

**Partnership Commissioning Framework Consultation Response Form**

**Co-ordinated Response from 15 Voluntary & Community Sector  
Organisations from a consultation held on 4 Dec 2008.**

**Contact:** Ian Darch or Helen Jones of Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council, on behalf of the 15 organisations listed below.

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**Organisation / Agencies:** Action for Children; Community Focus; Re-Entry; St Columba's Church Day Centre; Topps for the Community CIC; Wolverhampton Crossroads Care; Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum; Wolverhampton Multi-Care; Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council, YWCA; Zip Theatre; Wolverhampton Coronary Aftercare Support Group; Youth Opportunities Wolverhampton (YOW); African Caribbean Community Initiative, Wolverhampton CAB

**Is this an individual / group / organisational response? Please specify by underlining**

This is a Considered Joint response from the 15 voluntary and community organisations listed above taken from a consultation exercise held on 4 December 2008.

**Date of completion:** 4 December 2008

**Does the commissioning process outlined in figure one cover all essential components?**

It appears fairly comprehensive.

**If not what else should be included?**

Involvement of the sector at all stages of the process.

**Are the commissioning steps explained clearly?**

The circular diagram of the commissioning process was helpful and clear, backed up by a description of the stages.

**If not what else should be included? .....**Not what but how...

However, there was general agreement that the consultation document was written in unnecessarily high level language. This worked against most organisations reading most of it. Most organisations welcomed the opportunity for the consultation to clarify what they actually needed to know

and ask questions. It was felt that attention to plain English and ease of reading would increase access to the process to a wider range of organisations, and individuals who may not have English as a first language, but who are nevertheless providing a valuable niche service.

**Are the samples of standardised templates useful?**

We were not able to identify anything we understood to be a template in the draft consultation document so are unable to comment. The first three questions on this form are about things we couldn't identify. We suggest this may be enough to prevent an organisation engaging with this form.

**Would you use/adopt the standardised templates in your work area?**

We are unable to comment.

**Are there any other standardised templates you would like to see included? Be specific and send samples attached to your response from where possible.**

We would be prepared to be involved in discussing these if we knew what you were referring to.

**Do you think your agency / organisation will use the commissioning framework?**

For some organisations they have no choice but to engage in the process if they expect to gain local authority funding for their service especially if it is their sole or main funder. The above organisations would be encouraged to use it by: Wolverhampton having a good track record of using local organisations; clarity and fairness; because they have to; by learning from national experiences; if by using existing quality marks eg PQASSO, Matrix etc they would count; or developing a specific 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector accreditation eg ACQUA for preferred supplier list as in Hereford; money to support planning and preparation; ease of application; willingness to give support to organisations throughout.

**If not, why not?**

**Barriers** in accessing the commissioning framework included:

Volume of work required; un-realistic timescales; moving of goal-posts by commissioners; potential increase in competition; resources of larger organisations; no business plan; cost to the organisation; no security; lack of knowledge and expertise; knowing what your value is (ie value of the service); unable to afford to do it.

Organisations will be **discouraged** from using the framework: if their views are not taken seriously; if they are not consulted or involved; if there is not a true feeling of equality; if politics (ie who you know; councillors not liking certain groups) creates barriers to funding; local politics; payment schedules – if it is all in arrears it is impossible; the cost of either training or acquiring expertise; if it's too complex, wordy or too much work involved; or too much bureaucracy.

**How would using this common framework benefit your work, your agencies / organisations work?**

The principle of a common framework was accepted, however the clarity and amount of paperwork and preparation required needs to be kept to a minimum and be easily read and understood, bearing in mind that not everyone has English as a first language.

WVSC note: Some organisations who have an expectation of continuation of funding for their service through existing SLR agreements feel anxious that the system is changing. The change creates uncertainty about whether or not their service will be funded in the future.

**What support do you / your organisation need to strengthen the delivery of effective service commissioning?**

To be involved at all stages of the process  
Communication in Clear, jargon free, plain English  
To understand commissioners requirements  
Support required – help with tendering skills/form filling etc  
Third Sector thinking and operating as a business  
Use of exemplars eg forms, PQQ  
Support to pass PQQ (eg by training)  
Telephone help line  
Support provided to VCO's to become commission ready.  
Resources to offset the cost of preparation for tender/tendering

**How could commissioning bodies better involve you in their commissioning plans and processes?**

We need Involvement in the whole cycle  
We need to be involved in mapping gaps in service provision  
We need to be involved in 'needs identification'  
We need input in shaping strategy  
We need to be involved in identifying priority needs  
We need to be involved in the planning of the monitoring framework  
We need to be involved in setting standards  
We need to be involved in agreeing priorities and outcomes  
By using realistic timescales for proper consultation and bid preparation for voluntary and community sector organisations whose board of directors may meet monthly or every six weeks.  
By funding Third Sector support agencies to inform and co-ordinate.

**Any other comments?**

Compact compliance – there was a question about this in relation to the process.

Direct payments – quality against cost  
What will happen about direct payments?  
Note

Organisations listed the following things they thought would help their organisation to compete equally in tendering for services: Organisation's positive track record; assistance in the process; partnership working (within and across sectors); collaborative working; understanding of commissioners requirements; MONEY, MONEY, MONEY; giving reasonable time to compete; no jargon, clarity of terms eg 'pledge'; freedom to choose delivery method.

**Thank you for completing this form. Please return by 5pm on FRIDAY 16 JANUARY 2009 to Viv Griffin either by post or email.**

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