The City of London Growing Localities Awards 2014/15

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

   SHP Green Project

2. Describe your project in one sentence

   SHP’s Green Project enables people with complex needs to gain confidence and work towards their recovery by learning new skills, growing their own food, promoting biodiversity, and forging social networks within a structured, therapeutic and safe environment.

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

   The Green Project currently takes place across 8 SHP hostels for homeless people with complex needs, in two allotments in Redbridge, in community settings and at events. We also plan to start a Green project at one of our floating support services in south London.

4. What are the project’s objectives?

   SHP supports socially excluded people with complex needs around substance misuse, mental ill health, offending and homelessness, helping them gain the confidence and skills to overcome barriers to independent living and a better quality of life.
The project’s objectives are to help our clients:

- engage in healthy and meaningful activity
- learn new skills - gardening, organic food growing, cooking, creating natural habitats
- learn more about food and where it comes from
- train as peer mentors to help engage harder-to-reach clients
- to undertake further accredited training in horticulture, to increase their employability
- secure volunteering opportunities in the community to assist their reintegration into society
- see gardening/horticulture as a potential career
- forge social networks and learn social skills and team working
- broaden their horizons
- benefit from the therapeutic properties of horticulture
- encourage biodiversity in London

5. What are the project’s activities?

We engage a wide range of clients in our Green Project, who benefit from a variety of activities:

- Ongoing informal training in gardening/food growing skills/creating wildlife habitats
- Accredited 9-week in-house training (Level 1) in all aspects of gardening (e.g. composting; safe use of tools; organic pest/disease control; soil cultivation; sowing/propagation, etc.). Clients enrolled on this course, also receive training in First Aid and Health & Safety.
- Opportunities to enrol on external accredited horticulture courses at local colleges
- Peer mentor training for clients who have progressed within the project
- Training targeted community volunteers to run sessions with clients and help reintegrate them into society (e.g. those with experience in gardening and/or therapy)
- Training services staff so that they can run the project at their services
- Promoting social inclusion through volunteering opportunities in the community
- Finding work placements for participants
- Constructing bird boxes, feeders, bat boxes, and insect hotels
- Outings to Kew Gardens and other places of horticulturally educational interest
• Learning about different foods and how to cook and eat them (in order to help them vary their diet and eat more healthily)

• Involvement in awareness-raising about the benefits of growing your own food at public events

• Identifying public green spaces that clients can work in and where those without access to gardens can learn about horticulture and promote London’s biodiversity.

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

In the 2½ years of the project’s life, approximately 120 clients have engaged with the project as part of their journey towards recovery from chaos and trauma in their lives.

• ‘Psychologically Informed Environment’ – It is well-known that working outdoors with plants and soil has a calming and therapeutic effect on people – particularly those with complex needs and who are hard-to-reach (see Mind’s report on Ecotherapy - http://www.mind.org.uk/media/273470/ecotherapy.pdf). We offer our participants time before and after sessions to talk about how they feel and how the gardening work affects their mood. We find that in the course of the gardening sessions, clients are more likely to open up to the Green co-ordinator and some of the volunteers, perhaps because they do not associate them with clinical professionals or their support workers.

• Greater awareness of nutrition and the many benefits of growing your own food – In all the hostel projects that run the Green Project, residents plant, harvest, cook and eat the food they grow. They learn about nutrition and also the financial benefits of growing and cooking their food rather than relying on ready meals and takeaways.

• Increased self-confidence – We have observed that working in a safe, relaxed environment, nurturing plants and seeing them bear fruit can do much to increase a person’s self-confidence. Through the Green Project we have also managed to reach people who had become so isolated that they were afraid to leave their homes. Gradually, knowing they will be among friendly faces in a safe, non-judgmental environment, they have begun to attend regularly, overcoming lingering anxieties.

• Increased sense of responsibility/commitment – A key recovery skill is commitment – seeing something through from beginning to end. Many project participants have become
very involved in caring for their plants and enjoying the fact that they are responsible for their well-being.

- **Engagement with other SHP programmes** – It is sometimes a challenge to get our clients to engage with IT training or to attend employability workshops. We have found, however, that the Green Project acts as a ‘back door’ to other training. Once clients get involved in the project and want to find out more about plants or employment/volunteering opportunities, they are keener to learn how to use email and access the internet. Likewise, if they begin to consider a career in gardening/ground maintenance, they are encouraged to seek vocational/career advice at SHP, and learn how to use the computer for job searches and CV writing. Many of our clients have little or no knowledge of computers; but, as ever more functions and resources move online - such as bill-paying, welfare benefits, job search/applications, and communicating with statutory and other services – we want to ensure all of our clients become computer literate to avoid further exclusion from opportunities such as finding work, social contact, community activities, and savings to household budgets.

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

The SHP Green Project currently runs in 8 of our accommodation services, although clients from other SHP services – including our floating support services - also attend sessions at these ‘hubs’. We are keen to get more involvement from clients from our floating support services, and to this end are planning to create a Terrace Garden on the large balcony of our Westminster Floating Support service for people with mental health issues, and thus introduce a wildlife and food growing hub in the midst of a concrete jungle in Vauxhall (where the office is located). We plan to involve Westminster, Southwark and Lambeth clients (all of whom share the same building) in the development of the garden, including a sensory garden area, and will use it to teach them how to care for their own gardens (if they have them) or how to grow herbs and vegetables in window boxes. We also want to create a habitat for pollinating insects in order to increase London’s biodiversity.

We would use the grant money to:

- purchase timber, trellises, screws, bat boxes, topsoil, plants, and seeds
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 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

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