DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY INVESTMENT STRATEGY

A FRAMEWORK FOR PRACTITIONERS

By Sally Thomas

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HACT
Ideas and innovation in housing

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ABOUT HACT

Founded in 1960, but relaunched in 2012 with funding and support from a range of leading housing providers, HACT is a charity, social enterprise and industry-focused think/do tank established by the housing association sector. We seek to influence and innovate in ways which help all housing providers deliver more effectively within their communities.

HACT believes that the provision of housing is about more than just bricks and mortar – that housing providers are at their most successful when they focus on the social value they create, engage with and invest in their communities and actively seek to identify and meet the needs of those who live in them.

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NORTH STAR HOUSING GROUP

A WORD OF THANKS

This community investment strategy framework has been written for HACT by Sally Thomas, Head of Community Investment of North Star Housing Group with the help of Simon Underwood and Pete Duncan of Social Regeneration Consultants (SRC).

HACT is very grateful to the many people who have contributed to the development of this framework, including:

Paul Bridge, Homes for Haringey; Gavin Cansfield, Tower Hamlets Homes; Helen Cope, Consultant; Andrew Cooper, Affinity Sutton; Lisa Denison, Sovereign; Jane Edmonds, Knightstone HA; Matthew Gardiner, Trafford Housing Trust; Stephen Glover, Your Housing; Ken Goodsell, B3Living; Vivien Knibbs, Orbit; Jon Lord, Bolton at Home; Darlene Martin, Anne McLoughlin, Hastoe; Ciara McMillan, Daventry And District Housing; Shirley Mucklow, Phoenix Community Housing; Professor David Mullins, University of Birmingham; Bina Omare, Circle; Lara Oyedele, Odu-Dua Housing Association; Ken Perry, Plus Dane; Steve Short, Incommunities; Sandra Spence, Black Country Housing Group; Fintan Tynan, Poplar HARCA; and Nigel Wrightson, Metropolitan.

HACT staff who have been involved in developing the framework include:

Catherine Callens, John Coburn, Dr. Patricia A. Jones (seconded from the University of Birmingham), Matt Leach, Zoe Savory and Andrew van Doorn.

FOREWORD

As the prescriptive regulation of the last 20 years is stripped away, housing associations are once more in charge of their own destinies. As government funds less and less of what we do, it is up to organisations themselves to define their purpose. In this new and emerging world, optimising value is the new test of success, and innovation is the competitive advantage that will keep you at the top.

There are a growing number of associations defining their purpose by the strength of the communities in the neighbourhoods where they have homes. And we all know that many of these places are far from the confident, safe, prosperous and resilient communities that make for great places to live and work. The sector is one of the biggest investors for change into these communities and neighbourhoods and despite (or perhaps because of) austerity, annual funding has grown and now exceeds £750million, with the majority being provided directly by associations themselves.

Organising effectively to maximise the benefits that this investment could deliver is hard, but has never been more necessary. It requires a depth of understanding about how communities function; about the human and physical assets already present and how they can be better harnessed; it requires techniques to measure causality and impact; it requires energy, forgiveness and love. Above all, it requires an absolute commitment to share power and decision making with local people, with all the consequences that brings.

Every neighbourhood and every community is different and as the group of organisations which have steered this guide found, there never can be just "One best way". So what we offer here is a framework which can be tailored to any local situation. It is built from the collective experience of some of the organisations already leading this area of work; experience that we hope will give you a quicker route to success and help you avoid some of the blind-alleys we have travelled.

As you grapple with the emerging concepts of Social Value and Social Impact, as you carve out your own sense of purpose, and as you work alongside your local communities, I hope this will be an indispensable, practical guide to help you navigate your own path to success.

Matthew Gardiner
Chief Executive
Trafford Housing Trust

INTRODUCTION

Most housing organisations have always seen the 'big picture' and the value of investing in communities; some have been market leaders in this field. But too often their approach has tended to be opportunity-led rather than strategic. Budgets are tightening and responsibilities are expanding for households and housing providers alike. There is a pressing need to refresh, prioritise and extend the sector's best practice in supporting communities. Housing providers need to help strengthen communities, making them more sustainable and self-reliant. Housing providers should aim to enable households and communities to negotiate the new challenges and opportunities opened up by welfare reform, localism, new technologies and tough economic times.

> "There is a pressing need to refresh, prioritise and extend the sector's best practice in supporting communities."

Community investment is defined as the work that housing providers undertake with communities which is in addition to their responsibilities for providing housing. At HACT, we believe that community investment is not an optional addition to providing housing, but a crucial element of the work. HACT's extensive contacts with housing providers puts us in a unique position to pull together the most up-to-date information from organisations leading the way in community investment. This framework is the result of a process of shared learning. We have collated concerns and good practice in order to inform a framework capable of guiding housing providers through the process of putting tailored community investment at the centre of the way they operate and interact with their tenants and communities.

In early 2012 we brought together a group of senior people from a wide range of housing providers to share their experiences and to develop ideas about community investment. The group met several times. It was agreed that, as a first step, HACT should publish a simple, practical framework for developing a community investment strategy. This framework has become both a guide and a toolkit: it brings together information, experience and references in order to help all housing providers to develop their community investment work. The framework has been updated in 2015 to include reference to new HACT research and insights.

The framework has been written for HACT by Sally Thomas, Head of Community Investment of North Star Housing Group with the help of Simon Underwood and Pete Duncan of Social Regeneration Consultants. The framework's aim is to provide an overall structure to developing a community investment strategy, enabling housing providers to develop their ability and capacity to invest in communities.

Who is this document for?

The framework is designed for practitioners who are planning or who are already in the process of investing in their communities, but would benefit from a tool to aid them, helping them to structure their thoughts and assist in framing their ideas. The document has been shaped by community investment practitioners and is sensitive to many of the everyday challenges of community investment work within a housing provider.

The framework could also be of interest to staff, Board members, tenants, residents and communities. It is also relevant to others who want to know what housing providers do in terms of community investment. But the main users of this document will be the people who have daily or overall responsibility for developing and delivering a community investment strategy.

All housing providers can benefit from the advice within this framework. It can be used by those not yet involved in community investment to think about the issues and implications. It can also be used by organisations already undertaking community investment to assist in reviewing what they are already doing or to develop further ideas and approaches.

What is community investment?

A useful definition of community investment is as follows:

community investment is designed to help create, support and/or develop more self-reliant communities which have a positive and equal relationship with local service providers and have a measure of control over their own neighbourhoods.

The term 'community investment' is perhaps the most widely used, though there are a number of different terms used to describe social and community support activity by housing providers. These include:

community development, community empowerment, ***social investment,*** *community engagement* ***and community work.***

Community investment work usually contains three inter-related elements:

1. **the overall approach of the whole organisation;**
2. **work in a particular neighbourhood or community;**
3. **work on a theme or issue which cuts across geographical boundaries.**

Comprehensive community investment requires all three elements. This framework is designed on that basis. All the elements are covered in the main text. More information and tools to help with the neighbourhood and theme specific parts are included in the tools.

What is included in the framework?

This framework performs several functions:

- it provides background, sets context and explains **what** community investment is;
- it explains **why** you might want to develop a community investment strategy or approach;
- it helps you to work out **how** to develop and deliver a community investment strategy;
- it explains **who** might help you, with references and links to a range of resources. Resources included within the guide will be regularly updated, so be sure to keep coming back!

The framework also helps you address co-regulation and the Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) regulatory framework. You will find the eight key questions set out in the HCA regulatory framework on page 10, showing how community investment can help you address them. In terms of co-regulation, a community investment approach and activities will contribute substantially to a comprehensive and robust response to the principles and standards. Boards and senior staff will need to look at all the returns from the assets of the business, including social and economic. Community investment is an opportunity to take a broader approach to value, one that is social and economic as well as financial.

Larger housing providers may operate in hundreds of neighbourhoods. It may not be practical, or necessary, to undertake the same level of community investment work in all of them. In these circumstances, you will need to make judgements about the areas which might be prioritised. This framework should help you to decide where your priorities lie.

How to use the framework?

The framework is divided into 12 sections. Each section includes guidance notes, a series of quick questions to ask yourself and links to further references and sources of information.

An introduction covers and explains the purpose of each section. The guidance goes into greater depth regarding the steps you will take to complete your community investment strategy, and provides advice as how to go about them.

The key questions within each section are designed to be a quick read that you can come back to. You may wish to treat them as checklists of things to do or consider under each section, or you may wish to use them to frame a meeting or discussion with colleagues or participants.

Relevant resources are also provided to help you make use of the guidance. They are updated every quarter and reflected in the date on the front page, so please do check back regularly.

We would advise that you have:

Tool 2: A Community Investment Strategy in six months to hand from the outset when consulting the framework, as it will help you plan out the process and explain it to participants. If you have not already picked up a poster version of this tool at an event, you may wish to print out a copy and use it to chart your progress.

The framework follows a simple model of 'plan, deliver, monitor and learn'. It is advisable to consider all the sections of this document before you begin to work on community investment – the sections interlink and are cross referenced. But you might also want to dip in and out of various sections as and when they are most relevant to you.

Tools. *You will find this symbol at any point throughout the guide where a particular tool is likely to be helpful. Click on this icon and it will take you to the relevant tool.*

Words/phrases shown in grey. *This indicates a glossary term, see page 87 for the Glossary section.*

How long will it take to produce your strategy?

We estimate that a housing provider of any size should be able to develop a community investment strategy within about six months. Larger organisations will have more complicated operations, but they will also have more resources. If it is taking you longer than six months then you may not be putting enough resource and drive behind it.

Feedback...

We would like to hear what you think of this framework so that we can develop and improve it where needed. Please contact HACT at info@hact.org.uk to send your comments.

The HCA Regulatory Framework

This framework also helps you address co-regulation and the Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) regulatory framework, which asks of housing providers the eight questions outlined below:

1: Does the organisation have an appropriate strategic business plan? A community investment strategy will provide an important element of a good strategic business plan. (See Section 1)

2: Does the organisation's strategy suggest that it understands its external operating environment and the markets in which it operates? A community investment strategy would identify external social, economic and cultural factors as well as an evidence base. (See Section 2)

3: Do the financial plan and the financial position of the organisation support the delivery of its strategic objectives? Budgets and resources for community investment and whole organisation resourcing will support delivery of key elements of the strategic objectives. (See Section 6)

4: Does the organisation understand the risks to the delivery of its strategic objectives and get sufficient assurance on them and its systems of internal controls? A robust system for assessing the risks of community investment, linked to risk management in other of the organisation's strategic objectives, can provide the necessary assurance. (See Section 9)

5: Does the organisation demonstrate how it achieves value for money in meeting its strategic objectives? Measuring and evaluating the impacts of community investment, social, economic, physical, cultural, environmental, etc, demonstrates value for money as well as social value. (See Section 10)

6: Does the organisation's business plan have clear and measurable objectives and does the organisation have a track record of delivering its plans and objectives? A strategic vision for community investment, integrated with the overall corporate strategic plan, will provide clear and measurable objectives. Taking stock of your existing position and impact upon communities and others will allow you to identify successes and failures in delivery and to make improvements where necessary. (See Section 4)

7: Is there evidence that the organisation is transparent and accountable? Engaging with, involving and encouraging the influence of tenants, residents and communities provide accountability, backed up by measuring and evaluating impacts. (See Section 8)

8: Is the organisation effectively led and controlled? Community investment requires organisational change, strong leadership and internal checks and balances. (See Section 3)

THE FRAMEWORK:

1. YOUR STRATEGIC VISION
2. UNDERSTANDING EXTERNAL CONTEXT
3. FACILITATING INTERNAL CHANGE
4. YOUR IMPACT WITHIN COMMUNITIES
5. YOUR EVIDENCE BASE
6. RESOURCES
7. WORKING WITH ALL PARTNERS
8. WORKING WITH TENANTS AND COMMUNITIES
9. ASSESSING RISKS
10. MEASURING AND EVALUATING IMPACTS
11. SHARING KNOWLEDGE
12. ACTION PLANNING

1

YOUR STRATEGIC VISION

Ensure that all parts of your organisation know about, support and do not inadvertently work against your community investment strategy.

THE BASICS > GUIDANCE > KEY QUESTIONS > RESOURCES

THE BASICS

It may not be essential to have a 'whole organisation' approach in order to invest effectively in your communities, but it will certainly help. If the concept of community investment is not understood and embraced from the top of the organisation right through to those delivering it on the ground, then it may become marginalised and lose its focus. Community investment is not easy; it can be challenging and it requires sustained commitment, motivation, capacity and authority to deliver it effectively.

To make the best use of your resources, you will want to make sure that all parts of your organisation know about, support and do not inadvertently work against what you are trying to achieve through community investment. In other words, you will need strategic and operational 'buy-in' to make it happen. Your corporate vision and your community investment vision should coincide.

In these difficult economic times, your organisation may feel it needs to put a stronger emphasis on working and collaborating with partners and communities to meet shared goals; you may want to take an asset-based approach to your communities, in terms of both people and buildings. Doing so requires community investment to be fully embedded in your business plan and in the minds of all staff and Board members.

Other factors are also critical to success in community investment, for example, putting the right level of resources in place **(see Section 6)** and involving residents and communities as well as your tenants **(see Section 8)**. But clear leadership from the top is just as important. This is where the framework starts.

GUIDANCE

Be ambitious about your organisational vision:

Look at your current vision statement and see if it already includes a community investment angle. It is worth thinking laterally about how community investment activities could help you achieve some of your core organisational goals. You may wish to revise your official strategic vision once you have arrived at a completed community investment strategy. An example of a strategic approach which ties in community investment goals might be:

'We aspire to be more than just a provider of housing. In places where we have a concentration of homes, we seek to be the lead agency in shaping neighbourhood and place, providing services that transform the lives of both residents and the wider community. Where we have a smaller scale presence, we will seek to support initiatives by other agencies and focus our investment more clearly on the needs of our tenants/residents. Across all of our homes, we will focus support around employability and skills amongst our residents...'

Set your time frame:

Your community investment strategy might be long term (over 10 years), medium term (4 to 10 years) or short term (1 to 3 years). This might be expressed as, *'we will focus on the long term sustainability of our neighbourhoods and, in particular, their ability to respond resiliently to change'* or *'we will focus on meeting short term needs, reflecting the particular pressures on x, y and z communities at this time'.*

Consider how you will work with partners:

The extent to which you will involve and work with communities and other partners is important to consider. This framework is not intended to be prescriptive – there are many ways of undertaking community investment. Much is likely to depend on the outcomes of internal and external discussions with key individuals, groups and organisations. Having said that, we suggest that a partnership based approach is the most likely to be successful **(see Section 7)**.

GUIDANCE

Build on your strengths:

Adopting an 'asset based' or 'community strengthening' approach to your work with communities can be particularly useful. In summary, this means building upon the human and other strengths (assets) in a community. This is an alternative to traditional approaches which have focussed on need and deficiency, and which can perpetuate a culture of mutual dependency and of 'professionals knowing best' **(see Section 8)**.

Include local stakeholders from the beginning to the end:

It will be helpful to involve residents and other community stakeholders in the development of your strategy from the start. That means including them in the planning as well as the delivery phases. It may involve more work, but it will help you to produce a more inclusive and sustainable programme **(see Section 7** and **Section 8)**.

Your strategy should support your vision:

A comprehensive community investment strategy will cover all the headings used in this framework, and mirror its structure. But for general use and accessibility, you will probably want to produce a summary document which just covers the key points. Bear in mind that, like any strategy, one focused on community investment will need to be regularly updated and reviewed to take into account changing organisational, local and national circumstances.

A summarised version might look like this:

1. Introduction
2. Vision statement/statement of intent
3. Background – internal and external environment
4. Involvement of residents, communities and partners
5. Key actions/action plan summary
6. Arrangements for measuring, monitoring and learning

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Could you find out more about community investment and its potential within your organisation?
2. Have you considered the business case for undertaking community investment work?
3. Have you considered the scale of your community investment ambitions? Is it for the whole organisation or only a part of your organisation? Is it for the short or the long term?
4. Can you make the link between your overall organisational vision and your ambitions for community investment?
5. Do you need to alter your corporate vision, goals and business plan to develop your community investment role?
6. Have you considered who will take the lead in undertaking community investment work? This could be your organisation, or it could be a community group, a partner organisation or a similar stakeholder.
7. Have you considered how, and at which stage during the process, you will involve the following stakeholders: tenants, residents and also wider communities?
8. How and when are you going to involve others active in local communities, such as service agencies and key partners?

RESOURCES

Some good introductory sources on community investment are:

- At the Crossroads: A Progressive Future for Housing Associations. Mark Lupton and Matt Leach. Respublica (2011). **http://www.respublica.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/At-the-crossroads.pdf**
- Acting on Localism: The role of housing associations in driving the community agenda. Pete Duncan and Sally Thomas. Respublica (2012). **http://www.respublica.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/rla_Acting-on-Localism-.pdf**
- Localism that Works: How housing associations make things happen. PlaceShapers (2013) available at: **http://www.placeshapers.org/publications**
- Community investment by social housing organisations: measuring the impact – Vanessa Wilkes and Professor David Mullins, 2012. **http://hact.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Archives/2012/03/Survey_Report_for_HACT_-_Community_investment_for_social_housing%2C_Wilkes_and_Mullins%2C_March_2012.pdf**
- Search 'Asset Based Community Development UK' to see a range of sources and commentaries on ABCD **http://www.abcdinstitute.org/publications/downloadable/**
- Write-up: Raising the Roof: A new social bar for housing associations. Respublica 2013 **http://www.respublica.org.uk/our-work/publications/raising-roof-new-social-bar-housing-associations/**

These sources are regularly updated; so keep coming back!

2

UNDERSTANDING EXTERNAL CONTEXT

A robust community investment strategy will draw upon or take into account external conditions affecting your organisation, neighbourhoods and communities.

THE BASICS > GUIDANCE > KEY QUESTIONS > RESOURCES

THE BASICS

Every neighbourhood is different and so will be affected in different ways and to a varying extent, but external factors having and impact nationally are:

- public spending cuts;
- welfare reform;
- unemployment and the economic recession;
- localism and the community rights agenda;
- the closure of the Tenant Services Authority and the shift toward co-regulation
- the Social Value (Public Services) Act;
- a shortage of affordable homes to buy and rent;
- an ageing population;
- social media and new media technologies;
- climate change.

Examples of local factors which could be affecting communities might be:

- housing market conditions;
- demographic changes and migration;
- local developments (upcoming, ongoing or stalled);
- changes to local service provision.

GUIDANCE

Assess your environment:

There are two ways in which you might assess the wider environment:

1. **Geographically**, in terms of national, regional and local factors; and

2. **Thematically**, in terms of demography, economics, social, political and environmental factors.

Map the environment against possible risks:

It may be useful to write down a summary of the external conditions which currently impact on the areas in which you work. From here you could identify the potential ways in which these might change over time, and how you may need to adapt in the future. This could help to clarify your thinking. You might also want to consider, where appropriate, identifying and mapping neighbourhood resilience over time against possible future risks or pressures.

A good start is to use internal data to develop a picture of the different areas in which you work. This might include information on the extent of rent arrears, or the levels of reported anti-social behaviour, in each defined area. From here, there are a number of external sources of information which can help you to further clarify your picture.

Access other sources of information:

Local authorities are good sources of information; their research and policy teams will likely be monitoring and reporting on the policy environment. Larger housing providers may also have this facility in-house. Health authorities and local media are useful sources of information, along with police reports on crime and anti-social behaviour, the National Indices of Deprivation and the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

HACT's Community Insight tool uses Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping technology to provide instant neighbourhood and community profiles for housing providers. The tool draws on the very latest and most up to date open data sources covering all major social and economic indicators. **You can find out more about Community Insight here**.

GUIDANCE

Publications such as **Inside Housing** and the **Guardian Housing** and **Local Government Networks** are a good source of news, best practice and fresh ideas. Along with other organisations, **Urban Forum**, **Locality** and the **Centre for Local Economic Strategies** (CLES) have all produced useful introductions, research and reports covering topical themes and issues.

Analyse your information:

Once you have gathered this information, you may wish to adopt the PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental) analysis tool as a framework through which to assess the challenges and opportunities you may face **(see the 'Resources' of this section)**. PESTLE analysis is an audit of an organisation's external influences with the purpose of using this information to guide strategic decision-making.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Are you fully informed about current and foreseeable trends in the wider policy environment and how these are likely to affect the areas in which you work?
2. Have you identified how these conditions need to be taken into account as you develop your strategy?
3. Have you distinguished between factors that are estate-based or local, and factors that are regional or national?
4. Have you considered the potential effects that different conditions will have on your tenants and neighbourhoods in the short, medium and long term?
5. Do you have a procedure in place for gathering and assessing this information on an ongoing basis?
6. How will you allow for flexibility in your community investment approach, to enable adaptation to changing conditions?

RESOURCES

For up-to-date news and discussions on understanding your external environment, visit:

- Inside Housing
  http://www.insidehousing.co.uk
- The Guardian Housing and Local Government Networks
  http://www.guardian.co.uk/housing-network
  http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network
- New Start – 'the magazine for making better places'
  http://www.cles.org.uk/newstart/
- Locality Events and Publications
  http://locality.org.uk

For introductory and in-depth reports and analysis looking at specific themes, visit:

- CLES – The Centre for Local Economic Strategies
  http://www.cles.org.uk/
- The Urban Forum Guide to Community Resilience
  http://www.wellbeingnetwork.org.uk/documents/2011_06_resilience_guide.pdf
- CESI – Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion
  http://www.cesi.org.uk/
- The New Economics Foundation
  http://www.neweconomics.org/publications
- The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)
  http://www.cih.co.uk/booksandbriefings
- The National Housing Federation (NHF)
  http://www.housing.org.uk/publications.aspx
  http://www.housing.org.uk/events.aspx
- The Third Sector Knowledge Portal
  https://cssfs10.bham.ac.uk/Heritage/
- PlaceShapers Group of locality-focussed housing associations
  http://www.placeshapers.org/?id=11&ob=1

RESOURCES

For information and insight with a focus on housing with care and support, see:

- Sitra
  http://www.sitra.org/policy_and_public_affairs

For information and insight with a focus on housing for older people, see:

- The HousingLIN
  http://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/type
- Care and Repair
  http://careandrepair-england.org.uk/?page_id=149

For information and insight with a focus on sustainability in rural communities, see:

- Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)
  http://www.acre.org.uk/downloads/

To find out more about PESTLE and access a template, visit:

- RapidBI
  http://rapidbi.com/introduction-to-the-pestle-analysis-tool

or

- The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)
  http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/pestle-analysis.aspx

To get a sense of how things may progress in the future, you may find the following insightful:

- Housing 2020: Six views of the future for housing associations. Simon Graham [Ed.]. Orbit Group Ltd 2012.
  http://www.orbit.org.uk/media/130571/orbit2020finalreport.pdf

3

FACILITATING INTERNAL CHANGE

To deliver a community investment strategy successfully, it helps to have a culture within your organisation that understands and is sympathetic to community issues.

THE BASICS > GUIDANCE > KEY QUESTIONS > RESOURCES

THE BASICS

Housing providers are at their most successful if they:

- think wider than housing and beyond the needs of their tenants;
- are open to and good at working in partnership;
- are enterprising and prepared to take some calculated risks;
- are prepared and able to respond positively when challenged.

Developing such an organisational culture is not easy and takes time. Community investment could be a useful tool for refocusing your organisation – at Board level, within the senior management team and in parts of the organisation that would benefit from a stronger community focus. This section offers guidance on how you can facilitate change within your organisation.

GUIDANCE

Describe the change that you think is needed:

The process of doing this can be inclusive and empowering. Involve your residents, colleagues and partners in this kind of process: 'we are here now and we want to be there by xx (date).' There are a number of change tools (mentioned in the previous section, eg. Culture Mapping, PESTLE and SWOT analysis) that you can use to help you **(see the 'Resources' of this section)**.

Most housing providers are already well versed in processes of organisational change and will have their own sources of help and guidance. But you may not be used to the type of change required to deliver your community investment strategy. To undertake community investment your organisation needs to:

- understand issues and agendas which are wider than housing;
- develop understanding of and empathy with communities;
- understand the principles of community development and approaches which play to the strengths of communities;
- work much more closely with communities and other partners.

Carefully assess what changes you need to make:

Overestimating what needs to happen does not usually carry much risk, but community investment strategies can fail when organisations underestimate the need for change. You will need to assess both the strategic and the logistical changes required. You will also need to identify staff development issues.

Use a strength-based approach to assess the organisation:

Start from listing the areas in which your organisation performs well, what it prides itself for and the current expertise and strengths of your staff. If you have had previous experience of organisational change, it is worth revisiting what happened and assessing the experience. Most housing providers contain a mix of business, professional and community-oriented cultures; how you mange the inevitable tensions and bring these together for mutual advancement will be important.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What is your organisational culture? How far does it encourage a corporate approach to community investment?
2. What forms of organisational or departmental culture change might you need to be able to deliver a sustainable community investment strategy?
3. Is your department or organisation equipped and sufficiently resourced to oversee the changes that might be needed? Have you considered seeking an external perspective in the form of facilitators or consultants?
4. Have you got the right leadership and governance arrangements in place to meet the needs of strategy delivery?
5. Will success require a culture change in partner organisations and communities? How will you encourage and support this?

RESOURCES

To find out more about the change tools mentioned, and to access templates, visit:

- Culture Mapping:
  http://www.culturalmapping.com/index.html
- PESTLE (Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental) analysis tool:
  - RapidBI
  http://rapidbi.com/introduction-to-the-pestle-analysis-tool
  or
  - The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
  http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/pestle-analysis.aspx
- SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis:
  http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/swot-analysis.aspx
  or
  http://rapidbi.com/swotanalysis/

4

YOUR IMPACT WITHIN COMMUNITIES

It is important to consider how much you already know about your organisation's existing impact on tenants, residents, communities and neighbourhoods before you begin drawing up a community investment strategy.

THE BASICS > GUIDANCE > KEY QUESTIONS > RESOURCES

THE BASICS

It is always helpful to take a step back and see yourself as others see you. It may not always be a completely positive picture, but whatever it is, you need to know about it.

Since 2011, HACT has been working on a method to measure the social impact of housing providers. In partnership with Daniel Fujiwara, a leading expert on social impact valuation, HACT developed the Wellbeing Valuation approach. This approach generated wide interest across the sector as it enables to place monetary values on the social impact of community investment activities. These values can be found in the HACT Social Value Bank, the largest bank of methodologically consistent and robust social values ever produced.

This section of the framework helps you to measure the existing impact that you are having on communities in a quick and simple way.

You may find when you go through the following assessment process that you already have important and relevant information within your organisation to help with this research.

For further guidance on impact and risk assessment, you may find it helpful to refer to:

Section 10: Measuring and evaluating impacts

Section 9: Assessing risks

GUIDANCE

Concentrate on broader outcomes:

You are most likely used to measuring your departmental outputs (what they deliver) and perhaps, for your core services, your outcomes (the effect these services have), but the challenge with community investment comes in two parts:

- to take into account broader outcomes, as well as basic outputs, and to measure impact;
- to align your own measures with others that may already exist so that you can get a more rounded picture of the impact that you are having upon different communities and themes.

Consider all internal information sources:

Internal sources of information will include information that you collect regularly, such as tenant satisfaction surveys, the employment status of tenants etc., as well as the results of one-off consultations. It is helpful to have 'community conversations' with tenants and residents – this will help you gain valuable insight whilst at the same time building positive relationships. For more information on working with partners and communities, refer to:

Section 7: Working with all partners

Section 8: Working with tenants and communities

GUIDANCE

Consult external information sources:

External sources will include local authority neighbourhood or ward profiles, the national indices of deprivation and research and reports produced by government departments, think tanks and universities. These may cover different populations, places and themes that you are interested in. It is also worth looking back through local media (including online blogs and community websites) to see how regularly you are mentioned, under which circumstances and how you are reflected.

A list of potential sources of data and information is included at:

Tool 4: Types and sources of data and information

Prepare for organisational self-reflection:

You may need to prepare your organisation for the self-reflection involved when this assessment is reported. Organisations and individuals can be hard-wired to rationalise criticism and produce excuses, rather than respond positively to it. This may be where guidance or external facilitation could be helpful.

Involve your partners:

A survey of partners to identify how they experience working with you, and how they think both sides could improve working relationships, might be a good tool. Setting up a regular 'community investment partners' event might be a good way to start such a conversation and gain insight from their perspective.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Do you know how others see you – particularly residents and communities? How do partner organisations see your work in local communities?
2. What information do you (or others) already have about the impact of your existing services on local communities?
3. What conclusions do you draw when you look at this information? What positive impacts are you currently having? Are you offering value for money? Are you offering social value?
4. Is your organisation ready and able to take the constructive criticism that may result from these exercises? If not, how will you prepare colleagues and staff to be ready for such criticism?

RESOURCES

For monetary figures representing the social value of a number of potential community investment outcomes, see:

- The Social Impact of Housing Providers. Daniel Fujiwara. HACT (2013)

http://www.hact.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Archives/2013/02/The%20Social%20Impact%20of%20Housing%20FINALpdf.pdf

To get a sense of the role and impact of housing associations within neighbourhoods nationally, you can visit:

- The NHF 'Building Futures' Neighbourhood Audit Summary and Key Findings
  http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/IASS/research/building-futures.pdf

To find out more about measuring your social impact, check out:

- The Social Return on Investment (SROI) Network
  http://www.thesroinetwork.org/
- The Social Audit Network
  http://www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk/

For further guidance on impact and risk assessment, you may find it helpful to refer to:

Section 10: Measuring and evaluating impacts

HACT Value Calculator:

http://www.hact.org.uk/value-calculator

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YOUR EVIDENCE BASE

Your community investment strategy should be based on strong evidence of what is most needed.

THE BASICS > GUIDANCE > KEY QUESTIONS > RESOURCES

THE BASICS

This section gives advice on how to manage the evidence gathered through the previous three sections of the framework. At this stage, it will be very useful to take stock and consider what further evidence you may need to make informed judgements about your community investment strategy.

Since your organisation and your local communities will inevitably change over time, a community investment strategy must be adapted in order to meet evolving needs and priorities. For this purpose, it will be important to set aside time to regularly review and update your evidence base. Crucial to this will be ensuring that quick and easy methods for handling evidence are incorporated into the day-to-day activities of the relevant staff.

HACT's Community Insight mapping and reporting tool is a quick and easy-to-use source of regularly-updated information about the demographics and social and economic wellbeing of communities **(see the 'Resources' for this section)**. This resource will be most useful when aligned with regular consideration of how your work has impacted upon these wellbeing indicators over time. For guidance on including on-going impact measurement as part of your community investment activities, refer to:

Section 10: Measuring and evaluating impacts

GUIDANCE

The purpose of this section is to enable you to get to a point where you know the overall community context in which your organisation is working.

Identify external sources of data:

By this stage, in working through this framework, you should have begun to identify both existing data that you have and new data that you need to gather. Explore the scope for collaboration on data sharing and data mapping with other organisations, groups and partners. A collaborative approach allows you access to more information and builds relationships with useful partners in your community investment work. It also provides opportunities for your staff to develop experience of and expertise in partnership working, so vital to community investment work.

Keep it simple:

It is important not to over complicate things. You can easily get lost in data and not have the resources (expertise and time) to properly analyse it. Check whether this is the case. Ask people to be honest. You might also test whether you and relevant colleagues understand and can analyse the data that you have gathered. A friendly local academic might help you with this – perhaps by helping you to identify and draw out the information that will really tell you something.

Map your community:

As you analyse the data and information you are gathering you can begin to map existing sources of community and civic strength. You will begin to see where the infrastructure support is – the relevant organisations and groups, including those 'below the radar'. It may be that a particular local welfare advice worker has more information and contacts with, for instance, Roma communities than could be found in any surveys or information held by the local authority.

You can consider factors such as who holds what information, the roles organisations play and so on. You can identify 'hot spots' – high pressure issues, communities or neighbourhoods. You can identify existing strategies, partnerships and interventions.

GUIDANCE

Identify possible gaps:

You should also see if you can compare feedback from your residents with the views of the wider communities. This may lead you to seeing gaps, both in available evidence and in the position of your residents compared to the wider communities.

For a list of potential sources which will help you organise and make decisions about the data that you are gathering, see:

Tool 4: Types and sources of data and information

This tool will assist you in prioritising issues and key locations based on your strategic vision and community investment goals. You can begin to address them as you work through this framework.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What evidence have you gathered regarding your existing impact upon communities (see Section 4) and what does it tell you about the direction that your community investment work might take?
2. What other areas of evidence do you need to explore to complement this material, to strengthen the case for, and scope of, community investment?
3. Where are you going to find the further information that you need? Who is going to gather it and how long will it take?
4. Have you thought about the balance between collecting and analysing information and evidence, and taking action (i.e. at what point do you have sufficient evidence to act, even if you may still need to continue collecting further information)?
5. Do you require a system for assembling information and data to provide the evidence upon which you will base your community investment strategy?

RESOURCES

For sources of information on gathering your evidence, check out:

- HACT's Community Insight mapping tool, which uses GIS. Find out more or request a demo at: **www.communityinsight.org**

For a helpful model for collecting, analysing and applying qualitative and quantitative information to establish community investment priorities, contact:

- Social Regeneration Consultants to find out about their PCI (Prioritising Community Investment) model: **src@socialregeneration.co.uk**

Tool 4: Types and sources of data and information

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RESOURCES

Any strategy or action plan that you develop needs to be feasible within the resources that you can reasonably devote to and attract for it.

THE BASICS > GUIDANCE > KEY QUESTIONS > RESOURCES

THE BASICS

A mix of financial, human and other resources – such as information, support and communications systems – will be needed, from both within your organisation and outside it.

Look beyond your organisation for resources. An asset-based approach which seeks out and recognises the value of contributions from other groups and organisations will extend the reach of your strategy and produce a broader base of support. There are also significant grants, loans and social investment opportunities that providers have generally been slow to tap into so far.

For a successful strategy, there is much to be said for 'whole organisation' resourcing – considering how all the resources of your organisation in terms of personnel, skills, experience, finance, procurement, contacts, influence and so on can be used effectively to support your community investment strategy. Every section of the business needs to 'think community investment' when making key decisions.

GUIDANCE

Identify and calculate your financial resources:

Be a 'smart' community investor. Develop a realistic calculation of the amount of financial resources that you are prepared to put into community investment and, using this framework, identify how you want to invest it and what 'returns' (financial and social) you expect for it. Each association needs to decide what it can safely invest as a percentage of its turnover without risk to the rest of its business.

Work in partnership to expand available resources:

Search locally for voluntary, community and private sector organisations which might share your objectives for an area. Commission them or try to develop a partnership arrangement.

Ensure your project is sufficiently resourced:

It is important not to over-invest where money could be better spent elsewhere. At the same time, it is equally important not to under-invest: embarking on a project for which you are ill-equipped risks wasting resources in the long run and demoralising the staff and community members who participate.

Apply for grants and participation in initiatives:

There are a number of Government-funded projects and programmes that can help you make a success of community investment. For example, **Community Right to Build (CRTB)**, community budgeting and community organisers. A word of warning about accessing charitable grants – you will make few friends in the local community and voluntary sector if you, as a 'rich' housing provider, apply for grants in competition with them, especially when grant funding is at a premium. You may be better off working in partnership with local organisations and help them to apply for the funding. For sources of grants you can use your own contacts, your local Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) and available on-line services like Funder-finder and Grant-finder. Find out more about these from the sources below.

GUIDANCE

Involve staff from all departments:

You need to be aware of where corporate social responsibility (CSR) stops and community investment starts. Involving staff who might otherwise not come into contact with community issues, for example those in finance or procurement, may help bring about more corporate cultural change. At the same time, most CSR initiatives are top-down and not usually developed and delivered with communities. You may have to channel the ideas and enthusiasm of staff through proper partnership processes with residents and communities. These can be important learning opportunities for staff.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Can you identify the different types of resources needed for your strategy – for example money, people, knowledge, systems and goodwill?
2. What existing resources can you devote to your community investment strategy, either directly or indirectly?
3. Can you make a convincing business case for the use of the association's resources in terms of potential savings elsewhere – e.g. on rent arrears, tenancy turnover and anti-social behaviour?
4. Can you identify any other partnership, commissioned or levered resources that you might need to draw in to deliver your community investment strategy?
5. Who knows how to secure these external resources? Do you have people internally who could do this for you or will you need external help? Do you know where to look for this kind of help?
6. What rate of return do you expect from your community investment work? How will this be calculated and monitored? How will you balance financial and social return?

RESOURCES

The Big Lottery Fund is a good place to go for support with community projects:

http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/

To help you source alternative grants, the following websites are helpful:

- Grant Finder
  http://www.grantfinder.co.uk/
- Fund Finders
  http://www.fundfinders.co.uk/
- Funding Central (for voluntary organisations and social enterprises)
  http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk/Default.aspx

For guidance on seeking out and working with the skills and knowledge of local people, you might want to have a look at:

- The Asset Based Community Development Institute's Skills Inventory
  http://www.abcdinstitute.org/docs/abcd/Capacity%20Inventory.pdf
- Hosting a community organiser under the CoCollaborative Community Organisers scheme being led by Locality
  http://www.cocollaborative.org.uk/about

For grants and technical support for local social entrepreneurs (or tenants with ideas), check out:

- UnLtd
  http://unltd.org.uk/

If you are building on and extending your customer relations, you may find it worthwhile to invest in a Customer Relations Management (CRM) System so that all staff have access to updated information about the location, contact details, interests, skills and prior involvement of participants. To find out more about CRM systems, check out:

- Select CRM online
  http://www.select-crm.co.uk/crm

7

WORKING WITH ALL PARTNERS

Good partnership working is an essential ingredient of successful community investment.

THE BASICS > GUIDANCE > KEY QUESTIONS > RESOURCES

THE BASICS

Communities are complex and no one organisation is usually able to make a lasting impact without the help of others.

In some neighbourhoods or on specific themes, your organisation may be leading a partnership; in others you may be providing a more supporting role. You may find that your organisation's role in community investment is seen by others as more significant than it used to be – an inevitable consequence of public sector cut-backs. Many housing providers are now being approached by the voluntary and community sector for help in delivering essential support services to local communities.

The need for housing providers to take a more involved role in local partnerships is greater now than it has perhaps ever been. In issue areas requiring specific knowledge or skills such as community safety or health, housing providers may look to play a supporting role as junior partner to other bodies (ie. the police or care trust).

GUIDANCE

Begin at the ground level:

Don't begin in the comfort zone of statutory and professional partners. Ask yourself, which are the organisations that connect people within the community? It may be a local community association or an environmental pressure group. Is it possible to work with them? Such relationships may produce rewarding and unexpected outcomes. Organisations in the community and voluntary sector increasingly have to operate as businesses, so you may well have to pay them for their services.

Think outside the box:

Where appropriate, make use of external 'critical friends' to help you decide who to engage with as you develop your community investment strategy. The relevant stakeholders may be bodies that you have no direct links with. For example, it may be that evidence you have gathered suggests that health or transport are key areas of concern for communities, but you may have little or no current relationships in these fields. Local Strategic Partnerships, local CVS's (Community and Voluntary Services) or other third sector infrastructure organisations may be a good place to start when identifying new partners.

Undertake a gap analysis:

Begin by drawing up a table of:

- the key issues in an area,
- the stakeholders in those issues,
- and the nature of your current relationships with these stakeholders.

From here, you might look to identify the 'gaps' where partnerships could be formed or strengthened to better meet the needs of an area. For instance, it may be that your area suffers from high levels of unemployment. As part of a gap analysis, you might want to think about how your relationship with relevant local service providers, such as colleges and Job Centres, might be improved. From here you might wish to look into whether there are connections you could make with local social enterprises or charities which seek to address issues of training and unemployment.

GUIDANCE

Manage your relationships:

Relationships with partners, forums and networks are often more complicated and hard to get to grips with than those within organisations, but they can be just as important.

With larger organisations, relationships will vary depending upon the person/s or departments concerned. Within reason it will be important to break these down in your analysis, not to generalise. For example, saying that a relationship with a local authority is 'good' or 'mixed' is not necessarily going to be enough. How is the relationship with individual departments or officers?

You might also like to analyse the form that your relationships take – now and in the future – under headings like 'work with', 'work through', 'work around', 'influence', 'consult', 'delegate to', 'empower', and so on.

Work in partnership:

Community investment work requires close partnership working, which in turn can require specific sorts of skills. Your staff and Board members will do what is best for the organisation, but it may be worth encouraging them to strengthen and place a higher value on these sorts of skills:

1. learn from yourself – identify where you have good partner relationships and work with those staff and Board members to outline what practices could be encouraged within the organisation as a whole;
2. get some briefing and training on partnership working;
3. ensure that your recruitment criteria reflect the need for staff to be able to work effectively with members of external partner organisations.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Have you mapped all potential partners in your community?
2. At a corporate level, which key partners do you need to engage with to develop your community investment strategy and why? What are your existing relationships with them like? Which ones do you need to develop or improve? How could you do this?
3. At neighbourhood or theme level, which key partners do you think you will need to engage with to develop your community investment strategy and why? What is your existing relationship with them? Which relationship do you need to develop or improve? How will you do this?
4. Who in your organisation has best contact and influence with these partners and key players? Can you use these people to help deliver a partnership approach to community investment?

RESOURCES

To seek out and contact potential partners by location, type of organisation and activities, visit:

- NCVO's Funding Central site (the Partner Zone facility) **http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk/page.aspx?SP=Find_Partner**

For good practice in partnership working and case studies, check out:

- Business in the Community's INCLUDE project (which focus on collaboration between businesses, particularly in the field of developing skills and employability) **http://www.bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/include-pathways-community-investment**

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WORKING WITH TENANTS AND COMMUNITIES

Your existing tenants are your key stakeholders. It is best if you can involve them in your community investment strategy from the outset.

THE BASICS > GUIDANCE > KEY QUESTIONS > RESOURCES

THE BASICS

You will likely find that you have to balance your tenants' interests and needs with other people and organisations in your target communities.

Wider communities (i.e. those beyond your tenants and leaseholders) will be vital to the successful delivery of your community investment strategy. The extent to which you work with them will vary. You might invest in communities in a way which mirrors a traditional housing services approach – where you provide the best possible service to a set of customers. Or, you might adopt a more engaging and empowering approach, where communities are offered, and helped to achieve, a greater stake in the control of neighbourhood services and local assets.

The purpose of this part of the framework is to help you choose the approach most appropriate for your organisation and the people that you work with.

GUIDANCE

Challenges are normal:

Involving both your tenants and wider communities can be challenging. You may have to deal with difficult issues (such as tenants feeling that their rents pay for a service to them, not the wider community, or that their needs and priorities are not the same as those of the wider community). Be prepared for these kinds of issues.

Don't generalise:

"When you've seen one community, you've only seen one community" is a useful maxim. No two communities are the same, and within any area there are communities of geography, identity and interest. You will need to consider all of them.

Identify which communities to focus on:

The analysis you have undertaken so far in this framework should by now be helping you to identify which communities you need to engage with to pursue your community investment objectives.

Decide which approach to take:

As you think about how you want to engage with communities, we suggest that you seriously consider an 'asset based' or 'strength based' approach, which places an emphasis on identifying and building upon community capacity and self-reliance.

GUIDANCE

Draw in more expertise and capacity:

Larger associations will probably have some community engagement expertise and capacity within the organisation. If you need more, a wide range of organisations can offer advice and support or point you towards more local organisations. Working with local organisations on this will be particularly useful – they may want to work in partnership with you or you may be able to commission specific pieces of work from them.

Develop adequate briefings and provide relevant training:

Your tenant participation (or similar) team are obviously a resource to use here. But don't take it for granted that they will also be equipped for engaging effectively with the wider community. They may not have adequate resources or capacity; they may not have quite the right skills; they may need further briefing and training.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Do you have a means of defining and identifying the target groups for your community investment activities?
2. Have you considered how you will engage with your tenants and residents about your community investment strategy?
3. Have you considered how you will engage with wider communities about your community investment strategy?
4. How will you coordinate these two engagements to ensure fruitful relations? Can you explain and justify your approach?
5. Are you aware of community plans, ambitions and aspirations? For example, have you sought out evidence of these in the local press, online (in the form of blogs and social media), or in the form of Parish or Neighbourhood Plans, Community Appraisals or local campaigns?
6. How will you balance different interests and target groups when making and evaluating decisions as to where and how to invest?
7. Could your capacity to engage with communities be developed? For example, could you reorganise the way you engage with communities or should you extend the resources allocated to this work?

RESOURCES

For guidance and case studies on community engagement and community development, see:

- The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) 'What is community engagement?' Guide
  http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140805133148/http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/community-engagement-toolkit?page_id=&page=1
- The Asset Based Community Development Institute
  http://www.abcdinstitute.org/publications/downloadable/
- The Community Development Foundation
  http://www.cdf.org.uk/content/about-cdf
- Participation Compass, which helps people who work in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors with information, advice, case studies and opportunities to share experiences with others.
  http://participationcompass.org/welcome/index
- Successful Neighbourhoods: a good practice guide. Pete Duncan and Sally Thomas. CIH (2007)
  http://www.cih.co.uk/publication/display/vpathDCR/templatedata/cih/publication/data/Successful_Neighbourhoods

The process planner found on this site helps you choose participatory methods that are suitable to your situation. It also helps you plan your process. You will answer a series of questions which are compared to a database of methods to determine which methods best fit your needs.
http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/ProcessPlanner/Home

- The Big Local programme, now operating in 150 communities across England and Wales, has an approach to community work that is worth consideration.
  http://localtrust.org.uk/

9

ASSESSING RISKS

As with all areas of your business, the risks involved in community investment should be assessed and (where possible) minimised before you start rolling out your strategy.

THE BASICS > GUIDANCE > KEY QUESTIONS > RESOURCES

THE BASICS

Community investment can never be a risk-free activity and everyone involved with the strategy will need to be made aware of this. It will be important, however, not to be risk averse or your strategy will achieve little in practice.

It's also worth remembering that there are also risks in not doing anything.

GUIDANCE

Assess your risks:

Housing providers tend to be risk-averse and you may be tempted to simply apply risk assessment models from other parts of the business to the area of community investment. It is important to resist this temptation and undertake a separate and independent assessment. Community investment is an area in which you will have to take some risks in return for out-of-the-ordinary gains. And there are certainly measurable risks in not investing in communities.

If you do not have an already applicable system, we advise that you assess risks using a simple three part 'ORF' (Operational, Reputational and Financial) template, as in the following table. You can add more columns as needed – for instance 'who is responsible?', 'what are the timescales?'.

You can apply this simple template at a number of levels. It is worth applying it to the strategy as whole, but you may also find it valuable to go into more specific detail at a more micro level in order to develop a fuller picture. For instance, you may wish to focus on potential risks involved with particular initiatives or neighbourhood action plans. For more guidance on producing action plans, please refer to:

Section 12: Action Planning

Tool 1: An Action Plan Template

Risk area	Specific risk	Mitigating actions
Operational risks	*eg. performance-related problems due to increased pressures on staff time*	
Reputational risks	*eg. could be perceived as treading on the toes of a local charity/community group*	
Financial risks	*eg. uncertainty as to funding for community investment activity*	

GUIDANCE

Involve a range of stakeholders:

Risk assessment need not be dull. It is helpful to think about, develop and implement risk assessment as a driver and enabler, rather than as a bureaucratic burden. Alongside the finance department or a senior manager, you could involve relevant staff and partners, including people from communities, in simple but engaging discussions to identify and monitor risks. Conversations involving a range of people are more likely to raise unforeseen risks and, at the same time, produce imaginative ideas for mitigating actions.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Have you considered all the potential risks involved in your community investment strategy?
2. Who are you going to involve in risk assessment e.g. senior staff, the Board, Board sub-committees, tenants?
3. How are you going to record the risks; who is going to do this; how will this work be kept up to date?
4. How are you going to link risk assessment around community investment with wider organisational management approaches (will key community investment risks be on the corporate risk register?)
5. Have you considered the risk of doing nothing in terms of community investment?

RESOURCES

For more information on risk management, have a look at the following resources available on the Homes and Communities Agency's web pages:

- The section on risk management in their community engagement toolkit:
  http://cfg.homesandcommunities.co.uk/community-engagement-toolkit?page_id=3879&page=10
- Regulatory Framework for social housing in England from 2012:
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-regulatory-framework-for-social-housing-in-england-from-2012
- The 'Sector Risk Profile' drawn up by the Regulation Committee, which demonstrates some of the interdependencies between risks and how they can affect providers:
  http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140805133148/http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/news/hca-publishes-sector-risk-profile

10

MEASURING AND EVALUATING IMPACTS

Measuring and evaluating the impacts of your work demonstrates value for money as well as social value.

THE BASICS > GUIDANCE > KEY QUESTIONS > RESOURCES

THE BASICS

An ability to measure the social impact of different types of initiative is highly useful for planning your activities and evidencing their value. This is as true for the whole organisation as it is for the community investment team, not least because 90-95% of most housing providers' expenditure is on housing/asset focused investment. In 2013, HACT's research 'The social impact of housing providers' by Daniel Fujiwara made the argument for understanding and reporting the social value of every part of a housing provider's business. Following on this research, HACT and Daniel Fujiwara developed the Wellbeing Valuation approach in order to provide a clear and consistent way of measuring impact of community investment activities within the housing sector **(see the 'Resources' of this section).**

In addition to supporting decision-making, having a clear and consistent procedure for impact measurement and evaluation will enhance the credibility of your work within communities, making it a more attractive proposition for potential funders or social investors. It will also support any work you are doing to meet the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, which requires housing providers to consider their social impact in procurement and commissioning. There are other approaches to measuring social value such as LM3, SROI and Social Audit. HACT's Wellbeing Valuation approach sets out to be the new 'industry standard'.

GUIDANCE

Key principles:

It is important to establish a process and measures which are:

- simple to understand and use
- proportionate (i.e. in relationship to the scale, scope and resources of the activities being measured, the programme and the organisation)
- appropriate and focused (i.e. relevant to the activities being measured and tightly defined)
- realistic, achievable and practical (i.e. the results can inform decision-making around planning activities and allocating budgets to maximise impact)
- cost-effective to implement, manage and monitor

Types and sources of data and information:

The system will need to gather and measure information which is both qualitative (i.e. views and opinions) and quantitative (i.e. facts and figures), developing a range of measures which reflect both. Ideally, it should take a longitudinal approach (measuring changes over time).

Obvious as it may seem, it is important to establish at the outset a shared understanding of the terminology, such as qualitative and quantitative, baselines, outputs and outcomes, targets and measures (or indicators or metrics).

Tool 4: Types and sources of data and information provides a list of data that may be useful when measuring and evaluating outcomes.

Take an inclusive approach to developing and implementing a system:

- Involve tenants, to provide a sounding board to ensure the system is understandable, realistic and resource efficient
- Involve all other services and departments, to ensure there is a shared understanding and appreciation of the reasons and benefits of impact measurement. This will enable the input of ideas and views from a range of perspectives and expertise and, more broadly, support the key objective to take a whole organisation approach to the development and delivery of community investment

GUIDANCE

- Involve key partners to generate wider support and credibility, enable the contribution of ideas, data and information and, where possible, align systems

It will be sensible to take a staged approach, building the impact measurement system a step at a time rather than trying to do too much too soon; this way, the real-life results of application and practice can inform the development of the system.

Align impact measurement across your organisation:

Whilst social impact measurement in the housing association sector is still very much in its infancy, there is much to be said for integrating an assessment of the impact of community investment activity within performance management systems for the whole of your organisation. Doing this will create the potential to understand the ways in which the activities of all of your business can contribute to generating social and economic value in the communities you work within, rather than viewing community investment as a stand-alone activity. For example, a number of associations are seeking to align the impacts of their recruitment and procurement activity with their community investment in order to maximise their impact at a local level.

Incorporate a response to the Public Services (Social Value) Act:

Information on how partners are delivering services in ways which contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of their communities is likely to be increasingly sought by local authorities seeking to implement the provisions of the Public Services (Social Value) Act. Whilst experience of implementation of the act is as yet limited, developing an understanding and evidence in relation to your organisation's business may become increasingly important. As a public body for the purposes of the Act, housing associations will also have to take economic, social and environmental considerations into account when procuring goods and services. Establishing a clear framework for understanding and assessing your own impact in these areas will place you in a strong position to meet these requirements. For more information, Social Enterprise UK (SEUK) and the NHF both offer helpful guidance on the Social Value Act and what it will mean for housing providers **(see the 'Resources' of this section)**.

Tool 4: Types and sources of data and information provides a list of data that may be useful when measuring and evaluating outcomes.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Do you already measure and evaluate any activities related to community investment?
2. Can you align measuring community investment with existing performance management or impact measurement systems?
3. Who is or will be responsible for measuring and evaluating your community investment work?
4. Are you measuring the outcomes as well as the outputs from community investment?
5. From whose perspective do you currently measure the outcomes of your community investment? Might you get a different result if you sought the viewpoints of residents of the wider community, alongside those of your staff and tenants?
6. Are you measuring the impact of community investment in other parts of your business, particularly housing management performance?
7. Have you thought about measuring the social value of what you do across all the organisation's activities?
8. Have you considered seeking external help with this work? Do you know where to go for that help?

RESOURCES

For an analysis of the many ways in which housing providers generate social value, see:

- The Social Impact of Housing Providers. Daniel Fujiwara. HACT (2013)
  http://www.hact.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Archives/2013/02/The%20Social%20Impact%20of%20Housing%20FINALpdf.pdf

For an overview of measurement tools currently used by housing organisations, see:

- Community Investment by Social Housing Organisations: Measuring The Impact. Wilkes and Mullins. Third Sector Research Centre for HACT (2012)
  http://www.hact.org.uk/measuring-impact-reports

For information on tools and resources relating to monitoring and evaluation, see:

- The Charities Evaluation Service (CES).
  http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/tools-and-resources

For further information on the Public Services (Social Value) Act, see:

- The NHF's Social Value Act briefing:
  http://www.housing.org.uk/publications/find_a_publication/legislation/public_services_social_value.aspx
- SEUK's Guide to the Public Services (Social Value) Act:
  http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/news/new-guide-the-public-services-social-value-act
- Social investment performance management toolkit for housing organisations. Mullins, van Bortel, Ham and Watson (2010). University of Birmingham.
  http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=%2B6sjIOfdodE%3D&tabid=790
- The Social Return on Investment Network
  http://www.thesroinetwork.org/what-is-sroi
- The New Economics Foundation guide to over 20 social impact tools, free to download.
  http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/tools-for-you

RESOURCES

- The Guild's 'Getting Started In Social Impact Measurement' guide helps you identify what tools are available and which ones will suit the needs of your organisation. It is aimed at smaller Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) and may suit smaller housing providers. Available for free: **http://www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk/files/8113/4996/6882/Getting_started_in_social_impact_measurement_-_270212.pdf**

- Business in the Community, which offers tools and guidance for social measurement. **http://www.bitc.org.uk/resources/community-footprint**

- Housing associations take the lead in promoting social value – The Guardian – Sept 2013 **http://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2013/sep/17/housing-associations-social-value**

- The seven housing problems that most affect your happiness – The Guardian – Dec 2013 – Article by the Guardian on HACT's Wellbeing Valuation report **http://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2013/dec/10/housing-problems-happiness-space-noise-research**

- Calculating social wellbeing – Inside Housing – July 2014 – Article on how Affinity Sutton is using the HACT Wellbeing Valuation approach to measure their social impact **http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/calculating-social-wellbeing/7004877.article**

- Taking measure of social value – Inside Housing 2014 **http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/taking-measure-of-social-value/7004502.article**

- Communities Count: the Four Steps to Unlocking Social Value – report by Social Enterprise UK **http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/advice-services/publications/communities-count-the-four-steps-unlocking-social-value**

11

SHARING KNOWLEDGE

To build a strong strategy you will need to capture and communicate what you have learned within your own organisation and share it with your partners.

THE BASICS > GUIDANCE > KEY QUESTIONS > RESOURCES

THE BASICS

Community investment within housing providers is a relatively underdeveloped area of business. To build a strong strategy you will need to capture and communicate what you have learned within your own organisation and share it with your partners. This should be an integral part of any action plan, not just an optional extra.

Housing providers should not compete with each other when investing in communities. It is a lot more successful and efficient if you work in collaboration. With this in mind, there is much to be said for building learning and peer review into your approach. HACT can offer a channel for peer learning and support, but there may be alternative sources of support elsewhere. We suggest that you build both internal organisational and external shared learning into your strategy. This will add value to your organisation and the wider sector.

GUIDANCE

Involve stakeholders:

Evaluation and shared learning from community investment is another area which can be made lively and engaging and used to add value, not only to your strategy but also to the processes and buy-in to your strategy. Try ideas like participatory evaluation. Involve tenants, residents and other stakeholders – including other staff – in exercises that look at the effect that your actions are having. You can find ideas for this from some of the reference sources below.

Identify where most value is added:

See if you can identify areas in your strategy and action plan where clear knowledge sharing can most add value.

Link to existing networks and sources:

Use this framework to link in to the many sources of advice, support and best practice that exist.

Contribute to the collective learning by joining HACT's action-learning programmes: **http://hact.org.uk/hact-2012-2014**

KEY QUESTIONS

1. How are you going to capture and communicate community investment learning within your organisation?
2. Are you going to disseminate and share the learning? If so, who with and how?
3. Are you equipped to learn from mistakes as well as successes?
4. Are you prepared to learn from others in the sector and let them learn from you?
5. How are you going to do all this and who will be responsible for it?

RESOURCES

Good forums through which to access and share knowledge are:

• **by themes:**

HACT events and action-learning programmes
http://hact.org.uk/hact-2012-2014

TSRC
http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/Research/KnowledgePortal/tabid/840/Default.aspx

The National Housing Federation (NHF) Neighbourhood in NHF's Neighbourhood Investor Group
http://www.housing.org.uk/about_us/governance_and_accountability/member_groups/neighbourhood_investor_group.aspx

The RSL Network
http://www.winmarkglobal.com/wm/ViewPage?function=View&PageContent=53&network=RSL

The PlaceShapers Group
http://www.placeshapers.org/

• **by geography:**

NHF regional groups
https://www.housing.org.uk/in-your-area/member-engagement/

The Northern Housing Consortium (NHC)
http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/Events

Regional and local Civic Societies, listed by Civic Voice
http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/about/our-members/

Local Settlements and Development Trusts, listed by Locality
http://locality.org.uk/members/in-my-region/

ALMOs may be interested in:

The National Federation of ALMOs (NFA)
http://www.almos.org.uk/meetings

12

ACTION PLANNING

The final step is to bring everything together.

THE BASICS > GUIDANCE > KEY QUESTIONS

THE BASICS

This section builds on all the previous sections and helps you to decide on the actions that result from the strategy.

Your strategy should hit the ground running and make some early impacts in local communities. There should be a strong emphasis on 'doing'. There is much value in piloting, experimentation and trying things out.

You will need to **timetable and prioritise** within the strategy, using the evidence collected in the development process to decide, for example, **which communities** would benefit most from community investment and **which themes** will have the greatest impact across your areas of operation.

By the time you have worked through this final section you should be in a position to launch a comprehensive and well-evidenced community investment strategy and action plan.

GUIDANCE

As you pull together your action plan you can move to a position where you can make fully informed decisions. The factors that you will need to take into account when making those decisions are covered in Sections 1 to 11 of the Framework.

For an action plan template, see

Tool 1: An action plan template

For a list of potential community investment themes, see

Tool 3: Potential community investment themes

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Can you now bring together all the elements of the community investment package into a strategy and action plan?
2. Can you now also produce a position statement for each subject area that you wish to consider? For example, employment, young people, poverty, a particular neighbourhood, a particular community of interest.
3. Does your position statement include all of the following?:
   - key data;
   - current impact;
   - external environment;
   - internal environment;
   - existing and potential partners;
   - resources;
   - vision;
   - objectives;
   - risks.
4. Can you decide priorities and actions and make decisions based on these statements? If not, why not, and what further information do you need?
5. Do you have an investment decision-making process, including criteria upon which current and potential projects will be evaluated? Does this process help you to plan and prioritise community engagement activities?
6. Is your community investment action plan fully reflected in your corporate strategy, with appropriate measurement tools, such as key performance indicators and targets?

1. AN ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

This template includes the key things you will need to consider when drawing together your evidence to produce an action plan. You might wish to use it, as set out here, to produce an action plan for a particular neighbourhood, or it could be adapted to suit a project which will cut across geographical boundaries.

NEIGHBOURHOOD	ACTION	COMMUNITY PRIORITY (high; medium; low)	EARLY HOUSING PROVIDER ACTIVITY	CURRENT STATUS Pending; potential quick win etc	POTENTIAL LEAD AGENCY	POSSIBLE EXTERNAL PARTNERS	POSSIBLE MAIN FUNDING SOURCES	TIMING Years 1, 2 or 3 Quarters 1, 2, 3, 4

2. A COMMUNITY INVESTMENT STRATEGY IN SIX MONTHS

This tool is a suggested timeframe for the development of your strategy, which pulls together the contents of this document into a chronological order. You may find this helpful when planning the process of putting together a strategy. Please adapt this to suit your needs and priorities.

ACTION	Initial scoping/ visioning/ plan process	Involve residents and community reps	Assess external environment	Assess your own organisation	Assess existing position and impact	Gather evidence base for strategy	Identify and engage with other external partners	Assess available resources	Assess risks	Plan evaluation system	Plan learning and comms systems	Draw all the above into a strategy and action plan	Begin to implement the plan following approvals
MONTH 1													
MONTH 2													
MONTH 3													
MONTH 4													
MONTH 5													
MONTH 6													

3: POTENTIAL COMMUNITY INVESTMENT THEMES

This tool provides a set of community investment themes and subsequent practical examples.
It may be helpful when thinking through some possible themes for your community investment strategy.

SUBJECT	EXAMPLES
STRENGTHENING LOCAL ECONOMIES	• Employment and skills training • In-house procurement • In-house apprenticeships • Social enterprise support
POVERTY AND EXCLUSION	• Financial and debt advice • Community cohesion • Financial inclusion
YOUNG PEOPLE	• Diversionary activities • Sports and leisure • Advice and support
HEALTH AND WELLBEING	• Independent living • Vulnerability • Loneliness
COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND RESILIENCE	• Supporting civic infrastructure • Supporting community enterprise • Building "under the radar" capacity • Management/ownership of assets
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY	• Environmental improvements • Energy efficiency • Community energy initiatives • Community transport

4: TYPES AND SOURCES OF DATA AND INFORMATION

This tool provides suggested sources of data and information. It will be worth familiarising yourself with these sources of information early on, and returning to this tool for ideas and reminders when you need to seek and gather evidence.

DATA TYPE	POTENTIAL SOURCES	DATA TYPE	POTENTIAL SOURCES
'EXTERNAL' SOURCES OF DATA – BY PLACE AND /OR THEME – QUANTITATIVE	• Office of National Statistics (ONS) www.statistics.gov.uk/hub • Data held by local authorities • Crime and ASB statistics www.police.uk • The National Indices of Deprivation www.gov.uk/government/publications • "Community narrative" – including key population changes, dynamic inward and outward migration flows, etc • Community organisations • Local primary and secondary research • Other housing associations • Local Enterprise Partnerships	'INTERNAL' DATA HELD BY YOUR ORGANISATION – QUANTITATIVE	• Property related information • Asset management surveys and strategies • Customer profiling • Tenant satisfaction surveys • Tenant inspection findings • Resident feedback • Tenant scrutiny findings • Transactional analysis • Board reports • Stock condition data
'EXTERNAL' SOURCES OF DATA – BY PLACE AND /OR THEME – QUALITATIVE	• Community experiences (happiness, liveability, neighbourliness, etc) • Existing strategies, policies, partnerships, programmes, etc • Community organisations • Local primary and secondary research • Relevant legislation, reports, articles and publications	'INTERNAL' DATA HELD BY YOUR ORGANISATION – QUALITATIVE	• Corporate Business Plan • Growth Strategy • Board reports • Resident feedback • Tenant inspection findings • Customer Insight / profiling • Tenant satisfaction surveys • Tenant scrutiny findings

GLOSSARY OF COMMUNITY INVESTMENT TERMS

Asset-based community development (ABCD)

Building on the skills of, and connections between, local residents, the power of local associations, and the supportive functions of local institutions, asset-based community development draws upon existing community strengths to build stronger, more sustainable communities. The emphasis is on communities becoming more self-sustaining and less reliant on external organisations. Sometimes also known as strength-based community development.

Community budgeting

A community budget gives local public service partners the freedom to work together to redesign services around the needs of citizens, improving outcomes, reducing duplication and waste and potentially saving significant sums of public money.

It is predicated on many resident's experience of local public services as one of frustration at the complexity, fragmentation and difficulty of finding a way through the bureaucracy. It can be seen as Neighbourhood Management Mark 2.

The coalition government set up a pilot programme of neighbourhood and community budgeting in 2011.

Community cohesion

Bringing different people and groups together in a community of place, to strengthen ties and understanding, as a way of improving everyone's quality of life.

Community development

The process of building people's skills and abilities to act together on their common priorities – usually through the creation and support of independent community organisations and networks. It has, in the past, involved the support of community development workers employed by both the public and voluntary sectors.

Community empowerment

Community empowerment involves a positive shift of power, influence and responsibility away from existing centres of power – often outside a specific community – into the hands of communities and individual citizens.

Community engagement

The actions that external agencies take to enable them to consult, involve, listen and respond to communities.

Co-production

The production of public and other services, policies and programmes through the significant contribution of service users and communities, making use of the latter's resources, expertise and time to produce better local outcomes.

Co-regulation

The replacement of top-down regulation and inspection in favour of local accountability, where social housing providers self-regulate themselves in a transparent fashion and enable bottom-up tenant scrutiny and local systems of redress.

Corporate social responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is about how an organisation manages its business processes to produce an overall positive impact on its employees, its tenants, its partners and other stakeholders and the communities within which it operates. It means going beyond the normal business models of efficiency and value for money to deliver on a range of social as well as business objectives for the wider community.

Neighbourhood management

Neighbourhood management is a process which enables local communities to work with providers of neighbourhood services to meet local needs and expectations more effectively and in a way which secures and develops local accountability.

Neighbourhood planning

Neighbourhood planning is a new right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. It gives local people an unprecedented statutory say in helping to shape development in the areas in which they live.

Neighbourhood planning should empower communities to shape the development and growth of a local area through the production of a neighbourhood development plan, a neighbourhood development order or a Community Right to Build Order.

Neighbourhood development plans will become part of the local statutory development plan and will form the basis for determining planning applications in that area. A neighbourhood development order enables the community to grant planning permission for the development it wishes to see.

Neighbourhood resilience

Neighbourhood resilience refers to the ability of a neighbourhood and its inhabitants to meet or adapt to shared challenges (for instance, economic recession) in order to retain or enhance local wellbeing. The concept is closely related to that of sustainability.

Social impact

Social impact involves understanding the effects on various people that happen as a result of an action, activity, project, programme or policy. The 'impact' of this action or activity can be positive or negative, and can be intended or unintended, or a combination of all of these. An activity can have immediate and direct impact on certain people, but it can also have a more far reaching effect on people, organisations, institutions and entities which are not directly engaging with it. They might not even know they are being affected at all, but the 'impact' of the action might be very significant to them.

Sustainable

The word 'sustainable' can take on different meanings in different contexts. In relation to geographical communities, there are three elements:

- Environmental: This covers the human impact on global climate, biodiversity and non-renewable resources.
- Economic: An economy which is, and is likely to remain, competitive and thriving.
- Social: A place which affords a good quality of life for its residents, and is a popular place to live.

It is worth considering all three when preparing a community investment strategy.

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