

New Dream Community Action Kit



Guide to Sharing

Exchanging
 stuff, time, skills,
 and space

Produced in partnership
 with **SHAREABLE**

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The Emerging Sharing Economy

It's one of the first things we learn as kids: how to share.

But this practice usually fades as we become adults. Our houses become filled with our own "stuff." Garages, attics, basements, and closets transform into cluttered warehouses. When we need something, whether it's a chainsaw or a roasting rack, our first thought is to go out and buy it. But why get it new when our neighbor down the street has one we can borrow?

Sharing implies a different approach to ownership of the goods, services, skills, and talents that abound in a community. Through sharing systems, we can get the utility out of goods and services without the burden of ownership—and in ways that help build community, clear clutter, and allow for more equitable access to resources. The "access-over-ownership" model frees us from having to make, buy, and consume ever more stuff, saving our pocketbooks and reducing our environmental impact.

Today, a powerful sharing economy is emerging across the United States and around the world. Building on age-old roots but taking advantage of new online networks, innovative approaches to "collaborative consumption" are being developed within communities and on the Web to help people share goods and services more easily.

In this guide, New Dream invites you to explore our action ideas, fun videos, and useful tips to help you create new sharing opportunities in your community!



Janelle Orsi (third from left), co-author of *The Sharing Solution*, enjoys a meal with her cohousing mates in Berkeley, California. Janelle shares garden space and regular meals with her neighbors, takes part in a grocery co-op, shares an office space, and is always looking for new ways to share in her life. She blogs at www.sharingsolution.com. PHOTO: JANELLE ORSI



Photo: Adam Fagen @ Flickr

"In a shareable world, things like car sharing, clothing swaps, childcare co-ops, potlucks, and cohousing make life more fun, green, and affordable. When we share, not only is a better life possible, but so is a better world."

—Shareable.net

Did You Know...

- Many of the things we own sit unused for most of the year. For example, the average American uses his or her car only **8 percent** of the time, while the average power drill is used only **6 to 13 minutes** in its lifetime.
- To house our "stuff," Americans spend **\$22 billion per year** on 2.4 billion square feet of self storage.
- Sharing is a growing trend. Worldwide, some 2.2 million bike-sharing trips are taken each month, while more than **3 million people from 235 countries** have "couch-surfed" through home and apartment sharing.
- The sharing economy is now a **\$110 billion-plus market**, according to expert and advocate Rachel Botsman.

For the big picture on the emerging sharing world, check out:

Share or Die: Voices of the Get Lost Generation in the Age of Crisis, by Malcolm Harris and Neal Gorenflo, eds.

The New Sharing Economy, produced by Shareable.net with Latitude Research

What's Mine Is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption, by Rachel Botsman and Roo Rogers

Janelle Orsi's website The Sharing Solution

Lisa's Gansky's website Mesh: The Pulse of the Sharing Economy



Organize a Community Swap

Whether it's a garden hose or a toddler bike, chances are there's plenty of useful "stuff" sitting neglected within your community. Help people get access to pre-owned items—and give idle stuff a second life—by setting up community swaps and marketplaces where you can share and trade goods in a fun, co-operative, and often low-cost setting.



(LEFT) A community member takes part in a clothing swap hosted by Pittsburgh-based Give-and-Take. PHOTO: GIVE-AND-TAKE

(ABOVE) Toronto residents consume collaboratively at Swapsity's 2011 Music Movie Eco-Swap. PHOTO: SWAPSITY

IDEAS & INSPIRATIONS • Looking for some fun ideas for swapping stuff?

Throw a **community swap meet**. See [▶ How to Throw a Community Swap Meet](#) and [▶ How to \(Legally\) Open a Gift \(Economy\)](#)

Host a **seed or crop swap** to help diversify your farm or garden. See [▶ How to Start a Crop Swap](#), [▶ How to Organize a Community Seed Swap](#), [▶ SeedySunday.org](#), and [▶ Seed Swap Action Planner](#).

Hold a **book and media swap**. See [▶ How to Stage a Media Swap](#). To set up a swapping site to support your local schools, see [▶ Swap4Schools](#).

Host a **community potluck or food/recipe swap** to broaden your culinary experiences. See [▶ How to Reinvent the Potluck](#), [▶ The Shareable Feast](#), [▶ How to Host a Stranger Dinner](#), [▶ How to Host a MamaBake Food Swap Session](#), and [▶ How Hosting a Babyfood Swap Saved My Sanity and Fed My Child](#).

Start a **free box or market**. See [▶ How to Start a Really, Really Free Market](#) and [▶ Really, Really Free Market Flier](#). Examples include [▶ Diggers in New York](#), [▶ Bolinas Free Box](#), and [▶ Telluride Free Box](#).

Hold a **toy swap** to help families trade in outgrown items for new ones. See [▶ How to Throw a Toy Exchange](#).

Start your own **community/neighborhood sharing website**. See [▶ Share Some Sugar](#), [▶ Bright Neighbor](#), [▶ Hey Neighbor!](#), [▶ Streetbank](#), [▶ OhSoWe](#), [▶ Share Tompkins](#), and [▶ ToolzDo](#).

At [▶ GiftFlow](#), you can match up community needs with local donations of good and services.

Go online to facilitate free **local sharing or exchange**. See [▶ craigslist](#), [▶ Freecycle](#), [▶ Givmo](#), and [▶ Exchango](#).



Click to Watch VIDEO

Suzanne Agasi of ClothingSwap.com shows how to host a clothing swap at your home.

Hold a **clothing swap** to help people get access to "new-to-you" fashion. See our video on [▶ clothes swapping in California](#) and our step-by-step guide on "Hosting a Community Clothing Swap" (next page). Also see [▶ How to Host a Clothes Swap Party](#) and [▶ Clothes Swap Meetups](#).

STEP BY STEP

Hosting a Community Clothing Swap

Fun + Friends + Recycling = Clothing Swap

What is a clothing swap?

Very simply, a clothing swap involves getting a bunch of people together to exchange clothing and accessories that they no longer wear, in order to keep the items “circulating” longer. Clothing swaps provide a fun way to get community members swapping gently used items in an organized setting. But these events aren’t just about recycling—they’re about making connections, meeting new people in your community, and sometimes even philanthropy. Smaller clothing swaps typically attract around 10–30 people, but you can aim much bigger depending on your intentions, resources, and volunteer support.



Photo: Give-and-Take



Photo: Wen Lee

Key Steps

STEP 1 When, where & why? What’s your purpose?

1 Maybe it’s about getting people together for spring closet cleaning. Maybe it’s about meeting new people in the community. Or maybe there’s a larger goal, like raising funds for a local charity. Whatever the motivation, identify a larger purpose for your swap to give it significance. Then, set a date that gives people (and yourself!) enough time to plan the event and gather items. Also, consider the type of venue—will it be at a home, a friend’s café or business, or a community space or rental site?

STEP 2 Spread the word.

2 Get people to sort through their closets and drawers for gently used (no stains or rips) clothing and accessories. Let participants know early on if their sorting and recycling is going to support a cause, as this may provide extra motivation for people to part with nicer items.

STEP 3 Plan the event.

3 Most clothing swaps last for about two hours, but the timing really depends on the number of participants: more people means more stuff and more time needed to browse and sample! Also, think about the size of the space you’ll need (including possible fitting rooms) and the amount of time it will take to sort items pre-swap. If it’s a large event, consider asking people to drop off items in advance, and then sign up volunteers to help sort and size items and create signage. And of course, leave time for cleanup.

STEP 4 Allocate any needed tasks among a small committee.

4 Think about any props, food, and drinks you may want on hand. For a large event, make sure the swap site has restroom facilities and possibly even a kitchen. Consider having mirrors (or even changing tents) available, tables to use for sorting and display, and food and drink. You could organize the event to be a potluck, or maybe you can get a local restaurant or café to donate some treats, especially if it’s a community event to raise money for charity.

STEP 5 Establish any ground rules or suggestions for attendees.

5 Maybe it’s a \$2–10 fee, with the money going to a local cause or group, or maybe it’s a “bring a bag, take a bag” policy. Also, offer a friendly reminder for people to be considerate and not to hoard items, to ensure that the swap is as rewarding as possible.



Photo: Give-and-Take

STEP BY STEP

Hosting a Community Clothing Swap

Fun + Friends + Recycling = Clothing Swap

STEP 6 Day of event.

Have a friend or two help you set up the room, or, if you've asked people to drop off items in advance, remind volunteers to arrive a half hour to an hour before the event to help sort and arrange items (you can also ask participants to self-sort items as they bring them). If the event involves refreshments, consider sharing these before the swap begins to avoid spilling food and drink on clothing and other items.



Photo: T. Foley @ Flickr

STEP 7 Create a welcome and introduction.

Think about preparing a fun introduction as a way to welcome attendees to the event, to describe your cause, and to enable new people to introduce themselves to one another. Maybe they don't all know what a clothing swap is about, or maybe they want to learn more about the group(s) you're supporting locally.

STEP 8 Plant the seed for more swaps or group activities to happen in the future.

Host conversations about what cause the next swap should support locally, or how it could be organized next time. If some of the participants really "click," consider how you can facilitate future meetings and group actions. Also, be sure to take photos as a way to showcase the event and motivate others to participate in the future.

STEP 9 Do a final recycle.

Take any unclaimed items to a donation site, such as a community-based nonprofit, thrift store, or shelter that accepts clothing items. Remember to ask for a tax receipt if you'd like one!

STEP 10 Share your success!

Contact your local papers in advance of the swap to see if they might be interested in doing a story on the event. If not, consider writing a letter to the editor or contributing a guest blog sharing how the swap went. Or, describe your event at a future community gathering to plant more seeds for creative recycling, sharing, and swapping!



Photo: Wen Lee



Photo: Wen Lee

Things to consider when organizing a clothing swap:

- Clothing swaps are different for everyone, and there are diverse options to fit your occasion and purpose.
- No money is exchanged at a clothing swap! It's either free or you can collect a small donation for a select charity or group. In exchange for new "treasures," most people are happy to donate to support a social or environmental need in the community, or to bring a dish to share at a swap/potluck event.
- You'll need to decide whether or not to set limits on the amount of swapping: will you impose a "bring a bag, take a bag" rule, or just let folks bring and take what they need?
- Encourage ongoing recycling! If there are clothes left over, or if folks bring home things that don't fit or they don't like, consider donating the items to a thrift store or bringing them to another swap.

Lend Locally

We share books in public libraries, so why not create lending locations for other useful resources like toys, tools, cars, and even work spaces?



Co-founders of the North Portland Tool Library, a community resource in Portland, Oregon, dedicated to building community and fostering sustainability by providing residents with tools and the power to use them. PHOTO: NPFL

“Lending out toys, tools, sheet music, chess sets, child-development materials, seeds and more, libraries have established themselves as leaders in the sharing movement.”

—Shareable.net



Click to Watch VIDEO

Members of the Tool Lending Library in Berkeley, California, share tools, tips, and community.

IDEAS & INSPIRATIONS

Do you live in a big gardening or DIY community, or one with lots of young kids? Consider starting a tool, seed, or toy lending library. Here are some ideas to get you started:

Start a **clothing library** that enables people to “check out” everyday garments for a designated period of time. See [▶ Flux: Fashion on Lend](#) and the U.K.-based [▶ Maternity Clothes Library](#).

Start a **toy library** to help families share toys, games, books, and other children’s items. See [▶ U.S. Toy Library Association](#) and [▶ Start a Toy Library](#).



Photo: Waltham Public Library

Create a **seed lending library**. See [▶ How to Create Your Own Seed Lending Library](#) and this [▶ list of seed libraries nationwide](#).

Start a community **bike sharing program**, or start a **bike refurbishing project** to fix up and distribute used bikes to residents in need. See [▶ Niceride](#), [▶ B-Cycle](#), and the [▶ Bicycle Lemonade](#) project.

Start a **peer-to-peer car sharing program**. See [▶ How to Start Your Own Car Sharing Program](#), [▶ How to Share Your Car with a Stranger](#), [▶ Whipcar](#), [▶ RelayRides](#), and [▶ Getaround](#).

Start a **parking or storage sharing program**. See [▶ ParkAtMyHouse](#), [▶ Park On My Drive](#), [▶ StorPod](#), and [▶ ShareMyStorage](#).

Start a **tool library** to share tools, equipment, and DIY tips. See our video on the [▶ Berkeley Tool Lending Library](#) and our step-by-step guide on “Starting a Tool Library” (next page).

Get to know your neighbors by **lending locally**. See [▶ Ecomodo](#), [▶ Rentalic](#), [▶ RentStuff](#), [▶ Share Some Sugar](#), [▶ Neighborrow](#), [▶ Neighborgoods](#), [▶ The Sharehood](#), and [▶ Hey Neighbor!](#)

Start a **ride sharing program**. See [▶ Zimride](#), [▶ Nuride](#), [▶ Liftshare](#), [▶ RewardRide](#), and [▶ Zebigo](#).

Set up a **coworking space** where people can share company, office equipment, and ideas. See [▶ What Coworking Brings to the Community Table](#), [▶ 5 Essential Tools for Starting a Coworking Space](#), [▶ How to Design a Workspace for Sharing](#), and [▶ How to Jelly: A Guide to Casual Coworking](#). Examples of shared spaces include [▶ The Hub](#), [▶ TechHub](#), [▶ NewWorkCity](#), and [▶ DesksNearMe](#).

STEP BY STEP

Starting a Tool Library

Tools + DIYers + Community = Tool Library

What is a tool library?

Tool lending libraries allow members to borrow tools, equipment, and how-to materials for a specified period of time, usually for free. Tool libraries offer a friendly setting where DIYers and community groups can come together to share ideas and tips while gaining access to hundreds of hand and power tools for carpentry, home repair, gardening, and more. Some tool libraries go beyond lending tools and encourage sustainable living, inviting members to join in community greening efforts. The benefits of tool libraries include providing low-cost access to a broad range of tools, lowering the barrier to home repair/improvement, fostering sustainability, and building community.



Key Steps

STEP 1 Find interested community members.

1 Identify people in the community who are excited by the idea of a tool library and want to help get it going. Talk to neighbors, friends, and members of your congregation, school, or homeowners association and encourage them to get involved, either at the planning level or by contributing start-up funds.

STEP 2 Hold a meeting and designate a core team.

At your first meeting, discuss your vision for the library as well as the project's basic parameters. How many tools do you want to offer at first? Do you want to provide workshops or workspace? What are the options for locations? Identify a core team to develop the project and designate key roles such as a financial and legal expert, a membership and outreach coordinator, a volunteer coordinator, and a tool coordinator.



STEP 3 Set up the organizational structure.

3 Decide what form your library will take. Should it be its own nonprofit, a project of an existing organization like a public library or neighborhood association, or a more informal initiative maintained by motivated volunteers? [Silicon Valley Power's Tool Lending Library](#), which specializes in tools that help residents save energy, is hosted by the local utility in Santa Clara. Also, consider your staffing needs: having at least one paid staffer (the tool coordinator) is helpful to keep operations running smoothly.

STEP 4 Identify a source of start-up funds.

4 One of the first tool libraries, the [Berkeley Tool Lending Library](#), started in 1979 with a \$30,000 community block grant. But you can seek financial support from other public sources, private foundations, businesses, and individuals. To cover ongoing costs, some tool libraries charge a small membership fee, although most are free of charge. The West Seattle Tool Library offers "pay-what-you-can" community access to its tools and classes, and the [Missoula Urban Demonstration Project \(MUD\) Tool Library](#) charges members \$5 a month. Even if there's no fee to borrow tools, it's useful to charge late fees and replacement fees for lost or damaged items.

STEP 5 Define your membership.

5 Most tool libraries are open to any homeowner, tenant, or nonprofit in a defined geographic region. The [Temescal Tool Lending Library](#) in Oakland, California, is a service of the local public library and offers its tools to city residents and property owners. Think broadly about your community and about how this initiative can best meet people's needs.

STEP BY STEP

Starting a Tool Library

Tools + DIYers + Community = Tool Library

STEP 6 Draw up some ground rules for borrowers.

Make a clear list of membership policies—for example, that all borrowers must be at least 18 years old, that they must sign a liability release form, that they can borrow no more than eight items at a time, and that the lending period is 1, 3, or 7 days, depending on the item. To verify residency, have first-time borrowers present a photo ID, local public library card, and recent utility bill in their name. For certain tools, such as shop equipment available for on-site use, require borrowers to attend safety workshops. See sample lending policies [here](#) and [here](#).

STEP 7 Collect and track your inventory.

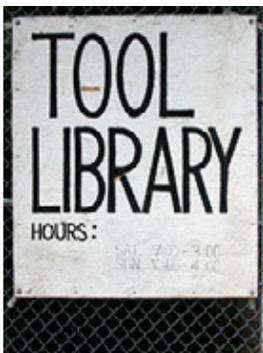
Your best option is to buy new, construction-grade tools that are built for everyday use, to minimize damage and breakage. Local builders, contractors, or retailers may be willing to donate old equipment, but be sure to test its quality first. Allocate at least 10 percent of your budget for tool maintenance, repair, and replacement. Engrave all items with your library's name and paint on ID numbers for quick cataloguing. Assign each borrower a unique ID, and use library software or a spreadsheet program for inventory and record-keeping. When tools are returned, check that they are in good operating order, and consider charging a fee for items that aren't cleaned. Periodically poll your membership to assess needs.



Photo: M338 @ Wikimedia Commons

STEP 8 Build community connections.

One of the purposes of a tool library is to build community. At the [North Portland Tool Library](#), staff ritually ask patrons what they are working on as a way to learn about local projects and to ensure that people are getting the right tools and know how to operate them. The [West Seattle Tool Library](#), a project of Sustainable West Seattle, encourages members to participate in community park restorations and to pursue "green" projects like backyard gardens, energy improvements, and water harvesting. Establish connections with local contractors and tradespeople, who may be willing to volunteer their time to staff or sponsor workshops. Also reach out to community groups, from affordable housing groups and woodworking clubs to local garden projects.



STEP 9 Spread the word!

Develop a media and outreach strategy as a way to get people excited and involved. Reach out to reporters, and send them announcements when you hit a milestone. Encourage library patrons to document their projects and share their stories with others. Most importantly, advertise your services so folks will want to use the library and support your efforts.



Photo: Spiffire @ Wikimedia Commons

Things to consider when starting a tool library:

- No two tool libraries are the same; however, there are some basic approaches that have worked well for many communities. Check out this [nationwide list of tool libraries](#), and reach out to other libraries to learn how they built their community resource.
- The benefits of tool libraries extend well beyond providing tools. Seek to make your library a community gathering place where people can make friendships, share project ideas, and even exchange labor.
- Starting a tool library can require significant upfront resources; be sure to research grant opportunities and to investigate how other groups have harnessed local and national resources to support their projects.

STEP 10 Celebrate your successes.

As more people use the library, continue to celebrate your successes. Host a neighborhood-wide green celebration to acknowledge your hard work and raise awareness of your efforts, so more people will want to become involved. Above all, don't forget to have fun with what you're doing!

Share Time, Labor, and Skills

Help people in your community share their unique skills and talents. Through a time bank or skills exchange, community members can trade professional skills like carpentry or grant writing, as well as practical tasks like babysitting or lawn mowing, on a credit or hourly basis—without exchanging any money!



(ABOVE) A time bank member provides computer support to an elderly woman. PHOTO: TIMEBANK @ FLICKR

(RIGHT) A time bank member helps freshen up a fence rail at a local building. PHOTO: TIMEBANK @ FLICKR



IDEAS & INSPIRATIONS

Set up a **skills exchange** to connect people in a non-monetary, trade-based relationship. See [▶ How to Start Your Own Skillshare](#), [▶ Skillshare](#), and [▶ WeTeachMe](#). Community-based examples include [▶ Brooklyn Skillshare](#), [▶ Boston Skillshare](#), [▶ Skillshare Austin](#), and [▶ Skillshare Network of Boulder County](#).

Facilitate local **sharing of errands and tasks**. See [▶ TaskRabbit](#), [▶ MyTaskAngel](#), and [▶ Good Gym](#).

Summon a **local work group** or “mob” to pitch in with everything from barn raising to house painting. See [▶ How to Start a Neighborhood Work Group](#), [▶ Neighborhood Home Repair Teams](#), [▶ How to Start a Crop Mob](#), and [▶ CropMob](#).

“The question: ‘How can I help you?’ needs to change so we ask: ‘How can we help each other build the world we both will live in?’”

—Time Banks USA

Set up a **time bank** as a safe, equitable way to barter skills and services. See our video on [▶ Boston’s Time Trade Circle](#) and our step-by-step guide on “Starting a Community Time Bank” (next page). Also, see [▶ How to Share Time Through Timebanking](#), [▶ LETSystems](#), and a list of examples at [▶ TimeBanks USA](#).



Click to Watch VIDEO

Participants in the Time Trade Circle in Boston, Massachusetts, exchange skills, make connections, and build community.

Some sample time bank exchanges include:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Computer assistance | Baking healthy muffins | Listening/companionship |
| Video editing | Tutoring | Haircuts |
| Editing/proofreading | Minor home repairs | Errands |
| Teaching arts & crafts | Car repair | Sewing/mending |
| Language translation | Grocery shopping | Snow shoveling |
| Language lessons | Transportation | Heavy lifting |
| Music lessons | Gardening | House cleaning |
| Cooking/cooking lessons | Pet or child care | Reiki treatment |

STEP BY STEP

Starting a Community Time Bank

Skills + Time + Caring = Community Time Bank

What is a community time bank?

Community time banks are local organizations that operate like banks—but instead of cash, members keep track of and trade time. When a member of a time bank spends one hour of his or her time performing a service for another member—whether providing companionship to an elderly person, helping with home repairs, taking care of a pet, or providing art, music, or language lessons—the person providing the service earns one “time dollar.” These credited hours can then be exchanged to obtain services provided by another member of the bank. Time banks empower and support individuals, strengthen community ties, and expand social networks.



Photo: TimeBank @ Flickr

Key Steps

STEP 1 Identify interested people.

1 Talk to neighbors, friends, colleagues, members of your congregation or school, and other community groups (such as healthcare institutions or social service agencies) about the possibility of forming a time bank. Engage people that have a strong connection to the community. Be strategic: you may want to start small and expand once you’ve done pilot testing with a core group and initial structure.

STEP 2 Hold an educational meeting and form a core group.

2 Use the first meeting to educate people about time banks and to identify volunteers to take the next steps. Ensure that people leave the meeting with action items and responsibilities. Key roles may include a leader to keep the project on track and sustain the momentum; a coordinator to track members’ information and decisions; a researcher to explore time bank models and lessons learned; and an outreach coordinator to reach out to potential members and the community.



Photo: Andrea Booher @ Wikimedia Commons

STEP 3 Identify the bank’s purpose, values, and structure.

3 With the core group, discuss the purpose and values of your time bank. Why is time banking of interest to you? What purposes do you want it to serve? Which community members do you want to support and engage? Then, consider a structure that will best support these goals. Some time banks use a community-based “neighbor-to-neighbor” approach but also engage an agency sponsor to help with administrative support.

STEP 4 Establish guidelines and a process for the exchanges.

4 Outline your core principles and develop guidelines for the types of services that can be exchanged. Encourage people to be creative: some time banks allow members to exchange **goods** (e.g., baked goods, artwork) as well as services (e.g., yoga instruction, car repair). Most time banks use online systems to help members **post requests** to provide or receive services, but trades can also happen off-line as people connect at events or through other means. Try to have multiple ways for people to connect.

STEP 5 Put in place a system for tracking hours and providing feedback.

5 Tracking time accurately and easily is essential to the success of your time bank. Online systems can facilitate the process, but some banks use paper tracking, which requires a coordinator to update the activity. To track time, most banks operate on the honor system: the person receiving the service posts the time (as if they were “paying” for the service), and the hour(s) are deducted from their account and added to the account of the person who provided the service. Set up a system to notify both people that the trade was recorded, to reinforce transparency. Also, create an easy way for members to provide feedback, positive or negative, on their trading experiences.

STEP BY STEP

Starting a Community Time Bank

Skills + Time + Caring = Community Time Bank

STEP 6 Develop security procedures.

Particularly as your membership grows, you will need to decide how to manage safety concerns. Many banks require members to take common-sense precautions when arranging an exchange, such as requesting references or avoiding situations that make them feel unsafe. Holding in-person orientations, encouraging members to participate in social events and meetings, and having a system for feedback and complaints can help reduce safety concerns. Also, make sure you put in place mechanisms to resolve conflicts among members.

STEP 7 Engage members through orientations, regular meetings, and social events.

Time banks work best when the members operate with trust and shared commitment. For new members, institute mandatory in-person orientations to ensure that people meet membership requirements and are properly educated about the time bank and its expectations. For existing members, hold social events and business meetings that bring people together to build relationships, and where you can provide updates, resolve questions, hear feedback, and tap volunteers. Remember to have fun, too!

STEP 8 Expand membership and share your experiences.

Once your time bank has been pilot-tested, consider increasing outreach to expand membership and broaden the range of services provided. Reach out to all media (newspapers, radio, TV, blogs, social media) and use word of mouth as well as presentations at community events. Use the news coverage to grow and strengthen your organization.



Photo: TimeBanks USA

STEP 9 Address staffing and resource needs.

Successful time banks require administrative support. Although many banks rely on volunteer effort initially, over time your bank may need

modest financial resources to fund a coordinator and/or defray the costs of software, meetings, outreach, etc. Many banks use trading to cover these functions: members provide services to the administrative sponsor, who in turn provides logistical and administrative support.

STEP 10 Celebrate your successes.

Remember to celebrate your successes. Celebrating a milestone—achieving a certain number of members, getting an online system, etc.—reminds all members of the value of time banks in helping communities tap into their most important assets: each other.



Photo: TimeBank @ Flickr

Things to consider when starting a time bank:

- Time banks have been around for many years, and there is much to learn from other experiences. Visit [TimeBanks USA](#) to see a nationwide list of time banks and to gain access to trainings, educational events, and other useful resources.
- Be patient: time banks need time to get off the ground. Finding the best structure that works for your community will likely require some trial and error. Prepare yourself and your members to adapt over time as the project evolves.
- In time banking, every hour is equal in value, and members should not compete aggressively for services. Enlist members who support the bank's purpose and understand that time banking is about building caring and inclusive communities and redefining economic value, not about simply replacing cash transactions.

Set Up a Co-op

The “co-operative” approach, in which co-op members jointly own or manage a good or service for their mutual benefit, has been around for a long time. But communities are now going beyond the traditional agricultural or housing co-op and applying the concept to things like transportation, gardens, and even renewable energy.



(ABOVE) Visitors tour Boyle Street Community Garden, one of Vancouver’s older urban food gardens.
PHOTO: ANNARADIX @ FLICKR



(RIGHT) Volunteers with the California-based Coalition for a Green Glendale spend the morning working in the Monterey Road Eco-Community Gardens.
PHOTO: MELISSA WALL @ FLICKR

IDEAS & INSPIRATIONS

Is there a need in your community that could be met through a formal or informal co-op approach? Here are some ideas:

Start a **community garden**.

See ▶ [Starting a Community Garden](#) and ▶ [How to Share a Vegetable Garden](#).

Start or join a **CSA (community supported agriculture)** or **meat/egg-sharing co-op**. See ▶ [LocalHarvest](#), ▶ [Growing a CSA from Scratch](#), ▶ [How to Share a Cow](#), and ▶ [How to Share a Chicken \(or Two\)](#).

Set up a **babysitting co-op** or **nanny share**. See ▶ [Childcare Co-ops 101](#), ▶ [Organize a Child Care Co-Op](#), ▶ [Babysitting Coop](#), ▶ [BabysitterExchange](#), ▶ [How to Share a Nanny](#), and ▶ [Babysitting Co-op Meetups](#).

Set up a **carpooling program**. See ▶ [How to Carpool with Strangers](#) and ▶ [How to Share School Transportation—and Why](#).

Start a **food buying club**. See ▶ [How to Save Big Money on Groceries by Starting a Food Buying Club](#), ▶ [FoodClub.org](#), and ▶ [United Buying Clubs](#).

Set up a **landshare program**. See ▶ [How to Share Land, Landshare](#), and ▶ [UrbanGardenShare](#).

Start a **campus food co-op**. See ▶ [CoFed](#) and ▶ [Top 10 Tips for Starting a Campus Food Co-op](#).

Set up a **worker-owned co-op**. See ▶ [How-Tos and Help](#) and ▶ [How to Start a Worker Co-op](#).

Start a **housing co-op**. See ▶ [How to Start a Housing Co-op](#) and ▶ [How to Share a House: A Case Study](#)



Click to Watch VIDEO

Anya Schoolman of Mt. Pleasant Solar Cooperative describes the renewable energy co-op she helped set up in her Washington, D.C. neighborhood.

Start a **solar or alternative energy co-op**. See our video on the ▶ [Mt. Pleasant Solar Cooperative in Washington, D.C.](#) and our step-by-step guide on “Starting a Solar Co-op” (next page). Also, see ▶ [How to Help Your Neighbors Go Solar](#), ▶ [How I Helped a D.C. Neighborhood Go Solar](#), ▶ [Community Power Network](#), ▶ [Solar Mosaic](#), and ▶ [One Block Off The Grid](#).

STEP BY STEP

Starting a Solar Co-op

Sun + Fun + Community = Solar Co-op

What is a solar co-op?

Forming a solar co-op involves getting a bunch of people (often neighbors) to install solar power for their homes at the same time. By negotiating as a group and sharing expenses and expertise, co-op members can significantly bring down the cost of solar. Joining forces with like-minded neighbors also spreads the work out and creates more negotiating clout with installers, utilities, and local officials. By starting solar (and other renewable energy) co-ops, communities can accelerate the transition to clean energy and be on the frontline of action to combat climate change.



Photo: Mount Pleasant Solar Cooperative

Key Steps

STEP 1 Find interested community members.

1 Talk to neighbors, friends, and members of your congregation, school, or homeowners association, describing the idea of a solar co-op and inviting them to participate. Energy self-reliance is a common desire, and almost everyone wants to lower their bills and support clean energy. Most people don't need to be convinced—they just need a practical way to move forward! Adapt this [flyer](#) to reach out to folks around you.

STEP 2 Hold a meeting and form a core group to lead the project.

2 At the meeting, discuss the key concepts behind forming a co-op and identify people to help move the project forward. Seek out participants with political connections and/or strong roots in the community, as well as skills like economic and legal analysis, media relations, and technical work like roofing, electrical, and plumbing. Identify volunteers to take on key roles including: a *leader* to keep the project on track and maintain momentum; an *organizer* to foster communication among members; a *researcher* to help identify local experts and resources; and a *marketer/communicator* to develop materials like flyers and press releases.

STEP 3 Discuss your values and develop your plan.

3 As the core group begins to meet, begin to identify shared values and address key structural questions. What kind (and size) of co-op do you want? Are you okay with corporate or business partners, or do you want to do it all yourselves? Which solar technologies make the most sense for your community? Are there incentives in place to make renewable energy cost-effective, or do you first need to organize to get these in place? Here are some useful [tools and resources](#) to guide you throughout the process.

STEP 4 Educate and empower.

4 As more people become interested in joining the co-op, you can help educate and empower members about: The costs and savings of an average solar installation; the relevant local regulations and permitting process for solar installations; the [federal tax credit](#) for solar installation, as well as [state and local incentives](#); the solar companies in your area, and how to talk to a solar contractor.

STEP 5 Assess members' energy needs, and lighten the load.

Before placing a bulk order for solar equipment, you'll need to know what size and type of installations your members will need. Distribute surveys to collect data on household energy usage, and show members how they compare to the neighborhood average. Encourage households to bring down their energy load by adopting efficiency measures. Arrange for discounted home energy audits for co-op members, and encourage people to upgrade their lighting by purchasing energy-efficient bulbs wholesale and selling them at cost to members.



STEP BY STEP

Starting a Solar Co-op

Sun + Fun + Community = Solar Co-op

STEP 6 Build relationships.

Encourage co-op members to reach out to the broader community. To be successful, you may need to push for new local incentives, or for reforms to existing permitting or interconnection standards. Build relationships with elected officials and regulators; if officials see a tax-paying and voting constituency that demands solar power, they are more likely to consider policies and incentives that are favorable to renewables. Also, contact local solar contractors who are looking to grow their markets; if a co-op proves it can deliver large numbers of paying customers, it can create significant leverage with local vendors.

STEP 7 Ask for help!

People get excited by a good project, so never underestimate their willingness to help a good cause. Seek out pro-bono legal advice to help sort through regulatory issues of liability and permitting. Get help with your website, data analysis, organizing, engineering and installation questions, photography, video, etc. Enlist kids to design t-shirts and deliver flyers door to door. Visit the [Community Power Network](#) to explore other renewable energy co-ops and learn from their lessons. Make sure your core group shares everything learned with the wider group, via meetings, email, etc.

STEP 8 Share your experiences.

Develop a media strategy. It's really simple: ALL media (newspapers, radio, TV, blogs) love a happy story. Reach out to reporters, and send them announcements when you hit a milestone. Share the credit. Empower your kids to be spokespeople for the project. Most importantly, capture the names of folks who want to join your efforts.

STEP 9 Celebrate your successes.

As more households join the co-op, continue to celebrate your successes. Host a neighborhood-wide celebration to acknowledge your hard work and raise awareness of your efforts, so more people want to become involved. Make the gatherings as fun as possible, to keep members enthusiastic about their ongoing commitment and

collaboration. The more folks who are working together, the more resources there are to share and the more influence you can have on regulators and the market.

STEP 10 Build power! (political, electrical, or whatever)

The current energy system is designed to be powered by large, centrally owned power plants. Under conventional wisdom, people are supposed to be energy consumers, not energy producers. It's going to take some work to stand this idea on its head, but don't be afraid to take on the utilities and change the rules!



Photo: Steven Loewinsohn, Green For All



Photo: Northwest SEED

Things to consider when starting a solar co-op:

- The first step to energy transformation is reducing demand. Households and communities should embrace a broad range of energy efficiency and conservation measures before going solar.
- The challenges of going solar vary widely by jurisdiction, so find an approach that works best for your community. Check out this [list of renewable energy co-ops](#) to see what other groups have done.
- Equipment costs are coming down, but the price of solar also depends on available rebates as well as local energy policies. In some places, solar hot water may be a cheaper first step than solar power.
- The array of issues facing an aspiring solar homeowner may seem daunting. But with a committed core of co-op members addressing these problems, they can become manageable.



Photo: Eugene Imhoff, Flickr

About This Guide

This *Guide to Sharing* is part of the larger *New Dream Community Action Kit*, a creative, fun, and easy-to-use online kit that promotes collective action and civic engagement to build more sustainable, healthier, and happier communities. The Action Kit consists of a series of guides on specific topics to help people around the country organize and implement projects in their own neighborhoods. To access the full Action Kit and additional guides, please visit www.newdream.org/communityactionkit.

Tell us your stories! Did you find this guide useful? Did you try any of our project ideas in your community? Please share your stories, questions, tips, and other feedback on our website at www.newdream.org/communityactionkit or by emailing us at newdream@newdream.org.

If you would like to support the development of more Guides in New Dream's Community Action Kit, [please click here to donate](#).

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ADVICE CORNER

5 Potential Challenges of Sharing— And How to Overcome Them

- 1 Irresponsible behavior.** Unfortunately, not everyone is a good sharer, and some people may try to take advantage of your good will. Be sure to build in mechanisms to ensure trust and prevent misuse of shared items.
- 2 Timing.** Sometimes, the “give” and the “take” of sharing don’t match up time-wise, and storage can become an issue. Aim to align your sharing activities as closely as possible with community needs.
- 3 Hygiene concerns (real or imagined).** To avoid health concerns, ensure that items you share (or obtain) are properly cleaned before re-use and do not pose a hazard to others.
- 4 Legal and safety concerns.** Be aware of potential risks and liabilities involved with sharing or use of secondhand items, and pursue legal protections where necessary. See the **Sustainable Economies Law Center** for more information.
- 5 Dealing with challenging people.** People are people, so remember to keep an open mind. Always seek to engage in broad, open, and respectful dialogue to support and strengthen community building.

About the Center for a New American Dream

New Dream helps Americans reduce and shift their consumption to improve quality of life, protect the environment, and promote social justice. We seek to cultivate a new American dream—one that emphasizes community, ecological sustainability, and a celebration of non-material values. We envision a society that pursues not just “more,” but more of what matters—and less of what doesn’t. Learn more at www.newdream.org.

About Shareable

Shareable is a nonprofit online magazine that tells the story of sharing. We cover the people and projects bringing a shareable world to life and share how-tos so you can make sharing a reality in your life. Learn more at www.shareable.net.