

VCS Procurement Action Plan

The purpose of this action plan is to facilitate implementation of the recommendations of the report of the Communities Review Committee ‘Supporting the Local Voluntary and Community Sector through Procurement’. The content has been developed jointly by council officers and representatives of the local voluntary and community sector. Progress in implementing the action plan will be reviewed annually by the Council’s Third Sector Strategic Forum with the involvement of Voluntary Action Islington and Islington Community Network.

Key SCP: Strategy and Community Partnerships, Islington Council
 ICN: Islington Community Network LS: Legal Services, Islington Council SPT: Strategic Procurement Team, Islington Council
 VAI: Voluntary Action Islington

Recommendation 1: Forward Planning Procurement				
Ref	Action	Who leads	When	Comments
1.1	Publish a forward plan of procurement opportunities over £100k (aggregate value), ideally a year in advance, and promote it via VAI E-News.	SPT	Updated and published quarterly	All available information will be published. VAI to promote a link to the Forward Plan as part of their monthly funding updates on VAI E-News.
1.2	Use the Council’s Third Sector Strategic Forum (TSSF) to encourage commissioners to plan ahead and promote procurement opportunities below £100k.	Commissioners	Every two months when TSSF meets	Commissioners to inform VAI of these smaller procurement opportunities so they can be included in funding updates.
1.3	Promote link to the Council’s Contract Opportunities web page via the VAI website and VAI E-News.	VAI	Monthly	Link to current contract opportunities to be included in funding updates.
1.4	Arrange provider events for bidders to understand more about proposed procurements.	SPT	As required	Information is published as part of tender advertisement.
1.5	Identify procurement opportunities that are particularly suitable for a consortium approach and help consortia of local organisations to form to bid for these contracts.	Commissioners VAI/ICN	As required	Council provides resources for capacity building from the VCS Grants Fund.
1.6	Use the Directory of Islington’s VCS to help commissioners develop lists of local organisations that are well placed to deliver particular services.	VAI	Update Directory during 2013/14; review annually	Additional resources may be required to enable VAI to update and develop the Directory.

1.7	Arrange 'Meet the Buyer' events.	SPT	Dates to be published	Dates will be published on the Selling to the Council web pages and promoted via VAI E-News.
1.8	Publicise training opportunities for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consortia Bidding Workshop • Effective Bid Pricing Workshop • Effective Tender Writing Workshop • How to be successful at PQQ stage • Understanding Terms and Conditions Workshop 	SPT	At least three of each workshop per year.	Dates for 2013/14 have been published on the Selling to the Council web pages and will be promoted via VAI E-News.
1.9	Improve consistency in the quality of commissioning processes across Council departments.	SPT/ Commissioners	As required	Feedback from VCS suggests that current experiences are variable.

Recommendation 2: Long Term Planning

Ref	Action	Who leads	When	Comments
2.1	Maintain commitment that, where possible, all contracts and grants should be for at least three years.	SPT	As per contract advertisement	This is a commitment in the Voluntary Sector Compact.
2.2	Islington Council will challenge proposed procurements for short durations as part of good practice and the work of the Procurement Board.	SPT	As required	Procedures are in place for this to occur.
2.3	Maintain ongoing dialogue with VCS organisations throughout the life cycle of contracts, and especially in the final year, so that they can position themselves to apply for future contracts or plan ahead for losing funding when contracts end.	Commissioners	As required	Feedback from VCS is that some funders (e.g. the Lottery) are more upfront about whether funding is likely to be renewed and this allows organisations more time to plan ahead.
2.4	Develop decommissioning guidance including template letters to notify end of contract period.	SPT	In place	To be included on Council intranet and shared with ICN. SPT has 'exit strategy' guidance for commissioners for the final 12 months of contracts.

Recommendation 3: Proportionate Procurement Processes

Ref	Action	Who leads	When	Comments
3.1	Advise and (where necessary) challenge commissioners to achieve proportionality in procurement processes.	SPT	As required	Important to consider the costs of procurement relative to the value of the contract. SPT have models of best practice for commissioners to use.
3.2	Training session for commissioners to be provided by the Council on proportionate procurement.	SPT	As required	To be made available to commissioners.
3.3	VCS to bring to the Council's attention any examples where proportionality in procurement is not being achieved.	VAI/ICN	As required	There is a commitment in the Compact to simplicity and proportionality in processes relative to the amounts involved.
3.4	Commissioners should consider TUPE implications when awarding or reassigning contracts.	Commissioners	As required	SPT can provide some guidance linked with advice from Legal Services.
3.5	Senior management to provide effective oversight of commissioning processes and sign off decisions on contract awards.	SPT	As required	SPT to develop resources which will deliver consistency across the Council. Procurement Board to provide oversight of functionality.
3.6	Timetables for procurement to be published to bidders at earliest reasonable opportunity.	SPT	As required.	To be made available with relevant stage of tender.
3.7	Commissioners to provide quality feedback on each stage of tender process to bidders.	SPT/ Commissioners	As required	SPT will work with commissioners to introduce reasonable standards.
3.8	Proper assessment to be made whether a grant or a contract is to be undertaken.	LS	As required	Islington Council is committed to issuing grants and/or procuring contracts in line with statutory requirements for each.

Recommendation 4: Specify Community Benefit

Ref	Action	Who leads	When	Comments
4.1	Prepare guidance for commissioners, procurers and contract management on the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.	SPT	In place (April 2013). SPT to meet ICN within six months to review/update guidance.	Guidance has been prepared to show how social value can be considered as part of supply chain management processes. A flexible approach, using broad questions, gives local VCS more opportunity to demonstrate social value.
4.2	Continue to invite service users and representatives of VCS organisations to sit on tender panels and provide training to support them where appropriate	SPT	As required	Standardised training procedures for service user involvement to be adopted.

Recommendation 5: Demonstrate Impact

Ref	Action	Who leads	When	Comments
5.1	Arrange workshops to help local VCS organisations get better at demonstrating social value and the difference their services make to residents.	VAI/ICN	As required	Council supports through its funding for VCS infrastructure e.g. to VAI, networks and forums, and community hubs.
5.2	Raise awareness of resources designed to help identify, assess and provide evidence of impact, and promote their use locally.	VAI/ICN	As required	Examples: Social Impact Toolkit on VAI website; NCVO Code of Good Impact Practice; NEF Guide to Social Return on Investment.

Recommendation 6: Gap Analysis				
Ref	Action	Who leads	When	Comments
6.1	Continue to map all funding to VCS on an annual basis and publish on the VCS funding pages of the Council's website.	SCP	Annually	2012/13 completed and published. Mapping of 2013/14 is underway.
6.2	Give detailed feedback to organisations when they fail to win tenders.	Commissioners	Already happening	It is a legal requirement for feedback to be provided as part of a tender process.
6.3	Develop guidance on providing feedback in general on tender evaluations.	SPT	Completed	Guidance available upon request.
6.4	Use the annual VCS Conference and other relevant forums to assess the health of the voluntary sector in Islington, including risks facing local organisations, and to promote awareness of support services available.	VAI/ICN to coordinate	2013 VCS Conference is on Saturday 23 November	Links to one of the key messages from delegates at the 2012 VCS Conference.

Recommendation 7: Closer Collaboration				
Ref	Action	Who leads	When	Comments
7.1	Islington Council and Cripplegate Foundation, as the primary funders of small frontline organisations, to work together to share knowledge and information.	SCP and Cripplegate Foundation	At least three times per year	Ensure that funding from Community Chest and from Local Initiatives Fund is complementary and avoids duplication.
7.2	Encourage local funders to attend the annual VCS Conference in order to gain a better understanding of the needs of local organisations.	VAI/ICN	Annually	Local funders to be invited to provide stalls and participate in workshop discussions.

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