

Creating Ground

# My Creative Skills Toolkit



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**Section A:**

**About the  
Toolkit**

# Introduction

The Toolkit involves research collaboration between Creating Ground and the University of Greenwich. The 'My Creative Skills' project (January to July 2020) explores how the creative arts encourage people to connect with each other to share their stories and experiences.

We use the toolkit to provide practical examples and step by step guidance of how creative methods and techniques can be used in group settings.

The creative exercises we show in the toolkit are based on important principles of inclusivity, valuing all voices, trust, listening and action-orientated interventions.

The activities have been developed over the years by searching on the internet, attending other workshops and getting inspiration from other courses.

In order to use this toolkit, you are not required to have any specialist creative or artistic skills; all that is required is a willingness to try new ideas and learn new skills.

# How to use it

## **OPENING AND CLOSING ACTIVITIES**

For us, the opening and closing activities are just as important as the main activity so think carefully about how much time you want to dedicate to these. They can be a really effective way of checking in with the group to evaluate how they feel at the beginning and end of the session.

It could be useful to choose one or two activities which the group likes to do them at every session to establish routine.

## **CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**

We encourage the participants to not only decide what they would like to do in the next session but also to facilitate and share their skills with the rest of the group.

As well as focussing on co-production, we always adjust and adapt the sessions to suit the needs of our group. This can include bringing in guest speakers or experts in certain fields, as well as drawing upon the existing skills within the group.

# How to use it

## OUTCOMES AND REFLECTIONS

As we all know, sometimes things don't go as planned, so we've included our intended outcomes along with some reflections on how the session went in practice.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

Before you begin your activity, you will need to decide the following:

- What do I want to achieve with this activity? (e.g. learn new skills; empower people and their voices; actions for change; evaluate and feedback on current activities)
- What activities will help me achieve my aim?
- How you will activity be delivered? (e.g. online or face to face)
- What format should I use to undertake the activity? (e.g. regular workshop sessions or one-off activity)
- What resources and materials are needed?

Aim to give everyone a chance to speak and share with the group what they have created. Be mindful of activities that may be triggering.

# Session Structure

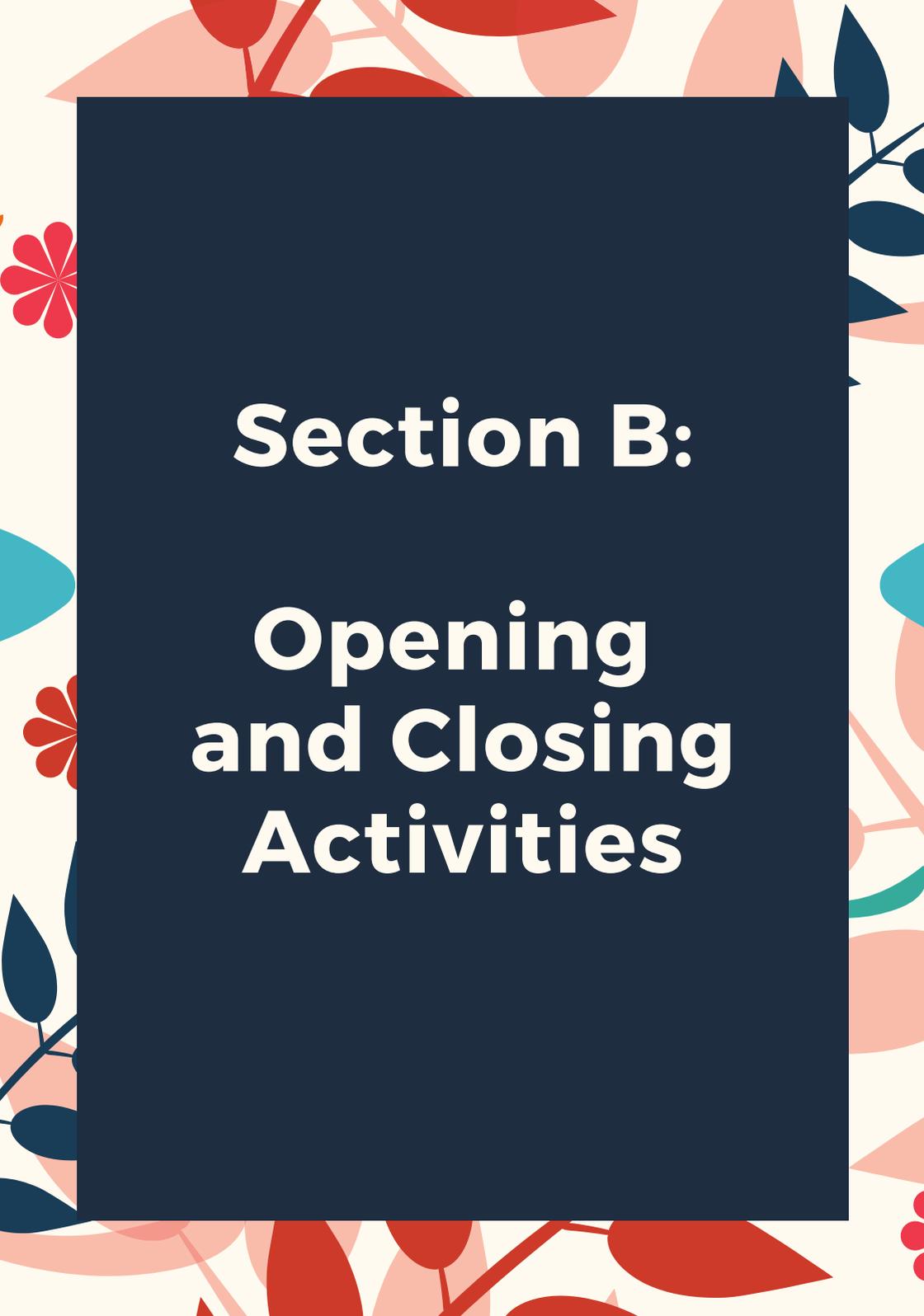
We have not included timings, as this will vary depending on your group size and level of English. Here is an example of how we usually structure our sessions that run for an hour and a half.

## **EXAMPLE STRUCTURE:**

1. Check in with each other (5 mins)
2. Opening activity (15 mins)
3. Set up activity (5 mins)
4. Activity (45 mins)
5. Sharing, feedback and photo (10 mins)
6. Closing activity (5 mins)
7. Next steps (5 mins)

How long you spend on opening and closing activities will also depend on how well the group know each other. When we have new members we might decide to spend longer on getting to know each other and creating a comfortable environment.

We also encourage members of the group to co-facilitate if they are not yet ready to facilitate a session on their own. The role of co-facilitator can include leading the opening and closing activities, keeping track of timings, and taking photos (with permission from the group).



# **Section B:**

# **Opening and Closing Activities**

## **SECRET FRIEND**

Opening: Write each participants name on a separate piece of paper. Randomly assign each person a participants name. This is their 'secret friend' who they should observe during the session, looking out for things they do well.

Closing: Share any positive observations about that person. You can ask participants to read the name before sharing or you can allow the group to guess who the message is about. This can lead to more flattering within the group.

Purpose: This exercise helps to bond the group, builds confidence, and encourages positive self-thought.

## **THINGS WE SHARE**

Opening: In a circle each person says a statement true to them e.g. 'I love reading in the sun', and those who agree with the statement step into the circle. If no one steps in, the person keeps going with statements until they find something in common.

Purpose: This encourages bonding within the group, whilst challenging participants to think about what is true to them.

## **ONE WORD**

Opening: Ask participants to answer a question using only one word, for example 'how are you feeling today?'

Closing: Ask participants the same question to see if anything has changed during the session or ask a new question like 'how would you describe today's session?'

Purpose: This helps to gauge how people are feeling at the beginning of the session, and then at the end you can either see if there has been a shift in feeling, or what they have got out of the session. It encourages people to think of unique words whilst discovering commonalities within the group.

## **SOUND AND MOVEMENT**

**Opening:** In a circle each person does a movement and a sound that comes to their mind about how they are feeling in that moment. The others in the group step into the circle and repeat the movement and sound.

**Purpose:** This is a great way to assess the mood of individuals and the group through body language and energy.

## **IMAGINE**

**Opening:** Ask participants to imagine they are a colour/animal based on how they are feeling and explain why they chose that colour/animal.

**Closing:** Ask the same question to see if anyone had either changed their colour/animal based on a shift in mood, or shift in perception.

**Purpose:** This allows participants to reflect on how they feel at the start compared to the end, but also helps the group to understand how different people view colours/animals.

## **MAGIC BOX**

**Closing:** Mime an imaginary box appearing from the ceiling, your pocket or wherever you choose. Then hand the box around the circle to each participant who say something they enjoyed, did not enjoy, or any other reflection from the session and put it in the box. You can ask a participant to look after the box until the next session and repeat the activity each session. At the end of the project you can decide as a group what to do with the box - think outside the box!

**Purpose:** This is a great team building exercise that encourages reflection, as well as giving individuals a sense of responsibility. Repeating this one regularly helps to establish a routine.



**Section C:**

**Creative  
Activities**

# Hands: Past and Present

## SESSION OUTLINE

-Ask participants to either draw their hands on the card or on a different card and then cut and stick them onto a new card

-Pose these two statements:  
'My past hands hold'  
'My future hands hold'

-Allow the group to decide freely what they mean and decorate their hands accordingly

-Afterwards share with the group

## WHAT YOU NEED

Coloured card  
Pens/pencils  
Scissors  
Gem stickers / Anything to decorate

## WHY WE DID IT

- To get to know each other more profoundly/deeply
- To help understand everybody in the group better and know how they looked at the past and the future
- To shape the future activities





## OUTCOME AND REFLECTIONS

The session was emotionally intense as participants had to reflect on their past experiences and think about/imagine their future. For some of them the past was painful, for some the past was better, for some the future was scary and for others the future looked really bright.

Participants enjoyed the experience of drawing around their hands and using different media to decorate them. Whilst working on the activity, some were chatting with other participants whilst others were concentrating on the activity in silence. It is important to allow everybody to create a relaxing and peaceful environment and allowing people to work the way they want on the task.

This activity offered an opportunity to everybody in the group to talk about themselves by using the art work done and deciding what to focus on, either the past with all their lived experiences or the future with all their hopes and dreams.

# Commonalities Flower



## SESSION OUTLINE

- Each person cuts out a piece of card in the shape of a petal
- As a group you create the centre of the flower and write all the things you have in common in the centre
- Each member of the group asks questions to find 3 things that are unique to them and writes these in their petal. Then they decorate their individual petals
- Then assemble the petals around the centre and as a group decide on a name for the flower

## WHAT YOU NEED

Coloured card  
Pens  
Scissors  
Glue

## WHY WE DID IT

- To identify and celebrate our unique qualities
- To get to know each other better
- To bond the group through commonalities

## OUTCOME AND REFLECTIONS

Some participants really struggled to find things that were unique to them so some extra guiding questions were helpful. We tried to focus on skills and interests, rather than delving into more personal topics such as family and relationships, as this may be triggering for some individuals. Decorating the petal is an important part of the process as it reinforces the uniqueness of each person.

## WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID

"This is an Ododo flower, each of its colourful petals represents one woman from our group and reveals what's special about her. We are all different. Someone can cook tasty meals, someone can bake amazing cakes, someone is good at hair styling. We study different things at different times. Some of us have little kids, some have grandchildren. We come from different places, have different fears, worries, experiences. But there is the bit in the middle, the things we share. We are all women. We like chocolate, sunshine and summer, dancing and having fun. We enjoy making art, being creative and being together."

# Pot of Positivity

## SESSION OUTLINE

- In pairs discuss 1 positive thing from the last week, and 1 thing we were secretly happy about
- Individually draw a large pot on paper/card. Inside the pot write down or draw images of all the things that keep you going, make you happy, and that provide positivity in your life
- Share pots with the group to explore similarities and differences

## WHAT YOU NEED

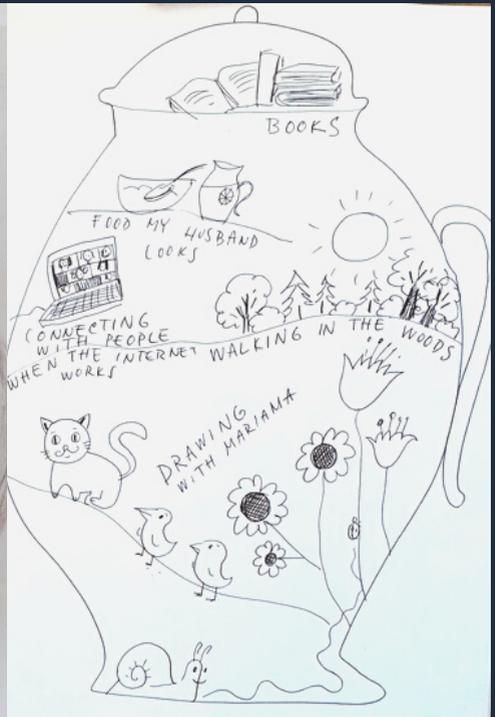
Coloured pens/pencils  
Paper

*You can also use cuttings from magazines and newspapers, which would require:*

*Scissors*

*Glue*

*Magazines/newspapers*



## WHY WE DID IT

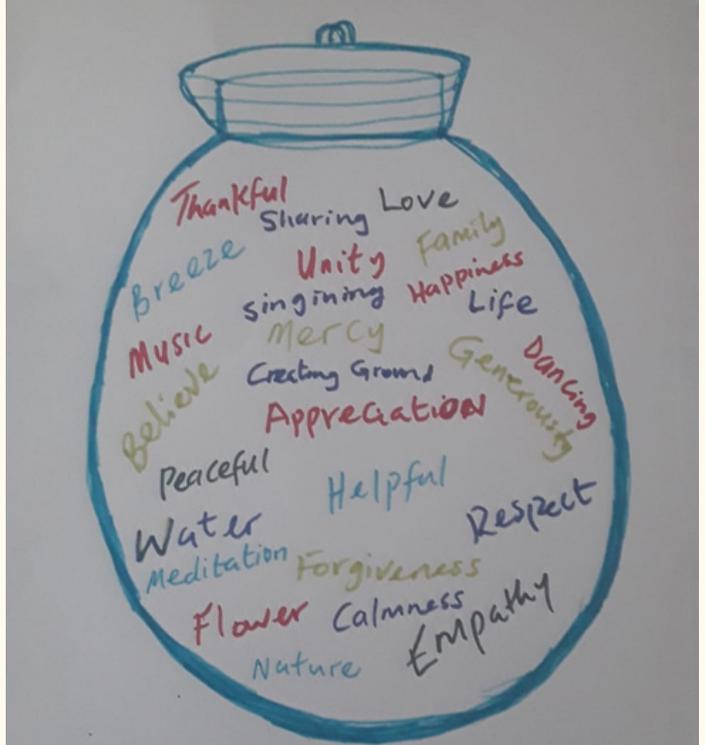
- To encourage positive thinking
- To strengthen resilience in difficult times through discovering where we draw happiness and comfort from
- To think about the positives we do not always consider, e.g. being secretly happy the shops were shut during lockdown
- To find commonalities and differences within the group

## OUTCOME AND REFLECTIONS

During sharing participants were adding each others' ideas to their pots, so it kept increasing. We learnt more about each other and our aligned values. This is a great exercise to understand what motivates individuals.

## WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID

"with this very small hope I'm having in my life right now, I'm transforming all this negativity to positive messages. I can already feel that we are all stronger together. I'm feeling happy and motivated. For this reason I'm say a very big thank you to each person who has helped me in this very hard period."





## WHAT YOU NEED

Coloured pens/pencils

Paper

Visual explaining SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals

*You can also use cuttings from magazines and newspapers, which would require:*

*Scissors*

*Glue*

*Magazines/newspapers*

## WHY WE DID IT

-To boost self-esteem, build confidence and positivity

-To focus on ourselves through thinking about our future goals

-To reflect on and change the way we talk to ourselves

## OUTCOME AND REFLECTIONS

A few participants shared that they were fearful or unable to think of a goal. This made us aware we should have spent more time identifying SMART goals that could be relevant to our group, specifically considering their experiences as migrants.

However, some other participants found it very useful and inspiring and went on to enrolling on courses, or making decisions they had previously not had dedicated the time to think about.

# Painting Stones



## SESSION OUTLINE

- Discuss ideas for messages you want to send out to the world
- Paint stones with these messages or images to represent them
- Place them in places you want others to see such as, parks, churches, hallways

## WHAT YOU NEED

Stones (the smoother the better)  
Acrylic paint (or you can use nail varnish)  
Tray to mix colours (we used tupperware lids)  
Paintbrush  
Marker pens  
Newspaper  
Tissue

## WHY WE DID IT

-To send out messages of hope or gratitude to people outside of the group

-To strengthen resilience in difficult times through sharing our messages with each other

## OUTCOME AND REFLECTIONS

Participants were able to divulge as little or as much as they wanted through imagining they were a colour. This worked well having new members in the group, as they were not pressured into saying too much, but could also get to know other members. Participants said the stone painting was very relaxing and a great activity to do with children.

## WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID

"At the start of the session we were asked what color we are and why. Some said yellow which represents brightness and hope  
Some said blue for love  
Some white for purity, purple for royalty, Some red, green, pink, grey and some black.

And at the end of the session, we were asked the same question and most answers have changed due to the therapeutic sensation experienced while painting the stones and writing the messages from the heart.

And as a person, this poem is my personal reflection on it."

# Community Collage

## SESSION OUTLINE

- As a group discuss definitions of community
- Individually imagine ideal your community and then share
- Find images to represent this
- Lay them out and decide as a group where to place things, discussing their meaning and what they bring to your ideal community
- Individually make a commitment to your community

## WHAT YOU NEED

- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Large piece of card
- Scissors
- Glue



## **WHY WE DID IT**

- To explore different ideas of community
- To understand each other's values
- To discover common values
- To debate differences and celebrate diversity

## **OUTCOME AND REFLECTIONS**

This sparked some debate within our group about whether certain political figures should be allowed into the community. A lot of important discussions around helping others and using education to enlighten others were born out of this session.

## **WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID**

"In a community you grow together in a safe environment... It's about unity, everyone contributing to the good of the community, even a simple thing such as saying good morning to your neighbour. This is a way of contributing. It's about having kindness to each other and making the best of the situation around us. It's about having a place to meet different people. We can all learn and share things with each other, different people learning and respecting each other through difference and diversities. We may have different genders, we may have different colours or be from different cultures, but it's about coming together and thinking about what unites us. It's about belonging and identity, it's about strength. We were also thinking about what we can each do more for our community. So we all said it's about speaking up more, it's about celebrating our successes, listening to each other and also valuing our differences. Peace and love."

# T-shirt Designs



## SESSION OUTLINE

By Ijeoma

- Each member thinks about what they would like on the t-shirt. You can use prompts like, messages of hope
- Using the stencils draw the letters onto the iron-on glitter vinyl, or draw freehand designs, and then cut these out
- Place a towel on a surface good for ironing (you can lay a towel underneath to be safe), and arrange your design how you want it
- Hold the iron down on the design for a few seconds at a time. Check if it has stuck, and repeat until properly stuck down

## **WHAT YOU NEED**

Plain t-shirts

Iron-on glitter vinyl

Alphabet stencil - capital letters

Alphabet stencil - lower case letters

Pencils/pens

Scissors

Iron

Ironing board/Suitable surface to iron on

Spare towel/piece of material

## **WHY WE DID IT**

-To unite the group

-To make us stand out at as a group at our exhibition

## **OUTCOME AND REFLECTIONS**

This session took a lot longer than we thought as we only had two irons, but some members were happy to stay behind to finish them off. It was important we all planned around a table beforehand as we gave each other ideas and we could reflect on what words came to mind when we think of each individual in the group.

## **TESTIMONIAL**

"People decided to do different things that was unique to them. Some people did lovely butterflies which I loved. You could see the uniqueness in our differences. And it was lovely, the determination, the motivation, the eagerness of people to learn it. It was something else. I was impressed, because they also motivated me as well that particular day. It was kind of a sharing skills, because in that I saw different skills in people which I learnt."

# Papier-mâché Frames

## SESSION OUTLINE

By Comfort

- Soak the paper in water for 24 hours
- Drain in little bits and mash it up bit by bit
- Add glue or starch to the mashed up paper
- Mold into whatever form you require
- Glue to the frame
- Decorate with glitter

## WHAT YOU NEED

- Frames
- Paper
- Water
- PVA glue
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Glitter

## WHY WE DID IT

- To empower and utilise the skills of a group member
- To think about what gives us light in dark moments



## WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID

"It was not intentional , I first learned how to use Papier-mâché while I was back in Nigeria in my Junior Secondary School Year as part of the art class curriculum and it became one of the things in artwork that I enjoy doing.

It was not intentional, It was Mama Felicia's idea to share it with the group as I had once gifted her a frame I designed her name on using Papier-mâché.

It was not intentional , we had met by chance at a migrant hub on the day she saw the frames I had made with Papier-mâché for some of the staff who had helped me at the migrant hub as a show of gratitude. And Mama Felicia being someone who appreciates all works of art requested for one.

It was not intentional , on this particular day when Laura asked for ideas for our next session at My Creative Skills Mama Felicia suggested that we make a frame like the one a lady gave to her at the migrant hub oblivious to her that I was that same lady because she couldn't recognize me anymore.

It was not intentional, Mama Felicia could not recognize me anymore because I was very skinny and not well when we met at the migrant hub before that day at My Creative Skills! So I laughed and told her I was that same lady and she apologized and gave GOD all the glory for making me healthier and well than before in her usual manner.

Although it was not intentional , I was given funds to get the required frames and all necessary decorating items needed and everyone became very eager to learn how to make that beautiful frame with Papier-mâché Mama Felicia had so much talked about with all joy.

Although it was not intentional, everyone joyfully got their hands sticky with the adhesive in the Papier-mâché and from their excitement and a place of deep thought in their beautiful hearts these frames were made.

Then I realized it had always been intentional! I might not have known this from the beginning, but the end result and a joyful request for a second session on these Papier-mâché frames brings it together to make me believe with all certainty that in my inner man it has always been intentional!"

# Bead Earring Making



## SESSION OUTLINE

By Yewande

- Select the colour, shape and size of the bead you will like to use
- Select a pair of fish hook earring you would like, either silver or gold plated
- Cut the coil wire (same colour as fish hook earring) with pliers. It has to be two times how long you would like it to be because you will be doubling it later on
- Put the coil wire in through the hole in the fish hook earring, bringing the two tips/ends together equally

Arrange your chosen beads through the tips/ends of the wire up to the end of the hole, whereby you put the coil wire in through

- Put a crimps bead at the end of the last bead and then use the nose of the pliers to clamp the crimps bead together tightly and then cut out the left over wire neatly with the cutter pliers and that is your bead earring ready for use

## WHAT YOU NEED

Beads (different colours, shapes and sizes)  
Jump ring  
Crimps end  
Coil wire / tiger tail  
Lobster clamps  
Pliers  
Fish hook earring

## WHY WE DID IT

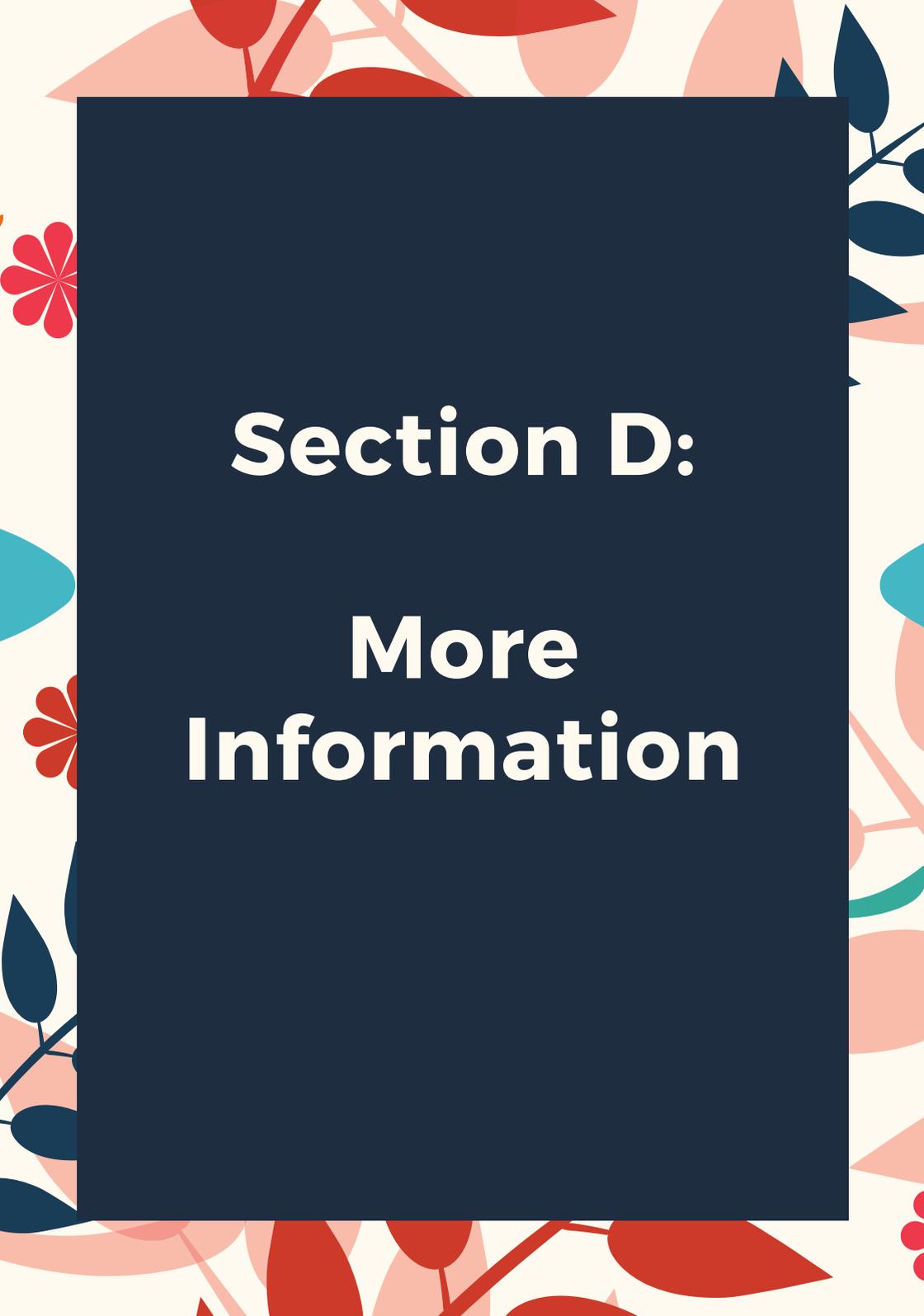
-To empower and utilise the skills of a group member  
  
-To learn something new that allowed us to focus on the process and switch off from external stressors

## TESTIMONIAL

"What can I say about the bead making session? Actually, this happened way back in 2006 when I travelled to Abuja, Nigeria for my National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in my country. My friend/flatmate, I will say, had to go and learn the bead making somewhere in Abuja where we reside but she had to pay to be taught the bead making. Any time she tried to practice what she had learnt, I would always go and sit beside her to watch what she did and also practice the bead making with her.

This was how I got to know how to make the basic things. When it got to exploring our skills at Creating Ground, I then decided to practicalise the bead making skill and to my surprise, I found that the bead making session has been one of the classes that the women love most. More so, any time I facilitate the bead making session, I always get commendable feedback, inspiring comments because the women always love the bead making session and wish to do more when they get home. Therefore, I will say the bead making session has been one of my best sessions that I facilitate. Furthermore, this skill has been one of the best skills I practice and share with the women and one of the best skills the women appreciate whenever we do it. Definitely, there are many more skills to learn at my Creative skills but I 'd say this is one of the best. Thank you."





**Section D:**

**More  
Information**

# Participants' Reflections

## WE ASKED AND PARTICIPANTS SAID ...

*Describe how you feel after a session of the My Creative Skills*

"I am very exciting and proud of myself, I can make face mask and flowers, which make my life more interesting."

"I feel fulfilled"

"Refreshing"

"I feel energised, happy, relax and motivated."

"I feel light and energetic."

"Energetic and happy because I am better than I was before the session"

"Inspired and energised; its provides a lovely break from the routine of my working week; always enjoy learning and trying new skills I would not ordinarily do. I feel very proud of my achievements ...even when things don't go so well (apron!); I like sharing what I have made with my kids, and its good for them to also see mum doing creative activities"



# Participants' Reflections

## WE ASKED AND PARTICIPANTS SAID ...

*What aspects of the sessions have you enjoyed most and why?*

"I most enjoy are the teamwork and everyone help and respect each other, we are some a big family. I am new but I feel very comfortable with everyone, and teacher has a lot of patient to teach us."

"The aspect of the sessions I enjoyed most is the secret friend, because it's amazing to know how members of the group respect and appreciate each other."

*How has My Creative Skills helped you?*

"I have learned new skills, meet a lot of friends. It has let me remember, when I was younger, I was very interested creative something, but when I have got a family, I totally give up it."

"I just learnt how to be open to people and make new friends, try new skills without thinking a lot about time or ways how to do it."

"It is been a place I have felt free because no one judges me rather motivates and empowers me."

*Anything else you would like to add?*

"My Creative Skills is like a little stream that is on its way to become an Ocean."

"Creative skills has been therapeutic for me and a place I have had good laughs with the amazing ladies even in my down moments."

# Thank you

Thank you to all the women who attended the sessions and contributed with their testimonials, feedback and art work to this toolkit.



## CREATING GROUND

Creating Ground CIC is a small Community Interest Company that uses the arts and community education to bring people together, improve wellbeing and create change at a personal and community level. We work predominantly with women who are migrants/refugees and/or women living in refuges or temporary accommodation.

For more information about what we do visit our website:

<https://www.theground.org.uk/>

or email

Laura Marziale, Director of Creating Ground CIC,  
[info@theground.org.uk](mailto:info@theground.org.uk)

## UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH

The Applied Sociology Research Group, University of Greenwich is focused on understanding the everyday lived realities of diverse social groups. We provide a forum for collaboration, co-production and knowledge exchange of ideas with local and national stakeholders. As a research group we are deeply committed to developing creative, participatory and socially engaged research that empower and amplify the voices of BAME and migrant communities.

For further information visit:

<https://www.gre.ac.uk/ach/research/centres/asrc>

or email

Professor Tracey Reynolds, Director of the Applied Sociology Research Group, [T.A.Reynolds@greenwich.ac.uk](mailto:T.A.Reynolds@greenwich.ac.uk)



Creating Ground



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