Empowering Inclusion:

Toolkit for Black and Racially Minoritised led Social Enterprises

Co-Created by Anglia Ruskin University,

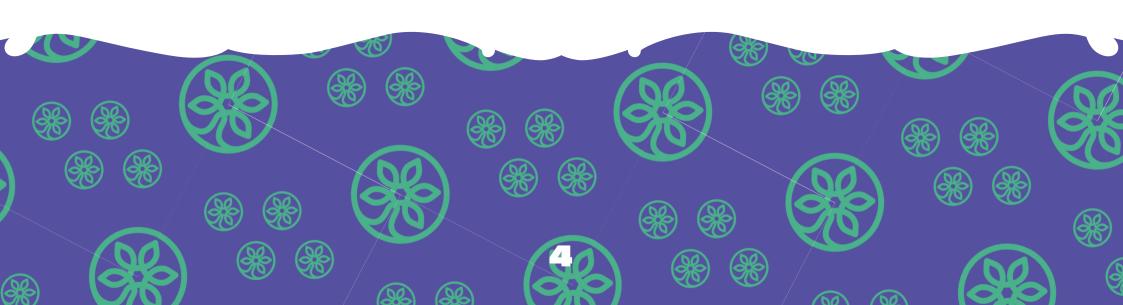Oxford Community Action and University of Greenwich

Contents:

*"There are **131,000** social enterprises in the UK, with a collective turnover of **£78 billion** and a workforce of 2.3 million."*

(Social Enterprise, UK)

About the Toolkit

The scope of the toolkit is to serve as both a practical guide and a theoretical framework, empowering Black and racially minoritised groups to navigate the complexities of establishing and sustaining social enterprises, highlighting the importance of:

- Social enterprises in promoting social justice, economic empowerment, and community development.
- Inclusive leadership practices for democratic decision-making processes.
- Sustainable strategic objectives.
- Building partnerships with other organisations, including universities, non-profit organisations, and local councils.
- Training and resources for developing entrepreneurial skills within Black and racially minoritised communities.
- Continuous engagement with communities, ensuring that their voices remain central to the mission and activities of the enterprise.
- Ensuring that social enterprises reflect the needs and aspirations of the people they aim to serve.

The Concept of Social Enterprises

Social enterprises combine entrepreneurialism with a commitment to societal goals. While there is no single model for social enterprises, they are primarily focused on creating social impact rather than generating profit for owners or shareholders. Innovation, transparency, and accountability are major characteristics as profits are typically reinvested to advance their social objectives.

"Social enterprises are businesses which trade for a social or environmental purpose. There are more than **131,000** *social enterprises in the UK, with a collective turnover of* **£78 billion** *and employing around* **2.3 million** *people. Social enterprises demonstrate a better way to do business, one that prioritises benefit to people and planet and uses the majority of any profit to further their mission. Social enterprises contribute to reducing economic inequality, improving social justice and to environmental sustainability."*
(Social Enterprise, UK)

The Making of the Toolkit

The toolkit is the outcome of a pilot qualitative case study that examined the transition of certain functions within Oxford Community Action (OCA) from a community group to a social enterprise, within the framework of Community Wealth Building.

The team conducted:
- 10 interviews with members of OCA management team and volunteers.
- To gain a better understanding of current policies and trends, the team also conducted 6 interviews with key informants from Oxford City Council and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector in Oxford.

The co-creation of the toolkit took place in four stages:

Stage 1

- Research design
- Data Collection

Stage 2

- Data analysis
- Identification of main themes

Stage 3

- Webinar 1: Consultation with OCA management team

Stage 4

- Webinar 2: Community experts
- Co-creation of Toolkit

About the Case Study Organisation: Oxford Community Action (OCA)

OCA was formed in 2019/2020 as a Black and racially minoritised led grass-roots community organisation which works with diverse new and emerging multi-ethnic and Migrant worker communities in Oxford.

OCA's primary aim is to support new and emerging Black and racially minoritised communities, alongside more established multi-ethnic communities in Oxford, in addressing and overcoming barriers created by structural inequalities, such as labour market and ethnic health disparities. These barriers prevent individuals and communities from realising their full potential and from achieving equal representation and participation as active citizens within UK institutions and wider civil society. OCA promotes community development, social inclusion, and social justice for diverse, multi-ethnic communities.

Where Communities Thrive

Some of OCA's main achievements:

- **Volunteer Mutual Aid-led Covid-19 Response:** In 2019, OCA launched a culturally sensitive, volunteer-led food redistribution service, reducing stigma for socially excluded groups who had not been using mainstream food banks in Oxford.

- **Promoting Racial and Social Justice:** The disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on Black and racially minoritised communities, along with the 2020 murder of George Floyd, exposed structural inequalities and systemic racism, shaping OCA's mission to promote racial and social justice.

- **Addressing Health Inequalities:** In 2021, in collaboration with Healthwatch Oxfordshire, OCA published Oxford's New and Emerging Communities Views on Wellbeing and produced films on the lived experiences of multi-ethnic women's maternity care in Oxford.

OCA Activities:

- **Uncover Community Thoughts:** Wellbeing; Maternity Experiences in the NHS; Men's Health Research
- **Recognise New Possibilities:** 55th Oxford Scouts Group; UpSkillet; Mental Health First Aid Course
- **Create Joyful Memories:** Food Redistribution; Eid Extravaganza; Claudia Jones Book Club
- **Tackle Concealed Inequalities:** Monthly Community Hikes; Camping Retreat; Children's Holiday Activities
- **Feed Others While Feeding Yourself:** Free Meal Tuesday; Hire Our Catering Services; Community Café

OCA Kitchen as Social Enterprise –
"Feed Others While Feeding Yourself"

OCA has recently embarked on developing its OCA Kitchen Initiative as a **Social Enterprise (Community Business)** arm to facilitate in the long term greater financial stability, self-determination and less dependence on local authority/grant funding which in a period of austerity economics is already much diminished.

"So **social enterprise** is a business that helps to address social issues. And that means usually a not for profit organisation that will run these things, that will put together the business acumen and then help to address these issues by creating a business, creating money to then be redistributed back into the communities that need it the most." **(OCA Director)**

Support for the initiative

"The first time I heard it, I was very confused, I'm not going to lie. I didn't know what it was... And as a volunteer I didn't know what it was until they explained to me. So it's literally creating a community space where they can create different types of food and re-sell it and use that same money back into the community which was like WOW!, that's a really nice idea because they do so much for the community. So rather than asking money 24/7 from the council, this is a very good idea to bring the money back to the community."
(OCA female community volunteer)

"*The main priority is* **bringing the community together.** *They've done a lot of activities for the kids. So the minorities who have not even swum in their life have gone for swimming every single day in the summer activities. They bring in different backgrounds together so people learn different cultures, learn different languages with each other. But the main priority is building them, bringing different cultures together, mostly minorities.*"
(OCA female volunteer)

Four Core Principles from the Social Enterprise Toolkit
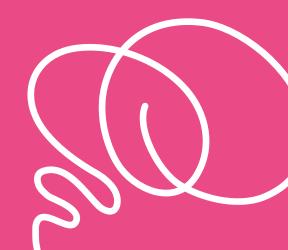
Findings from our case study research and Webinar discussions identified four main principles in the establishment of Black and racially minoritised led social enterprises.

Key Theme 1 - Transitioning

Key Theme 2 - Racial Justice/Social Justice - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Key Theme 3 - Legitimacy

Key Theme 4 - Sustainability

Key Theme 1 – Transitioning

In our case study the Transitioning period was identified as essential as it laid the foundations and prepared the community organisation to shape its operations, define partnerships and adapt to the new challenges and opportunities. An important feature of this transition was OCA's recent emergence and growing recognition by big institutional *'anchor organisations'* (Oxford University, NHS Integrated Care Board, Oxfordshire NHS Trusts, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council), of OCA as a **Community Anchor Organisation** (such as OCA's role in the Owned By *Oxford Community Wealth Building Partnership*).

The transformation occurred in response to funding challenges as one of OCA's directors explained:

*"So at **OCA** we have set up a social enterprise and that was in response to the lack of government grants available to support the food redistribution service that we have to pay for (£800 a month). We also made access to the food redistribution very accessible for people by not charging much or even at all. We asked people to donate £1 per bag which can cost between £25 and £35 per bag depending on what's in it."*
(OCA Director)

Main transition features:

- Transitional steps – establishing how the new OCA Kitchen Social Enterprise works.

"So what we've done is set up the Social Enterprise. We teamed up with [a local café] to offer food to customers. We sell this food and then with the money that we generate from this we are able to support the financial side of the food redistribution services that so many families are reliant on each week." **(OCA Director)**

- Diverse diasporic community resources – Diverse diasporic Community Chefs.

"Because of the resources that we have amongst our communities we are able to make this quite an interesting thing. So what we've done is we trained up chefs that come from various parts of the world. We had an initial circle of 12 different chefs that came and trained up in food hygiene certificates. And once they had that knowledge and then we were able to get them employed into our kitchen to then present favourite dishes from their own respective communities and serve this food to the public so that we can generate income to help support our other initiatives". **(OCA Director)**

- Delivering Social Impact

"And this is what we call a social enterprise. Yes it's still a business, it's still generating money but it's looking at what sort of impact we have within the communities. And making sure that we address those social issues within the communities." **(OCA Director).**

Key theme 2: Racial Justice/ Social Justice- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

A clear finding from our research showed the importance of remaining faithful to community principles. The emergence of social enterprises developed and led by ethnically diverse Black and racially minoritised community members to address entrenched structural inequalities is an increasing trend within the UK's voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. **Social Enterprise UK** in its *'State of Social Enterprises Survey'* (2019) in making the case for UK social enterprises being more proactive champions of equality, diversity and inclusion in comparison to small medium enterprises, stated, that:

"13% of social enterprises are BAME led and 35% have BAME directors making social enterprises much more representative of the population as a whole...42% of BAME social enterprises are under three years old"
(State of Social Enterprises Survey, 2019)

Black Lives Matter and
Black Led Social Enterprises

Black and racially minoritised led social enterprises have gained greater prominence as part of the **Black Lives Matter** social movement response to racial injustice highlighted by the murder of **George Floyd** in 2020, alongside the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on Black and minoritised communities.

Thus, **Lord Victor Adebowale**, a former chair of Social Enterprise UK, strongly advocates for Black and minoritised led social enterprises to be part of post pandemic efforts to 'build back fairer'.

In 2020 he said: *"If we are to recover in any meaningful sense, structural inequalities must be addressed urgently, starting with safeguarding economic and social opportunities that benefit BAME people...Some 20 per cent of the UK's social enterprises – businesses which trade to deliver their social or environmental mission – are based in our deprived areas. One in eight are led by BAME chief executives and directors, compared to one in 20 SMEs."* **(Lord Victor Adebowale, 4th June, 2020)**.

OCA's diverse mix of volunteers, diaspora communities and social leaders:

"It's mixed, you've got Arabs, Asians, English, Romanian, there's different people here that come through, both men and women."
(OCA female volunteer)

"So we have a mixture of people from different backgrounds...people from Sudan, Pakistan, India, different nationalities. We have the Caribbean communities...Jamaica, St Vincent, St Lucia. So we cover Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Algeria, Morocco, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Portuguese, Spanish, British. Especially we have a group of over 50's...they are coming every week so we cover a whole range of communities...We are seeing a lot of nationalities, all over the world. Because OCA supplies food to everybody not just one nationality. We're talking about the British, the Asians, all Africans, so we cover a wide range of communities."
(Male OCA Food Redistribution volunteer)

Key theme 3: Legitimacy

The increasing prominence of community-based organisations in providing social goods raises questions around their legitimacy i.e. their right to represent a community and act on its behalf.

This can be understood in many ways and is highly contested. We contrast a formal and procedural approach with a normative approach based on behaviours and outcomes. The former is based on adherence to rules and formal reporting structures.

The latter is about demonstrating behaviours and practices which embody the values of the communities served and developing a track record of delivering benefits for those communities.

However, it should be noted that communities are complicated and different parts of a community will have very different interpretations of its values.

Furthermore, different audiences view legitimacy through different and potentially contradictory perspectives which can be problematic for community-based organisations. For example, funding bodies and regulators will focus on procedural legitimacy whereas many communities are more likely to be interested in normative legitimacy.

A strong emergent theme from the lived experience testimony of the OCA community volunteers who participated in this case study is how OCA's creation of legitimacy is dynamically linked to its grass-roots harnessing of diverse **Multi-Ethnic** social networks/social capital.

Exploring and understanding how grass-roots social leaders and social entrepreneurs develop and harness legitimacy for their organisations is an under-researched but increasingly important area of inquiry.

Discussing the implications and importance for grassroots organisations of creating forms of 'internal and external legitimacy', Laura M. Van Oers et al, state:

"Grassroots groups are often fragile as they depend on voluntary work and rely on generosity and trust between strangers…Grassroots groups need to raise monetary support, secure permission to operate and attract members. Throughout, they must safeguard commitment and solidarity of their members and gain support from actors outside the community as there is a limit to how much groups can achieve on their own. Then again, resource acquisition and membership retention are likely to be difficult due to the organisation's position outside the mainstream. Operating in niches, grassroots communities initially suffer from a 'liability of newness', and their activities may be perceived as "'strange', 'inappropriate' or 'out of place'" **(Van Oers et al, 2018).**

Legitimacy and acceptance:

"I'm not saying that OCA has got it all right. They make a lot of mistakes, but I notice that they produce food every week, and do their best to make a lot of bags comparably similar. I know there's some favouritism goes on and little perks for volunteers and so on. I'm not averse to that. Leaders have to make decisions about how they reward volunteers, within a small framework really."
(Female, OCA Food Redistribution volunteer)

Legitimacy and values:

"The main purpose and the social mission of OCA is to reach out to the less privileged...Until I started with OCA I never knew that there are some people that don't have food to eat. But when I started working with OCA, then it made me to see in a different dimension, all the different skills, what OCA is about and the suffering of the people. So that's why I really stuck in and I'm happy and I enjoy doing it."
(Male, OCA Food Redistribution and OCA Kitchen volunteer)

Legitimacy and serving the disadvantaged:

"Yes, what I see in OCA is that it's got the seeds of a viable protagonist for when councillors can't stay on track as to what they're there for. And the food, giving the food to hungry people including people who haven't got transport to carry it and what have you. It's such a grounding, so it's a basic need being met."
(Female, OCA community volunteer)

Legitimacy and future employment opportunities :

"I think it also gives more opportunity to people like the OCA Kitchen, young people to bring their start-up companies to promote their business, also to see that there are people like the OCA kitchen and stuff. I've seen people from different communities coming and eating, Asians coming and eating Nigerian food. I've seen, it shows better the solidarity between the communities to me. Because in my normal time I wouldn't imagine that would happen, but now I'm there seeing it. It shows that communities are willing to help each other, are willing to come, willing to benefit from the opportunities given."
(Young male, OCA Kitchen and OCA holiday activities volunteer)

Key theme 4: Sustainability

As businesses driven by a social purpose and social or environmental mission Social Enterprises are often cited as vehicles for promoting sustainability. The Social Enterprise UK and British Council Report – *'Think Global Think Social: How Business with a Social Purpose Can Deliver Sustainable Development (2015),* states:

"Like other businesses, social enterprises create revenues, jobs and profits but their main objective is to create social value and transform lives for the better."

The three key forms of sustainability - 1. Social, 2. Environmental and 3. Financial were discussed and referenced consistently by different participants of this case study, as set out below. And, it is worth noting for instance, the case study participant's presentation of vibrant grass-roots social networks – that is forms of social capital and community solidarity, as an enabler of social sustainability.
In relation to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), our findings show that OCA's social enterprise work relates to: 1,2,3,5 and 10 Goals.

Sustainable community relations:

"The Food Bank brings a lot of communities together. They get to know each other, they get to know the place. Just each activity brings different communities, brings the communities, the young kids who come from immigrant families who haven't enough exposure. Doing these activities makes them more exposed to everything, going to the museum, learning about Oxford as a city. I feel like they have become more, let me not use the word 'exposed' again, but more used to the environment, more connected to the environment. They feel more, they will understand how to live here better."
(Male, OCA Food Redistribution and Holiday Activities volunteer)

Sustainability by limiting waste:

"I'd say that **OCA** *is in a very good position. In terms of food, people need to learn that beans and rice and vegetables can all be very tasty. And that meat, however it's prepared and fish and chicken, should be removed from the diet, however many generations that takes. Because the earth can't sustain the livestock, deforestation and all the rest of it...And anything you look at, you see waste, huge amounts of waste. Whether its stuff, wood, whether it's learning, people have learnt stuff and they're not in a position to use it. The greatest objects of waste are humans that haven't got opportunities or encouragement. We're the most advanced species on the planet, and we have difficulty looking after our own let alone anything else. Sustainability, avoiding waste, avoiding things that do waste."*
(Female, OCA Food Redistribution Volunteer)

"Yes, exactly, it's recycled. So the left-over food from the **Food Bank** *they cook it again to gain money from the people that are convinced about the programme. So because money is being raised by the Kitchen, it's getting there. From the money from the well-wishing people who donate for the Kitchen."*
(Male, OCA Kitchen Volunteer)

Sustainability and human resources:

"But what I love about **OCA** *as a company in general is that they are not biased. So whoever wants to volunteer, whoever wants to help out is never denied an opportunity to come and help us. So I believe they will never lack any human resources for the organisation, even though the finances are limited. I believe they will always have enough human resources. But the bigger they become I think it's better for them to have a financial ..."*
(Male, OCA Holiday Activities Volunteer)

Sustainability and financial security:

"For us, I know we have the structure, what we are lacking is the finance, it comes back again to finance. Because if we have the finance, we have the power to sustain, because the structure that has been put in place now is very good. People that are working...people are not being paid. But the work effort they put in is unbelievable. So, this comes down to finance, if we have finance, we go a long way."
(Male, OCA Food Redistribution volunteer)

Conclusion

This toolkit for **Black and racially minoritised led social enterprises** foregrounds local grass-roots leadership, self-determination, nurturing of collective agency and the harnessing of skills, talents and community assets.
The case study organisation Oxford Community Action's diverse 'diaspora space' social networks link the local to the global promoting co-operation, mutual aid and community wealth building as part of a broader solidarity economy eco-system.

References:

Hossein, C. S. (2020) 'Racialized People, Women, and Social Enterprises: Politicized Economic Solidarity in Toronto', *Feminist Economics,* 27(3), 21–50.

Van Oers, LM, Boon, W.P.C., Moors, Ellen H.M. (2018) 'The creation of legitimacy in grassroots organisations: A study of Dutch community-supported agriculture', *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions,* Volume 29, 2018, Pages 55-67.

Useful Resources:

Oxford Community Action

UBELE

Social Enterprise UK

Nourishing Economics

Businesses with a social purpose: the School for Social Entrepreneurs

Owned by Oxford Community Wealth Building Partnership

Narotzky, S. (ed.) (2020) Grassroots Economies: Living with Austerity in southern Europe, London: Pluto Press

Spence, Lester K., Knocking the Hustle: Against the Neoliberal Turn in Black Politics (Brooklyn, NY: Punctum Books, 2015)

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