

## 2.4 Resourcing tenant participation

Local authorities and RSLs are legally required to carry out an assessment of the resources required to implement tenant participation. The tenant participation strategy should set out the resources that will be made available to implement and support tenant participation. Resourcing tenant participation is about more than money. It also includes things like staff support and access to meeting venues. This section outlines why resources are essential for successful tenant participation and provides a framework to help landlords and tenants carry out an assessment of how they resource participation.

Neither the legislation nor associated guidance specifically states what activities landlords should resource. This is because resource requirements will differ significantly from area to area. However, resources should be negotiated and agreed with tenants and reviewed regularly.

Below is a list and explanation of the key activities that will require resources.

### Types of activity

<p><b>Staff time</b></p>	<p>To help tenant groups to set up, support existing groups as their activities broaden and develop, and support consultation with the wider community. This can be done in a number of ways, for example through employing specialist tenant participation staff, support from generic housing staff, commissioning independent specialist organisations, seconding staff to work directly with tenant organisations and providing funding to enable groups and federations to employ staff. Staff time will also be required at a strategic level to ensure the strategy is working.</p>
<p><b>Staff training</b></p>	<p>Training programmes to increase knowledge and understanding of tenant participation and enable all staff to develop the skills required to develop tenant participation practice. Training can be provided both internally and externally. The Scottish Centre for Regeneration's learners' resource pack can help individuals identify all their learning needs and help them to identify suitable learning programmes.</p>
<p><b>Tenants' training</b></p>	<p>Training programme developed with tenants to meet their individual and collective needs and enable them to fully participate. This may include attendance at seminars and conferences, training to increase knowledge and understanding, to effectively organise a tenants' group (for instance, minute taking and committee skills), to negotiate and consult effectively with the wider community and to access local, regional and national training events.</p>

<p><b>Development support</b></p>	<p>It is essential that tenants can access staff who will support them to build their skills, knowledge and confidence to enable them to participate. Development support can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● help to set up and support new groups;</li> <li>● supporting existing groups;</li> <li>● supporting individual office bearers and committee members to be more effective;</li> <li>● providing training to increase knowledge of the landlord organisation and on housing and community issues;</li> <li>● providing relevant and accurate information;</li> <li>● facilitating networking with other tenant organisations and agencies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Governing and elected members' training</b></p>	<p>Training and briefing to keep members informed of good practice and the development of tenant participation.</p>
<p><b>Consultation</b></p>	<p>Consultation can be carried out in a number of ways, for example, through focus groups, working groups, monitoring groups and policy review. For more information on consultation see Section 2.6.</p>
<p><b>Information</b></p>	<p>Tenants require good information to participate effectively. This will include providing information about tenants' rights; rent policy and procedures; allocations policy; right to buy; housing management policies; modernisation and regeneration proposals; the landlord's decision-making structures; the tenant participation strategy etc.</p> <p>For more information on providing information see section 2.6.</p>
<p><b>Direct grants to tenant groups</b></p>	<p>This will include start up grants and annual running cost grants to cover, for example, stationery, mailings, venue hire, telephone costs, office costs and attendance at conferences. Funding should be realistically based on the group's planned activities. Some groups will require larger grants than others based on the maturity and level of activity of the organisation.</p>

<b>Tenants' expenses</b>	There should not be financial barriers to tenants participating and funding should be available to cover travel expenses, child care and other care costs, communication aids and to provide suitable transport where required. Expenses should be refunded promptly and where possible paid on the day.
<b>Communication</b>	Communication with tenants and groups should be clear, timely and done in a variety of ways, for example: organising public meetings, open days, conferences, publicity materials, information and communication technology. Communication should be a two way process.
<b>Independent advice</b>	To provide tenants with impartial information and advice where tenants think this would be useful. Generally used where issues are complex and tenants would benefit from a full understanding of service delivery issues and service user issues.

### How much should landlords spend?

This is a common question! The findings of research into resourcing tenant participation across the UK have been mixed. Some studies have indicated the level of resources has a significant impact on the success of tenant participation, while others have not found this to be the case. What is clear is that it is crucial that landlords agree with tenants the level of resources that should be allocated to tenant participation and that tenants are involved in agreeing the priorities for the tenant participation budget. Resources also need to be regularly reviewed as participation structures improve and develop.

### Where does the money come from?

The majority of funding for tenant participation comes from tenant rental income. However, many groups represent all tenants and other residents in their area. In these circumstances, local authorities should consider using general funds to part-fund engagement activities, instead of all the money coming out of tenants' rents.

Where a tenants' group represents more than one landlord, landlords should provide funding and support in proportion to the number of tenants represented by the group.

Many landlords are now pooling their resources to meet the costs of participation or jointly employing a tenant participation officer. This is particularly effective among smaller landlords.

External sources of funding can also be accessed by tenant groups to provide facilities for the community that otherwise would not be made available. Sources of funding include the National Lottery, European Social Fund, Communities Scotland and charitable organisations. However, it is the responsibility of the landlord to meet the development support, administration and organisational needs of tenant groups.

### Grants to tenant groups

The majority of landlords fund tenant groups by providing them with a start up grant to get established, purchase essential equipment and raise awareness of their group. Groups are then usually given an administration grant, which is paid annually to cover the running costs of the group. One approach to determining the level of administration grant is to have a fixed sum plus a per-house quota, with the option to apply for additional funding for specific purposes.

Another approach is for groups to plan their activities for the coming year and present a business plan to their landlord detailing their aims, planned activities and resource requirements. This gives tenants' groups more control over their funding and how they choose to spend it. Where possible, landlords should allow tenant organisations to be in control of their finances provided proper accountability arrangements are in place and tenants receive training in managing and accounting resources.

The level of grants and means of awarding grants should be negotiated between landlords and tenant groups. Clearly landlords do not have an unlimited budget and resources need to be prioritised and allocated accordingly. The resources for tenant participation should be determined with tenants in the rent setting process. Tenant groups have a responsibility to plan their activities in advance and spend their grant funding appropriately.

### Fundraising

Many groups across the country organise their own fundraising events to raise money to assist with running costs and the purchase of equipment for their group. Local fundraising events such as coffee mornings and bingo nights not only bring in additional income, but also raise tenant and community awareness about the group and can encourage more people to get involved.

## Accessing external funding

Going beyond the issue of 'core funding', many tenant groups would like to undertake community projects that improve their local area, such as environmental projects, providing facilities for local children and so on. Clearly landlords have a limited budget and they may be unable to finance such projects or cannot carry them out for a number of years. However, there are lots of organisations who offer grant funding for community projects and many tenant organisations across Scotland have been successful in tapping into these resources.

FunderFinder is an excellent software package that helps not-for-profit organisations in the UK to identify charitable trusts that might give them money. It also gives advice on filling out funding application forms to ensure that your application has the best chance of being successful. Your landlord might have this software or be able to direct you to a local organisation that has it. For more information and tips on applying for funding go to [www.funderfinder.org](http://www.funderfinder.org) or the Scottish Executive's website at [www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/social/gtv-oo.asp](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/social/gtv-oo.asp).

