

## What is a Creative Timebank?

Please see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zpavP3S-jM> for a 7 minute video of the Leeds Creative Timebank. This will offer you a clear sense of what it is and how it works.

*'Every timebank transaction allows individuals to electronically request, offer, and pay for services in Hour Credits. When a member performs a task, he or she earns hour credits that may be banked for use at a later date or contributed to the time/bank for the development of communal projects. Timebank Hours can be earned and subsequently spent by anyone that needs support or has a project in hand – that is the great equalizer of a time-based currency – but those who might have a particular interest in our timebank are art students, artists, curators, critics, activists, theorists, historians of art, and other cultural practitioners.'*

Precedents vary from local experiments in Doncaster with a Time bank with around 120 members to much larger schemes that act like micro-currencies such as Ithica HOURS in New York. The proposed model of the Creative Timebank uses an on-line administrative database provided by Timebank On-line, which acts as a ledger of all hours traded by the members, but has been re-designed for specific use by the arts and cultural sector.

The proposed model seeks to provide the mechanism for a fully self-sustainable programme that will require minimal further funding. This is achieved, after this funded phase, by participants taking on the role of the 'timebroker', earning Hour Credits to co-ordinate and administer the timebank itself once operational. It will be a vital step in helping artists in the region to sustain their own practices and resilience within the wider network.

## Benefits

Example of the direct benefits for the individual practitioner could be;

- access to discrete skills and experience to pump-prime projects without immediate recourse to cash funding
- hands-on skills to help with the delivery of practical or curatorial projects such as design, software development, written review and critique or other professional skills
- young artist offering support to more established practitioner gaining specific mentoring in exchange
- creating an easy entry point into the creative network
- knowledge transfer to extend or re-position practice

## Core Values of the Creative Timebank

- The Time Bank is a working alternative to a failing cash-based economy and value system. It aims to build the new within the shell of the old.
- The scheme is for the creative community and ethics associated with the arts - including flexibility, transparency, free sharing of information, self-reflection and critique and the production of alternatives - are part of its values.
- We uphold a non-hierarchical, decentralised and contingent ethos that allows for, and expects, the maximum participation of those who join.
- The Time Bank is both the critique of, and creation of an alternative to, a system we believe is unsustainable. It should as such not to be seen as stop-gap measure during the recession but instead as an ambitious project to be appreciated as a thing-in-itself, not a means-to-an-end.

- These underlying ethics and core-values should themselves be understood as mutable and open to debate by participants in the scheme.

### Potential participants for the Creative Timebank

- Artists/creatives who are new to the city
- Existing established artists/creatives
- Young people coming into the discipline directly from arts based courses (visual arts, performing arts, new media, design etc) in HE. (College of Art, Met, Uni etc) ie 'emerging' practitioners.
- The wider creative industry, including suppliers of services and goods (ie architects, designers, technicians, photographers etc).
- People coming into the scheme from different disciplines and sectors, but who have a definite affinity with the values set out for the project
- Those involved in creative activity but who don't get paid, 'amateurs'
- Activists in relation to the triple crunch, e.g Transition Town/Leeds and Edible Cities supporters
- Anyone else who wishes to join who would further the core values.

### Background

In early 2009 Sue Ball and Sarah Spanton established a series of workshop discussion under the title of Climate for Change, discussing solutions for the interlinked credit, climate and energy crises, entitled the 'triple crunch' by the New Economics Foundation <http://neftriplecrunch.wordpress.com/>.

From these initial meetings a number of key areas were identified for further research and implementation including the ideas and practicalities of non-cash economy models such as guilds, LETS systems and Time Banks. A DIY working group was set up to discuss issues pertinent to non-cash economies including;

- different models of skills exchange
- the benefits of non-cash economies to the cultural and creative sector
- administrative and organising systems
- the potential for entrepreneurship and innovation using a skills exchange model
- philosophical/political discussion around 'value and worth', 'money and profit'.

From 2010-11, a pilot creative timebank was established with a small Arts Council Grants for the Arts Award and joining Timebank Online, the national agency for community timebanking. With 30 people participating, Leeds Creative Timebank was trialled for its potential for everyday use by individuals and organisations, and its impact on members and the wider network. The pilot demonstrated that it can

- establish a **sustainable and self regulating industry-specific mechanism** for the creative sector to strengthen professional skills and practice through reciprocal exchange,
- **refresh the role and impact of the arts** as a positive force for change in society
- increase fresh approaches, ideas and activities to take root through a **DIY and activist model**
- create the context for bringing people together with diverse communities of all sizes, developing gift economies and the creation of cultural and social capital.

### Reference Points

<http://leedscreativetimebank.blogspot.com/p/about.html>

<http://www.e-flux.com/app/webroot/timebank/about.html>