

VCS Grants Prospectus vision, values & principles (October 2015)

Prospectus Vision

In 4 years' time we want to see that this co-designed approach to VCS grant funding is resulting in less disadvantage and inequality experienced by Bristol's residents and for those who are experiencing disadvantage being more able to cope or manage, not just day-to-day but for the longer term.

We want to achieve this vision by working in ways that will bring sustainable change and we have agreed a set of **values and approaches** that will underpin all prospectus-funded activities:

Making a real difference

Making a real difference to the key challenges and change for the better by working in new ways which bring out the abilities and strengths in people, organisations and neighbourhoods so that every person and community can lead a better/good life together. The change will be measurable and will be achieved in ways we have not envisaged before.

Helping the most disadvantaged

Reaching out to the most disadvantaged people and communities to build on their strengths, to enable them to help themselves and to open up the possibility for change and ambition.

Offering the support and access that some people need if they are to be included in the life of the city and recognising the value and contribution that people who are multiply disadvantaged bring to the city.

Offering early help

Balancing the demand to address immediate needs and the desire to create longer term solutions.

Addressing inequality and discrimination so that there is fairer access to opportunities and improved quality of life for all.

Building on existing strengths

Creating the conditions for different kinds of conversations and ways of working which promote respect and create inclusive communities that make the best use of community organisations, assets and resources.

Enabling people, community organisations and local communities to have influence, build on their strengths to create change and make a positive difference to the rest of their community so that they feel listened to and more confident.

Connecting people

Connecting people to people and community organisations better so that they are more able to weather changing and difficult times.

Increasing the opportunities for people from different backgrounds and experiences to come together to increase understanding.

Linking with the city

Recognising that this prospectus is part of a 'whole picture' of activities in the city and linking well with other funds, organisations and businesses from all sectors so that these grants fit well and add value.

Working together to connect, share, draw in or pool resources and build a sense of collaboration and community.

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Prospectus Principles

<p>We will co-design this new approach to grant funding to lead the City Council’s investment in our city through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a balance of evidence-based and user perspectives to understand local need and shape grant priorities. • Building on what works as well as enabling creative and innovative local approaches which contribute to improving people’s lives. • Developing and demonstrating ways that the council and the VCS can work together. • Bringing about positive community outcomes, focusing on the most disadvantaged people in our city. • Encouraging strategic alliances and shared learning as part of the grant’s added value. • Using and contributing to (grants) best practice. • Leaving a legacy of sustainability. 	
Using a balance of evidence-based and user perspectives to understand local need and shape grant priorities.	We will use the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), other existing data and evidence sources, including listening to the views of local people through existing structures, to understand local need. Together these will give us a balance of evidence-base and user perspective with which to shape the grant priorities.
Building on what works as well as enabling creative and innovative local approaches which contribute to improving people’s lives.	<p>Organisations will be grant funded to build on their strengths and also to innovate. The grants will be allocated to give a balance between things that work now and innovation so that new approaches are taken where appropriate. Our approach will allow risk through a ‘test and learn’ model that embeds innovation and accountability.</p> <p>We are challenging ourselves to be more creative and to enable this move towards a more innovative approach, which by its very nature will disturb the status quo, we will seek support from experts in this field at testing and consultation points.</p> <p>We must have the flexibility to respond to new (or newly presenting) need. This will be through a specific grant fund that enables organisations to apply for either short term or longer term grant where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a gap to plug that is not currently being met; and • their activities will ensure that alliances and user pathways ‘join up’ to meet the new need; and • the organisation brings in match funding when possible.
Developing and demonstrating ways that the council and the VCS can work together.	<p>For this grants prospectus, by voluntary and community sector we mean non-governmental, community-based organisations which are value-driven (their values arise from the community) and which reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives for the community. The sector includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, Community Interest Companies, co-operatives and mutuals. They range from small volunteer/single worker organisations and local community groups to large established organisations.</p> <p>To be eligible to apply for prospectus grants organisations must be based in or delivering services in Bristol and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be non-governmental • be constituted

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a set of objectives that allows them to undertake the activities they are proposing • be value driven, for the social good • be non party political • have at least three local trustees or directors (who are not paid shareholders) • reinvest any financial surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives that bring a significant community benefit to Bristol • do not distribute any of their surpluses or assets through share dividends to individuals or shareholders • have a bank account in the organisation's name <p>For the purposes of the prospectus, organisations must have one or more of the following structures or forms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a registered charity • a Community Interest Company limited by guarantee • a Community Interest Company limited by share (Schedule 2 with 100% asset lock only) • a company limited by guarantee • a community benefit company registered as an industrial or provident society • a voluntary and community unincorporated charitable association <p>We will make sure that there are grant opportunities for a range of VCS organisations. Every grant (programme) offered will show clearly the organisational characteristics we can reasonably require (e.g. local base, local networks, user-led). This will not be a 'one size fits all' approach.</p>
<p>Bringing about positive community outcomes, focusing on the most disadvantaged people in our city.</p>	<p>We want to be in a position where we know what we are achieving through the prospectus and can show the value of it.</p> <p>We will focus on disadvantage and will work to identify the underlying key challenges for Bristol, against which VCS organisations will be invited to apply for grant. We will ask funded organisations to tell us and evidence how their activities will benefit their service users. We will develop a proportionate monitoring framework that monitors only what is important and that enables us to focus on our stated impacts. We will need to take into account requirements from other funders (e.g. Public Health England, Department of Health).</p>
<p>Encouraging strategic alliances and shared learning as part of the grant's added value.</p>	<p>Where it can make a positive difference for disadvantaged people, we will encourage formal and informal strategic alliances (e.g. geographic alliances, communities of interest alliances) in order to encourage new ways of working.</p> <p>Where the evidence shows that a more formally joined-up approach is needed to meet peoples' needs we will work to understand the local 'market' and will offer the opportunity for organisations to apply for grants collaboratively.</p> <p>We want organisations to share their learning* from grant funded activities so that it benefits the wider community and we will reflect this in our grant processes and grant agreements.</p>

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	<p>Shared learning and the formation of strategic alliances will be some of the added value that we seek to achieve through the grant.</p> <p>*we need to establish low cost ways of doing this</p>
<p>Using and contributing to (grants) best practice.</p>	<p>The grant mechanisms will be designed in a way that makes transparent use of the grant, so that it is easy to understand what grant is available, for what, for whom, when and how to apply. We will design grant processes in line with our commitment to the Bristol Compact, that are proportionate and clear and will make sure that our eligibility criteria are reasonable and are designed to include smaller organisations as well as medium and large organisations. The processes will be efficient and aim to conserve resources both for the VCS organisations applying and for those managing the application processes.</p>
<p>Leaving a legacy of sustainability</p>	<p>We understand that there is a range of funding opportunities open to VCS organisations in the city: some have limited options and some have wide funding portfolios. We will encourage organisations to widen their funding models through leverage and social enterprise where possible. We will encourage strategic alliances in order to release or bring in extra resources for the city, not just for individual organisations.</p> <p>The council will work with the funded VCS Infrastructure organisation to identify 'backroom' areas where the sector could be supported in the future to make efficiencies, such as in human resources, finance and Information technology. The council will also look at ways to support organisations who have the potential to and interest in co-locating in order to share costs and increase collaboration.</p> <p>Our processes will be Compact compliant and we will offer up to four-year grant funding, which may be reduced year-on-year, during which time organisations can evidence the effectiveness of what they do and maximise the potential of other funding sources. We will follow Compact protocols to withdraw grant in cases of non-compliance with grant terms and conditions or poor performance.</p> <p>As part of our commitment to fostering innovation, we accept that organisations will use some grant funding to cover the costs of evaluation and fundraising. We also accept that risk accompanies innovation and, although we have an obligation to ensure good use of public funds, we believe testing and innovation are important.</p> <p>Our grant processes and monitoring will encourage good governance so that grant-funded organisations are fit-for-purpose and sustainable.</p>

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Glossary of terms:

Principally reinvest any financial surpluses to further social environmental or cultural objectives that bring a significant community benefit to Bristol: The organisation must reinvest at least 50% of their financial surpluses for community benefit in Bristol. Regional and national organisations will need to reinvest at least 50% of their financial surpluses that arise from their work in Bristol for community benefit in the city.

Individual shareholder: Includes individuals and private sector companies

Assets: This includes dividends, as well as material assets.

Voluntary organisation: A formal organisation run by a management body made up of volunteers who are engaged in that activity for environmental, economic or social good.

Community Group: A community organisation is a less formally organised body run by a management body made up of volunteers who are engaged in that activity for environmental, economic or social good.

Asset Based Approaches

Social Justice is everyone's business but requires a different way of thinking about the role of individuals, communities, associations and institutions in creating vibrant, prosperous and inclusive communities.

We believe that asset-based approaches offer a framework for social change, starting with the consideration of the following questions:

- 1. What is it that communities can do best?**
- 2. What do communities require help with?**
- 3. What do communities need outside agencies to do for them?**

Once we are all clearer about the answers to each of these questions, we can make better use of the resources that we all have or have access to and support one another to use them to the benefit of whole communities. Activities funded through the VCS grants prospectus should not be about imposed solutions. We are emphasising that our focus is asset based to make clear our starting point. Our goal is to fund VCS organisations to work with Bristol communities to build more inclusive and confident communities.