

Growing Your Group

So your group is up and running and you have a small, dedicated core team. What now? Well, perhaps now is the time to quickly re-visit some fundamentals. Your group wants to help reduce economic inequality in the UK. And The Equality Trust (TET) aims to help you in that work. However, TET does not tell your group what to do or how to do it (see the “Working Together” document). We strongly recommend that, if not done already in the start-up phase, your group now draws up a strategy and some plans to deliver that strategy.

Setting a strategy and devising plans to deliver that strategy

Having an agreed strategy for your group will increase its attractiveness to existing and new members as it will show a unity of purpose and a clear sense of direction. Aspects you will probably wish to consider in setting your strategy are:

- * what do you want the group to have achieved in a year or two years?
- * how do you see your group in terms of members and activity in a year or two years?

We also strongly recommend that you consider:

- * the interests, passions and priorities of your group’s members
- * the major issues relating to economic inequality in your area
- * the current TET strategy

As well as these “what” issues you will also want to consider the “how” (the plans if you prefer). How is your group going to raise awareness about economic inequality in your area amongst the general public and how are you going to engage with those policy and decision-makers that actually have the power to affect economic inequality in your area?

But please note! Whilst it is important to strategise and plan, the group should also pursue activities to ensure momentum - so that people in the group feel things are progressing and that the group is having an impact. For example, an early campaign around the local Council and the living wage (for Council and contractor staff), or asking the Council to reduce its pay ratios have proved successful in galvanising local groups. Other ways have been to plan awareness-raising efforts (research, public meetings, stalls, other events) to publicise the level of inequality in the local area and attract new members to the group.

What does your group offer to new members?

This can sometimes be easy to forget but it is crucial and should be considered as part of your group’s strategising and planning. We tend to assume that people who are motivated enough to come along to a single meeting will then stick with the group but we also know that people can - and often do - drift away from voluntary groups. So it pays to take some time and analyse what it is your group offers to new members or potential new members:

- * Does the group have an attractive leaflet or website that tells people about the group?
- * Are group meetings welcoming, accessible and held in a reasonably pleasant venue?
- * Are new members able to get quickly involved in the work of the group?
- * Does your group ask new members what they think about the group’s plans?
- * Does your group ask new members what they might like to do for the group?
- * Are new members given the right amount of responsibility (not too much or too little)?
- * Does the group rotate its responsibilities and elect its officers at least once a year?
- * Does the group offer some fun and sociability to go with the work?

Are your existing group members effective ambassadors for the group?

Again, this is easy to forget but the best recruiters for your group are your existing members. Ask your existing group members to consider the people that they know, starting with those they know best and moving on to those they know perhaps less well. It is here that it pays to develop and practice your personal narratives – the story of why tackling inequality matters to you and why you think it matters more widely. These personal stories are a tried and tested way in social organising of making connections with other people and drawing them into activism. For more on this, please contact Bill Kerry at bill.kerry@equalitytrust.org.uk

Have you reached out to other sympathetic groups in your local area?

Inequality touches on so many aspects of life in the UK that it is fairly easy to find people who are working in other areas who are sympathetic to the idea of reducing inequality. The following are just some examples of organisations that the local groups have connected with in their campaigning and who have provided members for the local groups:

- * faith groups/churches
- * trade unions
- * living wage campaigners
- * local business groups
- * co-operatives
- * local political parties
- * anti-austerity groups
- * schools & colleges
- * food banks
- * community/voluntary groups
- * environmental groups
- * other campaign groups.

(NB: TET is not party political and groups are asked to not align with any particular party)

Have you connected yet with the other TET-affiliated equality groups?

As soon as your group affiliates to TET you are automatically part of a network of active local groups. The local groups can and do learn from each other so there is never any shortage of ideas and resources to help grow your activity and grow your group at:

- * Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/LocalEqualityGroups/>
- * Slack (forum) <https://localequalitygroups.slack.com/>

Also, always check the monthly TET bulletin to see the latest news from the local groups.

Stay flexible - the journey will have ups and downs

As voluntary collectives, local groups are subject to the availability and energies of their members. Sometimes members will have other more important priorities in life that will draw their attention away from the group and its activities. So it's important to be flexible and allow the group to change shape over time and in response to these events. These can actually be great opportunities to review where the group has got to and to think about a new strategy to take it forward. Marshall Ganz compares this to climbing a mountain where we would expect to ascend a peak at a time, resting, regrouping and re-strategising in between each peak.

Share your efforts and celebrate your successes

Your group will make many efforts and have many successes and when you do you must tell TET and all the other local groups. TET will promote all efforts and successes via its monthly bulletins and we strongly encourage groups to connect and share on Facebook, Twitter and GroupSpaces (see above). Even if something hasn't gone that well, it would be useful to hear about it. We can all learn from these things and plan to get better results next time. The more your group feels part of a wider movement that is achieving success, the more likely it is that you can inspire your members and attract new ones.