

Olympic Delivery Authority 'overlooks social enterprise'

By Kaye Wiggins, Third Sector, 7 July 2009

East London social businesses claim contracts are too large to bid for

[The Olympic Delivery Authority](#) is ignoring its commitment to working with social enterprises in the development of the 2012 Olympics site, according to some not-for-profit groups.

The Olympic bid included promises that it would create jobs for local people and regenerate the Stratford area of east London. However, local third sector groups have complained that the ODA is not meeting those obligations.

Christina Costi, managing director of E-employ, a social enterprise in Bow that trains construction workers and matches them with jobs, said the ODA's contracts were too large for it to bid for. She said the business, which has 300 workers on its books, struggled to make itself known to the ODA.

"The ODA should employ someone to research local social enterprises, find out what their needs are and help them to get involved with the Olympics," she said.

"The point of having an inner-city Olympics is to be able to support and regenerate local communities. But it's easier for the ODA to work with a few big agencies than to invest in smaller community enterprises."

Caroline Walker, manager of Growing Concern, an east London-based social enterprise that provides grounds maintenance and soft landscaping services, said the ODA should facilitate realistic talks with community groups about how they could get involved.

"We have low overheads so we would be able to carry out the work cheaply, and we reinvest our profits in running classes training local people, so we provide a community benefit," said Walker. "But from the ODA's perspective, we're unknown and unreliable. For them, we're just not big enough to get involved." Ezra Wallace, an assistant consultant at enterprise consultancy firm [Community Innovation UK](#), said: "It beggars belief that when there are social enterprises in the heart of the Olympic area with workers ready to go, and which reinvest in the benefit of the community, the ODA isn't doing more to engage with them."

An ODA spokeswoman said the organisation actively encouraged social enterprises to apply for tenders, but that it had strict targets to meet and could not work with groups that were unable to meet the criteria specified in its contracts.