



Dovecotes Tenant Management Organisation

Board Skills Audit Report

June 2023

Introduction

The responsibilities of the management committee vary widely, and it is unlikely that each member will possess all the skills, experience and knowledge required. Indeed, some committee members may have been co-opted onto our board recruited specifically for their skills in a particular area. However, we must ensure that, as a collective, the committee holds the necessary expertise.

A skills audit is a tool to understand the skill set of our board members and identify any skill gaps that might need addressing such as further training, shadowing, or mentoring implemented in an action plan to address these.

What expertise is required

All management committee members will need to have or develop knowledge and experience of:

- The organisation's core business functions
- Organisational management
- Financial management
- Governance in the voluntary and community sector

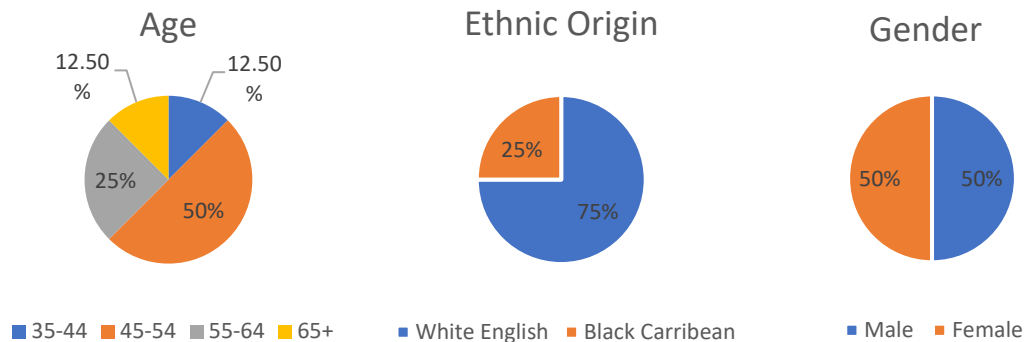
With specific expertise in the following areas:

- Chairing
- Employment issues/practice
- Evaluation and monitoring
- Financial management
- Fundraising
- Legal awareness
- Leadership
- Social Media
- Networking
- Organising events
- Policy making
- Promotion and marketing
- Strategic/operational planning
- Community Engagement

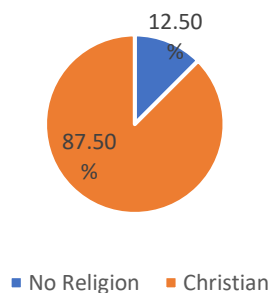
Our elected and co-opted board members play an important role in setting the strategic Delivery Plan through governance and decision making. In addition to the skills listed we feel it is important to have committee members who can provide perspectives through personal experience of the issues addressed by the organisation's activities.

Equality Data

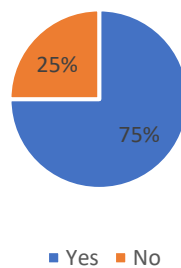
Dovecotes aims to have an inclusive environment for all staff and board members by identifying and removing barriers in our practices. In addition to the skills audit, all board members completed an equality monitoring form to help us achieve this and meet our obligations under the Equality Act 2010.



Religion



Has a disability



*Our equalities data shows that of our current board. We are aware that ONS data concerned with skills and qualifications will cover levels of higher education however, for the role of a board member vocational and sector related qualifications or certificates hold a higher level of significance. This category of data would be difficult to present given the plethora of disciplines for which board members are qualified and/or seeking training in.

Scope and Planning

The process of completing a skills audit is best following an Annual General Meeting, this helps in assessing newly recruited and existing board members. Unfortunately, due to conflicting priorities the skills audit didn't take place until January 2023.

The questions included in the audit were intended to identify what, if any, gaps exist on the board, not in individual members. The audit considered the skills, knowledge and experience the management board needs, what it currently has and, identify gaps revealing what to focus on. The audit will help the committee to develop strategies as well as realising the skills and expertise lost when members stand down.

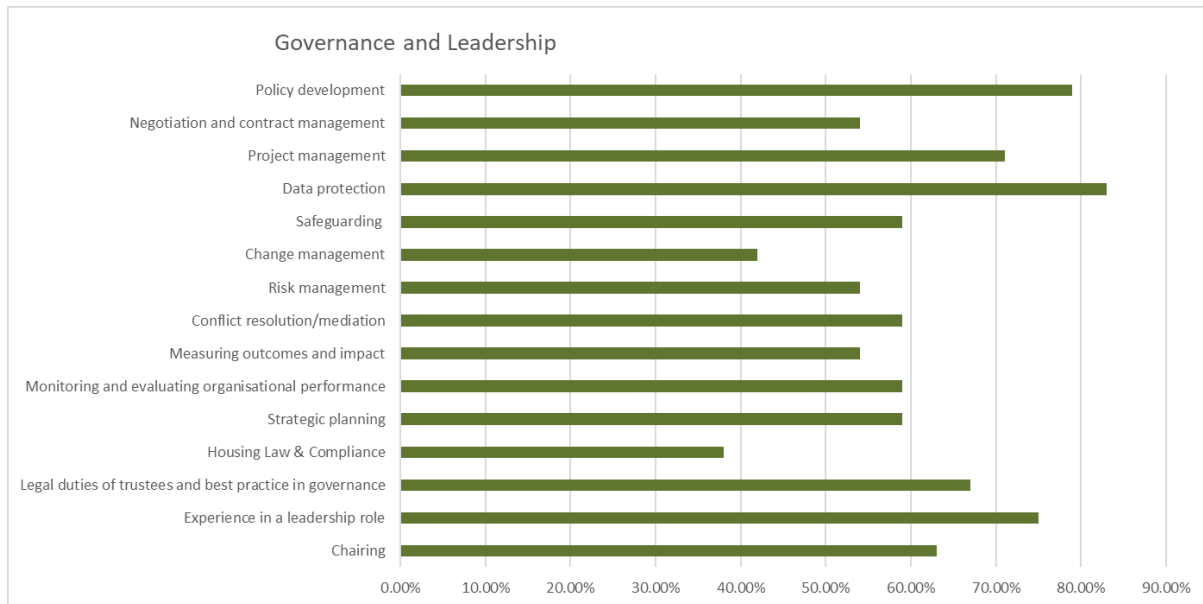
The audit covered 6 main areas.

1. Governance and Leadership
2. People
3. Finance
4. Operations
5. Digital & Marketing
6. Fundraising

Findings

1. Governance and leadership

This section relates to the core functions of the board to set vision, ethos, and strategic direction. Understanding strengths and weaknesses will help to build an effective board who provide confident, strategic leadership to the organisation; they lead by example and 'set the tone from the top'.



The data shows that the board scored highest in data protection, this may be because of our most recent policy review. Board members have discussed in detail confidentiality during the December 2022 Full Board Meeting. We are confident that we have a robust policy on data protection and confidentiality and that board members are informed, diligent and accountable in this area.

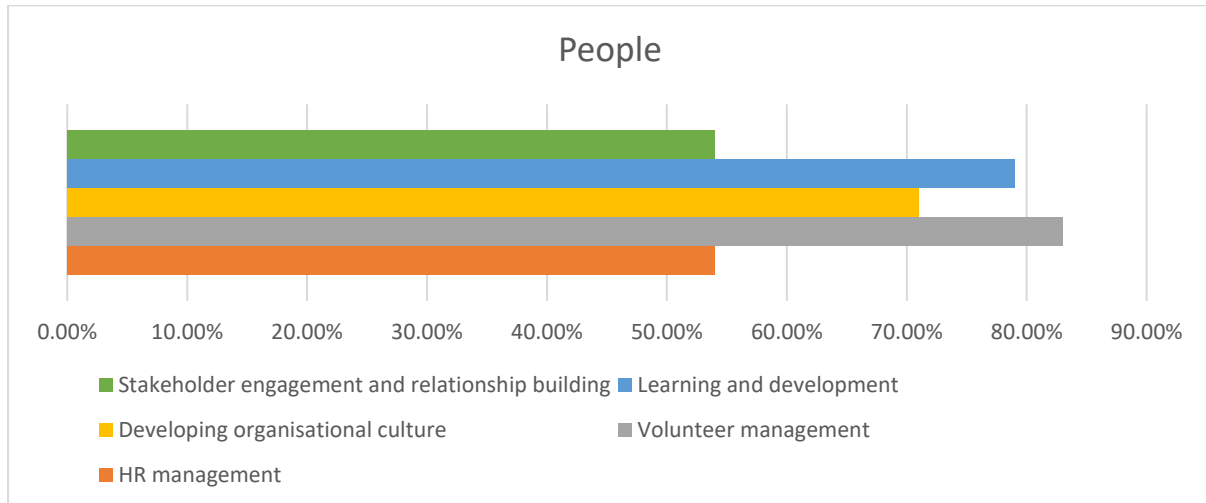
The board also scored highly in policy development, we recognise this as a strength because of the commitment and practices in reviewing, adopting, and implementing policies.

Both project management and experience in a leadership role have scored highly. The new system of electing executive roles annually and the vice/shadowing positions have supported members who have chosen to link with a mentor. This is further supported by the board succession strategy. It is noted that board members recently attended training on chairing skills and housing sector conferences furthering their skills leading to a higher score in this area.

The board scored lowest in housing law and compliance showing a weakness in this area. Comments from the audit show an interest in training. Similarly, there are lower scores in managing change and contract management/negotiation. There is a lack of skills and knowledge when dealing with overall change and management in their capacity as directors of the TMO.

2. People

The TMO employs 10 staff and is governed by 8 board members. To understand the strengths and weaknesses in this area will help the board to better govern the organisation and meet their statutory and legal responsibilities as an employer. This area is vital to the board in their interaction with staff, who provide the services of the TMO and deliver on the organisation's strategic goals and key performance indicators.

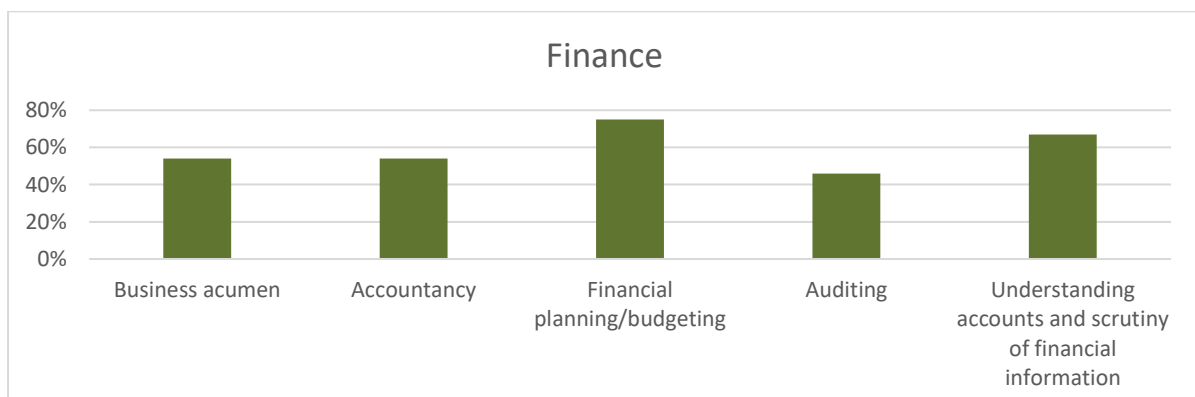


The board scored highest in volunteer management evidencing their skills and abilities to work as a team and actively challenge without conflict. This shows that in terms of compliance in volunteer administration the board are confident they do this well.

The board scored lowest in 2 areas; stakeholder management and HR management. Comments state that board members would like training in this area. The board need to improve their knowledge to better manage HR issues and their interactions with stakeholders. Understanding HR is not just about day-to-day staff management, it also includes the recognition of risks and the actions needed to mitigate them.

3. Finance

Board members must have a high degree of understanding and skills in financial matters of the TMO. We have financial procedures that dictate how the TMO must operate. It is essential for the board to understand these to ensure they meet their statutory responsibilities for the financial management of the organisation.



The board scored highest in financial planning and budgeting showing this as a universal strength. Similarly, understanding accounts and scrutinising financial information is built into the day-to-day

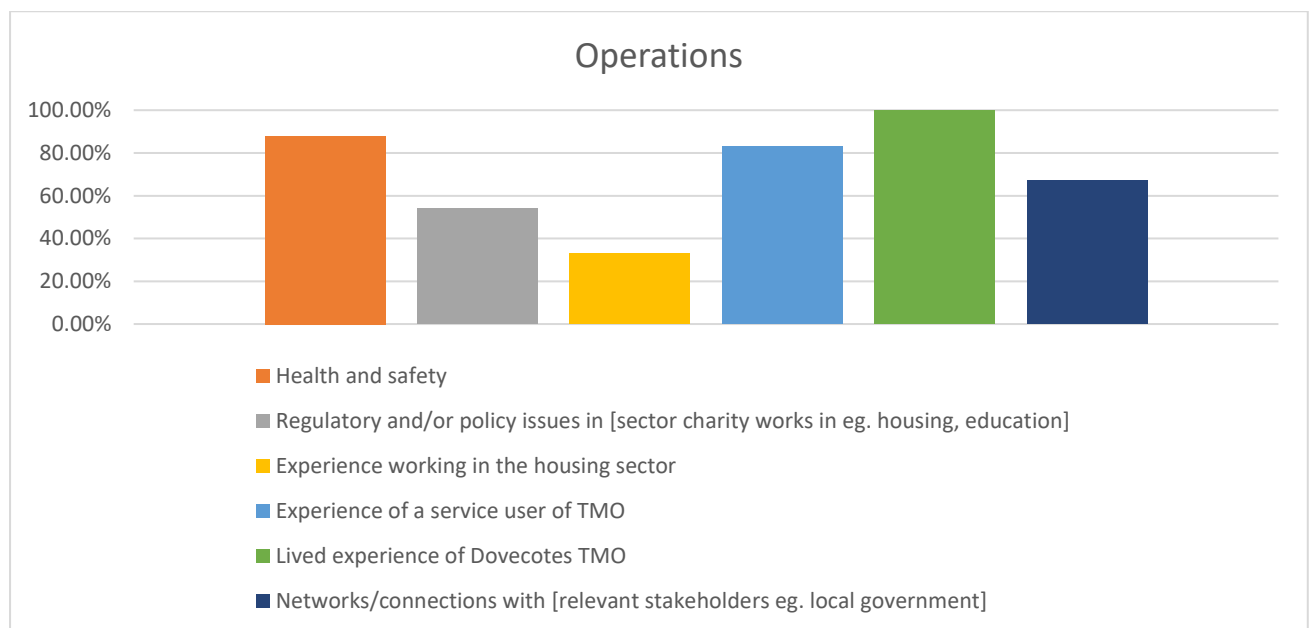
practices. This is achieved through monthly estimated draft report, quarterly treasurers reports and the weekly scrutinising and signing of all invoices.

The board scored lowest in auditing and business acumen. Business acumen is keenness and quickness in understanding and dealing with a business situation (risks and opportunities) in a manner that is likely to lead to a good outcome. It is a possible that this question may have been misunderstood when considering the high score in financial planning. However, a weakness in this area is a concern, especially when this relates to risks the organisation may face.

The TMO's finances are audited by an independent auditor who is elected by our members at the Annual General Meeting. Board members are not required to have high skills in financial auditing but should have a good understanding of the process. We have already made some headway in this area with the Treasurer attending a certified CPD course. We will further build on this with basic training for all board members.

4. Operations

Assessing board member skills in operational management helps to identify gaps in their skills and experience, to support the TMO in achieving its business goals and objectives. In this section we defined the skills and abilities most critical to Dovecotes. We are a local organisation led by local people who understand the business and have the right level of skills and lived experience to represent the customer base.



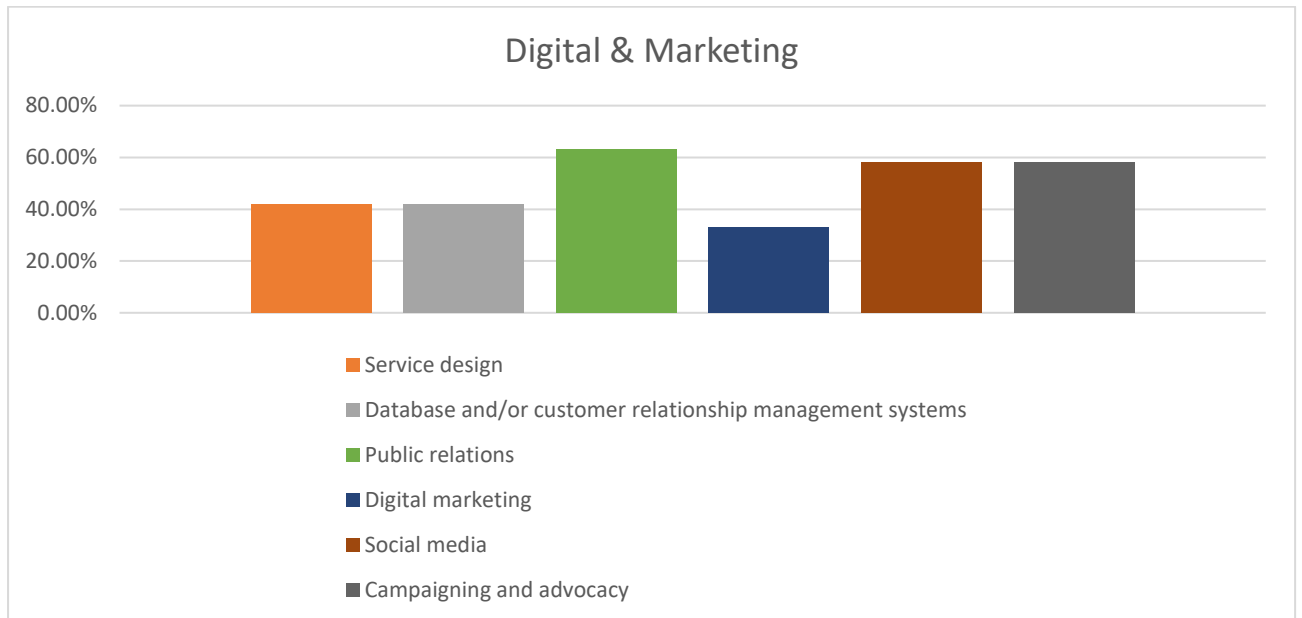
The board scored highest in lived experience of Dovecotes evidencing that our organisation attracts local people who have lived on the estate for a considerable time. The board also scored highly as a service user, their experience and knowledge in this area helps them when developing strategies and empathising with the customer. Health and safety also scored highly, further supporting our commitment to keeping everyone safe.

The audit identified that our board has little representation from those working within the housing sector. This is closely linked to the lower score early in the audit where it showed a weakness in board member knowledge of Housing Law. Though not an essential requirement of being recruited to the board, we recognise that this area shows that a more operational level of experience in

housing management is required. This will be resolved by implementing a shadowing process linked to working with employees and learning more about their roles.

5. Digital and Marketing

Marketing is an important aspect of the TMO and helps us to assess the boards level of skills and experience in everything from website design to social media accounts and content creation to identify any opportunities or areas for improvement.



Overall, the skills audit revealed generally lower scores than in any other area showing a deficit in skills, experience, and knowledge in this area. It is positive that the board scored highest in their advocacy and social media, this shows that although this is not necessarily a strength there is a good foundation to build skills further.

How and where we interact with tenants is vitally important. The Coronavirus Pandemic has changed the way that our tenants contact us. We connect with tenants through meetings, social media, our website, newsletters, and AGM's. Our methods have always been about connecting with tenants in the right place and at the right time. Today, that means that we need to meet them where they are already spending time. Board members are not required to have web design skills but, improving skills in analysing the information we share, how we share it, can help to support the organisation in moving forward into an ever more digital world.

6. Fundraising

As a community led organisation, we host events and provide opportunities to enrich the lives of our members. Fundraising for these events can be difficult but is essential for sustainability. Using this audit, we wanted to better understand the skills and experience board members have in attracting funding or fundraising externally. Expanding the boards skills in this area can help attract extra funding and support the organisation in achieving the objectives in our Business Delivery Plan.



The board scored highly in fundraising strategy, community fundraising and events fundraising. This is further evidenced by the events the TMO has delivered in the past. Though not reflected in this chart each board member has supported every event held by the TMO sacrificing their time outside of that which is expected as a board member.

Skills in attracting or applying for external funding scored lowest, this may be due to the fact that former applications for funding have been completed by the Chief Officer. This can easily be resolved through joined up working in this area.

What action is required?

Training is required focusing on HR, a low score in this area is a concern for the organisation and a specific field where external training will need to be procured.

We will increase the knowledge of our core functions by using our staff who have a good working knowledge of housing law and compliance. Board members will have the opportunity to shadow or attend sessions hosted by them. Some housing law and compliance training can be provided in house by the Chief Officer and Senior Officers.

We will introduce the use of a discussion jar; a tool where subjects relevant to the skills required are entered into the jar, members select a subject at random then research it together and discuss what they have learned.

To improve skills in contract management and negotiation, we will alternate the attendance of board members at the 6 monthly contractor management meetings; all contractors working on behalf of the TMO attend this meeting to review performance against key performance indicators, receive feedback and discuss our overall strategy. Board members will learn more about how we manage our contracts and expand their skills in their area

Our membership with external organisations also provides benefits and resources where members can attend sector specific training provided by TPAS, the National Resource Centre, CIH and the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations. We will use this to address skill deficits in all areas.

When will this be completed?

We aim to have made progress on most areas of weakness before the TMO Annual General Meeting in September 2023 using the action plan contained in this document. Members of the board have attended the NFTMO Conference where they undertook specific TMO workshops and seminars in relation to the low scoring skills audit areas.

When will the committee review progress & impact?

Monitoring the boards effectiveness is a key element of good governance. The board needs to assess its effectiveness, efficiency and, ensure ongoing compliance with its statutory and legal duties under review. Individuals should also reflect on their own contribution helping to create a stronger and more motivated board.

The skills audit will become part of the TMO's standard agenda item, discussing this monthly will illustrate progress against agreed targets, maintain momentum and encourage continuous improvement.

Key Area	Action	RAG Rating	Course Detail	Provider	Target Date
Governance and Leadership <i>Training required</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> housing law and compliance including director responsibilities Change and contract management 	Compliance - Secretary Training	High	Secretary Skills in a Community Group	Reed https://www.reed.co.uk/courses/secretary-skills-in-a-community-group-cpd-certified/278637	September 2023
	Contract Management	Med	Contract Management Course	E-learning 4 U https://www.reed.co.uk/courses/contract-management-course/305745#/courses/?keywords=effective%20contract%20management	September 2023
	Change Management	Low	Change Management: Managing Change and Continual Improvement	Janets https://www.reed.co.uk/courses/change-management-managing-change-and-continual-improvement/248859#/courses/?keywords=managing%20change	December 2023
	Housing Law	High	Discussion Jar	Chief Officer and Chair - Housing Law subjects entered a jar, members select a subject at random then research it together and discuss what they have learned 1 hour each Tuesday	Ongoing
	Contract Management	Med	6 Month Contractor Meeting	Board members invited to attend to learn more about how we manage our contracts. To ensure each board member has an opportunity to expand their skills in their area invites will be alternated.	December 2023
People	Stakeholder Engagement and Building Relationships	Med	Co-creation	Tpas - How Co-Creation Can Work 31/07/2023 - Is co-creation possible? What tools can help in co-creation? What obstacles can staff and residents face? What is the difference between co-creation versus co-production? https://www.tpas.org.uk/tpas-events/show/841	July 2023
	Managing People	High	Managing People Awareness	Erudition Ltd - https://www.reed.co.uk/courses/managing-people-awareness/302196#/courses/?keywords=managing%20people%20awareness	September 2023
	Stakeholder Identification	Med	Internal Session	Chief Officer to host a session with the board to help them understand what a stakeholder is and who are the stakeholders of Dovecotes TMO	August 2023
Finance	Financial Management	High	NFTMO Conference 23-25 June 2023	JerromsGCN Understanding and Managing a TMO's Finances.	June 2023
	Business Planning	Med	NFTMO Conference 23-25 June 2023	Business Planning for TMO's Masood Hussain session on business planning, goals, objectives	June 2023

	Auditing	Med	Internal Session	Session to be delivered by Martin Bradley JerromsGCN when discussing year end to provide board members with more information on the auditing process, legal responsibilities and how the role of a board members operates.	August 2023
Operations	Expanding housing operations knowledge	Med	Internal	Board members will select a champion role linked to the operations of the TMO. These will include voids, repairs, lettings and rents. The champion will spend 2 half day sessions with the Senior Housing Officer, Senior Maintenance Officer, and Housing Officers to learn more about the operational delivery of services and how the processes and policies come into practice. This will be completed in line with our Code of Confidentiality.	September 2023
Digital and Marketing	Web Design and making the most of online services	Low	Web Design: Creating Dynamic and Engaging Websites	Study Booth https://www.reed.co.uk/courses/web-design-creating-dynamic-and-engaging-websites/396997#/courses/web-design	October 2023
Fundraising	Applying for external funding	Low	NFTMO Conference 23-25 June 2023	Workshop – How to successfully secure external funding for your community projects.	June 2023