

ChangeUp/Defra Infrastructure Programme in the South East



Regional Consortium Newsletter

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RAISE is the Secretariat to the
Regional Consortium



RAISE
Berkeley House, Cross Lanes
Guildford, Surrey GU1 1UN
Tel: 01483 500770 Fax: 01483 574439
Web: www.raise-networks.org.uk
Email: mail@raise-networks.org.uk

Charity No. 1080583
Company No. 03932654



Infrastructure Development Plan for the Region

The September meeting of the Regional Consortium approved a package that will result in a Regional Infrastructure Development Plan. The plan will be based on desk research of regional infrastructure bodies and an analysis of specialist regional needs. They are identified in emerging and draft Local Infrastructure Development Plans - thus picking up on more local needs that cannot effectively and economically be satisfied at less than a regional level. Further details from either Catherine Johnstone at RAISE on 01483 500770 (catherine@raise-networks.org.uk) or Jacinta Thorley on 01483 459292 ext 227 (jacintat@surreyca.org.uk).

Capital Programme

Almost £480,000 was committed to eight applications in the first round of the ChangeUp Capital Programme. The awards included improvements to buildings - thus extending the use of infrastructure services in Brighton, Hove, Guildford, Reigate and Runnymede. A mobile ICT training scheme was supported in East Sussex, Kent and West Sussex. A scheme providing small scale improvements to village halls in Sussex to provide expanded services was approved. In addition, a number of small scale capital projects in Reading was approved. The Regional Consortium acknowledged the practical difficulties of spending capital grants, especially completing building works, by the end of March 2006. This will figure particularly in their consideration of final round applications closing shortly.

First round commitment leaves some £847,000 for allocation for the final round that closes at mid-day 24 October 2005. Further details on round one awards, or on the Capital Programme in general, from Crispin Davies at GOSE on 07812 581850.

Extension to Some "Early Spend" Projects

Over the summer the Regional Consortium approved extensions to 7 "early spend" projects with an additional grants totalling some £123,000. The 7 projects were: Isle of Wight - continuation of building information on skills within the VCS; Kent - to support continuing work around volunteer bureaux reconfiguration; Oxfordshire - continuation of "gap filling" work through development of infrastructure support; Rother - supporting reconfiguration of 2 Councils for Voluntary Service; Southampton - developing HR services over the wider Hampshire area; and, whole region - development of region wide support for play and childcare sector.

Defra Toolkit Rollout

A major recommendation of an evaluation of the Defra Rural Early Spend ChangeUp Programme was the development of a "toolkit" to benchmark the development of partnerships at any given point of their life. The toolkit can then be used at a later date to measure the progress in the development of the partnership. The Regional Consortium felt this technique would be helpful support for all ChangeUp partnerships - both at local and regional levels. Some 50 invitations to tender for this work were distributed with a closing date of 10 October. The lead bodies for consortia should anticipate an approach in early November from the chosen organisation. Further details from Crispin Davies at GOSE on 07812 581850.

Important Deadlines

GOSE has recently re-confirmed that the deadline for grant spend and completion of work is 31 March 2006 for funding from the 2005/06 allocation. Discussions are continuing with a very small number of projects where commitments have already been given that cannot be broken - for example, a contract of employment. In these cases an exceptional dispensation is being negotiated.

GOSE is also confirming that all Infrastructure Development Plans will need to be submitted by 31 March 2006 at the latest. It is appreciated that some may be in final draft form and still subject to consultation with stakeholders at the end of March 2006. Nevertheless the final, or latest draft, must be submitted by the end of March 2006.

Continuation Fund

The Active Communities Unit (ACU) published its national guidelines on the £7m national "continuation fund" on 3 October 2005. This fund is to ensure that local and regional work has some funding to continue during the early part of the 2006/07 financial year whilst the new Capacity Builders organisation is developing.

The South East will receive £714,700. The national guidelines suggest a 50/50 distribution of these funds between continued support for the running of consortia and support for projects included in Infrastructure Development Plans that catalyse a step change in support available to frontline VCS organisations for the longer term. However, these national guidelines allow for a degree of regional emphasis that the Regional Consortium will be debating and agreeing at its meeting on 18 October 2005. The detailed regional guidelines will be sent as soon as possible after 18 October to the lead bodies of local consortia together with a timetable for application. It is unlikely that applications will be requested before mid December with final decisions by 27 January 2006.

Capacity Builders will then have a further £15.75m for local and regional activities in 2006-2007 which will be totally under its control. Criteria for this money is expected to be published in February 2006.

Evaluation Project

The Regional Consortium has recently agreed that an early evaluation of the ChangeUp Programme would be beneficial in the region to inform the new Capacity Builders organisation in its formative months. It will also identify, and pass on, examples of good practice from consortia to consortia across the region and more widely. Consequently two sets of consultants have been appointed to undertake this work and, initially, to produce a hard hitting summary of strategic messages and lesson learnt for the benefit of Capacity Builders. Later outputs will be a report including recommendations on the programme and a series of good practice stories and examples for use in the region and more widely. The consultants are Word in Edgeways (01908 322277) and Gordon Morris/Claire Nichols (07917 577285). Most ChangeUp consortia have already been approached by the consultants. Further details from Crispin Davies at GOSE on 07812 581850.

Thames Valley BME

As part of sharing learning from across the region, the following article has been kindly provided by George Mathew (Thames Valley ASP Co-ordinator). George gives an overview of the work being done in the Thames Valley area. If you would like to find out more, please do contact George Mathew (gmathew.gose@go-regions.gov.uk, 07769 856337).

In July 2004 RAISE published a report – "A review of the Voluntary/ Community Sector Infrastructure in the South East" for GOSE. It highlighted that there was little knowledge of the extent/nature of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary/community organisations and huge gaps in infrastructure support. What was needed was the mapping of the BME population and its organisations across the region including detailed and sensitive research aimed at understanding the diverse needs and cultures of different groups.

Fast-forward to July 2005 and this is a part of precisely what the ChangeUp Additional Support Programme (ASP) is intending to achieve. The Thames Valley ASP is well underway as all the nine localities have delivered their work plans and have been successful in acquiring financial resources to carry this through up to March 2006.

In general, the majority have opted to employ project workers to carry out intensive research of BME organisations, refugee and asylum groups, faith groups and travellers communities. An exception is Slough which decided to employ six community outreach consultants from within the above groups, who will be inducted and trained.

An important area of work would also include setting up formal and structured BME networks that will eventually manage this ChangeUp programme. Here, uniquely, both Reading and West Berkshire are working in partnership, setting a precedent to ensure synergy and added value to the programme. Thus the information acquired and achieving the work objectives will be crucial in informing the Local Infrastructure Development Plan for BME Communities.

National Hub Update

All national hubs of expertise now have their business plans approved and offers of funding. To find out the latest information on all the 6 national hubs go to either of the two following portals: www.voluntarysectorskills.org.uk and then click on "About the Hubs" or go to www.nacvs.org.uk/resources/cbis/hubdevelopment.shtm.

Date	Event	Location	Contact	Telephone	Email
02/11/05	VCS Network Briefing Meeting	Hove	Nickie Davison	01483 501342	nickie@raise-networks.org.uk