

MINUTES.
Bristol Compact.
Funding & Procurement sub-group.
6th December 2007.
The Create Centre.

Present: Christine Storrie (BCC – Economic Regeneration), Wendy Stephenson (Voscur), Sabrina Lee (Voscur), Ariaf Hussain (BCC – Community Development) and Phil Gingell (BCC – Community Engagement).

Apologies: Phil Morgan (The Care Forum).

1. Minutes and matters arising.

It was agreed the minutes were a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

2. Actions from last meeting.

Discussed and up-dates added to agenda.

Procurement and commissioning.

Cs advised tried to keep draft guidance about same length as original.

Two different options for definition of commissioning. More traditionally seen as acquisition of services, without going through tendering process. Now being disseminated through central government that commissioning should, like Hearts and Minds, be intelligent commissioning. Defining and designing of services.

Group need to decide which model they wish to adopt. The members of the sub-group took a few moments to read through CSs paper.

CS explained that traditional commissioning meant commissioners would simply find someone to provide a service without putting it out to any form of tendering. The new intelligent commissioning takes a more holistic view and involves an element of designing of service delivery.

AH believes this holistic approach would more accurately reflect the ethos of Compact.

CS had attempted to avoid being too prescriptive. Aspirational and hopeful but WS feels there should be changes to say Compact members will aim to achieve goals set.

WS also believes para two, whilst being legally enforceable, could be written in a more accessible manner.

Can reference to Hearts and Minds be made?

It has been suggested to WS that Annie Hudson, as Chair of Compact steering group, should sign letter to commissioners drafted by WS.

ACTION: WS	To speak with Annie Hudson re signing letter.
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Letter could accompany document produced by sub-group, together with any responses.

There is to be IDA training for commissioners launched in January 2008. WS wonders if commissioners should be informed of this training. WS will provide sub-group with copies of handout provided by NAVCA.

Hearts and Minds report does state councils will be measured on their effective commissioning process. Audit Commission also looking at sustainable procurement.

CS thanked by sub-group for efforts made to date.

ACTION: CS	To re-draft guidance and bring back to next meeting (via AH).
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Full cost recovery.

SL advises much of guidance has remained un-altered.

Definition of direct and indirect costs explained in more depth.

Para two, examples of overhead costs expanded upon.

Once again sub-group took some time to read redrafted guidance.

AH queried term VCSE and was informed Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector now preferred terminology. This should, therefore, be consistent throughout document. AH also feels terms “voluntary” and “social enterprise” should be defined in documents. WS can provide such definitions.

ACTION: WS	To provide details from recent article.
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WS asked if any agreement had been reached re what indirect costs public service agencies would fund? SL advised there had been discussions but, too date, no decisions had been reached. Both AH and WS think there will be a general framework of what could be eligible, rather than a cast-iron agreement.

There is a list of what is thought to be eligible and guidance on how to employ a full cost recovery approach which could go as appendix to funding and procurement implementation guidance.

WS also asked if other Bristol Partnership members could be included in consultation.

AH referred to final two paras and felt support and training should not be restricted to VCSE, but should apply to all partners. Also change “should” to “will”.

Does final para need to be included? SL agreed this could be left out.

Full cost recovery is something which all partners signed up to Compact need to endorse. There should, therefore, be some statement committing partners to supporting/using full cost recovery model. Change “VCSE Sector” to read “the Compact members” acknowledge, and this should resolve this.

SL thanked for work to date.

ACTION: SL	To amend draft as appropriate.
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Lead funder.

AH confirmed various council departments approached. Details of 07/08 funding requested. Spreadsheet has been produced.

Derek Dodd (Regeneration Support Manager) has provided his papers as requested.

Three elements; passporting, monitoring and networking.

Passporting; one department or team holding information on organisation being funded.

Monitoring; where appropriate joint monitoring could be undertaken where two departments/teams providing funds. Where more than two funding streams apply, separate monitoring should be undertaken, but it should still be possible for two funders to get together and carry out joint monitoring.

Networking/information sharing; partners to come together at least once a year to discuss priorities/issues.

AH believes there is a fundamental problem with “lead funder” which he feels should, more properly, be “lead commissioner”.

CS and AH mentioned “lolita” which they felt should help. They explained this was the new e-procurement system used by BCC.

Interestingly there are only some 20 organisations which receive multiple funding.

AH attempting to get commissioning managers and grant makers together to discuss situation re multiple funded groups. Report has been produced which AH will disseminate.

ACTION: AH	To disseminate lead funder Report.
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WS pointed out this all arose from VCSE wanting simplified monitoring process.

AH hopes to be able to come to VCSE in January 2008 to discuss e-procurement and its impact. CS can provide sub-group with information in her possession.

ACTION: CS	To provide basic outline of principles of e-procurement.
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E-procurement will not stand in the way of usual engagement between organisations and funders.

CS also believes training for smaller groups can be targeted to tackle specific issues.

Letter to commissioners.

WS has received comments from various people agreeing letter should be sent.

Members of sub-group were happy with letter and WS will send this to relevant individuals.

List of commissioners supplied at previous meeting should be utilised. This list is fairly comprehensive but also, possibly, could include planning, transport, arts. Unfortunately there is really no one person who can provide a detailed list of commissioners within BCC. Might be worthwhile though contacting Carew Reynell(Director, CSS), who could be of assistance in this respect.

AH feels it would be worthwhile sending letter to all first tier officers.

CS has report on VCS organisations being funded. This is about six months old, but might be of some use as it gives details by department.

ACTION: CS	To provide copy report.
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ACTION: WS	To send out letters as appropriate.
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Equalities guidance.

AH and WS looked at this part of implementation guidance. Also looked at national guidance on procurement.

Need to adopt principals to ensure level playing field.

Focus on outcomes; definition of what is meant by this.

Simplicity and proportionality around procedure dependant on amount of funding involved.

Transparency and accountability.

Discussion and dialogue.

Basically the equalities question should be considered in all aspects of implementation guidance.

Many of the ideas come from the study of the national guidance.

Some of the equalities sector organisations may still have issues with the guidance.

WS pointed out that the Compact itself recognised the power imbalance between the VCSE sector and the funders and commissioners. Equalities groups have, historically, argued they were further dis-advantaged. This lead, ultimately, to the BME section included within the Compact.

It could be recognised in the introduction that certain groups experience discrimination and disadvantage within the wider society. Therefore these principles should be adopted to help tackle this.

ACTION: AH	To continue re-draft of equalities section, bearing in mind this discussion.
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3. Consultation time frame.

Re-draft of Compact out for consultation until 4th February.

Cllr Holland has set aside 17th March to assist with launch event. WS to speak with Gordon Murray (IDA) re this event.

Consultation period for Funding & Procurement Implementation Guidance will be running on 17th March, but this can still be highlighted at launch event for Compact re-draft.

Sub-group should, probably, be looking to get consultation period for Funding & Procurement Guidance completed by end of March beginning of April 2008.

Members of sub-group can e-mail their drafts to AH, who can ensure document is written in one particular style and looks like a cohesive piece of work.

ACTION: Group members	To e-mail drafts to AH a.s.a.p. To enable him to produce new document.
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ACTION: AH	To circulate final draft of guidance to group for comment at next meeting.
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4. Date of next meeting.

Tuesday 22nd January 2008 10:00am at The Create Centre.