**Research on community business success factors**

We are carrying out research on the success factors for community businesses in the [pub/transport/ housing sectors]. As part of this research, we would like to hear your experiences of running [name of business] and to discuss what you think has helped to make your business a success. We are also interested to learn how your business has overcome any challenges.

This research is being carried out by NatCen Social Research (NatCen) and WPI Economics. We are independent research organisations. You can find out more about us by visiting our websites: [http://www.natcen.ac.uk/](http://www.natcen.ac.uk/%20) and <http://wpi-strategy.com/>

Power to Change has asked NatCen and WPI Economics to carry out this research to help them with their work to support the growth of community businesses across England. You can find out more about Power to Change here: <http://www.thepowertochange.org.uk/>

**What will taking part involve?**

The research team would like to visit 12 community businesses to better understand the barriers and enablers to success. Taking part in the research is completely voluntary. If your community business agrees to take part, we would like your help with the following:

* **Four interviews with those involved in founding, managing or running the business** such as board members, staff and volunteers. We would like to speak to participants about their experiences of establishing and/or running a community business and the barriers and enablers to success.
* **One focus group with 6-8 customers.** We would also like to talk to customers of [name of business] so we can better understand what works well and less well about community businesses and the difference they make to communities. The research team would welcome guidance on how best to arrange the discussion.
* We ask that you **complete a short questionnaire** to help us to better understand your community business.
* The research team would also like to review a small number of documents related to your business such as published accounts or business plans.

Interviews will take up to 45 minutes and focus groups will last up to 1.5 hours. They will take place at a time and date convenient for participants between January and March 2017. Interviews can be carried out by telephone or face-to-face depending on the preferences of the staff member/volunteer. We would like to carry out the focus group with customers in person.

Community businesses will receive £500 as reimbursement for their time. Customers who take part in a focus group will receive £10.

Everything said in the interviews and focus group will be treated in the strictest confidence. We will ask permission to audio record the interviews and focus group so that there is a detailed and accurate record of what was said. The recording and full written version of the interview/focus group will be stored securely and only the research team at NatCen and WPI Economics will have access.

**How will the information be used by research team?**

NatCen and WPI Economics will use the information to produce outputs (such as reports) on the success factors for community businesses. This will include:

* A short case study **report focused on your community business**. This report is intended to showcase your business and highlight the factors which have helped to make it successful. The research team will check whether your business would like to be named in this report or to take part anonymously. The report will be shared with [name of community business] before it is published.
* The research team will also produce published reports that present the findings of the research from all 12 community businesses. The reports will not attribute findings to named community businesses.

The outputs may use quotes from interviews/focus groups, but individuals will not be named. While NatCen will take other steps to maintain anonymity, it is possible that some views may be identifiable in outputs due to the small size of the study and as some community businesses have chosen to be named as a case study. The researcher will discuss this with the participant and check they are comfortable with their contribution to the study.

**Sharing transcripts**

With permission the written version (transcript) of the interview/group discussion will be shared with Power to Change and stored in the UK Data Archive so it can be used for future research. The researchers will try to delete information from the transcript that could identify the participant. Participants do not have to agree to share their transcript.

**Next steps**

We hope that your organisation will take part in this important research. We will be in touch shortly to discuss your potential involvement and answer any questions you may have.