**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **Should I start my own Bagshare?**

Bagshare is about taking action to help create a plastic bag free shopping precinct. Containing non-plastic reusable shopping bags, Bagshare bins are located in your local shopping centre, so that local residents can borrow and return them. Plastic shopping bags stored at home are recycled. Residents no longer use plastic shopping bags from local stores.

To achieve this Bagshare vision, you will need to set-up and lead a local Sustainability Action Group for at least a year or two, or affiliate closely with already established groups such as Residents or Progress associations. You will also need to have a succession plan in mind so that if you decide to step down the Group can sustain itself. However, remember: even with a successful Bagshare programme, you will only ever help eliminate plastic shopping bags. Other plastic bags will still be in circulation, such as plastic bin liners and plastic food bags, for example.

1. **What else should I consider before starting my own Bagshare right away?**

Ask yourself if you will have the time, interest, experience and network support to get behind your own local Bagshare initiative. Aside from chairing a monthly General Meeting for Bagshare members, you will also need to field emails and / or telephone calls from volunteers to facilitate their progress if they unexpectedly need help. You will also need an interest for Sustainability. If you have already phased out plastic shopping bags in your own home or business, then it is likely that you understand the process and have realistic expectations. You will also need experience in general administration and you may have already been recently active in the leadership of a local community or student group. If you have friends with similar sustainability interests who perhaps have also phased plastic shopping bags out of their lives, and they have the free time, interest and experience you might also have a network. If you have considered all these factors, then it will be easier for you to start up your own Bagshare.

1. **How do I set-up my own local Sustainability Action Group?**

Start by planning, promoting and running a local Bagshare event with as its focus a plastic bag free community. Invite guest speakers who are subject matter experts to your event and who can promise to support you through the initial pilot stage of your own Bagshare program. Before sending out invitations to guest speakers, call them to see if they are willing and able. A good place to start is the Australian Conservation Foundation. To promote your event, start by getting in touch with your local community newspaper and make yourself available for an interview. Invite a journalist to the event as well and make sure you keep the journalist updated on new news as it occurs throughout the course of your Bagshare program. Now you are ready to send out invitations to the community for the event.

If you are successful in inviting a large enough group of people in the local community to attend your event, and they are sufficiently enthused in their own right with the potential for a plastic shopping bag free community, then you will have the numbers to form your own local Sustainability Action Group. Founding members should pay membership fees now. Deposit the fees in a dedicated bank account and incorporate the Group immediately.

1. **I have a local Sustainability Action Group, how do I get my Bagshare programme fully funded?**

Write up a short business case for a local Bagshare programme and in it outline the costs as well as the benefits for the local community. Consider designing a Bagshare logo and contact IP Australia to see if it is worth trademarking. Sketch designs for your Bagshare bins and bags photocopy clippings of your appearances in the local press and create a fully costed budget. Now approach the local council and local businesses with these materials and ask for a grant and sponsorship funds. To your local Council member, suggest a Sustainability Levy on homeowners if one does not already exist, with some of the revenue going to fund your Group’s Bagshare program. Approach every shopkeeper via your members and ask for sponsorship of your Bagshare programme. Use regular newsletters and media releases to report on progress and to help insure future funding occurs.

1. **What should my Bagshare budget include?**

At the very least, your budget should include the out-of-pocket costs for the initial Bagshare event, the Bagshare project and the General Meeting activities. Bagshare project activities that should be costed include design and production costs for the Bagshare bins, Bagshare bags, Bagshare labels (for donated bags) as well as web site hosting fees. It should also include the revenue generated from membership fees, a share of the Council’s Sustainability Levy on local rate-paying householders and from local shopkeeper sponsorships

1. **What kind of capabilities should my Bagshare volunteers have?**

Aside from the capabilities required for the general administration of the Group, you will need a Bagshare project manager who can construct a Project Plan and manage time, budget and scope. Be willing to network and ask sponsors for their assistance if you need help. For example, a local accountant might be willing to act as your pro bono Treasurer.

1. **Where should my Bagshare Bins be located, and how many Bagshare bins are needed?**

You will need to get in contact with local Council, shopping centre management and independent retailers to arrive at an agreement on where to place Bagshare bins. By now, you have already established these relationships. You should negotiate with the local supermarket and with local shopping centre management to place a bin at the appropriate entrances, including the entrance to the shopping centre from the car park (if there is one). Whilst initially you may begin with one or two Bagshare bin locations, over time consider expanding the number of bin locations for greater effect. *[Link to photos of the placement of the bins in Lane Cove]*

1. **Where can my Bagshare bags come from?**

Your Sustainability Action Group will need to source their own Bagshare branded reusable bags for the Bagshare bins and members and the local community may donate any that they have spare. The Bagshare system relies on community goodwill so that bags borrowed are returned for others to use. People may often have surplus bags at home and be very happy to donate them to a Bagshare Bin.

1. **Will people return my Bagshare bags?**

Yes. To ensure that the supply of bags is maintained, your Sustainability Action Group will need a member to check the bin daily and report back if none are available since this may suggest that more Bagshare bags are needed or more community participation is needed. Check that the Bagshare bags, labels and bins clearly communicate that the bags are intended for community use, and should be returned when the shopping trip is finished. In addition, you will also need to get in touch with the local media and other like-minded community groups to create the awareness that local residents must return their Bagshare bags to participate properly in the programme.

1. **How successful can my local Bagshare programme be?**

Careful management is key. The most important things to get right in combination are: 1) the number of Bagshare bags, 2) the number and location of Bagshare bins and 3) the amount of community participation.

Good luck with your very own local Bagshare programme!