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What should we stock?

We are happy to share with you what our most borrowed items have been, in the natty little video below. Our clever IT/ Metrics Lead, Jeremy, has put some time into demonstrating that there's a definite difference between the warmer months, the colder ones and around Christmas. These are the things that are most in demand at the LGS, and that we've used as a guide to buying multiple items and prioritising the repairs for.

<https://public.flourish.studio/story/2835463/>

- **Nothing bigger than a car boot** It's very clear now, but we almost took on some oversized ladders and garden equipment before we realized, hang on, no one's going to be able to get them home. If you have a van, then delivering big beasties might be an option for you - let us know how it goes and we'll stick it in the resources!
- **Decide if you'll take petrol-powered items** Before we opened, the Edinburgh Tool Library announced it was going to phase out its petrol-powered appliances and we decided to follow their model. The downside is that many people feel that fuel-driven items have more grunt to them. There's also an argument that accepting these tools is valuable because it keeps them out of landfill. The counter argument is, obviously enough, that electric devices mean that you're not consuming fossil fuels, or enabling it in your community. It also will make things smoother in terms of your insurance - storing any kind of fuel on your premises will involve a whole new tier of negotiations.
- **Invest in one attention-grabber item** if you can. We got this great advice from Buy Nowt LG6 (<http://buynowt1s6.com/>). Buy Nowt recommended a pizza oven, which we got and put in the window. It absolutely did the trick of getting people in the door, interested, and then looking around at what else we had. Depending on your

- community, your attention grabber might be a thermal imaging camera, a pop-up gazebo, or a giant connect 4 set - test what gets people going oooooohhhh.

- **Your community will surprise you.** Once you start operating, there will be an item that you didn't expect to be a big deal, that people will absolutely love. For us it was giant Jenga. We opened with 2 donated sets, which we thought was most likely one set too many. It turns out, it wasn't enough - we now have 3 sets of Giant Jenga, and over summer they are out constantly. Who would have thought? Track your 'most borrowed' stats, and be open to sourcing more of what is popular.

However much we'd like to give you a definitive list of what people want to borrow, it's going to be different where you are. We are very clear that a lot of our success has been down to explicitly 'growing from the soil we're planted in'. Using our guide, or a similar list from a similar project will be a great base, but our advice is always to consult with your community. It's a good opportunity to publicise your project, and also build buy-in. This is useful not just because you then get to say 'look what you told us you're excited about borrowing!' to your public, you also get to say to your potential funders, 'look at the demand coming in from the public!'. Below are a few examples of this kind of out-reach we did. We're excited to add examples from other groups on here.

- **Festival Stalls** - Your council's community engagement team (which they will have, but might be called something different), local Business Development team or other will have a schedule of events. Sharing a table with a sympathetic group or paying for your own is a great way to put yourself in front of the public. Some more good advice we had was to invite people to write what they'd like to borrow on post-its, then stick them on a big poster. It makes for

a fun activity on the day, and a really excellent graphic that made persuasive arguments for our initial funders.



- Online Survey** - This was more option-based than the suggestions of the poster. We cobbled together a list from the most popular items we found on other LoTs sites, and then invited people to vote for their top 5 favourites. We publicised this on our social media channels, pointed people to it at festivals, and generally pushed it everywhere we could. We originally went with a dedicated free platform, which seemed good until we realised that it charged to see your own results - something to look out for in general (we paid up and now use Google Surveys instead). This again gave us more content to reflect back to the community that

they were included in building the Shed, and more ammo to put in front of funders.



- **Approach community groups** We set up meetings with different community groups in our area and asked, 'What would you like to have access to, but not want to have to buy or store?'. We talked to a lot of organisations, some of whom understood what we were getting at, and some of whom didn't. One group that did was Up on Downs (<https://upondowns.com/>), parents of Down's Syndrome kids who get together for events and support. Their answer was a silent disco, which came as a surprise. But we managed to find funding (a sympathetic councillor's locality budget), and now Up on Downs uses it regularly, other borrowers enjoy it the rest of the time, and we have a really good story about how the Shed supports specific parts of the community.