

Additional Information for PRG for Volunteer Centre Wiltshire

Background

The council's Commission for the new VCS Infrastructure Support service includes the 5 Core Functions for an infrastructure support agency, with the addition of training, some additional support for BME groups and critically a volunteering service. Clearly, whilst it is an aspiration of Wiltshire Council to have a fully fledged Volunteer Centre there is insufficient funding to achieve this within the existing resources. This is recognised and acknowledged by the funder and to enable GROW to work towards this it was always understood additional funding would need to be acquired.

Within the GROW team, there are two very part time workers and two volunteers concentrating on providing a basic brokerage service and support for groups to attract volunteers and develop opportunities and advertise. There is no other spare capacity within the team as the commission has other targets to meet.

One way of opening up increased funding opportunities is to enable GROW to gain national accreditation as a Volunteer Centre. To do this there are 6 Core Functions that will need to be evidenced and developed:

1. Brokerage
2. Marketing volunteering
3. Good practice development
4. Developing volunteering opportunities
5. Policy response and campaigning
6. Strategic development of volunteering

Answers to Questions

1. How will the posts and the project be sustained beyond the end of the funding?

To enable GROW to gain the national accreditation there needs to be a dedicated one-off piece of work to build the required evidence and knowledge.. Once this is achieved the day to day work will be maintained by the current (core funded) staff. Becoming an accredited Volunteer Centre will open up opportunities to apply for funding specifically ring fenced for Volunteer Centres. GROW will be working closely in partnership with the Charities Information Bureau to identify funds to support sustainability and continually looking for funding to support volunteering opportunities in the future to build on the accreditation.

2. Are there any baseline figures for the improvement targets given?

DEVELOP only holds limited data around base line figures for North Wiltshire. As there has never been a Wiltshire Volunteer Centre in operation, only district based support through the previous CVSs, it is not possible to provide base line figures.

We have contacted the Economic and Social Research Council-OTS Third Sector Research Centre, who have carried out work on reviewing volunteering statistics but

there is little that is reliable at a local authority level. National surveys like the Citizenship Survey only have a few hundred responses for regions, and therefore any statistics at a County level would not be stable. There is the Places Survey of local authorities, but because of the survey method (postal, not addressed to a specific individual in a household) responses cannot be standardised against other population data so it is not known whether variations between authorities reflect the social mix of the people who live there or not. Also, because of the question used (it asks about "unpaid work" as opposed to "unpaid help") it probably underestimates levels of volunteering.

Building a Volunteer Centre for Wiltshire would give us the hands on ability to start building a picture of the value of the volunteering in Wiltshire.

3. Re. premises costs - Is there an option to utilise existing premises (i.e. perhaps Wiltshire Council)?

The budgets are worked out on a full cost recovery basis and a contribution towards premises is always included in all bids. We will be utilising existing premises and using our outreach offices in Pewsey and Salisbury. DEVELOP would wish to ensure that the local independence of the sector is seen to be maintained and that services are delivered from neutral venues. Furthermore we would not anticipate that use of council premises would be available completely free of charge.

4. What is the Management fee of £7,265 for?

It is proposed to employ two workers dedicated to undertaking and delivering this piece of work. This will require line management, supervision and direction on a one to one basis, managing the budget and reporting to funders ensuring targets are met and employment law is adhered to. Again budgets are worked out on a full cost recovery basis which is recommended and accepted as best practice and forms part of the Wiltshire Council's new Funding Framework for the voluntary and community sector.

Additional Information

Volunteering matters because:

1. Essential to the economy (worth £40 billion)
2. Essential to individuals providing mental and physical wellbeing
3. Essential to public services both internally and working alongside
4. Essential to social wellbeing – building social capital
5. Essential for the future and democratic wellbeing – volunteers are more likely to vote and be involved in their community

Volunteering adds value but it is not free and in the current economic crisis volunteers have an important role to play. A Volunteer Centre provides support for organisations and development of volunteering opportunities that enable people to try new things and make a difference to people's lives. Research show that for every £1 invested in volunteering there is a £7-£10 return. 22 million people volunteer equating to £40 billion.