

8 Labour Needs and Issues

The necessary labour force

In order to set up and run a Community Composting project you need willing workers. The necessary weekly time input varies with the scale of operations from 5 – 10 hours to 50 – 60 hours. A minimum of one very committed individual plus three or four helpers is therefore suggested initially. Once the enterprise is up and running two people may be sufficient to keep it ticking over, with extra help needed only when large jobs are to be carried out.

Labour sources

Where the enterprise is set up within an existing group such as the Scouts or an allotment association, a potential labour force already exists within the membership. Support can be sought through the club newsletter or by outside advertising, in the local press for example. Some ventures have drawn on children's groups such as scouts and schools, the probationary service, and prisoners. Such people may need close supervision, however, and health and safety rules must be strictly adhered to.

When first starting up it may well be possible to rely on voluntary labour. However, interest tends to wane after a while, and in the long term it may be advisable to look at using paid help, especially for such jobs as shredding or driving. The work is available in short stints and may be suitable for unemployed or retired people. The payment does not need to be in actual money: LETS currency can be offered if there is such a scheme operating locally.

See PR & Marketing 2)

It must be pointed out that where paid staff are employed, health and safety becomes a duty and appropriate safety regulations must be adhered to. Certain facilities must then be provided.

Required facilities

- Toilet facilities
- Washing facilities
- First aid kit

This is not to say that health and safety can be ignored if volunteers only are used! For advice on all matters of health and safety, contact the Health and Safety Executive. If in any doubt get advice in writing to cover yourselves.

Paid or voluntary?

Offering payment for services allows access to skilled and reliable labour, which is not dependent upon interest, enthusiasm or the weather. However, such labour is subject to Health and Safety laws as well as adding expense to the scheme. Voluntary labour is subject to personal whims and enthusiasm can wane with time. It does, however, provide a cheap labour force for the project while providing a suitable environment for learning about composting and for building community spirit.

The decision whether to employ workers or rely on volunteers will depend on your individual scheme. If a large potential labour pool of enthusiasts is available it may be better to tap it, at least initially until the venture becomes established. Once the enterprise is on its feet, it may become too large a commitment for volunteers or interest may slacken off. If so then this is the time to consider employing personnel.

Organisation of the labour force

A volunteer work force will benefit if some thought is given to motivation and organisation. Rotas can be invaluable for ensuring labour is available for the large, less popular jobs. They also ensure that the work is shared around according to how much each individual is able to contribute. In a large group a rota can help to ensure that volunteers who work well together are on duty at the same time and to avoid personality clashes. However, a positive attitude from a central, enthusiastic figure can reduce the need for strict rotas, using informal meetings to organise the week's work.

Where volunteers are to be used, keeping their interest and enthusiasm alive is central to ensuring a continuation of labour supply.

Suggestions for motivating volunteers

- Involve volunteers in all aspects of the project and give them responsibility where possible
- Keep people informed
- Make work fun
- Make work safe
- Provide facilities for tea-making, shelter and toilets, if possible
- Pay out-of-pocket expenses
- Arrange bagging days which are community operations
- Arrange social events
- Offer rewards of bags of finished compost
- Address grievances promptly

Jobs to be covered

There are a number of different kinds of work to be done in a Community Composting scheme. It is not all shovelling muck! In a small organisation there will be a certain amount of overlap but in a large one it may be necessary to appoint

individuals for particular jobs. If a Composting Club is set up it will be necessary to appoint a chair, secretary and treasurer. Even in a less formal situation it will be necessary to decide who will keep track of the funds, organise the work force or take care of the paperwork. Record keeping is essential for obtaining recycling credits and other grants and funds.

People needed

- Administrative personnel
- Labour manager (responsible for ensuring labour is available when required)
- Site manager
- Driver(s)
- Manual workers for compost making
- Machinery operators, especially for shredding
- Skilled workers for construction of bins / sheds/ hard standing etc.

Other relevant sections

- Legal Aspects
- PR & Marketing
- Getting Started