



## Case Study: Co-Options Ltd

***‘Having sustainable funding allows us to plan and develop with confidence and to take more financial risks. This in turn provides for more continuity and stability within the company.’***

***(John Turner, Co-Options Ltd)***

### **Tell us more about Co-Options....**

Co-Options was formed in 1989 to create alternative work opportunities for people with learning disabilities who wanted to work in open employment as opposed to the existing model of statutory day services.

Our aims and objectives are to provide businesses, employment and training opportunities, and active day services that include people with learning disabilities. We aim to be inclusive in all of our services and provide them based on the individual needs of people. We currently have eight diverse businesses as well as a supported employment team that offer direct support to sixty people with a learning disability during a typical week.

### **Where are you in terms of sustainability?**

We earn income from a variety of sources to develop sustainability. This includes money from local authorities for the provision of employment opportunities, from the sale of goods and services and grants from trusts and other funds. We consider our organisation as sustainable having been in existence for 18 years.

### **What you initially wanted to achieve and how you have done it. What were the main challenges?**

We wanted to develop a range of diverse social enterprises that were community based and provided the opportunity for people with learning disabilities to integrate into open employment. Our existing businesses range in diversity and include a bike shop, café, market garden, paper mache gift company, and several recycling businesses along with a leisure service and supported employment team. The common theme is that they are businesses with a high degree of public contact and have a capacity to generate income. The main challenges over the years have been to re-direct resources if necessary to new businesses and to close others that do not work.

### **What advice could you offer other organisations working towards sustainability?**

Don't empire build with time limited sources of funding such as European Social Fund or the National Lottery; they very quickly disappear. Do not stand still; be on the look out for the next potential opportunity. Try to establish a diverse range of sources of income generation. Do not be afraid to try, fail, and take risks.

### **Further details**

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