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Real Ideas Organisation Connected Schools

Harnessing underused school facilities to catalyse community activity



Organisation type:

Employment and education

Location :

South West

Award date:

June 2016



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Award amount: **£240,000**
Ownership : **Community Interest Company**

Grant purpose

A grant to work with eight schools to support communities of staff, pupils and parents to create new community businesses which address local community needs.

Engaging young people

Working to secure a new generation of community business leaders and empowering young people to create lasting change.

Community cohesion

Allowing schools to develop meaningful, sustainable and dynamic relationships with their communities and bring people together for mutual benefit.

Broad social impact

Developing community businesses to tackle local social challenges in areas of the country facing high levels of socio-economic deprivation .

Funded by Power to Change through the Innovation and Infrastructure Fund, RIO's Connected Schools is a pilot programme working with eight schools in five locations across England (Gloucester, Bristol, Plymouth, Torbay and Liskeard), which aims to explore schools as hubs for community business to thrive.

Power to Change funded RIO's Connected Schools project with £140,000 for a first year and a further £100,000 for the second year. With this support, they hope to achieve transformational change for schools and communities, enabling people to live rewarding lives.



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Schools offer a wealth of underused facilities, skills and opportunities. This project aims to make use of these untapped resources to create eight 'Connected Schools', each supporting at least two sustainable community enterprises and acting as a hub for others to develop. RIO consultants work with each school to train and coach in the development of a sustainable community business, which benefits both the school and local community.

Throughout the programme, schools will build dynamic relationships with community stakeholders emerging as 'connected hubs' that act as catalysts for community business to flourish. This not only empowers the community with skills and confidence but makes use of their built assets and improves lives in their localities. By accessing a range of RIO tools, training and resources, individuals will be able to understand how they can begin to tackle some of the local challenges together and create lasting change.

One example of the 'Connected Schools' that has emerged from RIOs programme is Hannah More Primary School based in Bristol, from which two community-led initiatives have emerged: Kaani Kulayl Chilli Sauces and a new 'Cultural Competence' training scheme.

Kaani Kulayl chilli Sauces is a community business set up by a group of women from inner city Bristol, who also work part time at Hannah More school. The aim is to connect the community through food and celebrate the multiple heritages that exist in the community. Pupils from the school have also been learning about chillies and growing them in the school garden, ready to be used as ingredients in the sauces. The close links to Hannah More Primary School means that the team has access to the school garden and greenhouse, as well as additional ingredients needed for their business.



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The 'Cultural Competence' training scheme, on the other hand, is a community learning offer that supports parents from diverse backgrounds and who have experienced persistent unemployment, to develop new skills and gain employment. The aim of the training is to harness the collective skills of school and their unique and diverse community on the topic of cultural identity to enable local business, organisations and individuals to become more 'culturally competent'. The school has trained 14 parents as facilitators with the aim of delivering the cultural competency training to other schools, businesses and organisations across Bristol.

The programme has been successful in providing the conditions for community business activity to emerge and by accessing RIO's business tools and resources, we are starting to create a legacy of skills, expertise and networks that will enable them to continue outside of the programme

Deshni Pyndiah

Real Ideas Organisation