

Challenge Introduction Document

What is the objective of the Buy Better Together Challenge?

The Buy Better Together Challenge has been created to identify new and different models of community buying to benefit consumers and contribute towards other social benefits. It is intended to inspire and reward new and sustainable approaches for individuals to save money or source better quality products or services through group buying schemes that have potential of being replicated elsewhere.

What is community buying?

Groups of consumers can combine their buying power to negotiate better deals, for cheaper prices, better quality or greater convenience. Individuals may feel they don't have the time or expert knowledge to make informed decisions when buying goods and services; when they collaborate and form groups they can spread the effort associated with making decisions between them. Businesses can also benefit, serving a group of consumers can help an organisation to spread overheads and lower costs. Community buying offers an opportunity for businesses to engage with potential customers in a new and more interactive way. For case studies of existing community buying groups see www.bis.gov.uk/buying/

Collaboration between consumers is not a new idea, although there is a growing momentum for customers to come together around a shared interest. The emergence of new technologies, including web and mobile applications, has opened up new possibilities to group, find, recommend, compare and purchase products and services. However, there is great potential for groups which don't use new technology too.

What is the relevance for the Department for Business, Skills and Innovation (BIS) and Co-operatives UK?

The Government launched its '[Consumer Empowerment Strategy; Better Choices: Better Deals. Consumers Powering Growth](#)' in April 2011. It aims to put consumers in charge so that they are better able to get the best deals for themselves, individually and collectively. This will, in turn, benefit the economy. Community buying is one way to boost consumer empowerment.

Co-operatives UK is the national trade body that campaigns for co-operation and works to promote, develop and unite enterprises to grow the co-operative economy. Co-operatives UK aims to bring together all those with a passion and interest in co-operative action.

Who is eligible to apply for the Buy Better Together Challenge?

Applications that meet the assessment criteria are welcome from all sectors, levels of organisation and groups based in the UK. 'All sectors' includes public sector, voluntary and community organisations and businesses.

You do not need to be formally constituted as a group for the initial application stage, so you may consider forming a new group to compete for the prize, if no suitable group exists at present.

Projects which solely comprise organisations (for example, businesses, voluntary organisations) combining to buy together will not be eligible. However, hybrid projects which combine consumers and organisations will be.

Can I apply with any idea relevant to Community Buying?

We have outlined three challenges to give guidance for applicants. Each of the challenges is focused on creating new or developing existing community buying schemes.

Challenge One: Project aimed at creating a platform, tool or vehicle to help individuals to come together and form a community buying group.

Challenge Two: Project aimed at enabling existing or new community groups to develop their purchasing power by working collectively on behalf of individual consumers.

Challenge Three: Project aimed at businesses to empower their employees or consumers to group for community buying.

Can I apply for more than one Challenge?

Yes. You can address more than one challenge in your application. All challenge applications will be assessed by the same criteria. Those chosen to go through to the second stage of the prize will be the highest scoring applicants. Finalists may include entries from all challenges, or they may have responded to the same challenge.

What are the assessment criteria for entry?

Applications that meet the following criteria are likely to have the highest chance of success:

- Consumer Benefit – demonstrate a sustainable saving in money or provision of better quality products or services or convenience to consumers
- Community Engagement – provide evidence of support from a relevant community, or communities, to participate (this could include a 'virtual' community)
- Innovative – will add something new to existing interventions or apply existing interventions in a different way
- Continual Development – are designed to be sustainable and have long lasting impact
- Dissemination – will have potential to be replicated elsewhere
- Social Benefits – For example, will reach groups not yet benefiting from community buying, helping disadvantaged consumers, build individuals' confidence by developing new skills, support social networks by developing relationships and trust or environmental benefits.

Each of the criteria has equal weighting.

Are there any Terms and Conditions for applying?

Yes. Please see the Terms and Conditions on www.bis.gov.uk/buying/

What is the application process?

The process has been designed so that it does not require more of your time than necessary. The initial stage is a simple form to introduce your project. Applications will be assessed by the Judges based on criteria depending on the criteria.

Successful applications will be invited for interview to answer more detailed questions about their challenge response. Those shortlisted following interview will be asked to develop a more detailed plan outlining their idea (support is available during this period to help you develop your plan). The finalists will then be invited to talk through their plan with a panel of judges for an overall winner to be chosen.

Each stage of the application process is outlined here:

Stage	Activity	Dates
Stage 1	Completion of basic information to describe what your idea is and how it can benefit groups of consumers	Open from 21 st February 2012 and closes at midnight on the 15 th May 2012 You will be notified if you have been successful for interview by 4 th June 2012 Interviews will take place during early to mid June 2012.
First selection		
Stage 2	If you are successful in the interview, you will be asked to complete a more detailed plan for your project or business. Support in writing your plan is available during this time	Following the interview, you will be notified if you are a shortlisted finalist by 18 th June 2012 Final business and project plans to be submitted by 22nd October
Second selection		
Stage 3	Talk through projects with the panel of judges, an overall winner is announced	Panel interviews will take place week commencing 6 th November Award Ceremony to take place at the end of November 2012

What support is available if I get through the first round?

The initial application form will ask whether you think any support or advice is needed to develop the business plan for your community buying scheme to the best of your ability.

The kind of support that might be necessary could be advice on community engagement; organisational and legal issues; IT or web services; market research; budgeting and business planning or marketing and promotion.

There are mentors available in Stage 2 to discuss any needs you may have further and tailor advice accordingly.

Further information about community buying groups can be found at www.bis.gov.uk/buying/

Who are the judges?

Panel of judges	<p>Tim Campbell MBE, CEO, Bright Ideas Trust</p> <p>Robin Murray, Industrial Economist author 'Co-operatives in the Google Age'</p> <p>Richard Pope, Product Manager, Government Digital Service</p> <p>Teresa Perchard, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Citizens Advice</p> <p>Maresa Bossano, Food Cooperatives Project Officer, Sustain</p> <p>Steve Clare, Director of Campaigns, Locality</p> <p>Kevin Mclean, Operations & Technology Director, UK Online</p>
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What is the prize?

The overall winner of the prize will receive £15000 to go towards making their project a reality. The money will be received in instalments providing necessary goals outlined in the participant's project or business plan are met.

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