



CONSORTIA DEVELOPMENT FUND

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2008-2014

Consortia Name: Bedfordshire and Luton VCS Infrastructure Consortium

Geographical area: East of England

Lead Body: Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire

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Consortium Vision / Mission Statement

Vision

A vibrant, effective, sustainable and inclusive Third Sector where all individuals and communities are empowered to play a full part in local voluntary and community action.

Our Mission

To provide effective support services to Third Sector organisations; enabling them to develop their capacity to deliver quality services that meet the needs of their communities.

Consortium aims and objectives

NOTE: Use of the word sector means the Third Sector, which we have taken to include voluntary organisations, community groups, charities and social enterprises.

Aims

1. To promote awareness and understanding of the roles of the Consortium and its constituent members across the sector and within other statutory, private and public agencies.
2. To work collaboratively to make full and best use of infrastructure resources.
3. To seek to develop a stronger representational voice for the sector by working in partnership, thereby increasing recognition by other sectors.
4. To identify and respond to opportunities and threats facing the sector.
5. To seek to achieve best practice and continuously improve the quality of services delivered through the sector, together with the selection and adoption of appropriate techniques to measure the quality and impact of services.
6. To ensure that equality and diversity issues are addressed throughout the Consortium's work.
7. To identify gaps, shortfalls and insecurity in current structures and to reach agreement on ways of tackling them, whether by developing and transforming existing structures and/or by developing new solutions.
8. To build partnerships with funders to secure stable solutions to fill those gaps and reduce insecurity in organisations that are working well.
9. To establish protocols and mechanisms for joint working that will allow a 'holistic' approach to be taken and innovation to be nurtured.
10. To co-ordinate and prepare a needs-led Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP), Strategic Plan, Business Plan and action-based Delivery Plans.
11. To seek endorsement of these Plans by the widest possible cross-section of stakeholders, including voluntary and community sector bodies, support agencies, commissioning bodies and likely funders.
12. To develop investment proposals for these Plans as required.

Strategic Objectives

NOTE: Our strategic objectives are short and concise so that stakeholders know, and can remember, what the focus of the Consortium is.

Volunteering - Recruit more volunteers, develop more volunteering opportunities and increase the capacity of organisations to support volunteers.

Capacity Building - Developing skills, knowledge, structures, funding and other resources.

Voice - Support the sector to have a stronger voice.

Partnerships - Enable and encourage partnership working.

Community Cohesion - Build cohesion by responding to the needs of existing, new and growing communities.

Profile - Raise awareness of what the Consortium is and what it does with its stakeholders.

Strategic Approach to Delivery - Work strategically and in collaboration with one another and the public sector on policy and services.

What are the outcomes and key changes that the Consortium aims to make over the next 6 years?

The Consortium's outcomes for 2008-2014 are:

Third Sector support services work more strategically and in collaboration with one another and the public sector on policy, information and services.

To achieve this outcome the following long term changes will need to take place:

- public sector will have an improved understanding, and recognise the role and work, of Third Sector support services in Bedfordshire and Luton
- the Consortium is recognised by the wider statutory sector
- equality and diversity is embedded across all objectives and activities of the Consortium
- clear protocols for membership and operation of the Consortium are in place.

Rural, urban and hard to reach Third Sector organisations are aware of and better understand the roles and services offered by the Consortium and its constituent members and are better connected with our services.

To achieve this outcome the following long term changes will need to take place:

- more Third Sector organisations have an improved understanding, and recognise the role and work, of Third Sector support services in Bedfordshire and Luton
- increased capacity of the Consortium to deliver effective support services that narrow the gap between supply and demand.

Local communities and Third Sector organisations have the skills, knowledge, structures, funding and other resources to fulfil their potential for responding to the needs of, and providing services to, their communities.

To achieve this outcome the following long term changes will need to take place:

- Third Sector organisations develop more sustainable means of income generation
- Third Sector organisations develop and implement good practise in governance, financial management, service delivery, performance improvement and in managing people (volunteers and staff).

The people of Bedfordshire and Luton engage in active citizenship and are better able to access a diverse range of volunteering opportunities that meet both the needs of volunteers and local volunteer-involving organisations.

To achieve this outcome the following long term changes will need to take place:

- Volunteer Centres are effectively structured and funded
- Increased public awareness of local Volunteer Centres and the benefits and opportunities for volunteering.

Third Sector organisations have a strong voice and an active involvement in influencing the decisions that shape the community in which they operate.

To achieve this outcome the following long term changes will need to take place:

- the development and implementation of more effective community involvement and consultation mechanisms with public sector agencies and within the Third Sector
- Third Sector organisations develop and improve their marketing and communications.

The Third Sector contributes to, influences and benefits from opportunities for greater partnership, collaborative and cross-sector working.

To achieve this outcome the following long term changes will need to take place:

- Third Sector organisations recognise the benefits of engaging in public policy, place shaping and partnership working
- Third Sector organisations develop and improve their partnership working skills
- take time to build and nurture effective and inclusive local networks, build relationships and get people involved.

Please state why you feel these outcomes are the right ones

The outcomes have been developed from the Consortium’s original Infrastructure Investment Plan and refreshed in the light of extensive research into the needs of frontline organisations [set out within the Business Plan] and a thorough understanding of the key drivers and public policy issues contained in local, regional and national policy.

Local Needs Data

Evidence collected and updated from 961 frontline organisations through *Volbase* mapping of the sector during 2006 – 2007 has highlighted the top needs of Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) in Bedfordshire and Luton. The top 25 needs identified in the Bedfordshire and Luton State of the Sector Report 2006 were:

Rank- ing	Need	No. of TSOs identifying need	Rank- ing	Need	No. of TSOs identifying need
1	Fundraising and Funding Advice	517	14	ICT for Voluntary Organisations	72
2	Volunteer Recruitment	359	15	Communications Skills	67
3	Marketing and Promotion	251	16	Charity Accounting	67
4	Volunteer Support/Management	166	17	Business Plan Development	67
5	Health & Safety	164	18	Trustee/Management Committees	64
6	First Aid	136	19	Leadership Skills	59
7	Training and Skills Development	106	20	Budgets and book-keeping	59
8	Managing your Organisation	100	21	Making Meetings Work	58
9	Support from Businesses	82	22	Staff Management	53
10	Child Protection	82	23	Financial Management	53
11	Project Development/Management	80	24	Quality Assurance	47
12	Team Building	78	25	Partnership Working	46
13	Premises and Property	76			

Infrastructure Consortium Research

BME VCS Infrastructure Support

The research was commissioned by the Consortium and published in 2006; it found there was a need for the following:

- consolidation and, where necessary, improvement of what already exists
- an increase in, and diversification of, services and activities
- business and action planning models
- the provision of long term community development support
- improved funding stability
- improved partnership working between and across communities
- an increase in the number and diversity of volunteers including trustees
- enhanced cultural awareness in the statutory and voluntary sectors
- a range of training provision to meet specific needs
- an independent interpretation and translation service for the County.

Social Infrastructure

The *Strong Communities* report, published in September 2006 sets out important research on the social infrastructure needs of new communities. The report recognises the need to engage the support of local planners and developers to ensure we can support the organisations and activities that enable people to create, run and sustain the voluntary and community groups, volunteering opportunities and social networks required for new and growing communities.

Social Enterprise and Public Sector Procurement in Bedfordshire & Luton

The report, published in December 2005, was commissioned by the Consortium to inform its work in these areas. It revealed a number of issues and obstacles affecting Third Sector involvement in public sector procurement, including significant factors to do with how the public sector organises and practices procurement and its perception of the sector to take on contracts. It also found that few Third Sector organisations could be regarded as 'procurement ready'. The report proposed:

- improving the generic and associated support for VCS organisations in developing their income streams and sustainability;
- developing a new capacity and focus to foster growth and development of new public sector procurement opportunities and an effective VCS response; and
- the development of more effective links between the VCS and public sector procurement bodies.

Bedfordshire Volunteering Survey 2006

In May 2006, Volunteer Centre South Bedfordshire and Volunteer Centre Bedford commissioned an evaluation of residents' informal and formal volunteering participation and awareness of volunteering opportunities in their community. The consultation also asked questions on reasons for not volunteering and what could be done to increase levels of volunteering across the County. 10% of respondents said more information or opportunities would encourage them to volunteer and half of all the respondents felt not very or not at all informed about local volunteering opportunities.

Infrastructure Development Strategy Consultation and Survey

The Consortium has undertaken extensive research, listened to the sector and held discussions with stakeholders. It has identified a range of strategic objectives, outcomes and projects designed to meet the priorities of the sector and the needs of front line organisations. The Consortium has consulted widely on its proposed projects and while there are tensions within the sector about what is relevant to specific organisations there is broader recognition that much of what is proposed will be of greater relevance to the sector as a whole.

There were clear messages from front line organisations that funding was their major concern. Our projects on Social Enterprise, Procurement and Generalist Advice all seek to address this concern. Local Third Sector organisations were also very concerned about their need for generalist advice and more volunteers; aware of the need to develop more effective marketing and communications, and improve quality. Some of our projects seek to address these concerns.

There was strong recognition that the sector needed to address the forthcoming local government reorganisation, improve community engagement and develop more effective partnership working, as well as improve its marketing and communication. Our Strategy and Business Plan seek to address and modernise the sector's work in these areas.

Local Context

Bedfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2003-2013

The Strategy includes several references the voluntary and community sector and, in particular, recognises that the sector *has particular strengths in working with communities* and states that public sector agencies *will work in partnership* with the sector to deliver key actions to support the strategy's priorities, including:

- supporting development and advice to social enterprises
- increasing public sector procurement from social enterprises and the voluntary sector

- increasing volunteering opportunities, including opportunities for young people, and the involvement of local people in volunteering
- developing robust mechanisms for effective community engagement, for example community level planning, parish action plans and neighbourhood plans
- actively engaging with the public in developing future plans and helping them to shape new communities through '*Planning for Real*' and other tools
- supporting the development of community-owned assets, which will allow community-based initiatives to thrive and respond to local needs long into the future
- improving the capacity of all public, voluntary and community sector services in the County
- facilitating the development of new community groups and access to local volunteering opportunities in new settlements.

The Strategy seeks to measure success in a number of ways, including:

- increasing the number of people volunteering
- increasing public sector procurement from social enterprises
- improving parish engagement with their communities.

Bedford Sustainable Community Strategy (Community Plan) 2004-2010

The Strategy recognises the contribution of the voluntary and community sector through the provision of volunteering and capacity building initiatives and the role that voluntary organisations play in delivering real change within communities, particularly in improving health, strengthening the economy, in developing learning opportunities and skills, in promoting leisure and addressing community cohesion.

Mid Bedfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy (Community Plan) 2003-2013

The Strategy recognises the contribution of an active voluntary and community sector in creating sustainable communities and that by working with communities, the statutory and voluntary sectors can help to develop the extent to which people feel they have a stake in the communities where they live. It also recognises the role that voluntary organisations play in delivering a range of activities and services, particularly in promoting community safety, housing and building communities, improving the environment, promoting leisure, strengthening the economy, developing learning opportunities and skills, and in addressing community cohesion. The draft Updated Plan makes a specific commitment to supporting the voluntary sector and encouraging an increase in the levels of volunteering by residents.

South Bedfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy (Community Plan) 2003-2013

The Strategy recognises the contribution the voluntary and community sector is making in delivering a range of activities and services, particularly in promoting community safety, providing housing and building communities, improving the environment, improving health, strengthening the economy, developing learning opportunities and skills, creating better transport, in addressing community cohesion and promoting leisure. It specifically includes actions to:

- facilitate resident and stakeholder involvement in the development of Town, Parish and Neighbourhood Plans
- develop and implement the *Bedfordshire and Luton Compact* and Codes of Good Practice
- develop a range of different approaches to community involvement and volunteering that increase access for groups and/or individuals that are under-represented, are socially excluded, have extra support needs or unusual skills
- increase awareness of the benefits of volunteering and local volunteering opportunities.
- identify and support local people able to act as (potential) community leaders within priority neighbourhoods and new communities
- maintain networks of agencies and individuals involved in promoting, developing and supporting voluntary and community action
- capacity build local voluntary organisations and community groups through information, advice and guidance, consultancy, outreach work, training and development
- enable local voluntary organisations and community groups to identify and access funding appropriate to their activities.

Luton Sustainable Community Strategy (Community Plan) 2002-2012

The Strategy recognises the contribution the sector can make to community cohesion and neighbourhood renewal, and includes a specific Strategic Objective to increase opportunities for and participation of individuals and voluntary/community groups in decision making bodies and regeneration programmes in Luton.

The **Bedfordshire and Luton Local Area Agreements 2006-2009** both recognise the role of the sector in supporting the delivery of key targets, including stretched targets to increase the levels of volunteering by March 2009.

Bedford Borough Unitary Authority Proposals 2007

Within the proposals for Bedford there are two references to what the Borough can do for the Third Sector in providing payroll services.

Central Bedfordshire Unitary Authority Proposals 2007

Within the proposals for Central Bedfordshire there are some positive references to the voluntary and community (or third) sector and to communities, along with specific commitments to:

- draw together local talents and resources to form community networks, which would provide grass roots input to both policy making and scrutiny, identifying issues and concerns
- partnerships with the third sector and (the involvement of) community networks and the voluntary and community sector as part of the Central Bedfordshire Governance Framework
- support third sector organisations through the application of the principles underpinning the local voluntary sector compact, the use of key partner grant funding agreements and greater encouragement of volunteering
- explore opportunities to support the independent management and operation of assets, and devolving service provision.

Learning and Skills Council Bedfordshire and Luton Annual Plan 2007-2008

The Learning and Skills Council recognises the valuable role the voluntary and community sector can play in assisting it to meet its key priorities for learning and skills; among young people, adults and employers; including its ability to access communities and young people, where there are low levels of education, employment and training. The Plan provides for developing a refreshed Working Together Strategy, with key priorities for moving forward LSC objectives, including:

- support to VCS organisations interested in delivering LSC programmes
- undertaking research and development of a programme of accredited training on social enterprise
- undertaking research and development of a programme of accredited training to meet the workforce development needs of VCS organisations working in the health and social care sector and increase the number of learners participating in health and social care qualifications
- providing training for VCS advisers on Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) provision so that they are able to advise and refer clients to Next Step provision
- increasing VCS organisations' readiness and capacity to bid for and deliver LSC mainstream and ESF work through the negotiated and tendered commissioning rounds.

Bedfordshire & Luton Investing In Communities Partnership

The Partnership's research, by OCSI, clearly shows that *there is evidence that social enterprises face barriers to growth, as available business support is typically targeted at helping businesses start-up and few Voluntary and Community Sector businesses seek advice from mainstream business agencies. Helping provide business support to social enterprises in order to identify and take advantage of growth opportunities (rather than focusing on helping businesses start-up) is a potential area for development.*

Regional Context

East of England Regional Economic Strategy

The Regional Economic Strategy provides a number of priorities and actions, including:

- improving the business planning and management skills of entrepreneurs to help improve performance and growth
- ensuring business support is better tailored to the needs of businesses and reflects the diversity of enterprises in the region
- growing community and social enterprises across the region
- building social capital by strengthening links between people, within and between neighbourhoods, and promoting community leadership
- working towards maximising the social benefits of public sector procurement
- strengthening infrastructure support for the voluntary and community sector.

East of England Regional Social Strategy

The Regional Economic Strategy provides a number of priorities and actions, including:

- promoting the benefits of volunteering in terms of improving an individuals skills and confidence and providing a valuable 'stepping-stone' to future(paid) employment opportunities
- offering a range of voluntary and community work opportunities for older people to develop their skills and wider social networks
- reviewing best practice in relation to volunteering policies and opportunities
- promoting volunteering as an integral part of sustainable communities and a network of quality Volunteer Centres promoting and enabling volunteering and community involvement
- using existing, and helping to further develop, community assets for achieving sustainable regeneration solutions
- supporting the infrastructure of voluntary and community organisations and enabling them to help shape and deliver high quality public services
- building the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to win tenders for the delivery of services, with more services being delivered by local VCS providers.

National Context

The Government's **2007 Comprehensive Spending Review** includes a number of key priorities for the Government in putting the Third Sector at the heart of work to build strong, active and connected communities, in partnership with local government, and in developing the sector's contribution to social and economic regeneration, including:

- enabling the sector's role in campaigning and representation
- increasing opportunities for participation in civic life & decisions on how services are delivered
- strengthening partnership working between local authorities and the Third Sector (including commissioning and procurement)
- developing community endowerments to provide sustainable grant making
- investing in community anchor organisations and community asset and enterprise development
- supporting volunteering, particularly among young people and socially excluded groups
- raising awareness of social enterprise and its potential for delivering public services
- investment in third sector infrastructure.

NOTE: full details of the policy context to support the Infrastructure Development Strategy will be published on the Consortium website.

What are the main implications of this Infrastructure Development Strategy for the consortium?

The Consortium is aware that its Strategic Plan is very ambitious. Nevertheless, it is committed to addressing these ambitions over the next six years. In doing so it is aware of the need to address the following:

Finance

The Consortium will need to secure significant levels of funding if it is to make the step changes needed to modernise the sector (see Resources Needed below). The Accountable Body will need to apply tight financial controls to ensure that funding received is correctly applied and accounted for across a number of different restricted funds. The payment of funds will need to be tied to delivery of outputs for each of the proposed projects and quarterly financial claims to Capacitybuilders and other funders. The Consortium will take the opportunities presented by Local Government Reorganisation to work with the new Unitary Authorities, as well as other statutory agencies, to improve their commissioning and procurement policies and procedures. The Consortium will also seek to secure funding for those projects not funded by Capacitybuilders from a range of other sources, including public sector commissioning and procurement.

Staff

Each project has a lead partner from the Consortium that will be responsible for taking the project forward. Initially this may be securing funding; it will inevitably include project managing its implementation, monitoring and review. Some of the projects provide for back-filling current appointments so that their expertise, local knowledge and contacts can be used to the full in order to achieve maximum impact and delivery. For other projects we will seek to employ new staff; this is likely to include:

- 1 x Strategic Development Officer for Developing and Managing the Consortium
- 2 x Partnerships Officers for the Representation and Impact of Local Government Reorganisation Project
- 2 x Forums/Networks Coordinators for the Representation and the Impact of Local Government Reorganisation Project
- 1 x Circuit Rider for the IT Support and Advice project
- 1 x Project Coordinator for the IT Support and Advice project.

Further details of the staff resources are set out in Annex 5 of the Business Plan.

Volunteers

None of the projects rely directly on volunteers for their delivery, although volunteers working within the Consortium's member organisations may be involved in some of the work undertaken. Much of the projects' delivery will include volunteers from front line organisations as beneficiaries of the support services provided. The Consortium will need to ensure that some of its training workshops, networking events and forum meetings take place at times when volunteers are available. Volunteers' expenses for attending forum meetings have been included in project budgets.

Geography

Major changes will take effect in terms of the sub-region's geography and political landscape as Bedfordshire's local government is being reorganised into two unitary authorities. Consideration will be given to the need to realign support service providers' areas of benefit. Our *Representation and the Impact of Local Government Reorganisation* Project seeks to address these issues. The sub-region is also one of the government's growth areas with over 90,000 new homes being built by 2031. This will see a 43% growth in population, the development of new social infrastructure, including new community groups and volunteers, all of which will need support services.

Skills and Knowledge

The Consortium is aware that it needs to develop the skills and knowledge of its staff, particularly in the areas of commissioning and procurement, social enterprise advice, equalities audits, marketing and partnership working. Some skills and knowledge will need to be bought in through specialist

staff, such as the IT Circuit Rider posts, or through trainers, working within the sector, to deliver specific workshops. Further information is included in Annex 5 of the Business Plan.

Information and Communications Technology

Some additional IT equipment for new posts is included within the Business Plan budget. There is a need for Consortium members and other Third Sector organisations to enhance their IT capability and our *IT Support and Advice Project* seeks to address this. There will be a continued need to maintain the Consortium's portal website and to ensure it is kept up to date, along with the proposed Consortia pages on the Capacitybuilders website.

Developing Partnerships

Partnership working is a key theme within the Strategy and Business Plan, reflecting the importance given to this as an aspect of modernising the sector. It requires significant levels of time, resource, energy and commitment to build trust and effective partnership working. Consortium members will continue to develop their own partnership working skills, both within the Consortium and with key stakeholders. Our *Representation and the Impact of Local Government Reorganisation Project* will seek to build new partnerships with new unitary authorities and include Third Sector organisations in new strategic partnerships. Our *Community Engagement Project* will seek to develop new Community Partnerships in neighbourhoods, towns and parishes. Our *Partnership Working Skills Project* will seek to develop these skills within the sector, as will our *Procurement Project*, which will look at organisations collaborating together to secure local authority contracts or access other public sector funding.

Sustainable Development

The Consortium is aware of the need to address sustainable development issues and to reduce its carbon footprint. Consortium members that already have Sustainable Development Policies in place will work with those that do not. The Consortium is committed to achieving continuous environmental improvement in all our activities and services. We will strive to reduce our own impact and make every effort to work with the Third Sector to promote a sound awareness and understanding of local and global issues that will facilitate sustainable development practices.

Measuring Impact

The Consortium is aware of the need to measure the impact of what it does. It will seek to measure the tangible benefits for frontline organisations, improvements in user satisfaction, and changes in public sector engagement with the Third Sector. Further information is included in Annex 3 of the Business Plan.

Strengthening the Consortium

Our *Developing and Managing the Consortium Project* very much focuses on the work we need to do to strengthen the Consortium. This will seek to employ, for the first time, a Strategic Development Officer to manage the work of the Consortium, including delivery of the projects set out in the Strategy and Business Plan; to provide for fund management arrangements, staff training and development, increased stakeholder engagement, the embedding of equality and diversity issues and the widening of Consortium membership.

Resources Needed to Achieve Outcomes

The total cost of delivering the Strategy and Business Plan is £2,681,850 for 2008/09 to 2010/11. Further information is included in Annex 4 of the Business Plan.

The total number of staff needed to deliver the Strategy and Business Plan is 20.5 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff for 2008/09 and 2009/10, reducing to 17.0 FTE for 2010/11. Further information, including job titles, salaries, time in posts, skill requirements and training needs, is included in Annex 5 of the Business Plan.

Please outline the roles of key people/organisations in delivering the Infrastructure Development Strategy

Organisation	Role	Project
Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire	Accountable Body	All Projects
	Lead Partner	Representation and the Impact of Local Government Reorganisation
	Lead Partner	Partnership Working Skills
	Delivery Partner	Community Empowerment
	Lead Partner	Social Enterprise
	Delivery Partner	Procurement
	Delivery Partner	Marketing and Communications
	Delivery Partner	Modernising Volunteering
	Delivery Partner	Community Accountancy
	Delivery Partner	Improving Quality
	Lead Partner	General Advice, Information and Development
	Lead Partner	Consortium Development and Management
CVS Mid and North Bedfordshire	Delivery Partner	Representation and the Impact of Local Government Reorganisation
	Delivery Partner	Partnership Working Skills
	Delivery Partner	Community Empowerment
	Delivery Partner	Social Enterprise
	Lead Partner	Procurement
	Delivery Partner	Marketing and Communications
	Delivery Partner	Community Accountancy
	Lead Partner	IT Support and Advice
	Lead Partner	Improving Quality
	Delivery Partner	General Advice, Information and Development
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity	Delivery Partner	Representation and the Impact of Local Government Reorganisation
	Delivery Partner	Community Empowerment
	Lead Partner	Community Accountancy
	Delivery Partner	General Advice, Information and Development
	Delivery Partner	Consortium Development and Management
Voluntary Action Luton	Delivery Partner	Partnership Working Skills
	Delivery Partner	Community Empowerment
	Delivery Partner	Social Enterprise
	Delivery Partner	Procurement
	Lead Partner	Marketing and Communications
	Delivery Partner	Modernising Volunteering
	Delivery Partner	Community Accountancy
	Delivery Partner	Improving Quality
	Delivery Partner	General Advice, Information and Development
	Delivery Partner	Consortium Development and Management
Bedford Race Equality Council	Lead Partner	Community Empowerment
	Delivery Partner	Community Accountancy
	Delivery Partner	General Advice, Information and Development
	Delivery Partner. Lead Partner for E&D Audits	Consortium Development and Management
Volunteer Centre Bedford	Delivery Partner	Community Empowerment
	Lead Partner	Modernising Volunteering
	Delivery Partner	Consortium Development and Management

What are the timescales, key steps, and process for reviewing the Infrastructure Development Strategy?

Who	Process	Key Step	Timescale
Consortium Members' Information Officers	Collect up-to-date intelligence on third sector needs and support services.	Feed into Strategic Development Officer's Report and Discussion Paper on Review of Strategy.	Ongoing throughout each year.
Consortium Members' Information Officers	Design and conduct annual satisfaction survey to monitor progress and shape future services.	Feed into Strategic Development Officer's Report and Discussion Paper on Review of Strategy.	December 2008 December 2009 December 2010 December 2011 December 2012 December 2013
Consortium	Discussion at Consortium meeting.	Undertake Annual Fit for Purpose Self Assessment.	December 2008 December 2009 December 2010 December 2011 December 2012 December 2013
Consortium Strategic Development Officer	Discussions with each Consortium member to review Strategy and Business Plan.	Prepare Report and Discussion Paper for Consortium.	February 2009 February 2010 February 2011 February 2012 February 2013 February 2014
Consortium	Discussion at Consortium meeting.	Review of intelligence on third sector needs and support services. Strategic Development Officer's Report and Discussion Paper on Review of Strategy. Annual Refresh of Business Plan.	March 2009 March 2010 March 2011 March 2012 March 2013 March 2014
Consortium Members	Develop and publish Equalities and Diversity Action Plans	Undertake Equalities and Diversity Impact Assessment. Review published Equalities and Diversity Action Plans.	September to December 2008 December 2009 December 2010
Consortium	Discussions at Consortium meeting and with stakeholders.	Prepare Infrastructure Business Plan for the period April 2011 to March 2014.	December 2010

ANNEX

Consortium membership and Terms of Reference

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT FOR THE BEDFORDSHIRE & LUTON VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE CONSORTIUM

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Consortium has come together as the vehicle for developing and leading on sustainable infrastructure for the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors in Bedfordshire & Luton.

2. Name

- 2.1 The Consortium shall formally be known as The Bedfordshire & Luton Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Consortium and, for profile purposes, shall be known as The Voluntaryworks Consortium. The Consortium's website address will be *www.voluntaryworks.org.uk*.

3. Overall Vision and Mission

- 3.1 **Vision** – A vibrant, effective, sustainable and inclusive third sector where all individuals and communities are empowered to play a full part in local voluntary and community action.
- 3.2 **Mission** – To provide effective support services to third sector organisations; enabling them to develop their capacity to deliver quality services that meet the needs of their communities.

4. Overall Functions of the Consortium

In order to deliver this vision, the following functions will be undertaken:

- 4.1 To promote awareness and understanding of the roles of the Consortium and its constituent members across the sector and within other statutory, private and public agencies.
- 4.2 To work collaboratively to make full and best use of infrastructure resources.
- 4.3 To seek to develop a stronger representational voice for the sector by working in partnership, thereby increasing recognition by other sectors.
- 4.4 To identify and respond to opportunities and threats facing the sector.
- 4.5 To seek to achieve best practice and continuously improve the quality of services delivered through the sector, together with the selection and adoption of appropriate techniques to measure the quality and impact of services.
- 4.6 To ensure that equality and diversity issues are addressed throughout the Consortium's work.
- 4.7 To identify gaps, shortfalls and insecurity in current structures and to reach agreement on ways of tackling them, whether by developing and transforming existing structures and/or by developing new solutions.
- 4.8 To build partnerships with funders to secure stable solutions to fill those gaps and reduce insecurity in organisations that are working well.

- 4.9 To establish protocols and mechanisms for joint working that will allow a 'holistic' approach to be taken and innovation to be nurtured.
- 4.10 To co-ordinate and prepare a needs-led Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP), Strategic Plan, Business Plan and action-based Delivery Plans.
- 4.11 To seek endorsement of these Plans by the widest possible cross-section of stakeholders, including voluntary and community sector bodies, support agencies, commissioning bodies and likely funders.
- 4.12 To develop investment proposals for these Plans as required.

5. Membership of the Consortium

- 5.1 Membership of the Consortium is open to third sector agencies based in Bedfordshire & Luton that provide infrastructure services and support to voluntary organisations, community groups, social enterprises, volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers. Organisations must be able to demonstrate that they provide at least three of the five following services:
 - 1. the organisation pro-actively identifies needs in the local community and facilitates improvement in service provision to meet those needs;
 - 2. the organisation assists local voluntary and community organisations to function more effectively and deliver quality services to their users, members and constituents;
 - 3. the organisation facilitates effective communication or networking and collaboration amongst local voluntary and community organisations;
 - 4. the organisation enables the diverse views of the sector to be represented to external bodies, developing and facilitating structures that promote effective working relationships and two-way communication;
 - 5. the organisation enhances the sector's role as an integral part of local planning and policy-making.
- 5.2 Organisations wishing to apply for membership of the Consortium will be able to download information from the Consortium's portal website. They should complete an Application Form outlining basic contact and organisational information, describe how the organisation meets the criteria in 5.1 above and state the level of work dedicated to such support.
- 5.3 Membership applications will be dealt with by the Accountable Body and decided upon by the Chairperson following consultation with members. Where there is no consensus on the application or where clarification is required the application will be discussed at the next Consortium meeting. The applicant will also be invited to attend the meeting.
- 5.4 The Consortium may co-opt organisations to advise it. They shall have a right of attendance at Consortium meetings but shall not be eligible to vote on any matters so decided.
- 5.5 Each member shall be eligible to have one vote in any decisions where a proposal is put forward for decision. Co-opted organisations shall not be eligible to vote.
- 5.6 Members of the Consortium may resign by advising either the Consortium's secretariat or other Consortium members, in writing, of their wish to do so.
- 5.7 Contact details for members and co-opted organisations will be published on the voluntaryworks.org.uk portal website and made available on request.

6. Stakeholder Engagement

- 6.1 The consortium will seek to be as inclusive as possible by supporting a process that allows continuous feedback from the grassroots up, promoting inclusivity, meaningful representation, flexibility and clarity of thought and presentation by engaging with stakeholders within and out with the sector. The Consortium will adopt a Marketing and Communications Strategy.

7. Members' Commitments

Consortium members will:

- 7.1 Provide a named representative that can authoritatively represent their interests and take decisions.
- 7.2 Ensure that the representative, or a named substitute, regularly attends meetings whenever possible. Members will submit apologies if they are unable to attend a meeting.
- 7.3 Provide any information agreed and requested by the Consortium within agreed time scales and meet any other commitments made to stakeholders or the sector by the Consortium.
- 7.4 Recognise the individuality of each member and the constraints within which they must work.
- 7.5 Focus on the development of services and matters of relevance to the sector as a whole/ majority.
- 7.6 Raise awareness of the Consortium.
- 7.7 Report progress and issues back to their individual Management Committees/Boards, relevant staff and their membership.
- 7.8 Treat any information received with due sensitivity and respect any confidences.

8. Accountable Body

- 8.1 Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire will act as the Accountable Body for the Consortium and will undertake the following:
1. Ensuring that all funding applications for the Consortium's activities are properly prepared, in accordance with any relevant guidance; that there are clear budgets, outputs and outcomes agreed by the Consortium and that applications for funding are submitted to Capacity Builders (or other funders) on time.
 2. Contracting with Capacity Builders and other funders on behalf of the Consortium and taking responsibility for all associated risks.
 3. Setting up and maintaining quarterly monitoring, reporting and claiming procedures for projects and Consortium members, ensuring a full audit of activities is maintained.
 4. Ensuring the effective management of the Consortium's funds, including the processing and payment of claims from Consortium members and the preparation of claims to funders on behalf of the Consortium.
 5. Monitoring the progress of projects being delivered by the Consortium.
 6. Undertake reporting procedures as required by Capacity Builders, other funders and the Consortium, ensuring the monitoring and evaluation of the Consortium's Strategic, Business and Delivery Plans.

7. Management and audit of the Consortium's funds through restricted fund(s) within the accounts and financial management controls of Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire.
 8. Providing an effective secretariat for the Consortium, including the arrangement of Consortium meetings and the distribution of minutes and agendas.
 9. Making arrangements for, and conducting, the election of the Chairperson.
- 8.2 The Accountable Body may over-ride decisions made by the Consortium where these are contrary to the terms and conditions of grants, guidance notes or other contracts entered into with a funder (including Capacity Builders) on behalf of the Consortium. All such decisions will be reported to the Consortium.
- 8.3 In the event of a disagreement between the Accountable Body and the Consortium both parties will attempt to settle the disagreement by arbitration and the appointment a mutually agreed independent third party.
- 8.4 The Consortium may review the appointment of the Accountable Body at the last meeting in the financial year. The Accountable Body shall assume office from the first day of April in each year until the 31 March of the following year.

9. Election and Role of Chairperson

- 9.1 The Consortium will elect one of its Members' representatives (other than the Accountable Body) to act as Chairperson of the Consortium who will undertake the following:
1. Chairing of Consortium meetings and stakeholder events.
 2. Building trust amongst Consortium members and resolving any tensions and conflict that may occur.
 3. Representing the Consortium at any East of England VCS Infrastructure Consortia Forums.
- 9.2 The Chairperson will be elected at the last meeting in the financial year and will assume office from the first day of April in each year until the 31 March of the following year.
- 9.3 If the elected Chairperson is not available to chair a meeting, the Consortium may appoint one of its Members' representatives (including the Accountable Body) to act as Chairperson.

10. Operating Principles

The Consortium will, at all times, seek to operate in an inclusive manner. It will:

- 10.1 Determine appropriate secretariat arrangements that support inclusivity, effective communication and good practice in administration of the Consortium's business
- 10.2 Work through any appointed Strategic Development Officer or secretariat.
- 10.3 Work through any Implementation Groups or other sub-groups working on specialist areas. Membership of such groups may include colleagues drawn from Consortium member organisations and, where appropriate, other stakeholders.
- 10.4 Meet regularly during the year and produce a schedule of meetings well in advance.



- 10.5 Organise meetings in ways that allow all members to contribute to agenda setting, ensure full accessibility to all its meetings etc. and strive to circulate agendas and other papers at least five working days in advance.
- 10.6 The quorum shall be two or the nearest number to one third of the Consortium's membership eligible to vote.
- 10.7 Attempt to work by consensus, but recognise they do not have the power to commit an individual member organisation to a course of action that it does not wish to take.
- 10.8 Work together on collaborative funding bids. Where there is open competition for Capacity Builders funding programmes the Consortium will first decide whether there should be a collaborative application by the Consortium or enable members to make individual applications.
- 10.9 Adopt and implement protocols for the Consortium on, for example, collaboration, conflict resolution, complaints, and representation and accountability.

THIS PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT IS SIGNED, FOR AND ON BEHALF OF OUR RESPECTIVE ORGANISATIONS, BY ALL MEMBERS OF THE CONSORTIUM:

Wendy Anderson-Welsh
Chief Officer
Bedford Race Equality Council

Jon Boswell
Director of HAPPEN
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity

Martin Trinder
Chief Officer
**Community & Voluntary Service
Mid and North Bedfordshire**

Everton Blake
Executive Director
Voluntary Action Luton

John Gelder
Director
**Voluntary and Community Action
South Bedfordshire**

Gerry Sansom
Manager
Volunteer Centre Bedford