

A partnership between



and



## Community shares

Community investment is the sale of shares or bonds in enterprises serving a community purpose, with the aim of raising at least £10,000 in capital from no fewer than 20 members. There are known to be at least 256 enterprises that have, or plan to have, community investment.

This market is still very young. Many enterprises are learning that share offers can take considerable time to develop, promote, launch and mature. Providing ongoing support, sharing of learning, innovation and good practice within the intermediary sector is a key way to nurture rather than hinder this market growth.

The foundations for developing, and understanding, this unique market in raising capital from within communities were laid through on the government funded Community Shares Action Research Learning Project (2009 – 11) delivered through Locality and Co-operatives UK. <http://www.communityshares.org.uk/>

The learning from this project and the growth of the use of this unique form of capital-raising has supported the establishment of a dedicated Community Shares Unit through a new partnership project between Co-operatives UK and Locality.

## The Community Shares Unit Project

The vision for the project is:

***“To grow a market for community shares, helping to fill the funding gap for asset-based community enterprises.”***

This project will promote practical action to enable the growth of a market for community shares, unlocking investments that can be used for asset-based community enterprise.

The mechanism is a Community Shares Unit (CSU) operating over a period of three years, in strategic liaison with key groups across Government, which can offer guidance, advice, market intelligence and promote learning in this fast moving and growing field.

Over 2012 – 2015, the project is projected to support 500+ new social ventures, with the launch of over 200 share issues. The project has a number of stakeholders from governmental, regulatory, co-operative and community sectors, and a Steering Group drawn from these groups will oversee the work of the Unit.

The aim of the Community Shares Unit Project is:

***“To grow a sustainable market and long term success of the use of the community shares model to raise equity finance and participation, with due process and protection for investors, in a range of community and co-operative enterprises.”***

The Unit will provide a single reference point for:

- Communities looking to develop share offers
- Investors seeking to understand more about the community shares market
- Intermediaries and practitioners
- Other federal bodies with an interest in the market and model and government and regulator(s).

It will support innovation in the field, such as match funding models for external investors and the use of technology, in line with new models in the wider arena of social investment. Alongside this, the unit will:

- Input to the development of wider work on social investment
- Promote effective performance and quality in relation to compliance with regulatory goals in this market, and monitoring of outcomes
- Engage partner organisations, including agencies such as Plunkett Foundation, and social investment specialists
- Develop market intelligence through a database, market analytics and high quality web resources
- Offer one stop support for community enterprises, investors and practitioners, with services such as checking offer documents and access to best practice
- Promote community shares through information and events, workshops and seminars
- Support business advisers in the field through training and guidance.

The Programme Leader will play a key role in the deliver of the project’s vision, aim, operating plan and objectives.

To apply for this exciting new post please complete the Co-operatives UK Application Form and provide a covering letter.

**Links:**

[www.uk.coop](http://www.uk.coop)

<http://locality.org.uk/>

<http://www.communityshares.org.uk/>