



Funding and procurement

The voluntary and community sector plays a crucial and recognised role in delivering public services and in building strong, cohesive and self-determining communities.

Voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) need financial stability to fulfil this role. Many VCOs enter into financial relationships with public bodies, either through grant funding or by supplying services purchased through public procurement (contracts).

This checklist guidance aims to promote and develop the best funding relationship possible.

Application process

- When developing funding or contract opportunities, care is taken to identify any existing opportunities that are managed by other departments or partners, and that the potential for aligning or pooling opportunities is explored
- Information on funding or contract opportunities is advertised widely, promotes fair access and encourages applications from a diverse range of organisations
- The eligibility criteria to apply for funding or contract opportunities is clearly explained
- Clear written guidance on completing the applications and the scoring of applications is provided.
- Information asked for and provided on application forms is purposeful and directly related to deciding who will receive funding or be awarded the contract
- Proposed action by applicants meets the specific criteria set out in the funding or tender programme
- The application process is proportionate to the amount of funding available or the size of the contract
- An appropriate point of contact from both sectors is identified and support and guidance is offered throughout the application process
- Both sectors recognise that a proportionate amount of overheads (core costs) can be included in project or service costs
- Organisations are informed of funding or contract decisions and given feedback on decisions by the agreed deadline stated in the application process

Conditions of the agreement

- Both sectors discuss and contribute to the terms and conditions of delivery, with conditions being agreed and formally documented in good time
- Effective processes are in place for the control, accountability and audit of finances and funded projects
- Opportunities for more flexible funding arrangements are discussed and, where appropriate, adopted (for example, multi-year funding)

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- A schedule for monitoring is set and clearly documented and, whenever appropriate, payments are made in advance of expenditure
- Potential risks are discussed up-front and responsibility for managing these risks is placed with the sector best able to deal with them

Monitoring and evaluation

- The monitoring and evaluation framework is consistent and helps to maintain high standards of governance, openness and transparency
- The monitoring and evaluation framework is clear and specific in assessing the measurable outputs and outcomes of the agreement
- Monitoring and evaluation is proportionate to the amount of funding received
- If agreed delivery is delayed or prevented by circumstances beyond reasonable control, it is recognised that there is not a breach of agreement
- Reasonable notice (a minimum of three months) is given for the end of grants and contracts and to any proposed changes to existing arrangements



Consultation and community engagement

Consultation and engagement plays a key role in partnership working. Listening to and engaging with partners helps to ensure that proposals are supported and leads to better planning and delivery of services. There should be a commitment to continually improve the quality of consultation and engagement, by learning from experience and building on good practice.

This checklist guidance aims to promote best practice in meaningful and effective consultation and engagement.

Planning and methodology

- The purpose of the consultation and engagement is clearly stated
- The topic and issues to be addressed during the consultation and engagement are clearly stated
- The process for consultation and engagement is clearly described
- The target audience and format of the consultation and engagement is clearly explained
- Fairness, equality and inclusion underpin all aspects of the consultation and engagement policy
- Existing good practice has been respected and followed where appropriate
- All participants, especially those with a specific interest in the consultation and engagement subject, or who may be particularly affected, are involved in planning from the beginning of the process
- Enough resources are allocated to support the consultation and engagement process
- The scope and timescale of the consultation and engagement process are reasonable and clearly documented (12 weeks is usually accepted to be a reasonable minimum timescale)
- The delivery methods of consultation and engagement are clear in purpose, accessible and appropriate for the needs of the participants; when possible, attention should be paid to the importance of outreach work and face to face engagement

Involvement and support

- It is clear whether the response to the consultation and engagement is based on views of the individual or on behalf of a group
- Any barriers to involvement are identified and attempts are made to overcome them
- Existing communication networks are maximised and participants work together to help facilitate quality responses

Feedback and monitoring

- The consultation and engagement is monitored and evaluated against its initial purpose

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- Results from the consultation and engagement are communicated back to participants in good time and conveyed accurately and in an appropriate format
- Any decisions that follow as a result of the consultation and engagement are clearly publicised and explained
- There is a commitment to continually improving the quality of consultation and engagement by learning from experience, building on good practice and developing a consistent approach across different agencies



Partnerships

Effective partnership working can ensure that both sectors achieve common goals and commit to developing and delivering services to help build strong, cohesive and self-determining communities.

Partnership working should promote awareness and build on the knowledge, experience and understanding of representatives to establish a framework that works for all partners.

This checklist guidance aims to promote and develop effective partnership working.

Initiating partnership working

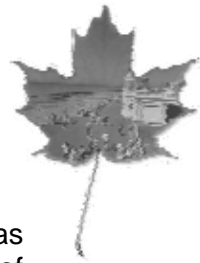
- Key partners are identified and the representative for each partner is offered the support they need in order to participate effectively in partnership activities
- The purposes of the partnership activities are clear, agreed by all representatives and documented.
- Care is taken to identify any other existing partnerships and whether the proposed activity duplicates that of any other partnership
- Measurable objectives for the partnership activities are identified and appropriate methods for achieving these objectives are agreed
- Enough resources and administrative support are allocated for the partnership activities
- Any barriers to involvement are identified and attempts are made to overcome them

Partnership working in practice

- Each representative is given the opportunity to contribute to the agenda for partnership activities
- Fairness, equality and inclusion underpin all aspects of partnership working and activities
- The relationship between partners is based on mutual trust and respect; all representatives can share skills and knowledge and discuss freely any differences of perspective
- Each representative maintains a continual dialogue with those they represent and has the authority to take decisions and actions
- The independence and operational autonomy of partners is recognised and respected
- Partnership activities are supported by leadership that enables rather than controls

Improving partnership working

- If any specific issues are highlighted during the partnership activities, training is discussed as a possibility for all partners and organised if necessary
- Information resulting from partnership working is communicated in good time and conveyed accurately and in an appropriate format
- There is a commitment to continually improving the quality of partnership working by learning from experience, building on good practice and developing a consistent approach across all partners



Volunteering

Both sectors recognise the value of volunteering: high levels of volunteering can be seen as an indicator of healthy and active communities and add a unique contribution to the value of service delivery.

Raising the profile of volunteering, developing best practice in management and removing barriers to volunteering can help to get more people involved in various forms of voluntary activity.

This checklist guidance aims to promote and develop the best volunteering framework possible.

Volunteering as a result of free choice

- Pressure is not placed on any individual asking about volunteering opportunities
- Support and guidance is given to potential volunteers to help them make an informed decision and find opportunities that best fit their individual needs, interests and abilities
- The recruitment and management of volunteers is based on mutual trust and respect
- Processes are in place that allow individuals to discuss any issues in confidence and make decisions freely
- A degree of flexibility is adopted for the management of volunteers: it is recognised that volunteers are acting through free choice and are not expected to carry out work that should be undertaken by paid staff

Volunteering is open to everyone

- Volunteering opportunities are actively promoted in the wider community and any barriers to volunteering are identified and attempts are made to overcome them
- Work is carried out to help increase and promote diversity among volunteers, in terms of age, race, gender and disability
- The varied individual motivations for volunteering, and the support needs that different groups may have, are recognised and provided for
- Both sectors regularly monitor proposed legislation and regulation for potential impacts on volunteering, and any updates and / or relevant information is communicated between the sectors and key partners

The mutual benefits of volunteering

- Volunteering policy promotes and allows for volunteers to benefit from their contribution to the community by:
 - gaining a sense of worthwhile achievement
 - increasing their skills and experience for future employment
 - being reimbursed for reasonable expenses and
 - having fun
- Volunteers are offered appropriate and relevant induction training and support on a regular basis to enable them to carry out their role

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- Volunteers are invited to be involved in processes for improving public services, from consultation through to involvement in design and delivery
- Both sectors work together to share and develop best practice to benefit future volunteers

Recognising the value of volunteering

- Thanks and recognition is given to individual volunteers, but is also given publicly to highlight the contribution volunteering can make to a community, an organisation or a particular project
- Efforts are made to gather relevant and valuable data on volunteering and the impact of voluntary activities in communities
- The long-term contribution of volunteers is recognised and addressed when making decisions around sustainable long-term funding



Community groups

The community sector contributes greatly to improving social inclusion and cohesion. Community groups help local people to contribute to the development of their communities, promote community leadership and have a voice in local decision-making.

It is essential to make sure that service development and delivery can benefit from the skills and experience found in community groups.

This code of practice aims to promote a better understanding of the contribution of voluntary and community groups.

Ensuring a voice for the community

- Fairness, equality and inclusion are central to methods of engagement with, and development of policy for, community groups
- Methods of engagement are clear in purpose, accessible and appropriate for the needs of the community group involved. Innovative methods of engagement, which are more suitable for the target audience, should be looked into and adopted if appropriate
- Appropriate support is provided to enable community groups have their say, and any barriers to involvement are identified and attempts are made to overcome them
- The differences in working with paid workers and volunteers in a group need to be taken into account; this may include capacity and knowledge of the issue
- Community groups with first-hand experience of particular issues are invited to be involved in the development and delivery of solutions at an early stage
- Local infrastructure organisations ensure that they will represent the interests of the community inclusively, fairly and honestly when asked to speak on its behalf

Enabling positive community identity

- The diversity, needs and independence of individual community groups are recognised and respected
- It is clear whether a specific community group or the sector as a whole is being represented when participating in any activities
- Community members are encouraged to carry out leadership roles in community networks
- Both sectors raise awareness of the contribution and diversity of community groups within the wider community

Supporting community networks

- Local infrastructure organisations and community networks are used as a means of contact, information sharing, training and advice for community groups
- Community groups are given support in accessing resources – for example, meeting spaces, workers with community development skills, small grants or appropriate learning opportunities – to help them take ownership of assets
- Both sectors work together to share and develop best practice and learn from experience to further benefit community groups



Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary and community groups

Both sectors recognise the important role of the BME community in ensuring the voluntary and community sector is more representative of society. The BME sector represents diverse communities, including faith groups and refugee and asylum seeker organisations.

BME groups can bring distinctive value to society by supporting a more cohesive and inclusive community. Joint action between sectors is crucial in achieving race equality, good race relations and the elimination of racial discrimination.

This checklist guidance aims to promote a better understanding of the contribution of BME groups.

This checklist is specifically for working with BME groups and provides additional support to the guidance for community groups in general. Please ensure that reference is made to the checklist guidance for community groups.

Ensuring a voice for the BME community

- The specific needs of BME communities are recognised and appropriate support is provided to enable these groups have their say
- BME groups with expertise in a particular issue are invited to be involved in the development and delivery of solutions at the outset
- Any specific barriers to BME groups getting involved are identified and attempts are made to overcome them

Enabling positive BME community identity

- The diversity of people, communities and cultures within BME groups is recognised and respected; promoting these diverse cultures will aid communication, leading to greater knowledge and understanding
- The independence of BME groups, and their right to challenge policy and practice as part of achieving race equality, is recognised and respected
- BME community members are encouraged to carry out leadership roles in community networks
- BME groups ensure that they will represent the interests of their community fairly and honestly when asked to speak on its behalf

Supporting the BME community

- Both sectors recognise the importance of understanding the diversity of the BME community, and commit to gather as much information and build good working relationships
- Principles that effectively achieve race equality, promote good race relations and eliminate racial discrimination are developed and promoted in all policy
- It is recognised that BME people may have a different experience of volunteering and community work, and specific support is provided in line with the checklist guidance for volunteering
- The possibility of dedicated funding to support capacity building for BME groups is discussed and allocated if appropriate