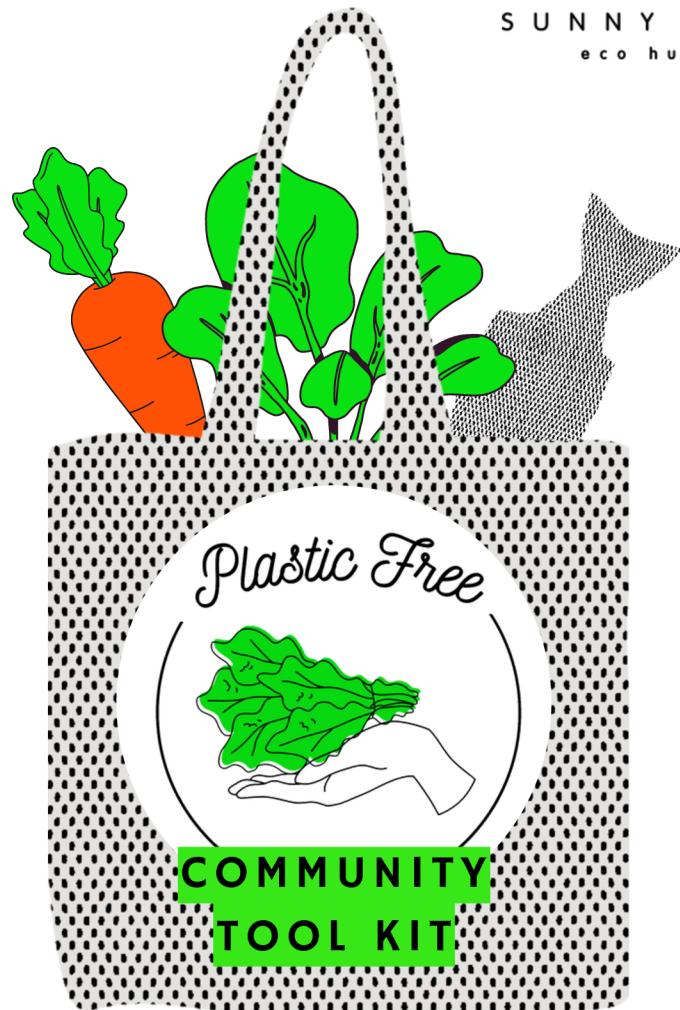




SUNNY JAR
eco hub





This project and production of this toolkit has been
supported by the Just FACT Tower Hamlets Partnership
(Wen.)



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2 GET TO KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

3 SPREAD THE WORD

4 BRIDGE THE GAP

5 SKILL SHARE

6 GROW COMMUNITY IDEAS

7 TIME TO CELEBRATE AND REFLECT

A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITIES, GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS TO REDUCE SINGLE-USE PLASTIC IN THEIR LOCAL AREA



This toolkit was written and produced by the Sunny Jar Eco Hub team. We are a social enterprise based in London, fostering greener living in the city. We provide workshops and activities, creating opportunities to make sustainable living easy and accessible for all.

We believe that, collectively, people hold the wisdom, skills and knowledge needed to live more sustainably. We facilitate spaces and create moments to come together and learn from each other.

Our gentle approach to activism is centred around community wellbeing and small, eco-friendly changes that people can incorporate into their daily routines which bring joy and a connection to our planet.

WE EAT UP TO...

1 TEASPOON
OF
PLASTIC
EVERY WEEK*

INTRODUCTION

A GLOBAL ISSUE

&

A LOCAL RESPONSE

THE
WORLD USES
5 TRILLION
PLASTIC BAGS
A YEAR

A GLOBAL ISSUE

Plastic pollution isn't just about litter—it's a major climate issue. By 2050, the production and disposal of plastic could generate 56 gigatons of emissions—using up 14% of the world's remaining carbon budget. That's a massive toll on our climate, driven by everyday items, like takeaway packaging, bottled drinks, cling film, and shopping bags.

Changes in the climate is the single biggest health threat facing humanity. Climate impacts are already harming health, through air pollution, disease, extreme weather and loss of biodiversity.

When you consider both the environmental harm and the growing impact on our world, it's clear- we need to take action to cut down our use of plastic.

2/3
OF OUR
PLASTIC WASTE

IS DUMPED IN
OTHER
COUNTRIES LIKE
MALAYSIA,
TURKEY,
BANGLADESH
& POLAND

1 IN 4

FISH THAT WE
CATCH CONTAIN
PLASTIC IN
THEIR
STOMACHS

FIND LINKS TO THE FACTS
IN THE REFERENCES SECTION

A LOCAL RESPONSE

Plastic Free Poplar was a community project completed in 2023.

AIMS OF THE PROJECT

Encourage local residents to take action to reduce single-use plastic waste in the Poplar area.

Further develop residents' resourcefulness and knowledge on how to reduce their plastic waste.

Foster community connection through making and learning together, whilst caring for the local environment.



We worked with schools, local businesses, community organisations and residents, reaching over 1000 people. Using community-led and co-production approaches, the project included practical workshops, art installations, community meet-ups and litter picks.

Plastic Free Poplar is part of Just FACT (a JUST Food and Climate Transition), a network of people and projects in Tower Hamlets, coming together to create the building blocks for an alternative food system that is democratic, environmentally sustainable, and people-driven.

See <https://justfact.co.uk> for more information



VALUES OF THE PROJECT

FOR EVERYONE

Providing welcoming, inclusive and safe spaces, sharing ideas and supporting wellbeing

JOY

Bringing positivity & fun



LONG-LASTING CHANGE

Encouraging resilience, forging relationships & creating resources

KINDNESS TO THE PLANET

Sharing & reusing, composting, upcycling & litter-picking.

In this toolkit, you will discover the insights, tools and activities that were core to the success of the Plastic Free Poplar project. The toolkit is split into the different project stages, with ideas for each stage.

We hope it will be useful to support you and your community to reduce single-use plastics and contribute to a more sustainable neighbourhood.

Read more about our project on our website: www.sunnyjarecohub.com/plasticfreepoplar



TALK TO
LOCAL
BUSINESSES



Getting to know the community is vital in understanding the current issues with single-use plastics in the area and to build relationships with community members. It was the first stage in our project and helped us discover how people felt about the plastic problem.

We ran fun activities to have initial conversations with local residents. We also introduced ourselves to key people, further growing our network. Speaking to the businesses on the high street was also important at this stage.

2 GET TO KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

CONNECT
WITH
SCHOOLS

KNOW YOUR AREA

&

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

USE YOUR
NETWORKS



TAKE PART
IN
COMMUNITY
EVENTS

GATHER A LOCAL NETWORK

Your network can help you connect with the right people and expand your reach. The list below is just a starting point- you may discover more connections as your project grows.

WHO

HOW THEY CAN HELP

Local Councillor

Making connections with local schools and key community contacts.

Librarians

Libraries can provide opportunities for workshops and host exhibitions.

Teachers & Schools

Working with schools will help engage young people and communities.

Business owners

Collaborate and support sustainability efforts together.

Community centres

Our local community centre provided free space for our monthly meet-ups

Local groups with shared values

Groups like 'Friends of the Earth' can amplify and join events as volunteers

Think about who you could contact and how can you grow your local network.



TALK TO LOCAL BUSINESSES

Much of our single-use plastic waste comes from purchasing convenience foods and everyday shopping. Engaging with local businesses about this issue is important.

BENEFITS TO BUSINESSES

Many businesses will find that reducing single-use plastics can save them:



Money + Time + Appeal to the eco-conscious consumer

You may find businesses that are already taking steps to cut down on their plastic use. We discovered that our local pie and mash shop was repurposing old milk bottles from the nearby café to store their gravy!

ASSESSING SINGLE-USE PLASTIC CONSUMPTION

It's helpful to assess how much single-use plastic a business uses. This initial measurement serves as a baseline, allowing you to track any changes by the end of the project. For example, a reduction in plastic bag use could mean lower costs for the business. Conducting a survey will help gather this important information.

We worked with Queen Mary University students and Plastic Free Roman Road to create a survey. Find a link to an editable version on the resources page at the end of this toolkit.

CONNECT AND HAVE FUN

Learn more about the people in your community through creative and engaging ways. Talk to people on your high street. Find out what they care about and where your project intersects. A fun activity is a great way to strike up conversation and connect on common issues.



PAPER BUNTING

Set a stall in a busy area like the high street. Invite passers by to stop and share their opinion or answer a question. Try "What are your concerns with plastic pollution?" or "What do you do to reduce plastic at home?" and write it on a shape and peg to a line for others to read.

Decide on your bunting's shapes to fit your project theme. It could be sea creatures to represent ocean pollution, light bulbs for ideas or anything else easy to draw and cut. Pre-cut some shapes ready for people to start writing. You can ask participants to draw and cut their own shapes to make it more creative.

You will need:

- Paper (up-cycle old magazines, cereal boxes, single-sided printed paper)
- Pre-cut shapes
- Colour felt-tip pens
- Twine
- Pegs

INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT

Make participation easy and welcoming for all by ensuring accessibility for diverse needs and catering to a wide variety of people at different times, locations and spaces. Consider different ways people can participate. Try holding a variety of workshops in different community spaces, on the weekends and in the high street.

Family friendly activities like crafts are a fun way to engage with people. While little hands are busy crafting, the adults have time to hear about your project, share their ideas or sign up for future events.

NATURAL PLAY DOUGH

DIY

1 CUP
FLOUR

1/2 CUP
SALT

1/2 CUP
WATER

2 TBSP
OIL



Download the full
tutorials from our website
www.sunnyjarecohub.com



3 SPREAD THE WORD



Launch your project and spread the word! It helps to have a big event to share your project, to reach as many people as possible. It could even get you in the local paper.

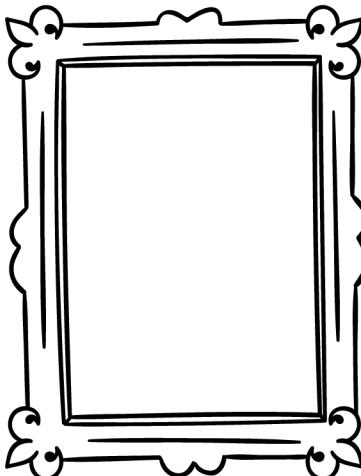
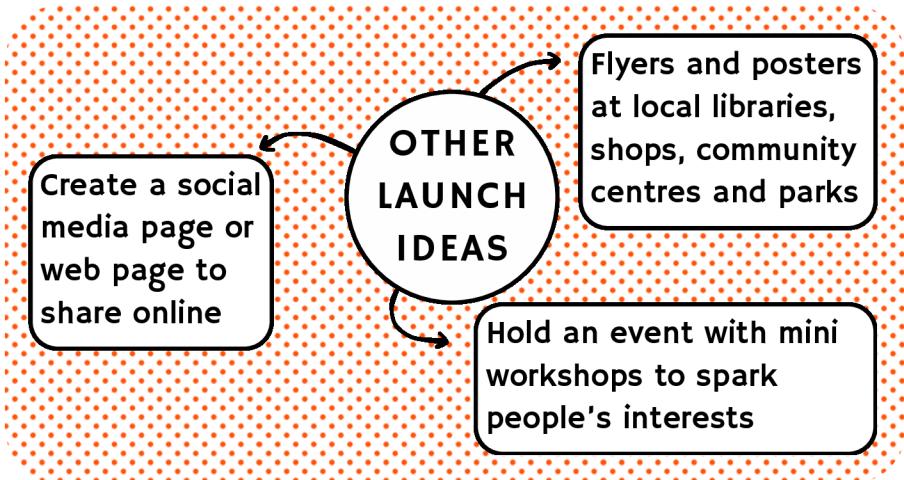
We created an art installation with schools and toured it in the neighbourhood. We also ran litter picks to highlight the issue.



HOW TO CREATE A COMMUNITY ART INSTALLATION

Connect with local schools or kids clubs and plan a series of workshops to create your art installation (for inspiration, see our project page, link in resources section). Include education on plastics and how to reduce plastic use. An important element is how to campaign- the children in our workshops all wrote a letter to their local MP and voiced their concerns for the future of the planet.

The community can also get involved with co-creating the art installation. Collaborate with different groups and invite them to make sections of the art installation for you.



LETTERS TO MPS

When creating the art installation, take the opportunity to do some campaigning as a group. Let the government and local MP know about your concerns about the plastic problem in your area by sending letters or emails.

A TOURING EXHIBITION

Art is a great tool to bring people together and creates a talking point.

Find public venues to show off your completed art installation, along with posters raising awareness on plastic pollution. We exhibited ours in different community venues and in the local market for 12 months, engaging a wider audience.

A touring exhibition is a great way to maximise the use of your artistic creations and show it to a larger audience.



Find a link to a letter template at the back of this booklet.

COMMUNITY LITTERPICK

Litter picks can help bring attention to your project by highlighting the impact of single-use plastic on our environment as well as caring for our neighbourhood. It is also a great way to meet others and enjoy some fresh air. By holding it in a busy place on your high street or parks, you are able to strike up conversations with the passing public.

Kids love litter picking and are great ambassadors to get more people involved.

We borrowed litter-pickers from our council's waste team

LITTERPICKERS' ESSENTIALS

- Litter-pickers
- Thick gloves
- Strong bin bags
- Willing volunteers
- Drinks and snacks, hot or cold drinks depending on the weather



Try joining forces with a local environmental group, like Friends of the Earth, to run regular litter picks. Walking groups or runners might be happy to help too.



Care for the environment

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY LITTERPICKING

Collective action

Wellbeing

Community connection

4 BRIDGE THE GAP

PRACTICAL
WAYS TO
ENGAGE

REACH OUT TO
EXISTING GROUPS

&

FIND SHARED INTERESTS



Your community is made up of many people with diverse interests, values, and priorities. You can harness this diversity for your project by identifying shared interests and common goals, bridging the gap between people's needs and interests and the project's aims.

We connected with existing groups in our area, such as language classes and a homeschooling group. Through the variety of workshops we delivered, we found common interests in food, sewing and creativity, with many people excited to learn new skills and be part of the plastic-free journey.

REACH OUT TO ESTABLISHED GROUPS

Connecting with existing groups can help to broaden your reach. It can save time and connects you with a diverse range of people who already meet regularly and ensures a mix of perspectives and experiences are included in your project.

Established groups may include coffee morning groups, local classes or other social and learning communities. While they may not identify as activists or environmentalists, it's a great way to raise awareness about how local community issues are also part of global challenges.

Check your local council's website for a list of community groups active in your area.

LOCAL GROUPS TO LOOK OUT FOR :



Scouts



Home school groups



Language classes



Coffee mornings



Eco groups



Gardening groups



Parenting groups



Art Clubs

FIND SHARED INTERESTS

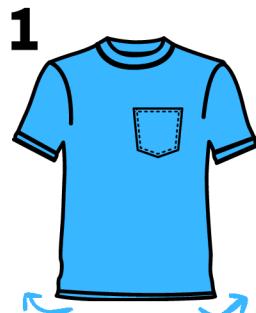
Practical activities are a great way to discover shared interests. We found that people joined our workshops for different reasons- some wanted to learn craft skills, others wanted to make their own products and save money and some were motivated by a desire to live more sustainably.

Participants may connect over shared interests and continue attending to strengthen their new connections. They will learn new skills and meet new people along the way.

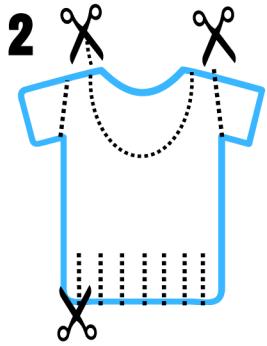


T-SHIRT BAG MAKING

You can easily turn unwanted T-shirts into strong, reusable carrier bags. This activity encourages people to up-cycle textile waste and bring their own bag to the shop.

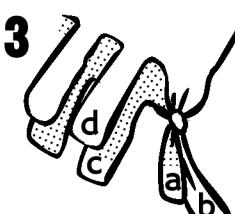


Turn your t-shirt inside out.



Cut through both layers.

- Cut off the sleeves and neckline.
- Cut a fringe along the bottom 2cm apart. Cut first & last strip in 1/2 along the seams.



Tie the front and back tassels together

tassels b to a and d to c.

- Next, tie the adjacent tassels together, closing the gaps- tassels a to d and b to c.



If you want to show off the tassels, leave your T-shirt the right way round at the beginning.

PLASTIC-FREE CLEANING

Reduce packaging waste and exposure to toxic chemicals by making your own cleaning products.

THE TOOLS



Loofa



Coconut Bristles



Wooden Brush



Synthetic foam sponge



Synthetic foam sponge

They shed micro-plastics during and after use.

ALL-PURPOSE SPRAY



Suitable for all surfaces apart from marble and natural stone.

In a jar combine:
-500ml of white vinegar
-1 discarded lemon

Let infuse for 2 weeks.

Strain and pour into a spray bottle.

Top up with 500ML of water and use



TOILET BOMBS

- 5 tbsp citric acid
- 10 tbsp bicarbonate soda
- 4 drops of essential oils (peppermint/lemon/eucalyptus)
- 2-3 drops of water

Mix everything together. Fill an ice cube tray with the mix and leave overnight to set.

Once set, store 'bombs' in an airtight jar.

To use: Drop one or two in the toilet bowl and leave to work for a few hours to remove limescale build up.

5 SKILL SHARE

SHOWCASE COMMUNITY
SKILLS AND
KNOWLEDGE

&

MONTHLY
PLASTIC FREE
MEET UP

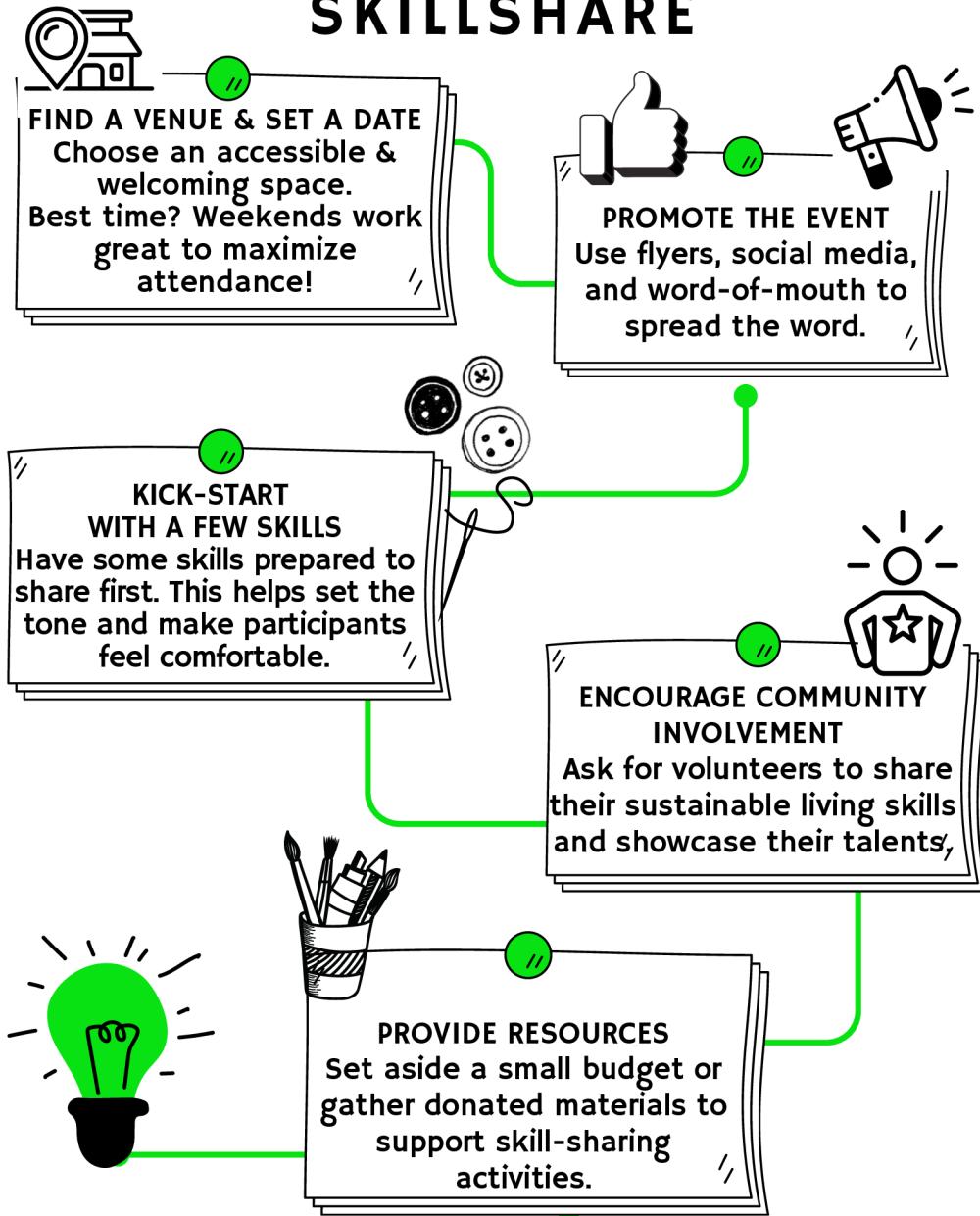
ASK PEOPLE
WHAT THEY
WANT TO LEARN



The people in our communities are rich with skills and knowledge—often more than we realise. We can create opportunities for people to learn from one another, strengthening connections and fostering a sense of shared purpose. Skill-sharing also ensures that projects are shaped by those they are meant to benefit, making them truly community-led.

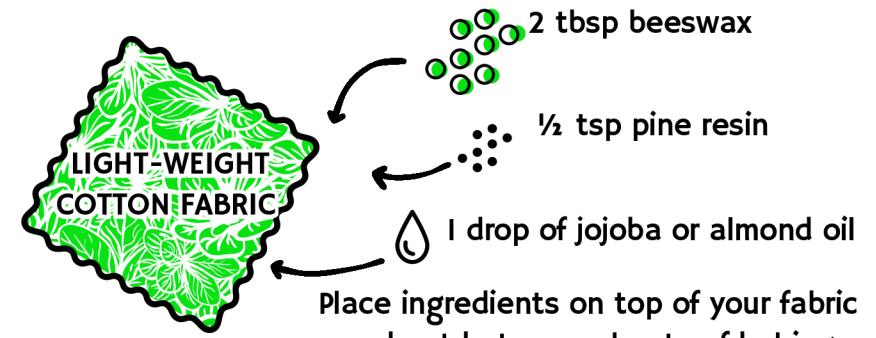
We ran monthly meet up skill shares in our local community centre. Initially, we led the sessions, but with encouragement and support, a number of people volunteered to facilitate the sessions and share their knowledge. A local entrepreneur, Elizabeth, introduced her natural skincare products. Tanjina, a local resident, shared her sustainable Ramadan practices and Paul taught the group how to make candles. Find their tips on the following pages.

HOW TO RUN A SUSTAINABLE LIVING SKILLSHARE

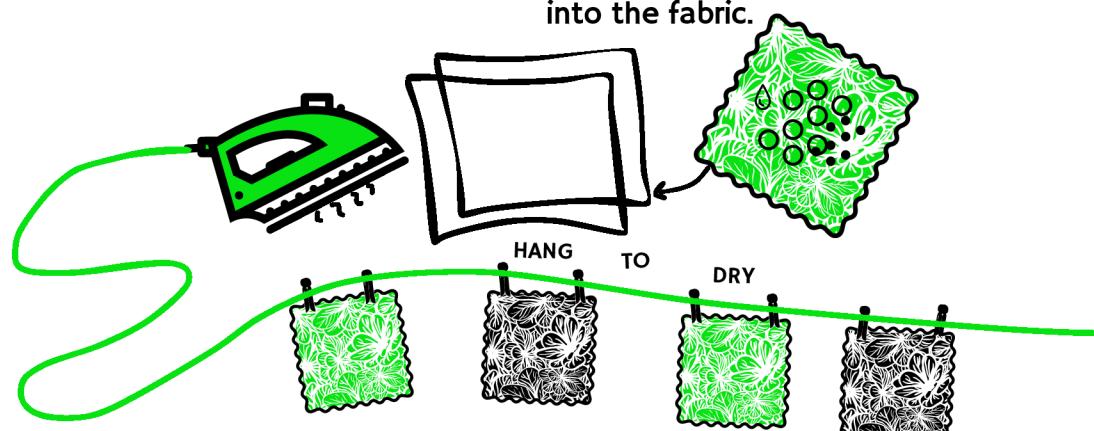


BEESWAX WRAP DIY

Try making beeswax wraps, a plastic-free cling film alternative made from organic cotton, naturally anti-bacterial beeswax, jojoba oil and pine resin.



Place ingredients on top of your fabric and put between sheets of baking paper. Use a hot iron and melt the wax into the fabric.



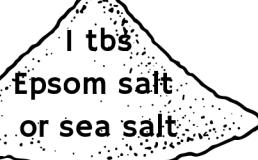
Beeswax wraps can be used for most foods. Activate by scrunching and warming with your hands. Wrap items and shape. Don't use with raw meat, fish and hot or wet items. Clean with cool water and mild soap. Store in a cool place. Lasts up to a year; refresh with wax or dispose of it in the compost.

HOMEMADE TOILETRIES

As well as reducing packaging waste, making your own toiletries can save you money and be better for your health. Pamper yourself with these easy recipes.

BATH SALTS

2 drops of
essential oil
of your choice



2 tsp dried lavender



Put
mix into
an old
sock, tie
off top and
pop into
bath
& relax

COFFEE SCRUB



Try replacing olive oil
with sunflower,
coconut or almond oil
You can also replace
the coffee with oats
or demerara sugar.

ELIZABETH'S TIPS

Don't scrub too often as your skin sheds naturally. Over scrubbing can lead to skin irritation or excess sebum production. Instead, use it every 2-4 weeks and turn it into a relaxing spa day.

Download the full tutorials from our website
www.sunnyjarecohub.com



TANJINA'S UPCYCLED JARS

Our workshop facilitator, Tanjina, encouraged participants to explore sustainable Ramadan practices: making decorations, preparing healthy snacks, and embracing traditions without single-use plastic. We up-cycled jars into good deed jars (During Ramadan, the jar is filled with slips of paper, each with a good deed written on it)

YOU WILL NEED:

- Card cut in small squares (Old cereal packets work well)
- Pens
- 1 jar
- Tissue paper or fabric to decorate
- Glue (Find our flour glue recipe on our website)



1. Decorate your jar by glueing small bits of tissue paper or fabric pieces on it.
2. Write good deeds on the card pieces (Pick litter, plant flowers, cook together, help someone etc.)
3. You and your family members can take turns on a daily basis to draw a card and complete whatever deed is written on it.

6 GROW COMMUNITY IDEAS

COLLECT AND EXPLORE IDEAS
&
THE ACTION PLAN



A core part of the project is nurturing community-led ideas and co-creating an action plan for lasting change.

Your Plastic Free Community Action Plan should outline practical and achievable solutions, shaped by the input of local residents. Engaging the community ensures that the solutions are relevant and have a higher chance of success.

For our project, we used participatory action research tools to collect ideas and thoughts. These are designed to be easy to access and understand and quick to use in the community setting.

COLLECT AND EXPLORE IDEAS

A strong community action plan starts with understanding the needs and interests of the people involved. Every engagement is an opportunity to listen and talk to people. Use simple tools to maximise your reach and collect a range of views.

Make an ideas board: Use a large sheet of paper or a white board. Encourage people to write their ideas down or mark a tick next to an idea they like.

Visual tools and data can help reach more people and encourage participation. Draw a community map together, or ask people to draw pictures or paintings of their ideas.

Keep questions open. Questions to start with could be: What helps you reduce plastic use? What are some things that don't help? What would you change if you could?

Write on post-it notes and place under the questions. This can help you sort the answers later, when you are analysing your data.

Collecting ideas

Surveys

Speak to businesses about their single use plastics use-surveys can be useful to gather this information (see page 11).

Cater to your community. Our local area has a large Bangladeshi population, and having volunteers who spoke the language boosted engagement.

Invite your workshop participants to help with gathering community insights! From gathering data to helping make sense of it, their contribution is valuable -and their experiences enrich the project as a whole.

Constructive discussion can play a key role in exploring the community's ideas. Dedicate part of your workshops to discussions and analysis of the research and information collected. Identify the key issues that matter most to your community and create the foundation of your Plastic Free Action Plan together.

Send surveys in emails or share them on social media. Ask community partners to share it with their audiences too. Create a QR code to the survey online and put the code on flyers and posters.

"We need more bins in the streets"



THE ACTION PLAN

You should now have a range of ideas. To help you prioritise them and share them back with the wider community, hold another stall or event in your area. Ask people to vote for the ideas that are important to them- these will form the base of your action plan.

Community discussions and voting ensures that the action plan reflects the collective interests and needs of the people involved. It also helps to bring wider attention to the project and get support.

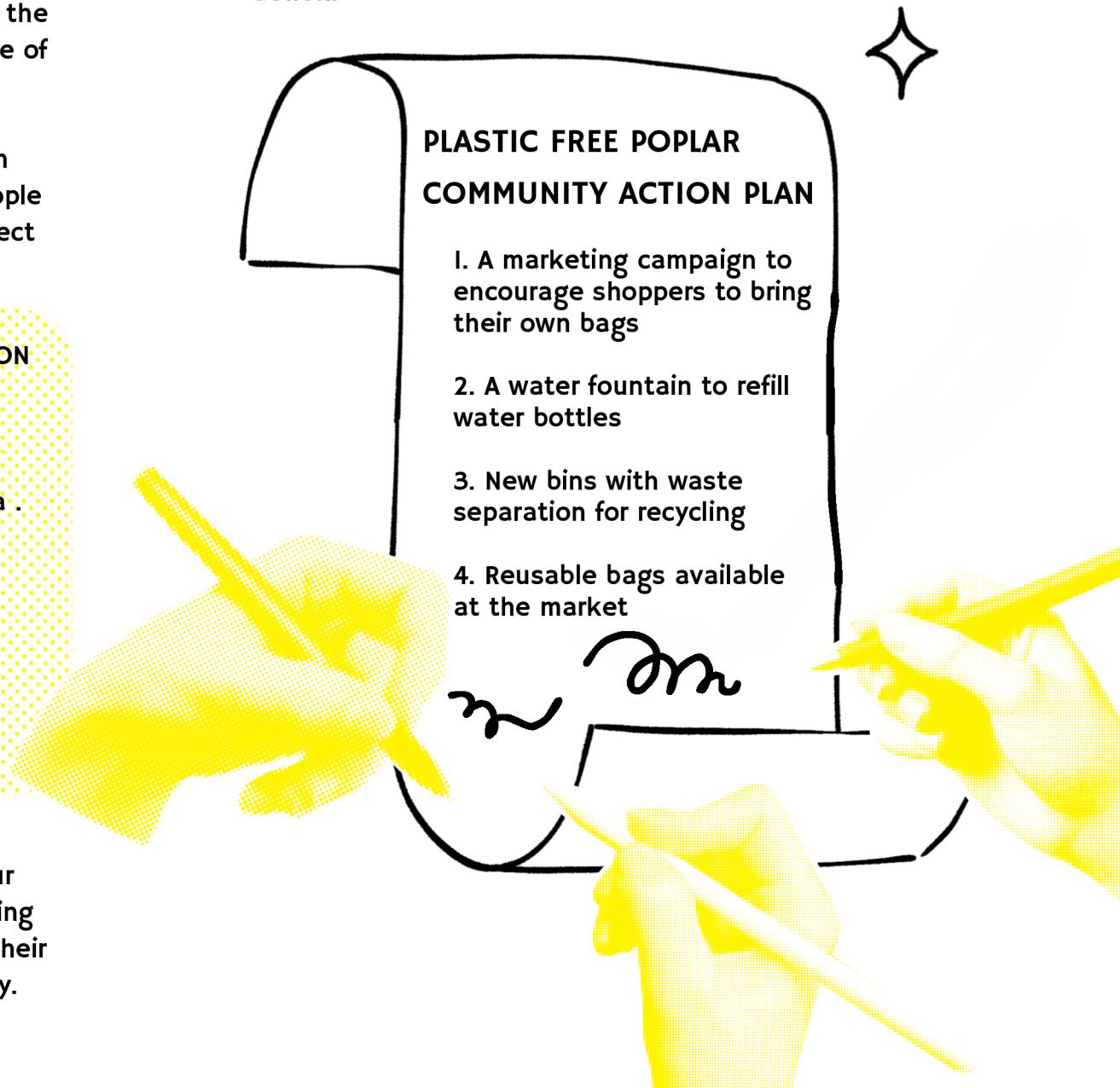
The level of community input will depend on the nature of the project. Some initiatives, like ours, prioritised broad reach, using simple voting to make decisions collectively. Others may choose to work closely with a smaller group of key community members who collaborate and make decisions together.

CREATE A VOTING STATION
Invite people to place colourful bottle tops in the jar that is labelled with their favourite idea .



Now that you know what the community wants, you can apply for project grants and funding to further "action your action plan." We received project funding to do a marketing campaign in the local area to encourage people to bring their own bags- one of the actions supported by our community.

Share your action plan with key stakeholders, including local businesses, the council and their high streets team, and local residents. Ask people to sign it if they support the plan and start discussions on what needs to take place to take action.



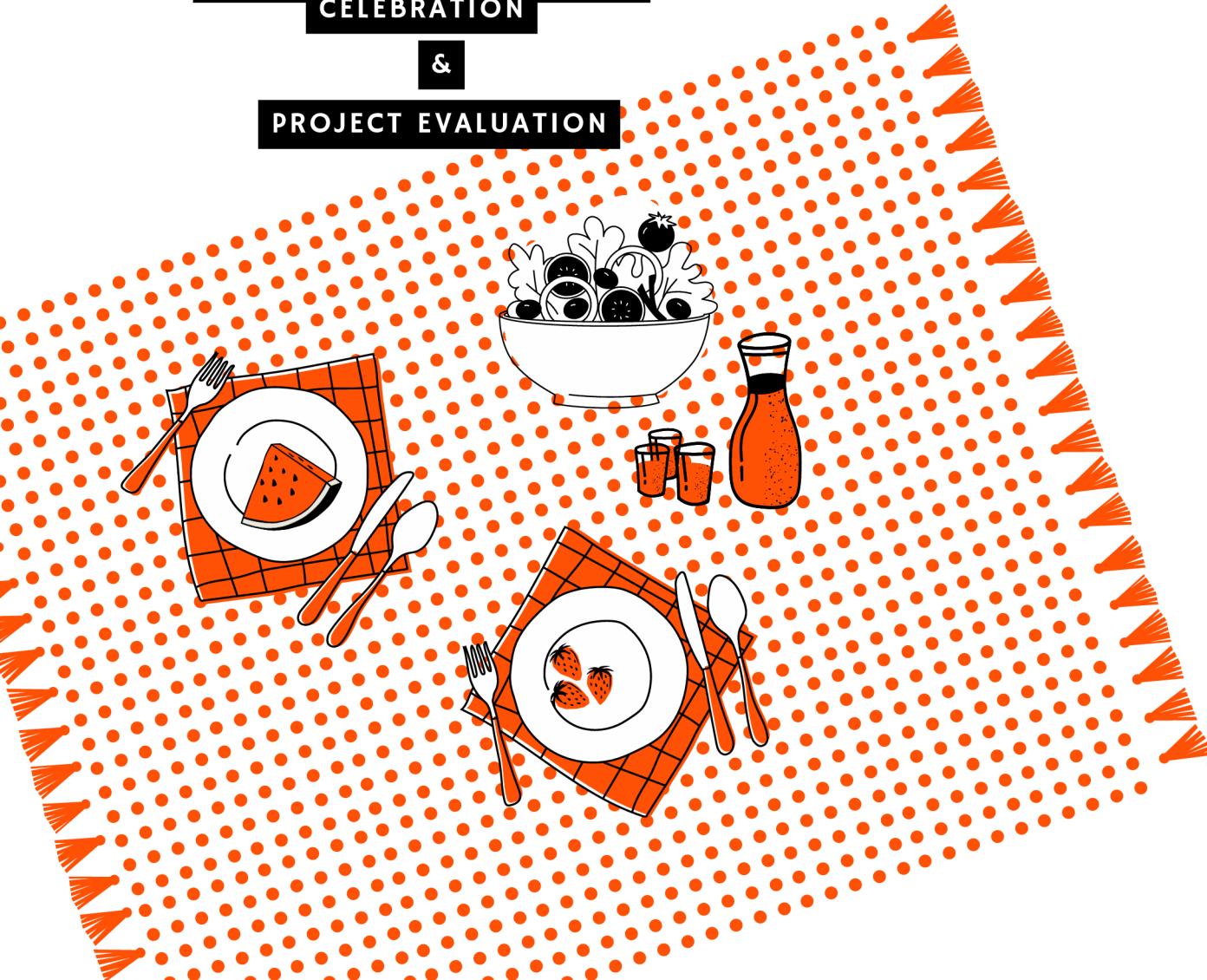


7 TIME TO CELEBRATE AND REFLECT

RECIPE FOR A PLASTIC FREE CELEBRATION

&

PROJECT EVALUATION

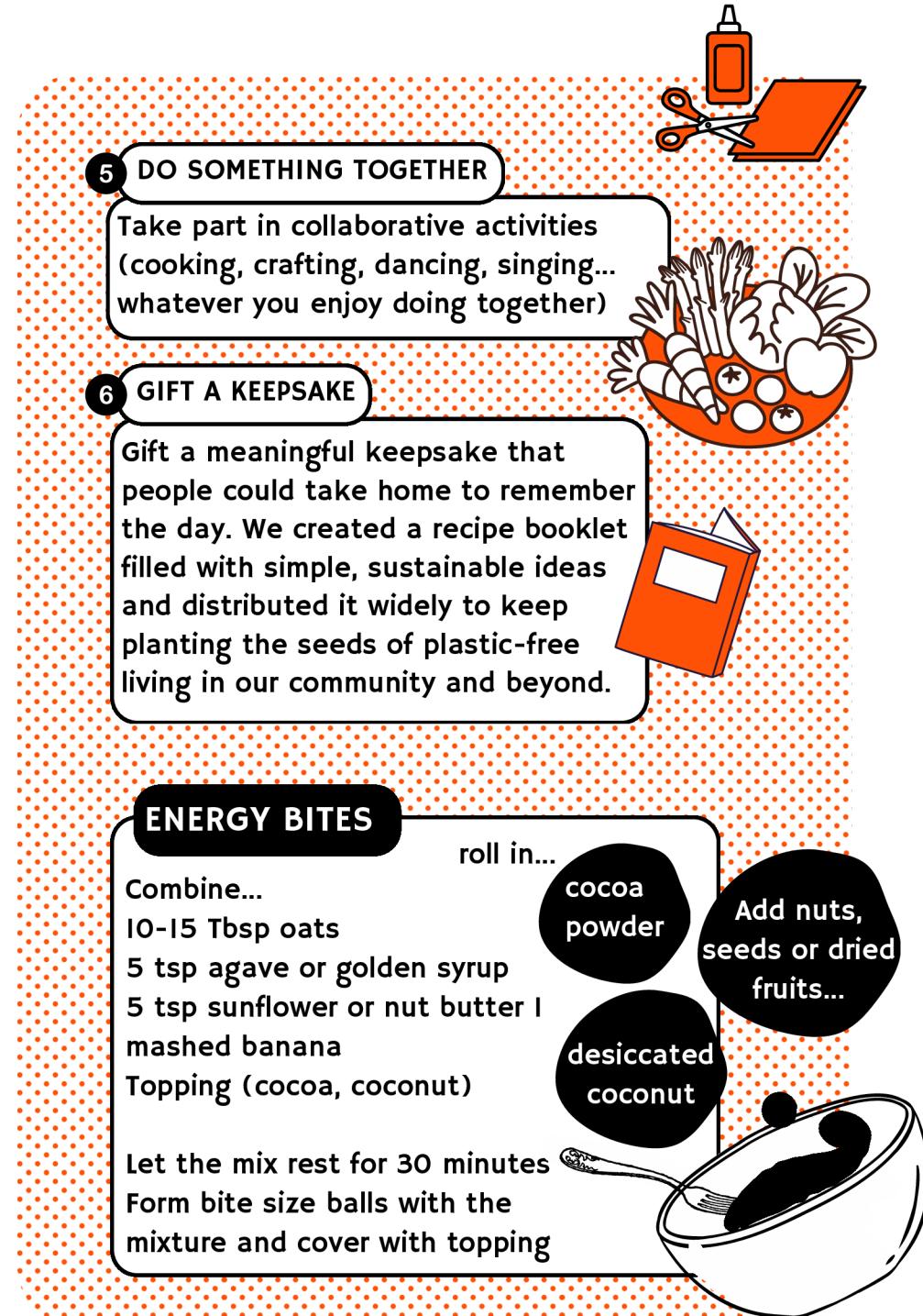


Joy and celebrations are an essential part of any project—it's a chance to reflect, look back on what has been achieved and look ahead for next steps. It's all about bringing people together, connecting and growing.

We participated in many local community fairs and celebrations, and we also hosted our own seasonal events to bring people together to rethink and reshape our traditions in a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly way.

At different stages of the project, we took stock and reflected on what we've learnt from the project, using evaluation tools to help us measure its impact on the community.

RECIPE FOR A PLASTIC-FREE CELEBRATION



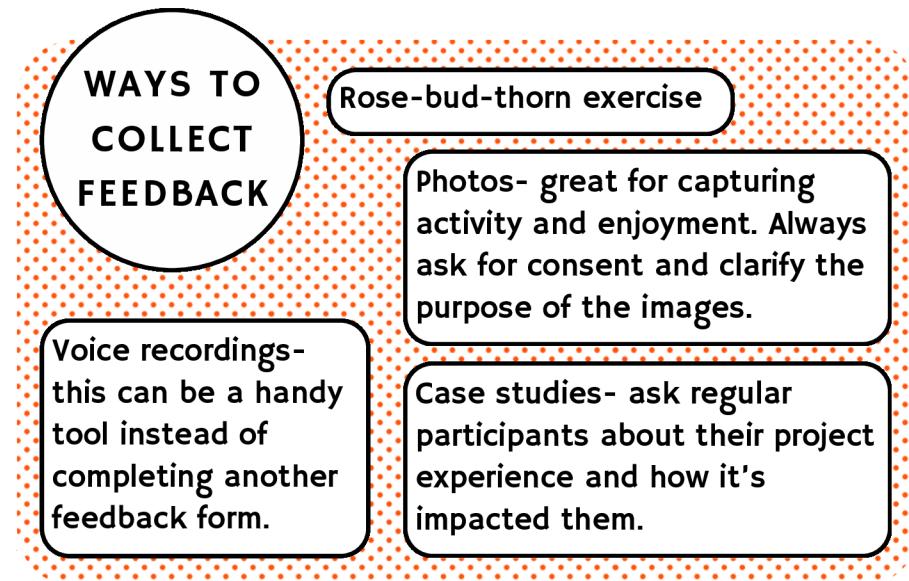
PROJECT EVALUATION

Evaluation helps you improve your project, use your resources wisely, and show the impact of what you do. It can help you identify areas for improvement and learn from what was successful or what was challenging. It shows funders, partners, or the community what you've done, why it matters, and how you've used your time and resources, making your work more transparent and accountable. Keep things simple, have a plan to collect feedback and other things you want to measure and how to incorporate these measures throughout your project.

COLLECTING FEEDBACK

Make collecting feedback and data part of your community engagement. It doesn't have to be difficult- Try simple questions on a large piece of paper with:

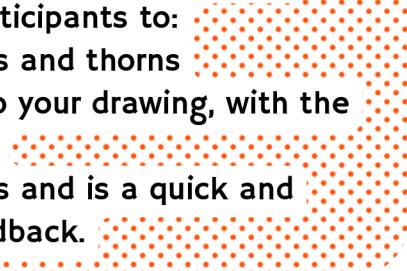
- 'What did you enjoy today?'
- 'What could have been better?'



ROSE- BUD-THORN EXERCISE

A simple evaluation tool that can be completed at anytime in the project. Ask participants to:

- Draw roses, with some buds and thorns
- Write your thoughts next to your drawing, with the prompts below as a guide.
- It can be used with all ages and is a quick and creative way to gather feedback.



ROSE

- What is something that is working well?
- What is something positive about the event/ project/ product/ experience?
- What are you proud of?
- What was the highlight?



BUD

- What is an area of opportunity?
- What is an idea that can be explored further?
- What can be improved?
- What are you looking forward to?



THORN

- What is something that isn't working?
- What is something negative?
- What caused stress?
- What was difficult?



EVALUATION TOOLS

RIVER OF LIFE

A visual, creative way to reflect on the whole project with your regular attendees and volunteers. It encourages people to revisit key moments – what went well and what was tough – and can often spark meaningful conversation when shared with others.

TRY IT

Ask everyone to draw a river that represents their journey through the project journey/experience. The way the river flows can show how the project moved forward over time with different sections representing the different stages of the project. You can also draw a river collectively.



Big moments or turning points? These can be shown as rapids, sharp bends, or a sudden change in direction.



Any challenges or tough spots? Represent those as boulders or whirlpools in the river.



For the helpful stuff—like support, resources, or things that made it easier—those can be shown as trees or driftwood along the riverbanks.



RESOURCES & REFERENCES

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Plastic Free Communities is an initiative from Surfers against Sewage: <https://plasticfree.org.uk/>

Just FACT is a network of people and projects in Tower Hamlets, coming together to create the building blocks for an alternative food system that is democratic, environmentally sustainable, and people-driven: <https://justfact.co.uk/>



LINKS & REFERENCES:

1 INTRODUCTION

Find references for our facts:
<https://sunnyjarecohub.com/pfpreferences>

2 GET TO KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

Find the editable business survey :
<http://tiny.cc/pfpbsurvey>

3 SPREAD THE WORD

Learn more about our Plastic Free Poplar Project:
<https://sunnyjarecohub.com/plasticfreepoplar>

An example letter template to send to your MP:
<https://plasticfreeseaford.co.uk/resources>

4 BRIDGE THE GAP

Get more recipes, tips and ideas from our resource hub:
<https://sunnyjarecohub.com/resourcehub>

5

SKILL SHARE

Get more recipes, tips and ideas from our resource hub:
<https://sunnyjarecohub.com/resourcehub>

6

GROW COMMUNITY IDEAS

Find these helpful participatory research guides online:

Overview of PAR Tools for Research, Communication, and Empowerment (handout). Available at:

<https://cii.wwu.edu/showcase2003/hammond/resources/tools.pdf> (Accessed: 11 August 2025).

Participatory Action Research: A Toolkit. University of Reading. Available at:

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7

TIME TO CELEBRATE AND REFLECT

References for evaluation tools:

Carmody, S. (n.d.). River of Life storytelling exercise, adapted from Qualitative Research – a practical guide for health and social care researchers and practitioners. Licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

University of Colorado Boulder. (n.d.). Rose, Bud, Thorn. Research & Innovation Office. Available at:
<https://www.colorado.edu/researchinnovation/rose-bud-thorn> (Accessed: 11 September 2025).

THANK YOU!

To the amazing Just Fact team at Wen. for their support and encouragement throughout the project.

To everyone at R-Urban Poplar for giving us the most wonderful place to work from and feeding our bellies and souls.

To all our community partners and the people who got involved in the project, it's been so lovely to work with you.

Finally, to everyone reading this toolkit and wanting to change their community for the better- You've got this!

Linda, Maud and Becky
&
the Sunny Jar Team