

## **Enabling the Voluntary, community & social enterprise sector grant consultation**

Bristol City Council is considering the future of the funding we currently provide to support the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. This funding is currently called the VCSE Infrastructure Support Grant. This consultation will inform the proposal about VCSE support that goes to Bristol City Council's Cabinet in December 2019.

We welcome the feedback of VCSE organisations of all sizes and type across the city as well as members of the public. We particularly want to hear from the many diverse communities within the sector and within Bristol.

The closing date for this consultation is **Sunday the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2019**

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## **Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector Support – Consultation**

### **1. What is this consultation about?**

Voluntary, community and social enterprise groups (VCSE) play a vital role in the city. They are key partners in meeting the challenges and realising the opportunities set out in the BCC [Corporate Strategy](#) and [One City Plan](#). The sector in all its diversity is a reflection of Bristol citizens' drive and determination to improve their own communities.

The VCSE sector in Bristol plays a key role in:

- Addressing disadvantage and inequality
- Finding new ways to address the priorities and concerns of communities
- Strengthening the voice and influence of communities and citizens
- Promoting inclusion
- Enabling citizens to take action
- Growing social, economic and democratic wellbeing

The council funds support to the VCSE sector to enable it to thrive and to fulfil its role in the city. This funding is currently called the **VCSE Infrastructure Support Grant**.

The current recipient of the VCSE Infrastructure Support Grant is [Voscur](#), the Bristol-based charity. Voscur use this grant to support the VCSE sector in Bristol. This funding is coming to an end in March 2020. We are proposing to extend the grant until October 2020 to give us time to offer a new grant opportunity. This consultation is seeking the views of VCSE groups and organisations in the city to inform the priorities and approach of the next VCSE support grant, which will be

decided by Cabinet.

## 2. Background

Voscur has a funding agreement with the council from May 2016 – March 2020 (we're proposing to extend this to October 2020). In 2016 the grant was £453,796. This funding has been reduced by 25.5% to £338,118 in 19/20 and includes £21,510 from the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group. A tapered reduction in funding was built into this grant from the outset – see the November 24<sup>th</sup> 2015 Cabinet report and decision ([https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/201511241400/Agenda/1124\\_11.pdf](https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/201511241400/Agenda/1124_11.pdf))

### Current outcomes

As part of the funding agreement, Voscur must evidence six outcomes through its support, funding and influence work strands:

- Outcome 1: VCSE organisations are more able to raise additional funding to develop and deliver their services
- Outcome 2: VCSE organisations have more capacity to run their services more efficiently and effectively.
- Outcome 3: VCSE organisations develop or evolve to meet gaps in service provision
- Outcome 4: Bristol VCSE organisations know how and where to access appropriate VCSE infrastructure support.
- Outcome 5: VCSE organisations develop collaborative solutions
- Outcome 6: The Bristol VCSE sector actively contributes to policy changes, strategic development, service re-design and commissioning in the city.

### Evidencing success:

- Voscur provides evidence for the impact of the grant, and the achievement of the six outcomes above, by providing an annual monitoring report to the council.

## 3. Current landscape and strategic drivers

A number of strategic and other factors are driving change, challenge and opportunity for the VCSE sector in the city:

Council Corporate Strategy: The Council recognises the VCSE as a key partner in its 2018-2023 Corporate Strategy:

*“Bristol’s diverse and creative community and voluntary sector is one of the city’s great assets....We need to work closely together in the spirit of constructive support*

*and challenge, maintaining a sector which is strong and sustainable in its own right.”* At the same time the strategy also sets out the need to deliver savings and to transform what the council is here to do. The council’s relationship with community organisations is key to this.

**One City Plan:** The Plan sets out ambitious targets for the future of Bristol, decade by decade up to 2050. Partners from across the city’s business, charitable, academic and public sectors all contributed to the first draft of the plan which aims to make Bristol fair, healthy and sustainable with reduced inequality.

The plan has a vision for each decade and goals which fall under six priority themes; Health and Wellbeing, Economy, Homes and Communities, Environment, Learning and Skills and Connectivity.

**City Fund:** offers potential loan investment to support VCSE social enterprise and income generation. The fund can resource VCSE organisations to diversify their income stream through revenue generating activities.

**VCSE Strategy:** Into a New Era 2019-2029, led by Voscur. This sets out 6 key objectives for development of the VCSE sector: distributed Leadership; financial independence (commercial approach); improved data and information; independent voice; increased collaboration, partnership and cohesion; greater resilience and adaptability.

**Major funding programmes closing/reducing:** [Golden Key](#), [Bristol Ageing Better](#), [Building Better Opportunities](#), [Social Enterprise Innovation Programme](#) and [Bristol Impact Fund](#) are all due to come to an end over the next 2 years. Bristol City Council will be considering options for the future of the Bristol Impact Fund beyond its June 2021 end-date.

**New tools and technologies:** Developments in digital and online technologies are providing opportunities to share skills, resources and good practice and to generate funding, promote ‘cashless exchanges’ (where people and organisations exchange in-kind skills and benefits) Developments create the possibility of placing information and data at the service of citizens, communities and organisations. .

**Support from business:** the Council’s [Social Value](#) policy assesses all tenders for council contracts against the social value they are offering the city. Support to the VCSE is one way for them to demonstrate social value. Business Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) more broadly can be brokered in to offer skills, resources and funding into the sector.

**Asset-based community development:** people and organisations across the city are increasingly recognising the value of asset-based approaches to building thriving communities. This means citizens getting on with the things that are important to them and where appropriate getting the right support at the right time from the city council and other organisations.

[Community Anchor organisations](#) ‘are community led, independent of the council and other bodies and tend to be multi-purpose, often managing community buildings and other assets, operating as social enterprises and surviving through generating a diversity of income streams’ (Quartet Community Foundation report, 2017). They are playing a key role in the city in the delivery of services and activities at a neighbourhood level.

Power to Change by Black South-West Network, September 2018: This [report](#) identifies “the impact of austerity and the black, Asian, minority ethnic (BAME) sector’s disconnect from power.” and “a need for strategic investment and infrastructure support to effect positive change within the sector”. Recommendations include actions around equitable funding; supporting connectivity in the BAME sector; intensive capacity building and support for asset transfer.

#### **4. The proposed approach to the Enabling the Voluntary, community & social enterprise sector grant**

The council’s investment in the Enabling the VCSE sector grant will contribute to:

- Powerful, thriving communities
- Strong, long term vision and leadership of the sector
- A city plan and approach that reflects the diversity and creativity of the city

#### **Ways of Working**

The council is proposing five community-building principles that would inform its approach to re-commissioning the VCSE Infrastructure Support Grant:

- Place based
- Asset based
- Inclusive
- Citizen-led
- Relational

#### **Place based**

Place based means working in a ‘bottom-up approach’ to meet the unique needs of people in one given location by working together to use the best available resources, local knowledge and insight

The Enabling the VCSE Grant would:

- Strengthen neighbourhood organisations, prioritising places where there is greatest inequality
- Encourage connections and collaboration between VCSE organisations
- Contribute to a one city approach, working collaboratively with the council to find long term sustainable solutions

#### **Asset based**

Asset-based community development means making the best use of the strengths that already exist in the local community. These strengths may include skills,

experience and resources.

The Enabling the VCSE Grant would:

- Tap into and build on the existing skills, knowledge, expertise and energy of the VCSE sector
- Enable the VCSE sector to make best use of the city's diverse resources
- Encourage the exchange of skills and knowledge within the sector
- Grow capacity, skills and collective leadership within the VCSE sector

### **Inclusive**

Inclusive means working to create communities which are open, tolerant and welcoming to all, particular to people from sections of society who are disadvantaged and at risk of isolation.

The Enabling the VCSE Grant would:

- Welcome in the people who tend to be excluded
- Take positive action to nurture the self-organisation and self-determination of communities who experience systemic disadvantage and exclusion
- Foster attitudes and actions that deepen inclusive behaviours and ways of working

### **Citizen-led**

Citizen-led means that the people of Bristol have the ability, and desire, to improve the lives of the people of the city, and we are supporting their lead.

The Enabling the VCSE Grant would:

- Strengthen the confidence and capacities to support citizens to take action on the things that are important to them
- Provide easily accessible support to community groups, particularly those with no paid workers

### **Relational**

Relational means facilitating the creation of strong working relationships between members of the VCSE sector, their wider communities, the council, public sector and business sector

The Enabling the VCSE Grant would:

- Build strong and collaborative relationships between...
- Foster a culture of collaboration with the council, other public sector organisations and business to address the challenges of the city
- Build cohesion and understanding between communities

## **5. The council's proposed priorities for the Enabling the VCSE Sector Support Grant**

The council has taken note of the Bristol VCSE Strategy: Into a New Era 2019-2029 and the '**Change for Good** Report of the Independent Commission on the future of local infrastructure (January 2015)' (at <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/vcseconsultation>) in developing our priorities.

Change for Good, a report commissioned by the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) was published in 2015. The report focused on how infrastructure support is funded and delivered in a landscape of recession and reduced local authority funding. The report recognises that “The infrastructure of the future is likely to be a much leaner enabler, broker and catalyst rather than necessarily a deliverer.” What this means is that VCSE support organisations need to shift from straightforward service delivery to more activities which help VCSE groups help themselves and each other and to pull in support from different sources.

The Report recommends that ‘future investment needs to deliver capacity by unlocking social capital and leverage’; and that ‘Infrastructure bodies must be relationship builders and brokers capable of leveraging resources’. We understand this to mean that our grant funding should be used to unlock resources of many kinds and deepen the supportive co-operation between the VCSE and other sectors within and outside the city

The council therefore proposes that the priorities of the Enabling the VCSE Sector Grant would be:

1. Maximise strong relationships between VCSE organisations so that VCSEs may share each other’s assets (time, skills, knowledge, experience , money, buildings etc.) and produce collective solutions to shared problems
2. Strengthen the VCSE’s capacity to be enterprising and business-like. This would include supporting VCSEs to find new sources of funding and earned income.
3. Strengthen the capacity of the VCSE sector to respond to change, with a clear focus on
  - organisations that are led by equalities groups <sup>(1)</sup>
  - neighbourhoods and places experiencing greatest inequality
  - smaller and emerging community groups
4. Facilitate confident leadership and influence so that the VCSE sector, in all its diversity, can:
  - play a full part in shaping and achieving the ambition of the city set out in the One City Plan
  - influence and shape the council’s future Enabling the VCSE Grant so that it has maximum impact
5. Support the VCSE sector by accessing local, regional and national wealth, such as funding and investment opportunities, and other assets, such as skills and knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> women; Black, Asian, and minority ethnic people (BAME); young people and children; older people; disabled people; lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered people (LGBT+); people from different faith groups

The Change for Good report sets out a case for investment in VCSE infrastructure support that requires that “Infrastructure must prove capable of ‘redesigning’ itself to meet changing demand”.

In order to deliver support within the council’s proposed principles and priorities, Enabling the VCSE Sector grant recipients would be required to adopt an approach that considers:

- What support is best delivered city wide, to enable maximum impact across the city and with minimal duplication.
- What support is best delivered at a more local level to enable support for organisations and communities of specific place and interest.
- How resources can be used to enable flexible, innovative and bespoke support that can adapt quickly to changing priorities.

## 6. Our Funding approach

We will require a collaborative approach to delivery of infrastructure support to the sector. Collaboration between VCSEs is a key element in sustaining the city’s VCSE sector in the coming years. To enable this we propose to build in a 12-week period to allow collaboration and partnership working to be explored by potential delivery organisations.

## 8. Timetable

We are considering the following decision-making and funding timetable. It may be subject to change:

	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
Consultation & Engagement	18 <sup>st</sup> July 2019	15 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2019
Cabinet decision	December 2019	
Publish grant commissioning plan	January 2020	
Collaborative design	January 2020	March 2020
Application process open	April 2020	May 2020
Grants evaluation	May 2020	June 2020
Grants decision communicated to applicants	June 2020	-
Decommissioning protocol (if required)	July 2020	Sept 2020
Implementation phase	July 2020	September 2020
Commencement of new period of grant funding	October 2020	-