

Oxfam

Subject area

Project name: Oxfam Collects at Work

Institution: Birmingham City University

Summary

In March 2012, Oxfam worked in partnership with Birmingham City University to launch a scheme called 'Oxfam Collects at Work'. The scheme engages the University's employees in sustainability and environmental issues whilst at the same time raising money for Oxfam for its work overcoming poverty and suffering around the world.

Project partners

Oxfam and Birmingham City University.

The problem

Everyone has items cluttering up the house that they no longer need, but people find it hard to make time to drop these off at a charity shop or find another use for them. So instead the items are simply thrown away and usually end up going to landfill.

The approach

Oxfam Collects at Work provides a really simple solution to the problem of what to do with that sweater you no longer wear or that book you'll never get around to reading. The scheme encourages University employees to bring in unwanted goods into their workplace; Oxfam then collects them to sell them in our shops and raise the money we need for our projects. Oxfam provides co-branded marketing materials, an effortless online sign-up and a dedicated Oxfam Collects manager to make sure the scheme runs smoothly. Birmingham City University provides a collection point and a volunteer champion to help promote the scheme to their colleagues.

Our goals

- Make it more convenient and hassle-free for employees at Birmingham City University to de-clutter at home and donate their unwanted items to Oxfam
- Raise money to support Oxfam's work fighting poverty and achieving sustainable development for people living in poor communities
- Give more unwanted items a second life by reselling, reusing or recycling them
- Reduce the 1 billion items going into landfill each year
- Reduce the carbon footprint of University employees taking part in the scheme

Continued...



Company profile

- A global humanitarian, development and campaigning organisation working with others to overcome poverty and suffering
- In the UK Oxfam has around 700 high street shops selling donated fashion, books, music, homewares and new ethical products.

[View Oxfam Collects on the Green Directory](#)



EAUC Company Member case study

Obstacles and solutions

Obstacles	Solutions
Donors being reluctant or unsure about signing up to gift aid as part of the scheme (at no cost to a donor, gift aid allows Oxfam to claim an extra 25% from the government for every £1 raised from the sale of donated items).	To encourage employees to sign-up we emphasised in the launch communications how simple and quick the sign-up process is. We will also provide a twice-yearly personal impact report for each person who signs-up showing how much their donations have raised and examples of how Oxfam has used that money to fight poverty. Birmingham City University will also receive an impact report at an organisational level.

Performance and results

Since March 2012, Oxfam have collected 230 bags and will try and sell as many of the items in our shops. Even those items that we can't sell we will find a way of reusing or recycling them. For example, we send lightweight clothing to our social enterprise project in Senegal which provides employment for disadvantaged women and whose profits are invested in livelihood programmes run by Oxfam in West Africa. For more information on what happens to donated items see www.oxfam.org.uk/donate/donate-goods/what-happens-to-your-donation

For Birmingham City University, it provided an opportunity for employees to de-clutter, reduce their carbon footprint and feel that they are personally creating genuine impact.

"Staff have welcomed the scheme – it has created a real 'feel-good' factor around the institution and people are now competing to see if they can raise the most for Oxfam. People also find it convenient to drop stuff off more easily than going to their local shop" said Professor Fiona J. Church (Executive Dean, Faculty of Education, Law and Social Sciences)

Lessons learned

Previously, Oxfam have only offered Oxfam Collects at Work to large blue-chip companies. However, this project with Birmingham City University has proved that what makes the scheme a success is working in partnership with **any organisation** that shares an interest with us in sustainability, the environment and making a contribution to helping people living in poverty. It doesn't matter whether they are a university, college or company – the scheme is flexible enough to adapt to different sectors and has wide appeal.

Further information

- **Contact:** Sue Spencer, Oxfam, suespencer@oxfam.org.uk, 07780 747588
- **Website:** www.oxfam.org.uk/get-involved/how-your-company-can-partner-with-us/oxfam-collects-at-work



Registered Office : EAUC UK Office, University of Gloucestershire, The Park, Cheltenham, GL50 2RH
Tel : 01242 714321, info@eauc.org.uk, www.eauc.org.uk

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