

Sector Leaders: draft programme

Voscur is consulting on its draft programme for the Sector Leaders initiative. The proposal below has been developed by Voscur and we are now seeking sector feedback that will inform the final version of the programme. Please send your comments to: richard@voscur.org – we would also love to hear from anyone wishing to become a Sector Leader.

What do we mean by Sector Leaders?

Sector Leaders embody Voscur's strategic aim of strong and distributed leadership. By 'Sector Leaders' we mean a group of people able to provide a view of the sector that is valuable in both its breadth and depth. They are also able to use the position of influence that they have through their role at their organisation or their work within local communities to help Voscur;

- respond to the sector's needs,
- deliver on the new Bristol In Partnership (formerly the Bristol Compact) and objectives in the new VCSE strategy and
- take forward issues, opportunities and challenges to strategic partners, commissioners and decision makers within the city.
- Some examples of what a position of influence could be include:
- A network of contacts within a local community that can be consulted to help reinforce community leadership through local decision making
- Access to specific mechanisms/decision makers, e.g. public boards, community activities/groups
- Delivering a project/projects that have particular relevance to an objective in the VCSE strategy
- Strong sector knowledge and experience that can help shape policy and guide decision making

How will Sector Leaders be different to Advocates?

Advocates were elected for the purpose of sitting on public sector strategic boards and working groups, mainly led by Bristol City Council and then reporting back to the sector. This is useful in ensuring the VCSE sector is 'at the table' and able to influence policy and strategy

whilst gaining intelligence about local government policy. However, this way of working does not help us to empower the wider sector.

Sector Leaders on the other hand, can be those operating at senior management level in the sector and/or those working on the ground with the community. They can, therefore, be appointed from any organisation and level of seniority assuming that they meet certain criteria (see 'Appointment Process' below). This allows us to appoint people from a range of roles to ensure more diverse participation, richer intelligence and to be more responsive to the needs of the sector. They are not intended to just be CEOs, but anyone who speaks for, acts for, represents or mobilises a relevant community.

Why do we need them?

Sector Leaders help the sector become better-connected, exercise influence and provide a conduit into specific strategic bodies. Appointing people in positions of influence who are able to enact change enables us to meet these needs and achieve the sector's aims as set out in Bristol In Partnership and the VCSE strategy.

Aims:

- Encourage growth and sustainability in the VCSE sector
- Ensure best possible outcomes for communities served
- Strengthen voice and influence of communities and the wider sector
- Achieve the aims of the Bristol SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) Alliance

Outcome: Sector is better

- Integrated into decision-making mechanisms that affect its work
- Known and understood by priority stakeholders
- Valued as a peer by stakeholders that share aims and values

Where will Sector Leaders operate?

Priority areas are the socio-economic issues which the VCSE sector seeks to address in order to improve communities and quality of life.

Sector Leaders' roles within organisations connected to these socio-economic issues will help to realise these improvements. They are 'where' Sector Leaders operate.

Examples of priority areas are listed below. These will ideally be independent of any specific organisation/individual and will work towards broad social goals:

- Health and wellbeing
- Poverty and inequality
- Environmental sustainability and energy security
- Skills and education
- Inclusive employment
- Economic regeneration
- Sustainable food production and food security

How will Sector Leaders be expected to operate?

Short term:

To begin with the Sector Leaders will be a small group that consists of members of the legacy Advocate programme. All current sector leaders will be transferred to the new programme. The initial Sector Leader activities will revolve around quarterly meetings where they will contribute to the development of the new programme. The format of these meetings will be similar to an Action Learning Set, with Voscur acting as facilitator.

Long term:

The aim is to expand the programme to a larger network. Once the number of Sector Leaders exceeds 20 it will no longer be practical to meet as one group.

Sector Leaders will be loosely aligned along the priority themes that they work within in order to make their activities easier to manage and to encourage relevant connections.

As the overall network expands, smaller groups involved in related issues may wish to meet in person to discuss and collaborate on relevant actions and suggest new projects; Voscur will help facilitate meetings.

Sector Leaders will be connected by an online forum – for example, a Linked In group – which would be the focal point for network-wide communication and coordinating activities.

There is a difference between Voscur's commercial work and the duties carried out by Sector Leaders. Sector Leaders will work on behalf of the sector and/or community to enact change. Voscur, on the other hand, works on request on behalf of organisations or partnerships, usually to help them engage with or connect with the sector and/or communities.

The work of Sector Leaders is to apply 'upward pressure'; by this we mean that it:

- Has been requested by or based on the needs of the community or the sector
- Involves advocating for or implementing positive change on behalf of the community or sector
- Is not replicating the work of an existing project
- Is seen as having achievable aims
- Is seen as being worth the Sector Leader's/Voscur's time

The number of projects active in each priority area should reflect the community need. This need can be judged based on progress on Bristol's One City Plan and the SDG Alliance goals.

What will Voscur do?

Voscur will act as a facilitator for the Sector Leaders programme. This will involve:

- Coordinating appointment of Sector Leaders
- Supporting Sector Leaders in achieving sector aims
- Facilitating initial Sector Leader meetings
- Providing analysis of intelligence where required
- Disseminating information to sector
- Seeking information or feedback from the wider sector to inform the group's work
- Checking and approving Sector Leader appointments according to the role's criteria

Proposed role description:

Sector Leaders are a group of influential and passionate people from the Bristol VCSE sector. They take a principal role in the development of the sector and get the opportunity to bring about meaningful change. The role will involve:

Routine

- Work with Voscur staff and other Sector Leaders to find ways to exercise influence in a way that benefits the VCSE sector
- Work with Voscur staff and other Sector Leaders to develop policy and responses on behalf of the sector
- Act upon the policies and plans agreed with Voscur and other Sector Leaders and use their position to enact change on behalf of the sector
- Attend relevant strategic meetings and meetings with other Sector Leaders
- Report regularly to the Sector Leaders group

Advocacy

- Identify opportunities, issues and challenges affecting the VCSE sector
- Help to develop and exercise solutions that solve VCSE challenges
- Inform Voscur of important developments within the Sector Leaders' area

Appointment process

Sector leaders can be suggested by anyone with an interest in the sector or individuals can put themselves forward. To promote the programme and generate suggestions for additional Sector Leaders, Voscur will publicise it across all its communication channels and through its ongoing outreach activities in local communities. The aim of this is to recruit a representative network of leaders from across the city.

Voscur approves all Sector Leader appointments. The criteria for selection are:

- The candidate's role at an organisation or with a group of people is relevant to at least one of the priority areas under the Bristol SDG Alliance and/or the objectives within the VCSE Strategy
- They are able to exercise influence or enact change (not, for example, in a statutory role)

Voscur will help find opportunities for 'buddying' to help smaller organisations to participate

Person specification

- Willing and able to work effectively to exercise influence or enact change that supports the VCSE Strategy and One City Plan
- Enthusiastic and passionate about the VCSE sector
- Strong understanding of the issues affecting the sector
- Able to lead beyond their organisation
- Ability to understand complex issues and work constructively with partners and stakeholders

Next steps and timeline:

- Voscur AGM January: present changes from Advocates to Sector Leaders as part of VCSE Strategy and Bristol in Partnership launch, e.g. invite a selection of current Advocates and potential Sector Leaders to discuss what they do, then ask them to facilitate table discussions on the question: "What does community leadership mean to you and your community?"
- February meeting: Voscur presents suggested new format for Sector Leader programme to current Sector Leaders.
- Mid-March: Sector Leaders feedback on suggested programme
- End of March: final Sector Leaders programme published to Sector Leaders, Voscur board and Voscur staff. Update Voscur website with details of the new Sector Leaders programme.
- Early April: Voscur and Sector Leaders identify individuals to approach. Individuals are identified based on the role specification and criteria outlined above.

- During April: Voscur shortlist approved by CEO. Voscur approaches shortlist of potential candidates.
- During May: appointment process takes place – Coincide with first official sector leaders meeting in Q2.