A. About the Awards

Lemos&Crane working with The City of London Corporation’s Charity, The City Bridge Trust presents The Growing Localities Awards. Total prize money of £2,500 is offered for projects based in London that demonstrate excellence in using nature to enhance and improve local communities and in particular the lives of vulnerable or socially excluded people, generating positive outcomes such as health and well-being, new skills and knowledge, new relationships, and a sense of purpose and belonging.

To apply for the award you will need to describe what your project already does and to explain how the prize money would be spent to further your work.

This year entries are invited for projects and initiatives in any London borough that involve any one or combination of:

- **Gardening and growing food**: for communal eating and small-scale enterprise
- **Introducing young people to nature**: encouraging young people to develop an interest in nature through bird-watching and similar activities
- **Keeping animals**: bees, chickens, pigs, etc for the experience of care but also to farm
- **Nature-themed arts and crafts**: woodcraft, photography, film-making, writing, etc
- **Reclaiming and developing wasteland**: especially led by residents and tenants
- **‘Green’ exercise**: groups for walking, cycling, running, etc with a nature theme
Entries are invited from non-profit organisations such as:

- Homeless agencies
- Supported housing (providing mental health services, substance misuse, etc)
- Social housing providers
- Residential care providers
- Health organisations
- Hospices
- Prisons
- Churches and faith groups
- Other community-based and voluntary organisations.

Entries will be judged based on criteria including:

- **Originality** – the distinctiveness and memorability of the project idea
- **Replicability** – how others could be inspired by and run similar projects themselves
- **Reach** – the numbers of people involved in the project, particularly in engaging the wider community
- **Diversity** – of people engaged, particularly those who are ‘hard to reach’ or have challenging needs and who are brought together with the local community
- **Impact** – of the project (demonstrated qualitatively or quantitatively) on people’s health, well-being, relationships, skills, knowledge, sense of purpose and belonging.

**B. Timetable**

- Deadline for entries – **Wednesday 17 December, 2014**
- Shortlist announced – **End of March 2015**
- Winners announced – **June 2015**

**C. Rules and procedures**
1. Entries must be completed using this entry form and submitted electronically here.

2. Receipt of all entries submitted online will be automatically acknowledged.

3. Entrants may be asked to provide further information.

4. The judges' decision is final. Awards will be made at the judges' discretion and no correspondence will be entered into concerning any decision. Not all the awards advertised may be awarded if the judges consider the criteria have not been met. Additional commendations may be made at the judges' discretion.

5. The content of any entry may be used for informing other practitioners and also for publicity purposes unless the entrant withholds their consent to this in writing.

6. Entrants are deemed to have accepted these rules and procedures and to have agreed to be bound by them when entering this competition.
D. Your Entry

Please do not exceed 1500 words in total.

1. Name of project you are entering for The Growing Localities Awards

Growing Minds

2. Describe your project in one sentence

Our project is a resilience-based gardening club that focuses on improving the wellbeing of people with mental health problems, enabling them to acquire and develop the skills and confidence required to grow vegetables and flowers in an inner city environment.

3. Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (e.g. homeless agency, social housing, prison, community, etc.)?

The setting of our project is at City and Hackney Mind’s Recovery Hub (day centre) in 15 Homerton Row, London E9 6ED

4. What are the project’s objectives?

The project has five objectives:

- To promote the mental resilience and well-being of clients through the therapeutic activity of gardening. Clients have the opportunity to get outside and enjoy the sensation of watching and helping a garden grow and flourish.

- To teach the participants about gardening in an inner-city area and how to make things grow despite space confines. This has the benefit of both helping the group members to grow things of their own at home and also increasing their confidence and self-belief.

- To encourage healthy eating amongst clients and educate them about growing food
5. **What are the project’s activities?**

The project is a volunteer and peer-led gardening club which enables service users to acquire and develop the skills and confidence required to grow vegetables and flowers in an inner city environment. It is a therapeutic, relaxed and supportive environment in which service users can explore the joys of gardening.

We have developed an annual schedule of gardening activities (of four components according to the season) comprising of:

**Spring:**
- Seed sowing, vegetables chosen and flowers
- Painting structures and surfaces
- Feeding the birds
- Pricking out seedlings and potting on
- Mulching borders
- Patio maintenance
- Planting spring bedding
- Deadheading daffodils and tulips
- Planting summer bulbs either in pots or the ground, e.g. Gladioli, Lilies, Cannas etc
- Improve soil in vegetable beds
- Staking plants
- Checking for pests and diseases
- Planting potatoes
- Weeding
- Harvesting any produce, for example lettuce and salad crops

**Summer:**
- Removing spring/winter bedding
- Planting tubs and hanging baskets
- Watering especially pots and raised beds full of vegetables and flowers
- Planting out vegetables in tubs or the ground, grown from seed

- To minimize isolation and encourage social interaction by allowing the participants to take part in a fun group activity in which they can feel safe and comfortable, interact with others and gain confidence.
- To maintain an attractive and peaceful space for clients and staff to enjoy amidst a busy and stressful inner-city area.

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Staking and supporting plants
Butterfly identification
Taking photos of the garden
Harvesting vegetables and cooking them
Weeding
Planting summer bedding displays, and perennials
Sowing winter bedding (e.g. Pansies and Violas)
Deadheading faded flowers
Preparing semi-ripe cuttings
Picking flowers and creating displays
Patio maintenance

**Autumn:**
Pruning plants and flowers
Sweeping and raking leaves,
Removal of summer bedding
Sowing sweet peas
Making bird boxes
Making insect hotels
Harvesting produce and watering
Planning for winter bedding or bulbs

**Winter:**
Planning work for next year
Preparing new beds from scratch.
Feeding the birds
Making a compost bin
Preparing any new areas or new beds for planting
Pot washing
Sweeping and raking leaves
Pond maintenance

**Other activities:**
Training and support to develop the skills needed to plant, grow and maintain vegetables and flowers and to use natural resources judiciously.

‘Gardening in inner city conditions’: how to grow plants in limited space e.g. a window box and raised beds.

Healthy eating classes

Grow cook and eat classes: covering health and safety in the kitchen, the basics of food
hygiene, shopping to a budget and food preparation. Each week the group have the opportunity to develop their practical skills as they prepare a healthy meal for our centre using the produce harvested from the garden itself.

Day trips to see gardens - e.g. Kew Gardens

Yoga in the Park

6. What has been the impact / achievement of the project?

All activities are geared to enabling service users to be more aware of the therapeutic value of gardening and nurturing their environment, in dealing with their mental health difficulties.

By equipping service users with the skills needed to grow their own vegetables the project has encouraged service users to eat more healthily and eat more sustainable produce.

Involvement in the project has given people a chance to explore cultural difference and preference in diet in a multicultural context.

People have had opportunities to socialise and have felt a greater sense of ownership and involvement in their community.

2013-2014: As a result of taking part in the project:
95% participants reported improved physical health
95% participants reported improved mental health
85% felt happier as a result of gardening
100% gained new or improved existing gardening skills
95% gained more knowledge of gardening/conservation
80% adopted a healthier lifestyle
90% reported feeling less isolated and socialising more with others?

Enhancing Control
The staff of City and Hackney Mind played a significant role in making this project one that people could feel able and valued to participate in through making it a project that was designed and delivered by all involved.

Resilience
Examples cited by Volunteers involved with the project suggest that there has been a positive impact on their resilience as individuals.
Examples include:

- Being involved with a group undertaking an gardening based programme has built trust and given an opportunity to offer each other emotional support and a safe space to share their problems
- Acquiring new skills and confidence
- Creating a learning environment where people can take some responsibility for shaping the project has promoted feelings of achievement and pride

**Participation and social inclusion**

The project has given people an opportunity to volunteer and do something for people in need which has been positive for their own mental well-being.

Examples include:

Volunteers have benefitted from their participation by building relationships with people from other backgrounds.

Potentially vulnerable people on a low income were able to be engaged with meaningful activities as sessions were free.

Volunteers have since gone onto further study and volunteering citing their experience of participating in the project as a factor in making these steps.

**Hackney in Bloom 2014:**

Hackney in Bloom gives green fingered residents, schools, businesses and community groups the chance to show off their skills. It is a partnership between Hackney Council, Hackney Homes and The East London Garden Society.

The free to enter competition supports and encourages gardening, horticulture and environmental sustainability to make Hackney a greener, brighter and better place to live.

Our garden was awarded Bronze in the ‘Best Growing Project or Enterprise’ category.

**7. How would you spend any prize money to further your project/initiative?**

Should we be successful all the prize money will be used to develop the project to include a summer module on ‘How to construct an ‘Eco-Greenhouse’ from recycled plastic bottles’. This will be a great practical project that everyone at the centre can get involved with—turning used plastic bottles into a greenhouse, and then enjoying the chance to grow some produce once the work is finished.
Making our own greenhouse from plastic bottles will be a great way to turn “waste” into something really useful. It will take a lot of effort and team work but the end result will be a very eco-friendly building that should allow us to grow your own fruit, vegetables and garden plants for years to come – and at the fraction of the economic or energy costs of a traditional glasshouse.

E. Submitting your entry

Please return this entry form by **5pm, Wednesday 17, Dec 2014** by uploading it on [this page](#).

Please add any documents, photos, videos or other media that are relevant to your entry and email them to [awards@lemosandcrane.co.uk](mailto:awards@lemosandcrane.co.uk) quoting ‘Growing Localities award entry’ and your organisation name in the subject heading.

If you have any problems uploading your entry please also email [awards@lemosandcrane.co.uk](mailto:awards@lemosandcrane.co.uk)

Thank you for your time and effort which is much appreciated. Good luck!