



Workshop Consultation Highlight Report 6th April 2010

The Feasibility of Establishing a Managing Agent Capacity for Third Sector Organisations in the South West

1. Attendance

The meeting was attended by:

Angela Hicks, GEW Business West
Aroona Smith, Silai for Skills
David Carter, Learning Plus
Debra Horide, South West Forum
Greg Davies, Community Council of Devon
John Bunting, Exeter CVS
Karen Michael-Cox, YWCA England and Wales
Louise Walsh, Groundwork South West

Lucy Findlay, RISE
Rick Weeks, South West Forum
Roy Sharman, Honicknowle Commnet Ltd
Simon Charters, South West Forum,
Stephen Woollett, South West Forum
Stephen Wright, SWAN,
Tim Ward, Learning Curve
Wendy Stephenson, Voscur

Apologies were received from:

Angela Kerr, ViSTA
Helen Black, Council for Voluntary Service Gloucestershire
Isabel Livingstone, South West Forum
Jan Crawley, South West Foundation
Julian Williams, Sofa Project
Robyn Munford, Sharpham Trust
Rupert Daniel, Black South West Network
Sue Cohen, Single Parent Action Network

2. Background

A discussion paper circulated in advance summarised the focus of the meeting: that a Managing Agent (MA) capacity be developed on behalf of South West third sector organisations, and that this MA would bid for public service contracts.

Initial consideration would be given to the European Social Fund tenders issued by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

3. Meeting Highlights

This highlight report is divided into 2 sections;

- 3.1 Statements of support, on which there was a general consensus of opinion, and
- 3.2 Questions, which highlight the areas requiring further thinking/clarification.

4. Statement of Support

A general consensus of opinion was reached on the following:

- 4.1 The region requires a special purpose vehicle for facilitating third sector access to public service contracts.
- 4.2 The MA should be neutral and independent. It should not deliver any service outputs.
- 4.3 The MA needs to establish a strong relationship with the sub-regions.
- 4.4 The MA needs to be separate from the voice function of SWF.
- 4.5 The MA must not be closed or exclusive in terms of membership to the consortium.
- 4.6 The MA should provide capacity-building for smaller VCOs such that they can access consortia membership. Capacity-building can be effectively delivered at the sub-regional level.
- 4.7 The MA needs to include technical expertise on: (i) bidding; (ii) collaborative working; (iii) contract management and (iv) learning and skills technical expertise.
- 4.8 The assembled organisations share excellent expertise in each of the above named areas.
- 4.9 The MA needs to remain absolutely neutral in its allegiance to stakeholder organisations.
- 4.10 The MA model would possess the following Unique Selling Points:
 - i. Regional reach to third sector organisations who are willing and able to work together.
 - ii. Reach (through third sector consortia members) to individuals who are most disadvantaged
 - iii. Neutrality
 - iv. A capacity-building component for third sector organisations who deliver to multiply disadvantaged individuals, but lack the capacity to be involved in ESF delivery.
 - v. From the SFA perspective, the MA represents a single point of contact for the South West third sector on skills and learning.
- 4.11 The MA should be governed by a Management Board.
- 4.12 The MA must be prepared for consortia members to be involved in other (competing) bids.

5. Question Marks

- 5.1 Can this MA model be realistically established within the short timeframe? How quickly can the legal/financial work be done? Are resources available to do this preliminary work?
- 5.2 Would the MA write the bids, or consortia members? Where would the bid-writing expertise reside?
- 5.3 How is membership to the consortium decided?
- 5.4 How would the MA be governed? What would be the criteria for membership on the MA Management Board? Draw on precedents for this at the national level.
- 5.5 How should the MA effectively collaborate with the existing sub-regional consortia (notably Learning Curve, Learning Plus and ViSTA), and the newly established social enterprise MA?
- 5.6 How can smaller third sector organisations relate to the output-driven nature of ESF (and learning and skills) contracts?
- 5.7 Should the MA include Cornwall (and therefore the Learning Partnership as a stakeholder)?
- 5.8 Is Learning Curve's membership model applicable, whereby affiliated organisations are members of Learning Curve, and bidding groups are formed from this membership depending on the specifications of each tender?
- 5.9 Given that the MA would not deliver any service outputs, the MA must consider how to guarantee the outputs that it is commissioned to provide. This might include flexibility within the consortium to move outputs between providers.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 Confirm to SFA the willingness amongst third sector organisations to work collaboratively.
- 6.2 Clarify with the SFA that an MA is not required to deliver any outputs, that PQO requirements would remain, and whether any resources could be secured to establish the special purpose vehicle.
- 6.3 Business Plan/Risk Analysis required.
- 6.4 Include all present organisations (as well as those who apologised) in a continuing dialogue.

Simon Charters
08/04/10

Note - following the workshop, Simon Carter sent the following:

Dear colleagues

Thank you to those who attended the consultation workshop in Exeter last week - I hope you found it as useful/interesting as we did. Attached are the 'highlights' of the meeting, which I'm sending to all those attended, as well as those who have expressed interest but were unable to attend. We'll also be briefly summarising the outcomes of the discussions in some standard SWF bulletins this week - let me know if you have any comments on this or the contents of the highlight report.

I have spoken with the SFA to clarify one two issues raised at the meeting:

1. The SFA is 'confident' that the rule which currently requires lead bidders to deliver 51% of outputs would not necessarily apply in the case of a managing agent model.
2. As things stand, both the managing agent and the delivery partners would be required to complete a PQQ. This could change, but equally may not.
3. The SFA will reply in due course as to whether there are any resources available for establishing a managing agent.

All comments welcome as always.

Kind regards,
Simon