

Southampton Compact

Introduction

This Compact Code of Good Practice aims to build on existing good practice in Southampton and continue to improve relationships between Statutory, Community and Voluntary organisations.

1. A strong, diverse and independent civil society

Undertakings for Public Bodies and Agencies:

1.1 Respect and uphold the independence of the VCS to deliver their mission, including their right to campaign, regardless of any relationship - financial or otherwise - which may exist.

1.2 Ensure the VCS is supported and resourced in a reasonable and fair manner where they are helping public bodies and agencies fulfil their aims.

1.3 Ensure that public bodies and agencies recognise the need to resource local support and development organisations in order to assist the VCS with their capacity and capability to deliver positive outcomes.

1.4 Ensure greater transparency by making data and information more accessible, helping the VCS to challenge existing provision of services, access new markets and hold Southampton Connect partners to account.

1.5 Consider a range of ways to support the VCS, such as enabling greater access to state owned premises and resources.

Undertakings for the VCS:

1.6 When campaigning or advocating, ensure that robust evidence is provided, including information about the source of data and the range of people and communities represented.

1.7 Ensure independence is upheld, focusing on the cause represented, regardless of any relationship they have with Southampton Connect partners, financial or otherwise.

2. Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services

Undertakings for Public Bodies and Agencies:

2.1 Ensure that social, environmental and economic value forms a standard part of designing, developing and delivering policies, programmes and services. Also, consider how any benefits delivered will be sustained.

2.2 Consider the social impact that may result from policy and programme development. In particular consider how developments would impact local efforts to inspire and encourage social action and to empower communities.

2.3 Work with the VCS from the earliest possible stage to design policies, programmes and services. Ensure those likely to have a view are involved from the start and remove barriers that may prevent organisations contributing.

2.4 Give early notice of forthcoming consultations; allowing enough time for the VCS to involve their service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees in preparing responses. Where it is appropriate, and enables meaningful engagement, conduct 12-week formal written consultations, with clear explanations for shorter time-frames or a more informal approach.

2.5 Consider providing feedback to explain how respondents have influenced the design and development of policies, programmes and public services, including where respondents' views have not been acted upon.

2.6 Assess the implications for the VCS of new policies, legislation and guidance, aiming to reduce the bureaucratic burden, particularly on small organisations.

Undertakings for the local VCS:

2.7 Promote and respond to Southampton Connect partner consultations where appropriate.

2.8 Seek the views of service users, clients, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees when making representations. Be clear on who is being represented, in what capacity, and on what basis that representation is being made.

2.9 When putting forward ideas, focus on evidence-based solutions, with clear proposals for positive outcomes.

3. Responsive and high-quality programmes and services

Undertakings for Public Bodies and Agencies:

3.1 Ensure that the local VCS has a greater role and more opportunities in delivering public services by opening up new markets in accordance with wider public service reform measures.

3.2 Consider a wide range of ways to fund or resource the local VCS; including grants, contracts, loan finance and use of premises. Work to remove barriers that may prevent the local VCS accessing local government funding, thereby enabling smaller organisations to become involved in delivering services where they are best placed to achieve the desired outcomes. Consider the use of consortium and/or subcontracting arrangements to allow small agencies to participate in large contracts.

3.3 Ensure transparency by providing a clear rationale for all funding decisions.

3.4 Commit to multi-year funding where it is appropriate and adds value for money. The funding term should reflect the time it will take to deliver the outcome. If multi-year funding is not considered to be the best way of delivering the objective, explain the reasons for the decision.

3.5 Ensure there are well managed and transparent application and tendering processes, which is proportionate to the desired objectives and outcomes of programmes. This can be done by advertising and promoting opportunities as early and widely possible and allowing adequate time for responses, particularly for large pieces of work or projects that involve joint working. All relevant information should be presented so that groups can decide whether to apply.

3.6 Agree with the VCS how outcomes, including the social, environmental or economic value, will be monitored before a contract or funding agreement is made. Ensure that monitoring and reporting is relevant and proportionate to the nature and size of the opportunity. Be clear about what information is being asked for, why and how it will be used.

3.7 Ensure equal treatment across sectors, including reporting and monitoring arrangements, when tendering for contracts.

3.8 Recognise that when VCS organisations apply for a grant they can include appropriate and relevant overheads, including the costs associated with training and volunteer involvement.

3.9 Discuss and allocate any risks to the organisation(s) best equipped to manage them. Ensure delivery terms and risks are proportionate to the nature and value of the opportunity.

3.10 Ensure that the widest possible range of organisations can be involved in the provision of services through appropriate funding and financing models, for example outcome based payments and payment in advance of expenditure. Payment in advance of expenditure should be considered in the first instance.

3.11 Ensure all Southampton Connect partners distributing funds on the Government's behalf adhere to the commitments in this Compact. This includes the relationship between prime contractors and their supply chains.

Demonstrate how funding arrangements and financial support can allow smaller and specialist providers to play a greater part.

3.12 Apply the Compact when distributing European funding. Where conflicts arise with European regulations, discuss the potential effects and agree solutions together.

3.13 Encourage feedback from a range of sources on the effectiveness of the public bodies and agencies partnership with the VCS and how successful it has been in delivering their objectives. Consider placing this feedback in the public domain.

Undertakings for the local VCS:

3.14 Ensure eligibility for funding before applying and be explicit about how outcomes will be achieved, focussing on the needs of clients and service users.

3.15 Ensure robust governance arrangements so that organisations can best manage any risk associated with service delivery and financing models, including giving funders early notice of significant changes in circumstances, and complying with funding conditions.

3.16 Be open and transparent about reporting, recognising that monitoring, whether internal or external, is an aspect of good management practice. Have clear lines of accountability, especially in joint bids, and respect confidentiality.

3.17 Demonstrate the social, environmental or economic value of the programmes and services provided, where appropriate.

3.18 Help facilitate feedback from users and communities to Southampton Connect to help improve delivery of programmes and services.

3.19 Recognise that Southampton Connect partners can legitimately expect the VCS to give public recognition of its funding. Also, recognise the decision making responsibilities and decision timetables in public bodies and agencies.

3.20 Recognise the changing environment of funding, particularly funding from Central Government sources, and that there are competing demands for public spending.

4. Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services

Undertakings for Public Bodies and Agencies:

4.1 If a programme or service is encountering problems, agree with the VCS a timetable of actions to improve performance before making a decision to end a financial relationship.

4.2 Consider what to do if there is likely to be a failure to meet the delivery targets specified and how intended outcomes might be met in other ways.

4.3 Assess the impact on beneficiaries, service users and volunteers before deciding to reduce or end funding. Assess the need to re-allocate funds to another organisation serving the same group.

4.4 Where there are restrictions or changes to future resources, discuss with the VCS the potential implications as early as possible, give organisations the opportunity to respond, and consider the response fully, respecting sector expertise, before making a final decision.

4.5 Give at least three months notice in writing when changing or ending a funding relationship or other support, apart from in exceptional circumstances, and provide a clear rationale for why the decision has been taken.

Undertakings for the local VCS:

4.6 Plan for the end of funding to reduce any potential negative impact on beneficiaries and the organisation.

4.7 Contribute positively to reviews of programmes and funding practice.

4.8 Advise Southampton Connect on the social, environmental or economic impact of funding changes, and on ways to minimise their effects on people in vulnerable situations.

4.9 Give early notice of any potential issues, including budget and delivery problems.

5. An equal and fair society

Undertakings for Public Bodies and Agencies:

5.1 Work with the VCS organisations that represent, support or provide services to people specifically protected by legislation and other under-represented and disadvantaged groups. Understand the specific needs of these groups by actively seeking the views of service users and clients. Take these views into account, including assessing impact, when designing and implementing policies, programmes and services.

5.2 Acknowledge that organisations representing specific disadvantaged or under-represented groups can help promote social and community cohesion and should have equal access to state funding.

5.3 In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and to ensure a voice for under-represented, disadvantaged and small groups.

Undertakings for the VCS:

5.4 If receiving funding from Southampton Connect Partners, show how the value of the work can help that organisation deliver its public sector duties on promoting equality and tackling discrimination.

5.5 Take practical action, such as through funding bids, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build stronger communities.

6. Dispute Resolution

As far as possible any disagreements or breaches should be resolved by negotiation and discussion between those involved. The national organisation, Compact Voice, may be able to help if this process doesn't work. If this fails then any existing agreed or statutory dispute resolution mechanisms or the relevant ombudsman may be used.