

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2008-2014

Consortia Name: Tower Hamlets Information Network - THIN

Geographical area: Tower Hamlets

Lead Body: Community Organisations Forum - COF

Contact Details:

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Consortium Vision / Mission Statement:

To build the capacity of voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) to deliver public sector services and maximise income generation opportunities in Tower Hamlets

Consortium Objectives:

Quality accreditation and commissioning

1. Agree an accreditation process that identifies service delivery readiness of local VCOs and meets agreed public sector requirements
2. Support Infrastructure to understand the commissioning process, meet the agreed accreditation standards and become commission ready
3. Work with Tower Hamlets Partnership to identify service delivery opportunities and manage transparent and fair tendering processes

Crises Management

4. Undertake a feasibility into best model of Crises Management
5. Approach Statutory providers to support Crisis Management Model
6. Establish project

Human Resources support

7. Agree a suitable HR support model with ELN
8. Provide access to affordable HR management training working with ELN

Improve communication and cooperation & ICT support

9. Manage the Community Portal and increase the number of VCOs on the portal by 30 each year
10. Work with ELN

11. Develop an ICT health check project
12. Develop model premises and procedures

Take forward the premises strategy

13. Develop a shared database available to VCOs
14. Develop a premises providers network
15. Link with and take advantage of the work of ELN

Volunteering

16. Increase capacity within the Volunteer Centre
17. Increase training for Volunteer Involving agencies staff and leaders
18. Develop new and targeted volunteer programmes and projects
19. Develop Youth volunteering
20. Work with the ELN to develop volunteering opportunities in relation to the London Olympics

Community and Social Enterprise

21. Enhance SCE advice and support services
22. Establish a network of SCE support providers

Workforce Development

23. Review past workforce development projects
24. Provide access to training
25. Produce new targets

What are the key changes that the Consortium aims to make over the next 6 years?

Quality accreditation and commissioning

VCOs have a structure through which they can develop quality standards which matches the needs of LBTH and prepares the VCS for commissioning.

Crises Management

VCOs will; be supported through crises at an early stage rather than waiting until VCOs needing time consuming rescue packages.

Human Resources support

VCOs will be able to recruit and manage staff effectively which will improve standards at all levels within the sector.

ICT

VCOs will be able to make the better use of ICT

Premises

VCOs will be able to make better use of available premises and develop provision, particularly for children and youth provision.

Volunteering

The strategy found that there was a lack of a Volunteering England accredited Volunteer Centre; a need to support volunteer management posts, training and funding, board support for volunteering and volunteer leadership; a need to target specific groups and a lack of information about volunteering opportunities.

Community Social Enterprise

The strategy found a lack of specialist skills and expertise in the area of trade or proposed trading and a concern that most aspirant SCEs are totally reliant on grant funding for their current income. As a result their financial management models are not suitable for 'commercial operations' where profit and loss are part of the calculations. As a result there is a danger that these organisations will set themselves up for unrealistic and unsustainable targets.

Workforce Development

There are some initiatives in place among VCS employers including Investors In People, and Learning and London East Action for Development (LEAD). Partnerships are also in place including the London East Advice Partnership (LEAP). However partnerships need to be strengthened and there is a lack of specific VCS support.

Please state why you feel these aims are the right ones: (please reference any research, consultation or other data you feel is relevant)

Over the last two years THIN has developed a number of strategies as well as undertaking specific projects. Our Objectives are the result of the work undertaken and priorities identified from this process.

Quality accreditation and commissioning

THIS has developed a set of quality standards and accreditation process which has now been discussed more fully with and revised by LBTH. Funding has been provided by LBTH to provide support to 27 VCOs to enable them to be commission ready.

Crises Management

When VCOs are facing serious issues they may require capacity to offer concentrated support over weeks or months. We have found that it is cost effective for public sector agencies to support preventative mechanisms to support VCOs rather than waiting until VCOs needing time consuming rescue packages. Specialist advisers services are needed during this period and could be covered through VCO contributions, pro bono support, secondment or consultancy.

Human Resources support

This strategy found that VCOs had difficulty finding competent qualified and committed staff; experienced difficulty in retaining staff; lacked expert knowledge and had problems motivating staff in the face of vagaries of funding. There was a lack of funds to cover maternity and sick leave. In addition VCOs need help with all aspects of staff management and administration systems.

ICT

The strategy found that VCOs need help with ICT strategy and forward planning; IT skills and management; use of ICT in monitoring and evaluation systems; technical support; and training for senior managers as well as coordination of purchasing.

Premises

The strategy found there is a need for better information about provision and availability of community premises; a need for mechanisms to share plans for new provision; a consideration of future provision for youth, under fives and children's organisations and mechanisms for joining policy development and planning between providers on provision, expansion and management of community premises.

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What are the main implications of this Infrastructure Development Strategy for the consortium (e.g. finance, staff, volunteers, geography, skills and knowledge)?

The lead organisation, COF has undergone some significant changes in leadership over the last twelve months and as a result there have been limited leadership with THIN resulting in a lack of participation by members and potential members. We will need to rebuild the consortium in order to take the strategy to forward. COF will use the strategy and to reinvigorate THIN and increase participation.

Under these circumstances delivering the strategy in full will be challenging. However we want to include the objectives contained in the strategies and work towards their achievement.

COF will use the Consortium Development Fund resources to rebuild the consortium

Please outline the roles of key people/organisations in delivering the Infrastructure Development Strategy:

COF Chief Executive - lead on developing the consortium and developing activity

The Environment Trust Lorraine Hart – lead on premises

COF Capacity Building Officers – lead on quality accreditation, commissioning and workforce development

COF Volunteer Manager – lead on the volunteer project

What are the timescales, key steps, and process for reviewing the Infrastructure Development Strategy?

The next steps are to re-launch and re-invigorate the consortium THIN. Once this is achieved the strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis, in the last quarter of each financial year

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Name of Consortium: THIN

Lead body signature:

Date signed:

Date signed off by Consortium:

