

## Corporate Grants Consultation

The following points are a reflection of the comments made by all five groups who participated in the consultation event on the 16<sup>th</sup> April

### **Do you think the terms of reference should remain the same? What amendments would you suggest?**

- The first bullet in the ToR seems to be aimed at established orgs and those who have one a tender – needs to incorporate new orgs
- Address smaller organisations specifically
- Needs to relate directly to the community
- Please use plain English, not corporate speak
- Corporate funding should be for all size groups
- A specific pot for small groups including equalities groups
- Training between orgs & sharing skills should be funded by LBH to prevent wasting resources
- Measurement of outcomes will this become more strict
- Plenty of time & consultation on any changes to outcomes
- Need to know what the Councils objectives are
- Sharing information to VCS on quick grant pots of money; VCS needs to know
- Corporate fund could reflect grant funds
- Need to address competition between LA & VCS when looking at grants for conversion courses to enable staff to transfer across organisations and small organisations grants
- ToR looks quite comprehensive but many unclear about what Council's priorities are.
- ToR should be reflective of the needs of groups on the ground, particularly small groups
- It is unclear how the ToR will be implemented and affect VCS
- Point 3 of the ToR needs clarification – reads as if it's 2 separate points that have been merged. Once they are identified what happens? Does not working on the Council's current priorities mean that they are not eligible for anything? Or is a preferred providers list drawn up?
- With regard to 'not working efficiently' who measures this & how? What is the 'yardstick' for measurement? Needs clarification please
- The ToR talks about identifying groups in certain categories – there is no clarification for how this process takes place
- Information on how new initiatives are identified would be useful, a centralised place to suggest such initiatives might be very interesting
- More information about council's objectives; a clearer outline
- Would like to see information provided about currently funded groups; their activities and priorities. This could then allow groups to identify any opportunities for partnership working or how groups current activities could be modified to meet council objectives
- Further links with departments commissioning services. Groups would be keen to see a more 'joined up' approach from the council in informing groups what grants and what commissioning opportunities are available
- Questions regarding point 3; identification of organisations which don't accord with LBH's current priorities

## **What is your vision for Hounslow Council funding for the voluntary sector 2010-2014?**

- There needs to be a development in support systems for legal advice and the like to help the VCS cope with a general shift towards tendering
- Applications for grants rather than tendering is a much more appropriate system for the VCS
- The Council's funding strategy and current programmes need to be made more clear and better publicised
- There needs to be help for new groups starting out as well as for the more established ones.
- There was the general concern that commissioning would mean VCO's are squeezed out.
- Important to note that by keeping levels of funding static (i.e. no rise in money to the VSS) is, in actual terms, a reduction in funding because of inflation
- Plenty of time for commissioning. Commissioning should be equally accessible to VCS. Equalities groups should be helped
- Simple open way of knowing how and when to apply. Longer term funding
- 24 month funding
- ½ 3 year & ½ year on year
- CVSH website to have commissioning info
- Organising joint fund raising events
  - The age criteria for funding for children and young people should start from 3 years of age instead of 11 in order to facilitate preventive as opposed to crisis intervention work.
  - Cycle of funding should be 3 years as opposed to an annual basis in order to promote sustainability of projects and stability.
  - Funding support should reflect the size and level of groups i.e. small groups needing informal mentoring during the funding process
  - Funding support for vulnerable people is under resourced
  - Commissioning with the Third Sector is rising up Council priorities, as such there is a need to ensure the grant schemes are protected to encourage innovation and development by groups (which Commissioning can stifle by its proscriptive & internally developed nature). Alongside this the broad criteria of the grants scheme needs to remain to allow maximum creativity
  - Tying the funding to the Council's priorities limits the innovation and creativity of groups, if this criteria were taken out projects would be developed solely on what clients/beneficiaries were requesting
  - Continue with the capacity building support for groups around the funding, for example training on business planning, fundraising, tendering, building partnerships
  - With the new reliance on commissioning as a way of delivering Council priorities (not the groups or even the communities) there needs to be a standardised, practical procedure laid out between the Third sector & the Council. Currently the run-in times are too quick and there isn't enough time to develop a meaningful partnership that would be able to deliver the service
  - Longer funding contracts (with break clauses!)
  - Improved timings on payments of grants/invoices, very difficult for smaller groups to manage cash flows
  - We would like to see better communication about the various grants scheme. The website isn't particularly friendly to use and there seems to be little regular information on available funding
  - Potential to access Council resources at a subsidised rent, for example staff secondments, hot desks, buildings, employment of staff etc.
  - More flexible funding streams; re-distribution of funding to smaller organisations who could in turn sub-contract services eg Age concern sub-contracting to the pensioners forum
- Funding is very fragmented at the moment
- More collaborative working would be beneficial with LBH support and guidance
- More small grants
- Important that grants are flexible and proportionality balanced
- Funding to support links between groups

## **General Comments**

### Commissioning

- Being geared towards commercial sector rather than the VCS
- How it excludes small organisations and adds expense and risk to larger orgs
- Going towards tendering will mean a need for access to legal advice for the VCS
- Concern about losing bids to competition from business who are set up to tender but don't have the community's interest at heart
- Concern that if this competition does choke the VCS that it will be hard to regrow it.

## Compact consultation feedback

### Something good

- The level of support within the council – ie the Leader and LSP
- Children's services have developed a list of standards (based on the Compact) for use in all their contracts
- Makes sure all orgs are aware of quality assurance systems (QAS)
- QAS show the VCS is well run (dispel the image of the unprofessional)
- QAS help with funding bids
- Clarity from council over Monitoring and Evaluation is essential
- It is ASPIRATIONAL because on first sight it appears unobjectionable as it is clearly so well intentioned
- Consultation principles are good
- The phrase: 'Recognise and value the independence of the VCS as one of its greatest strengths' was well received

### Something bad

- The support from the top doesn't permeate through the layers internally to action on the ground
- Very few people/groups know about it – communication poor
- Not seen as a 'living' document – needs a cultural change within the council and within the Third Sector to implement it by actually using it
- Currently it doesn't feel like an equal partnership when dealing with the council (in funding/commissioning etc)
- Voluntary sector need to feed back to council (charlotte) more
- No 'teeth', no powers to enforce and if do try and enforce it seen as a trouble maker
- Currently projects with the council don't feel like a partnership – feel like the paid support. There needs to be a recognition at many levels that the voluntary sector are the experts and the council values their input
- Currently we don't feel we can use the Compact as an enforcement tool in case we don't get funding in the future because we become seen as a trouble maker
- It is too general and assumes all VCOs have the capacity to implement QAS. Small orgs do not have the time or resources.
- Far too inflexible
- Over engineered – does not cover a wide range of orgs
- It is WOOLLY because the following questions arose;
  - How are these things to be measured?
  - How would 'structures for effective partnership' be achieved?
  - In such an unequal partnership what does 'fairly share the risk' mean?
  - 'Unrealistic burdens or expectations' are measured in relation to what?
- Consultation is not rigorous/frequent enough
- Participation is not user/community focused enough

### Something to include

- A way of enforcing it!
- A process for drawing it's message/impact down through all the different layers of council workings
- Agreed standards for payment of invoices/grants to the Third Sector
- Clear communication lines
- Measure the number of bids & the amount of external funding coming into the borough as a result of the Compact partnership (prove it's worth to others)
- Measure partnerships being developed on the Compact principles across the borough
- Add in processes/specifics (or maybe examples??) for how it could actually positively impact partnerships
- Currently too woolly, although it shouldn't be too prescriptive as everyone needs to be able to adapt it to own work
- Council Will...
  - Give support and funding to encourage and enable VCOs to implement QASs
  - Have an understanding of appropriate QASs for the VCS and of the sort of orgs for which they would be appropriate.

- A clear action plan
- More frequent consultations
- To support smaller groups to engage and participate in consultations through resources/funding
- The rights of VCS to be heard needs to be taken more seriously

### **Something to remove**

- Power imbalance!
- NOTHING because it's a good concept but insufficiently concrete in terms of achievement.
- No specific comments made on this except that although there was general agreement on the wording – people questioned how is the compact actually going to be implemented in partnership with the VCS

### **General Comments**

- People are still slightly unsure about the Compact; should it be sent out with funding applications?
- People have used the Compact and have been supported by it in the past; especially when associated with cuts in funding
- NCVO Compact advocacy support helped one group to investigate and raise a Compact breach
- A summary document of the Compact would be beneficial
- There is evidence that the Compact can work
- The Compact should be utilised and promoted more within the council
- One group's SLA with the council was not up to date; the Compact should be used to deter activities such as this from happening
- Translated versions of the Compact should be available
- The council approach to the Compact is extremely fragmented. This needs to be addressed. A cross unit Compact steering group would be really beneficial.
- General suspicion of the fact that it is not legally binding
- If QASs are to become a requirement, there needs to be funding to implement them.
- Is there a way of scaling the requirement of QASs for size/type of org?
- There was the concern that different funders require different QAS (some are prescribed for orgs like home start)
- Need to get away from the idea of "professionalising the VCS". Most VCOs are already operating in a very professional way already.
- None of the group were currently using the Compact
- Most of the group knew little about it
- This consultation will lead to a new draft Compact to be distributed by CVSH and LBH as soon as it is completed.

# COMPACT

## SOMETHING BAD

### Maintain high standards of governance, conduct and openness (Clare)

- When do you consult? – does not actively consult. LSP to be flexible include some groups more people.
- Communication by personal visits to the service users, is necessary.
- More consultation. More consultation with services. Independence participation
- Need to include the positives (and negatives). Outcomes highlighted
- LSP does not reach out to the community – ever.

### Effectively and accurately engage in consultation and involvement (Segal)

- Users need to feel listened to. More user focused.
- Fortress Mentality
- How is the outcomes used, when met.
- Not reaching all groups (some types of group not represented)
- Period of consultation period. Access of voluntary sector on LSP board – service user level – feed back.
- How when & where. Do you consult with service users etc?
- Fortress mentality. Come and speak with VS in our centre.
- Too many authority figures on LSP. Users etc will not attend when police and others are present.
- Consultation not frequent enough

### Implement best practice funding principles to ensure that all funding opportunities are open, fair, transparent and proportional (Charlotte)

- SCAS not up to date: not constant. Funding levels only outlined for one year.

### Promote sustainability and increasing independence (Kate)

- Payment on time of services rendered
- To promote sustainability & independence. Treat VCS as equal partners delivering outcomes, not as subservient service deliverers dependent on grants/contract.
- Little communication. What is the Compact?
- Who takes notice of it at LBH? Use it more – adhere to it more.
- Make it easier to obtain fundraising from outside the Borough.

### Develop a mutual understanding and respect of the constraints placed on each sector (Rachel)

- Bad Woolly

# COMPACT

## SOMETHING TO REMOVE

### Maintain high standards of governance, conduct and openness (Clare)

- You all wear ties, suits and boots. Dress down and dress down your attitudes.
- Everything looks okay but concerned whether it would not be just paper exercise.
- More consultation. More consultation with services. Independence participation
- Need to include the positives (and negatives). Outcomes highlighted
- LSP does not reach out to the community – ever.

### Effectively and accurately engage in consultation and involvement (Segal)

- Nothing to remove, but how demonstrated.
- Nothing specific. Will these principles be followed through effectively.
- How is the outcomes used, when met.
- Not reaching all groups (some types of group not represented)
- Period of consultation period. Access of voluntary sector on LSP board – service user level – feed back.
- How when & where. Do you consult with service users etc?
- Fortress mentality. Come and speak with VS in our centre.
- Too many authority figures on LSP. Users etc will not attend when police and others are present.
- Consultation not frequent enough

### Implement best practice funding principles to ensure that all funding opportunities are open, fair, transparent and proportional (Charlotte)

### Promote sustainability and increasing independence (Kate)

### Develop a mutual understanding and respect of the constraints placed on each sector (Rachel)

- The way specific issues feedback, chart is worded is misleading. The point unprofessionalism was missed. Voluntary organisations are happy with having professional standards but other aspects of professionalism e.g. exclusivity, looking down on volunteers is not wanted.

# COMPACT

## SOMETHING GOOD

### Maintain high standards of governance, conduct and openness (Clare)

- To engage – consultation is good.
- Consultation idea is very good

### Effectively and accurately engage in consultation and involvement (Segal)

- Engaging service users/services
- Recognise and value the independence of the voluntary and community sector.
- Consultancy services users.
- Consulting carers, service users etc. Helps to empower people & encourages participation.
- Empowerment
- Independence (of groups). Regular (dialogue)
- Consultation. Recognise values of third sector.
- Value of independence

### Implement best practice funding principles to ensure that all funding opportunities are open, fair, transparent and proportional (Charlotte)

- Points 3 & 4

### Promote sustainability and increasing independence (Kate)

- It would be a good idea as long as the fundraising increases jointly without compromising with specialism that adds value as well independence
- LSP/ Top level support
- Children's services – develop a list of standards, developed for all tenders.

### Develop a mutual understanding and respect of the constraints placed on each sector (Rachel)

- Good aspirational

# COMPACT

## SOMETHING TO INCLUDE

### Maintain high standards of governance, conduct and openness (Clare)

- More frequent consultation to support voluntary services
- What changes need to be made? – Public recognition. Help engagement in more informal participation
- Practical communication e.g. visits by council reps
- Out come of consultations to be demonstrated e.g., by publications
- To have outcome of what has been achieved – e.g. LINK – what have they achieved?
- What are the National Compact principles – 1,2,3,4,5 & 6? Not clear

### Effectively and accurately engage in consultation and involvement (Segal)

- More frequent consultation
- Visit organisations
- Few should be community and not Civic Centre based
- Support the VS to consult
- Visits to organisations to see what is going on in voluntary sector.
- More frequent consultations is required
- More frequent meetings
- Carry out good intentions. Publicise results in digestible form. Sustainable Communities Act.

### Implement best practice funding principles to ensure that all funding opportunities are open, fair, transparent and proportional (Charlotte)

- Commissioning
- A starter pack: 10 easier steps to the Compact
- Rights to appeal – funding decisions
- Identify conflicts between MPs and Councillors
- Definition between grants and contracts

### Promote sustainability and increasing independence (Kate)

- Make sure compact is widely publicised & understood on both sides of partnership
- Use reader friendly terms
- Include some stricter guidance on LBH paying us at the beginning of the quarter not the end after many phone calls.
- Process invoices on time – to enable financial sustainability & keep admin costs down!
- Mutual respect to honour contracts
- Ensure sustainability by paying for services promptly
- Compact on all contracts
- Pay invoices on time – to improve sustainability
- Standards agreed – i.e. pay invoices on time

### Develop a mutual understanding and respect of the constraints placed on each sector (Rachel)

- Concrete arrangements, plans for structure

## **Voluntary and Community Strategy Consultation**

### **Have you all seen the previous VSS? What were your thoughts on it?**

- It looks really boring
- Its development needs more involvement from the VCS
- Less jargon is needed
- It needs to be more clear
- Very text heavy, far too much background information. Many of the sections could be appendices (however there is lots of useful information there)
- Hard to read, to absorb the key messages
- Would be good to see a clear documents with some key commitments to standards and policy in it, the current strategy may have this but it's not obvious!
- A few people had seen it – none could remember the content
- People attending the event should have been warned in advance that they should look at the doc
- As soon as it is written it is out of date
- Would have been useful to have seen the strategy beforehand
- Almost all participants had not seen the VSS and made the point it is not disseminated widely enough. It was suggested that when a group makes an application a copy of the VSS is automatically sent out to them. (Posted rather than emails because of printing costs/too many emails)

### **Is there anything you'd like to see LBH doing to improve the way it works with the Third Sector, that could influence the 2010-2014 Strategy?**

- Resource centre development. LBH should look for external funds to fund this
- A map of the Borough outlining where various organisations are operating from
- An online community – so people can post comments
- An online resource where groups can update and outline activities carried out by themselves in the near future. Perhaps by expanding the directory to include an area for people to post up comments/activities
- Something much more visual
- Re-vamp our section of the website. Not very user friendly
- The directory is a good resource, but needs to be kept up to date
- We need to make sure that we can reach out to all sectors of the community. All our publications need to be fully accessible; various language options available etc?
- Recognition of the importance of CVS organisations in the economic downturn
- VCS organisations need support; not just to pick up the mess of the council
- Recognising and celebrating the diversity of the VCS and supporting that
- Constant fear of 'threat' that groups will lose their funding if they don't do exactly what the council say
- Make sure we don't miss out on any 2012 money
- VCS orgs should be involved in the design and the evaluation of services
- 'De-mystifying' commissioning and procurement (Commissioning re-evaluation/change around in 2011)
- Hounslow would benefit from a Resource Centre to provide low cost but quality accommodation for the Third Sector. This would allow core funding to better spent on services or development
- Potential use of empty shops on the High St (Hounslow, Feltham & Brentford) as a venue for a resource centre, or a series of small offices. They would need minimal outfitting. The additional benefit would be to protect the recent regeneration investment in these areas
- The current approach to (most) Commissioning looks from the outside not to be thought through or joined up, and the projects arbitrarily developed. By not working with the Third sector in the development of the tenders there is not a true understanding of what is already been delivered, what clients want, and little use of the sectors front line delivery knowledge. This is (sometimes) leading to duplication of effort/services, or organisations stopping key services that are still in demand to fit in the new services
- Currently the timescales for the Commissioning are too short (for smaller organisations) to respond to in a real manner. Building a joint bid to deliver new services (as set out by the Council) takes time, especially with Third Sector organisations that mostly need the permission of their Board to proceed

- Many of the tendering opportunities are not actively publicised to the Third Sector and rely on word of mouth or 'who you know' information. Promotion needs to be streamlined and transparent
- CCICU needs to take a more active role in supporting the Third Sector in creating procedures for tendering to be used by all Council departments when involving the Third Sector
- Recognise the dichotomy between the commercial way in which the council HAS to operate now and the service and community driven VCS
- There is the need to encourage positive partnership that value difference and that recognise that not all organisations can work together
- The reduction in funding and increased competition will lead to the need for more joint bid – this will need support
- It was stressed again that by keeping levels of funding static (i.e. no rise in money to the VSS) is, in actual terms, a reduction in funding because of inflation.
- There was the feeling that the council / councillors should be more active in getting out and visiting orgs
- There needs to be more positive publicity for the VCS in the community – to generate support and community feeling
- More communication about opportunities, particularly finance/ facilities etc which could be available to the sector
- Event when LBH sell themselves & what they can do. Different departments could give eg, commissioning information
- Also other way round so VCS can show LBH what they do
- Can we have a link on the website to VSS
- Participants stated that it will help to know the name of the relevant department responsible for the strategy so that they can continue to comment after today's event.
- It was agreed that generally speaking LBH Community Cohesion Unit were very helpful and supportive.
- It was suggested that closer working between the VCS and LBH would be beneficial including an annual review of the Strategy.
- It was felt that decision making regarding funding was not transparent enough.
- In terms of information sharing and support, participants felt that LBH should take more of a lead in contacting/visiting local groups directly.