

ChangeUp East London Partnership Consortium development grants 2008-11

Fit for purpose Consortia

Capacitybuilders' relationship with local and regional Consortia will focus on the **strategic** role these partnerships can play including:

- A robust knowledge base about and analysis of the third sector in a given area
- A shared vision, with broad 'buy in' from stakeholders for more effective, responsive and efficient support services which meet the needs and aspirations of frontline organisations
- Acting as a catalyst for improvements in way sector support services are planned, funded, delivered and evaluated
- Taking an active role in influencing local and regional policy, decision-making and commissioning priorities to take account of the role and potential of the third sector and the support it requires to reach its potential.

To deliver these roles, Consortia should be able to demonstrate that they are:

- **Informed:** with in depth of knowledge and understanding of their area of benefit, third sector and sector support services
- **Engaged:** with a range of stakeholders, including frontline organisations, a range of support providers and public sector partners.
- **Inclusive:** with a robust approach to promoting equality and diversity embedded across activity and processes.
- **Robust:** with adequate governance and partnership protocols
- **Learning:** Effective monitoring and evaluation systems in place.
- **Delivering:** Satisfactory fulfillment of previous funding agreements, including the Consortia Development Fund.

These align with core elements of the self assessment exercise undertaken within the Consortia Development Fund (CDF).

Capacitybuilders recognises the challenges of partnership working, including lack of capacity among partners, achieving a shared vision and the impact changes in personnel and funding can have on momentum. However, Consortia are in receipt of substantial public funds, and it is right to ensure that the partnerships are robust, and able to deliver against expectations. It is not expected that all Consortia will be able to act and deliver as 'perfect partnerships' at any one time, rather the pre-requisites for funding is to deliver the strategic functions set out above.

Funding expectations 2008-11

Capacitybuilders wants the three year Consortium Development grants to support the following areas of activity:

1. Continued development of the consortium as an effective partnership.
2. Delivery of core consortium functions, including communications, strategic planning and engagement.
3. Development and delivery of the strategic roles with strong links to local-decision making, including local strategic partnerships and the LAA, and the skills to respond to changing environment.

A focus on these roles also implies a clear need to move beyond Consortia as partnerships of 'provider interests', to include the views and perspectives of frontline organisations and local public sector partners (which a significant number are doing). It offers *potential* alignment to local partnerships, including LSPs and LAAs, and for a broader 'third sector' remit, of which sector support and ChangeUp is only a part.

The larger grants offered to Consortia covering more than one 'top tier' local authority area will be matched by expectations of linkages and work at local authority level.

Whilst recognising that this is a limited grant, Capacitybuilders want to agree a realistic, focused set of priorities within the three areas of activity above and will encourage Consortia partners to consider creatively how these resources can best be used to contribute to the outcomes specified. Some Consortia have found that a specific staff post has added momentum and focus to their work, whilst 'backfilling' arrangements have worked well for other Consortia in recognising the time members contribute to consortium work. There may be scope for neighbouring Consortia to share posts.

The following Table sets out in more detail Capacitybuilders' core expectations of consortia under the new grants.

Table: Consortium Development Grants : Baseline expectations		
<i>Roles of fit-for-purpose consortium</i>	<i>Minimum expectations (reported against annually)</i>	<i>Capacitybuilders' commitments</i>
Informed: Up-to-date intelligence on third sector needs, and support services, including evaluation and progress of relevant projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain up-to-date intelligence on sector support needs • Monitor progress of business plan • Engage in regional co-ordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for regional co-ordination (see section 6) • Promote intelligence, including bringing together plans from across England

<p>Engaged: Strategy for communication and engagement of members and stakeholders, and maintain page on Capacitybuilders national website.</p>	<p>Clear strategy for engagement with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector support services • Public sector • Frontline organisations <p>Maintain page on new communications website</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote best practice • Development and implementation of public sector strategy
<p>Inclusive: Evidence of embedding equalities and diversity in consortium's work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation and engagement with marginalised communities • Monitoring of impact of support services and projects • Links with Improving Reach projects • Improved links with specialist and subsector services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote links with Improving Reach projects • Equalities and Diversity (NSS) • Promote best practice • Develop and implement Equalities and Diversity strategy
<p>Robust: Annual 'light-touch' self-assessment against 'fit-for-purpose' criteria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure clear procedures for decision-making, financial allocation, commissioning, dealing with conflicts of interest, accountable bodies and financial reporting. • Annual self-assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set clear minimum expectations at beginning of programme • Offer guidance based on best practice, and self-assessment
<p>Learning: Monitor and review progress, and contribute to evaluation programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and evaluation continues to inform business plan development, and is shared locally, regionally and through the website • Participation on ChangeUp evaluation • Establish appropriate links with national support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early guidance on monitoring and evaluation expectations • Support and promotion of best practice in measuring impact • Ensure co-ordinated communications regarding evaluation and national support services
<p>Delivering: Meet grant requirements including financial returns to Capacitybuilders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet and report on grant conditions, including half-yearly financial monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportionate, light touch monitoring expectations • Payment in advance • Named contact in grants team
<p>Outcome: By 2011, consortia are strategic, credible and influential partnerships able to strengthen the third sector locally and regionally.</p>		

Beyond annual reporting against these 'baseline' expectations, consortia will be asked to prioritise a limited number of activities which embed the improvement and sustainability of third sector support at local and regional level.

Building on the business and strategic plans, consortia will also need to identify between two and five priority activities which will contribute to some or all of the following:

- Specific improvements/development highlighted in the assessment of business and strategic plans.
- Improved links with subsectors and specialist infrastructure, including social enterprise.
- Integration and links between consortia plans and broader local partnerships and strategies, including links with Local Area Agreements.
- Increased skills among support providers in commissioning and evaluating impact, which will be important as many local funders move to more competitive funding regimes.

These have been prioritised as they will have a significant impact on the sustainability and legacy of the programme, and in ensuring the right support is available for the third sector locally and regionally.

There will be an opportunity to 'refresh' these priorities activities on an annual basis. Capacitybuilders recognise that this is a limited grant, and want to agree a realistic, focused set of priorities within the three areas of activity above. Consortia partners will be encouraged to consider creatively how these resources can best be used to contribute to the outcomes specified.

Some ideas of approaches adopted by consortia working with limited resources will be made available on the Capacitybuilders website in February.