

Top Tips: Creating Talented Town Teams

This guide defines recognisable stages that can aid the process of town team or partnership development. The guide does this by using a series of such stages defined as the “F-Factors of Success”. The purpose of using such a checklist is not to follow it slavishly but to have it by your side as a prompt to shape the team’s development at any stage.

Foundations: It’s important to not lose sight of what first led your town team to come together and if this is still valid or has been achieved. Often it will be passion over a single issue, the opportunity to organise an event or perhaps the offer of funding. Baseline evidence of the wider issues and opportunities facing the town is a good place to start. Whatever the original motive, it is likely to have a lasting influence on the way your town team works and the people it attracts to join it.

Function: The function of your town team needs to be agreed and clearly articulated to help create a strong sense of teamwork and to help others to understand what you stand for. This function will initially be born out of the foundations and it needs to be defined in terms of the ‘what’ (e.g. maintaining business and/or social function of the town centre) as well as the ‘how’ (coordinating/influencing/doing). It’s helpful to revisit the team’s function periodically to check if it reflects what is needed and review what’s been achieved.

Form: As is often said, form should follow function. Your town team or partnership may well begin as a loosely constituted ‘umbrella body’ seeking to coordinate and influence the work of others. Or it might be much more about doing things like organising a street festival or promoting the town. Both have their merits either separately or combined. In time it may adopt the legal form of a charity or company and could put down roots as a Business Improvement District.

Folk: The people that make-up and drive forward your town team are probably the most important of success factors. Your focus on folk, though, needs to extend well beyond this core to other businesses and organisations you work with, involve and influence. Do you use paid staff or volunteers and how might the two best combine? What are your relationships with strategic organisations and influential individuals to inform decision-making, broaden support and shape service delivery? How do you communicate and engage with the wider town and its residents? This is all an important part of the focus that needs to be put on making the most of your townsfolk.

Finances: You need to consider your town team finances beyond how you manage any start-ups funds you might have been provided with, to cover how you raise new funds and perhaps focus on projects or assets that will help sustain activity. Some of the best town teams have struggled for funds in their early days but become very savvy at sustaining themselves long-term.



Forward Plan: No advice on organisational development would be complete without the recommendation that you write all this down and review it in an annual forward plan. Proposals for how you run and develop your town team are as important as action plans stating your intentions for practical projects and wider progress – too often the one exists without the other so that townsfolk’s enthusiasm and aspirations are dashed. Projects won’t progress without a well-run organisation to coordinate or deliver them. Influence won’t be achieved without the groundwork in collecting evidence, developing contacts and presenting the case.

Fun: The unsaid ‘F-Factor’ but unless you make your meetings enjoyable and your activities rewarding, how will you expect willing volunteers to keep coming back and for others to join you?