

ChangeUp/Defra  
Infrastructure  
Programme in the  
South East

Regional  
Consortium  
Newsletter

Newsletter 4  
August 2005

Documents mentioned in this  
newsletter are available at

[www.raise-networks.org.uk/quicklinks/](http://www.raise-networks.org.uk/quicklinks/)

under "ChangeUp/Defra"

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Funding and Finance Programme Approved

After some delay, this programme of activity was approved by the Regional Consortium in July 2005. The main focus of the regional programme is:

- Public procurement and engagement between the voluntary/community sector (VCS) and public and private sectors.
- Full Cost Recovery.
- Local Area Agreement development.
- Sharing of practice and experiences.

The majority of policy drivers for the VCS currently are pushing the VCS towards delivering more public services or contract driven work. There are increasing concerns about the readiness of the VCS or the public and private sector to meet this challenge. The Funding and Finance Programme is designed to explore the issues, raise the awareness of all sectors about this increasing demand and offer opportunities for influencing locally, regionally and nationally.

The members of the Regional Consortium are joining with the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) to hold a regional conference in October 2005 targeted at the Local Authorities, Economic Partnerships, Business Links, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), Strategic Health Authorities, Learning and Skills Councils, Regional Assembly, Government Office South East (GOSE) amongst others. We will focus on strategic leaders, commissioners, VCS leads within Local Authorities and Compact Champions to raise their awareness of the current VCS agenda. The Regional Consortium hopes to explore what services these organisations want from the VCS, establish what is needed for successful contracting with the sector and what non-VCS parties may need to change in order to create a level playing field. This conference will include exploring social enterprise and what we mean by full cost recovery.

The regional conference will play its part to warm up the key players. During the period November 2005 - January 2006, there will be a series of local events that are focused on the 20 Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) areas. These will follow a similar format as the regional conference. These events will be an opportunity for the sector to engage the key commissioners and funders at the local IDP level and commence the discussions and negotiations that will need to occur regarding the outcomes of the IDPs. These will be planned and delivered by one organisation who will work in partnership with the 20 local leads for the IDPs. This recognises that you are all extremely busy and do not necessarily have time to put on an event, so all of the hard work will be done for you.

The third element of the programme is focusing on Local Area Agreement (LAA) development. We have 9 new LAA's being developed in the South East and following on from the 2 pilots in Kent and Brighton and Hove, the wider VCS is very concerned about how to get involved and engaged in the process. GOSE see the VCS playing a vital role in all of the LAAs and want this to happen from the start. With the use of ChangeUp/Defra Infrastructure funding there is to be a VCS secondee to GOSE from September 2005 - March 2006. This person will work alongside another secondee from the Local Authorities and their main purpose is to look at LAA engagement and how it can be managed.

Against tight timescales, information about the post has been disseminated. We will inform you as soon as a person has been appointed. In the meantime, if you have anything that you think we should know regarding LAAs, please contact Kathryn Shephard by e-mail at [kshephard@raise-networks.org.uk](mailto:kshephard@raise-networks.org.uk). The programme has also ring fenced a small pot of funds to support the VCS in the 9 local areas to engage with the LAA process. This programme is very timely and we will be capturing the findings and experiences in a regional guidance document that will be developed during programme.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Programme

The Regional Consortium approved the ICT Regional Programme at their meeting in July 2005. This programme has been a real challenge to develop as the needs of the voluntary/community sector (VCS) relating to ICT are huge and complex. The programme had £500,000 allocated to it but this is a drop in the ocean compared to

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## ...contd ICT Programme

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the needs of the sector so we knew it had to be targeted and somehow sustainable.

The programme will look in depth at ICT support to the VCS across 4 main areas: technical support; hardware; software; training.

It will look at 3-4 different models of delivery to include: CVS led support; cross subsidy support through social enterprise; hub and spokes and possibly through UK Online Centres (we are awaiting confirmation of this). The whole programme will be independently evaluated and we will test the suitability of all of the models for small and large VCOs, urban and rural locations, sustainability, geographic location and proximity of local access and user satisfaction.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach for ICT support to the VCS but it is an area of concern as the VCS continues to fall behind with its development. The programme will seek to look at how the VCS plans using ICT to support its activities and if this can be done differently to achieve better outcomes. The programme will capture the costs of each model based on full cost recovery so that we, the sector, are more realistic about the actual costs.

Success at the end of this programme would be a range of successful models of ICT support, tried, tested and costed with recommendations about how to replicate them in your own area. We want VCS infrastructure services to be able to cost ICT into their Infrastructure Development Plan so that they can access e-learning and e-government. In turn, the infrastructure can then support the frontline voluntary/community organisations (VCOs) to develop their own ICT systems to enable more effective service delivery. It is a huge task but one that we cannot shy away from. The National ICT Hub of Expertise is still struggling to get started as it is such a tricky area but we want to rise to the challenge in the South East and make this work. The ICT programme will run from August 2005 to September 2006.

## Social Enterprise Training

As part of the regional Social Enterprise Programme there will be the opportunity for the voluntary/community sector (VCS) to access Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative (SFEDI) Accredited training to become social enterprise advisors. The training will start in the late autumn. Places are limited so please let us know if you are interested in booking a place. The training is free and there are 20 bursaries for the VCS candidates to support certain expenses.

Once qualified, you will be qualified to deliver social enterprise advice, cross-sector which could offer opportunities for income generation within your organisation. The Regional Consortium is aiming to develop a minimum of 20 advisors from the VCS who can start to capacity build organisations in the South East to take on the challenges and opportunities that social enterprise presents.

If you are interested in exploring this training opportunity can you e-mail Catherine Johnstone at RAISE by email at [catherine@raise-networks.org.uk](mailto:catherine@raise-networks.org.uk) and title the e-mail 'Social Enterprise Training'.

## National Hub Update

Ministers have now approved the business plans of 5 of the ChangeUp national hubs of expertise in the areas of:

- Finance
- Governance
- Volunteering
- Performance improvement
- Workforce development.

Each of the 5 hubs is making progress to establish their teams and begin delivering outcomes for the voluntary/community sector. They are keen to work closely with local and regional consortia to ensure that their work is complementary to that which is already ongoing or planned and have been attending a number of regional events to begin this communication process. Hubs are also working with each other to seek to avoid duplication and identify areas of synergy.

A revised business plan with proposals for the **ICT hub** was received in late June, it is currently being considered by the Home Office and a decision is expected shortly.

Go to [www.governancehub.org.uk](http://www.governancehub.org.uk) to view information about the National Governance Hub for England and the voluntary/community sector.

Date	Event	Location	Contact	Telephone	Email
09/09/05	VCS Network Briefing Meeting	Reading	Nickie	01483 501342	<a href="mailto:nickie@raise-networks.org.uk">nickie@raise-networks.org.uk</a>
02/11/05	VCS Network Briefing Meeting	Brighton & Hove	Nickie	01483 501342	<a href="mailto:nickie@raise-networks.org.uk">nickie@raise-networks.org.uk</a>