

Gloucestershire Infrastructure Group Business Plan

2008 - 2011

December 2007

Contents

	Page
1	Summary of Consortium Infrastructure Business Plan.....3
2	Aims and Objectives of the Consortium4
3	Evidence of Gloucestershire VCS frontline need5
4	Outcomes and changes.....7
5	Business plan process: Involvement of beneficiaries and stakeholders9
6	Objectives and projects 11
	a. GIG as a consortium
	b. Projects
7	Research into similar or related services 14
8	Key targets 15
9	Risk assessment 17
10	Annexes 19

1. Summary

Gloucestershire Infrastructure Group (GIG) is made up of 12 local voluntary and community sector infrastructure agencies. These agencies have worked together since 2004 to develop an infrastructure development plan for Gloucestershire, focusing on the delivery of key support services, initially to strengthen partner agencies. Projects have included performance management, income generation and the development of a county wide database (Volbase).

The period 2008-2011 is the next phase in the development of the consortium. Based on an evaluation of the context and the needs of the county's sector, the consortium has some exciting plans. Firstly, to strengthen its relationship with the Gloucestershire Assembly for the Voluntary and Community Sector and ensure the most appropriate strategic structures exist to support the county's voluntary and community sector to thrive and deliver a first class service which is lean, efficient and cost effective. Secondly to attract funding for and deliver projects which improve performance, efficiency, greater collaboration and sustainability of front line agencies.

This Business Plan sets out how these plans will be achieved.

2. Aims and Objectives of the Consortium

Aim

To create new sustainable ways of working which enable Gloucestershire's front-line voluntary and community organisations to deliver a first class service which is lean, efficient and cost effective.

Objectives

1. To be configured to best support infrastructure delivery and to improve the quality, quantity, content and availability of infrastructure services in Gloucestershire
2. To co-ordinate the main infrastructure support to all voluntary and community organisations in Gloucestershire, ensuring a base-line delivery of services across the county which are high quality and locally accessible
3. To be accountable and responsive to the voluntary and community sector's needs and aspirations through the Assembly and to ensure that the sector will know what services are available
4. To develop both the consortium's and the Sector's capacity and ability to manage multiple contracts and encourage enterprise
5. To present a clear image to the voluntary and community sector and to our stakeholders
6. To operate in and encourage the Sector to operate in a transparent, reflective and inclusive manner.
7. To promote active and genuine partnerships between VCOs, including between infrastructure organisations and to develop new and sustainable ways of working.
8. To seek and retain commitment to the consortium by Trustees and officers of the infrastructure organisations in the consortium.
9. To seek and retain funding support for infrastructure delivery and frontline delivery from the strategic organisations.

3. Evidence of Gloucestershire VCS frontline need

The needs of the frontline VCOs are summarised into three main areas, with local evidence for these needs as follows:

3.1 Need for consistent high quality infrastructure provision across the county

Current work being undertaken with GIG and the seven Local Authorities towards a single infrastructure contract for the county by April 2009 has highlighted significant gaps in provision of core infrastructure services in parts of the county: for example there is now no infrastructure provision in the Tewkesbury district and virtually none in the Cotswolds. GIG agreed a model of infrastructure delivery in 2005 and this current work illustrates several gaps where the reality doesn't match the model. (Objective 1, 2) Individual GIG members have been working on full cost recovery budgets and can now much more clearly evidence what work is being funded in each district and what gaps there are. This has already led to an agreement to merge between two volunteer centres, (Cheltenham and Tewkesbury) and merger discussions between some of the rural CVS and there is clearly much more work to do in this area.

The process of carrying out the mapping project in 2007 (Everybody Counts) highlighted significant lack of capacity within some infrastructure organisations in the county that make up GIG and an urgent need to re-configure the way we work together to make tasks such as maintaining and managing the database more effective. (Objectives 2, 7) This has already led to a more formal collaborative agreement which has attracted £100k from Lloyds TSB over the next three years. This project has helped GIG members to start to look at other ways that we could re-configure some of our activities in similar ways.

3.2 Need to inform GIG of their needs and aspirations and to know what services are available to support them

The main route by which GIG gathers information about the needs of and engages with, the frontline VCS, is through the VCS Assembly, with most GIG members also sitting on the Assembly Board of Representatives.

As a result of an Assembly Away Day in January 2007, as a conclusion of the difficulty in gathering data for Everybody Counts and also as a result of recent work to investigate the needs of "hard to reach" communities following the summer floods, GIG members have recognised the need to widen the Assembly's inclusivity and its engagement with front line groups. It has been agreed that this needs to be done through reviewing representation on the Assembly Board, its links to elected VCS reps on thematic partnerships, its relationship with GIG and its "branding".

(Objectives 3, 5) The Assembly Board is also committed to addressing the lack of BME engagement in strategic structures in the county, a need identified by Linking Communities, the organisation which represents the BME VCS on the Assembly Board.

GIG demonstrated its need to develop new internal procedures in order to be able to manage contracts more effectively, (Objective 4) during evaluation of its recent work at an away day in July 2007 and through the self assessment process recently carried out. It was recognised that, without a lead agency or worker to pull all the work together, we are unable to effectively deliver our objectives.

3.3 Need to adapt to the new financial climate

The financial climate in which the VCS operates is changing rapidly (See NCVO “State of the Sector” and SW Forum report) and this is reflected locally in frontline organisations in Gloucestershire and within GIG members themselves. The need for front line organisations to be supported to adapt to this “Brave New World” has come from several sources:

- Gloucestershire County Council reported very poor quality grant applications for 2007-8, even from organisations which were known to provide quality services.
- The Children and Young People’s Directorate have identified this specific need amongst VCOs providing services to children and young people, due to much of the previous grants budget for this work now going into contracts.
- Evaluation from GAVCA’s training programme shows a growing demand for training in areas of financial sustainability, collaborative working, financial management and winning contracts.
- The Gloucestershire VCS Assembly Board of Representatives highlighted this need at its Development Day in January 2007.
- A recent audit of services provided by GIG members showed very little of this kind of work currently being undertaken.

These needs, which have been identified within Gloucestershire, mirror regional and national trends as illustrated in the NCVO VCS Almanac 2006 “The State of the Sector” and the South West Forum’s contribution to the “State of the South West 2007” report by the South West Observatory. In particular, the trend towards the larger organisations getting larger and squeezing out the smaller organisations is very evident in Gloucestershire and highlights the need for GIG’s “Brave New World” project, to help groups adapt to this new financial climate.

Associated papers (Annex 1):

Everybody Counts report 2007

Assembly Board Away Day 2007 notes

GIG Away Day report July 07

NCVO report and SW Forum report 2007

4. Outcomes and Changes

The Gloucestershire Infrastructure Group will seek to achieve the following outcomes over the next 6 years.

a. Needs and improvement

The Gloucestershire VCS is:

- a) better informed about new needs
- b) reviews its services in response to information about changing or emerging needs
- c) involves a range of individuals/organisations reflecting the diversity of the local community, in the identification of needs and solutions, including the VCO's role in addressing needs, where appropriate
- d) better informs statutory organisations and funders about changing needs in the local community

b. Effectiveness and quality

The Gloucestershire VCS has:

- a) increased knowledge of LIO and other available infrastructure support services
- b) increased knowledge, skills and qualifications in workforce
- c) increased knowledge of current local and national developments affecting its work
- d) improved access to funding sources
- e) increased knowledge of how to use quality tools and techniques to improve performance
- f) more groups, representing the diversity of the local community, accessing LIO services

c. Communication, networking and collaboration

The Gloucestershire VCS:

- a) meets and communicates better
- b) works more collaboratively and, where relevant, forms partnerships/consortia to address particular needs or tasks
- c) makes better use of scarce resources by sharing good practice, expertise and/or equipment, premises etc, where possible

d. Representation, effective working relationships and two-way communication

The Gloucestershire VCS:

- a) is a more integral part of local planning and policy making
- b) has access to appropriate and sufficient information to enable it to develop its own views about key issues and respond to consultation
- c) has its views sought by key external agencies at all stages of a consultation process
- d) is more actively involved in the development and operation of effective working partnerships
- e) benefits from working agreements, protocols and/or compacts with statutory and other outside bodies

e. Local planning and policy-making

The Gloucestershire VCS:

- a) has the knowledge and skills to become more involved in local planning structures
- b) has genuinely accountable members involved on key local strategic initiatives with feedback to the whole sector
- c) provides representatives from a wide range of VCOs for planning and policy - making groups

5. **Business plan process: Involvement of beneficiaries and stakeholders**

The main mechanism for GIG to consult with its frontline beneficiaries is through the VCS Assembly Board of Representatives. The Assembly Board includes representatives from over 29 different thematic (including all six equality strands) and geographic networks within the VCS and also reps from the thematic VCS strategy groups (see diagram). The role of each of these reps is to bring the views and needs of members of their network to the table and, in this way, the Assembly Board aims to be inclusive of the whole of the VCS in the County.

The Assembly Board discussed the needs of the Sector at its annual Away Day in January and this information formed the basis of the discussions that GIG then started in July about how best to meet these needs in its future plans.

Stakeholders from some of the Equalities Strands are members of GIG and have been involved throughout the process of the more detailed development of the business plan. These are: BME – GlosREC and Linking Communities and Youth – Glos Youth Partnership. There are no infrastructure organisations for the other equalities strands and that is why GIG uses the structure of the Assembly Board to ensure wider involvement in its work.

The public sector has been involved in the process through Rachel Wright, the Voluntary Sector Policy Officer at Gloucestershire County Council, who represents the County Funders Group, a grouping of all seven Local Authorities. Information from the multi-sector Compact Group has also informed this plan.

a. **GIG membership**

GIG membership is open to infrastructure organisations in Gloucestershire and all members of GIG have a Director on the Board of GIG. GIG links to the Gloucestershire VCS Assembly as described above, in order to involve its wider stakeholders, but these other organisations are not members of the consortium. In terms of the structure of the VCS Assembly, GIG is one of the 29 specialist networks that are represented on the Assembly Board.

List of GIG members:

Gloucester Association for Voluntary and Community Action
Forest Voluntary Action Forum
Cotswold Council Voluntary Services
Tewkesbury and District Council for Voluntary Services
Volunteer and Community Action (Stroud District)
Gloucestershire Rural Community Council
Co-operative Futures
Cheltenham Volunteer Centre
Gloucestershire Neighbourhood Projects Network
Gloucestershire Racial Equality Council
Linking Communities
Gloucestershire Youth Partnership

Associated Papers (Annex 2):

GIG membership

Assembly Terms of Reference

Diagram of Assembly structure

Diagram of relationship of GIG to the Assembly

6. Objectives and projects

GIG as a consortium

Objective	Project
	GIG Consortium Development
To be configured to best support infrastructure delivery and to improve the quality, quantity, content and availability of infrastructure services in Gloucestershire.	To facilitate discussions amongst GIG members around re-configuration of their services.
To co-ordinate the main infrastructure support to all voluntary and community organisations in Gloucestershire, ensuring a base-line delivery of services across the county which are high quality and locally accessible.	Work with the Partnership and Participation Project to ensure that the widest possible engagement of the VCS in GIG's work is achieved through the VCS Assembly.
To be accountable and responsive to the voluntary and community sector's needs and aspirations through the Assembly and to ensure that the sector will know what services are available.	Monitor the implementation and report on achievement of the GIG Business Plan and Infrastructure Plans to GIG and external stakeholders.
To present a clear image to the voluntary and community sector and to our stakeholders.	Deliver a marketing plan for GIG and its activities.
To operate in, and encourage the sector to operate in, a transparent, reflective and inclusive manner.	Facilitate and deliver appropriate communications from GIG to frontline agencies through the Assembly and other stakeholders in line with the marketing plan.
To promote active and genuine partnerships between VCOs, including between infrastructure organisations and to develop new and sustainable ways of working. (repeated in 2 nd Project).	Facilitate and deliver appropriate communications from frontline agencies including through the Assembly and other stakeholders to the GIG consortium.
To seek and retain commitment to the consortium by Trustees and officers of the infrastructure organisations in the consortium.	Establish a communication and reporting systems between GIG project (Brave New World), relevant GIG member projects (such as the Performance Improvement project) and GIG consortium.
	Maintain GIG membership in line with Consortium's constitution and needs of frontline organisations.
	Review GIG membership and operation on a bi-annual basis in line with Business Plan and changing context and recommend to GIG configuration/projects in line with this.

	<p>Co-ordinate GIG consortium activities and support GIG members to develop the consortium as an effective network within the wider VCS Assembly.</p> <p>To provide financial management and administration for GIG.</p> <p>Collaborate with GIG partners for the delivery of the performance improvement project (see fundraising plan).</p>
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GIG project

Objective	Project
To be responsive to the voluntary and community sector's needs and aspirations.	<p data-bbox="867 262 1430 296">'Brave New World' Project</p> <p data-bbox="867 296 1430 394">Develop and deliver a comprehensive development programme focusing on financial sustainability for frontline workers.</p>
To develop both the consortium's and the Sector's capacity and ability of front line organisations to manage multiple contracts and encourage enterprise.	<p data-bbox="867 394 1430 428">Topics to include:</p> <ul data-bbox="867 428 1430 596" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="867 428 1430 462">▪ full cost recovery <li data-bbox="867 462 1430 495">▪ business planning <li data-bbox="867 495 1430 529">▪ financial management <li data-bbox="867 529 1430 562">▪ risk management <li data-bbox="867 562 1430 596">▪ winning contracts. <p data-bbox="867 630 1430 730">Learning to be delivered through seminars, action learning sets, small groups, networks and formal training, e-learning.</p>
To promote active and genuine partnerships between VCOs, including between front line and infrastructure organisations and to develop new and sustainable ways of working.	<p data-bbox="867 764 1430 932">Develop and deliver frontline organisations' willingness, capacity and ability to work collaboratively, using: information sharing, mentoring and support, matching events, conferences and workshops.</p>
To seek and retain funding support for infrastructure delivery and front line delivery from the strategic organisations.	<p data-bbox="867 1008 1430 1209">Work with strategic groups within Gloucestershire such as the VCS Assembly, County Funders group, Compact Group and thematic strategy groups to actively implement the Compact, resulting in positive outcomes including:</p> <ul data-bbox="867 1209 1430 1377" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="867 1209 1430 1276">▪ improved understanding of each sector; <li data-bbox="867 1276 1430 1344">▪ agreed common definitions of full cost recovery, <li data-bbox="867 1344 1430 1377">▪ sustainable VCS. <p data-bbox="867 1453 1430 1545">Work with non-statutory funders such as charitable trusts and private companies, to ensure the needs of the sector are met.</p>

7. Research into similar or related services

In 2006, GIG researched and devised a model for infrastructure in Gloucestershire. This model sets out the existing provision of infrastructure services at county and district level. It is currently being used as the basis for the work being undertaken with GIG and the seven Local Authorities to explore the possibility of a single infrastructure contract for the county by April 2009.

Associated Papers (Annex 3)

Gloucestershire Model for Infrastructure Provision 2007

8. Key targets

Year	Project	Target
2008 - 2009	Brave New World	<p>Recruit worker.</p> <p>Deliver project plan based on evaluation of needs of frontline organisations.</p> <p>Develop and deliver training programme, workshops and events focusing on financial sustainability and collaborative working for frontline organisations.</p> <p>Ensure representation from all equalities strands in participation of training programme.</p> <p>Deliver mentoring/action learning programme for frontline organisations.</p> <p>Collaborate with GIG partners for the delivery of the performance improvement project (see fundraising plan).</p>
2008 -2009	Brave New World	<p>Evaluate year 1 delivery and plan for year 2.</p> <p>Deliver comprehensive training and support programme for frontline organisations (as year 1).</p>
2009 - 2010	Brave New World	<p>Evaluate year 2 deliver and plan for year 3.</p> <p>Deliver comprehensive training and support programme for frontline organisations (as year 2).</p> <p>Work with GIG members to plan for exit/sustainability of project.</p>

Year	Project	Target
2008 - 2009	GIG Consortium Development	<p>Recruit Worker Co-ordinate ten GIG meetings.</p> <p>Review and report on delivery of Business Plan and on bi-annual basis.</p> <p>Deliver GIG annual marketing plan.</p> <p>Update GIG web and other marketing material.</p> <p>Ensure GIG Trustees, member organisations and other stakeholders are appropriately briefed on GIG's operations and relevant external developments - produce bi-annual newsletter.</p> <p>Report on implementation and review of implementation of GIG Business Plan and external stakeholders x 1.</p> <p>Facilitate review of GIG relationship to Assembly, review of membership, configuration and recommend any strategic and operational changes to GIG.</p> <p>Review and develop infrastructure development strategy 2008-2014.</p> <p>Facilitate equalities proofing exercise of all GIG's work.</p> <p>Co-ordinate GIG consortia activities.</p>
2008 -2009	GIG Consortium Development	<p>As year 1</p> <p>Facilitate the implementation of any changes in GIG membership or strategic configuration as agreed.</p>
2009 - 2010	GIG consortium Development	<p>As year 2</p>

9. Risk Assessment

Description of risk	Impact	Probability	Existing controls and actions required to mitigate the risk	Lead responsibility
Not enough funding received from Capacity Builders to continue to develop the consortium sufficiently robustly	GIG becomes uncoordinated with not enough capacity to that on a leadership role within the third sector	Low	The level of activity of GIG would be scaled down to fit the available resources	GIG Board
Conflict within the consortium due to external pressures eg forced acquisitions and mergers	There is a breakdown in relationships within GIG making the consortium unworkable	Medium	GIG is already seen as a forum where difficult issues can be discussed openly. If necessary an independent chair could be brought in to support GIG through difficult periods	GIG Board
No funding identified to deliver the 'Brave New World' project	GIG would not have any delivery work of its own and the likelihood is that GIG would be seen as a talking shop and of no value to the local third sector or to GIG members especially in light of local developments	Medium	GIG has established a culture of partnership working. The members of GIG would seek alternative funding for the project or look for a different delivery mechanism	GIG members
Organisations who represent diversity groups or specialist areas either cease to engage with GIG due to their fragile positions or cease to exist	GIG would find it harder to mainstream the diversity issues in its activities	High	Other links in place to equalities groups in the Glos Assembly.	GIG Board

Failure to recruit a sufficiently competent consortium worker	The consortium would have to invest it's time and energy in managing the worker rather than acting strategically	Low	The employment of the consortium worker will be through a GIG member who has demonstrated that their organisation has a track record in recruitment and line management of staff	GIG Board and Line Management organisation
Failure to recruit a sufficiently competent project worker	The project would not deliver it's expected outputs and outcomes	Low	The employment of the project worker will be through a GIG member who has demonstrated that their organisation has a track record in recruitment and line management of staff	GIG Board and Line Management organisation
Frontline organisations do not want to engage in the Brave New World project	The project would not deliver it's expected outputs and outcomes	Low	All the members of GIG have well established relationships with frontline organisations in the third and have excellent communication channels with them	GIG members
Communications with stakeholders are not effective	The role that GIG plays within the Glos third sector is not properly understood and frontline and statutory organisations do not engage.	Low	GIG has a close working relationship with the VCS Assembly and also has a good working relationship with the statutory agencies. The communications plan develops these relationships further	GIG communications sub group

<p>GIG does not review and act on recommendations with regard to its relationship with the VCS Assembly</p>	<p>GIG duplicates work of the Assembly and confusion over role of GIG in relation to Assembly</p> <p>Loss of strategic and positive impact for member, frontline and other organisations</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>GIG members are also members of Assembly and recognise the importance of this work.</p> <p>GIG has included review of relationship with the Assembly in year 1 of the Business Plan and the communications strategy.</p>	<p>GIG Board</p>
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Annexes

1. Everybody Counts report 2007
Assembly Board Away Day 2007 notes
GIG Away Day report July 07
NCVO report and SW Forum report 2007
2. GIG membership
Assembly Terms of Reference
Diagram of Assembly structure
Diagram of relationship of GIG to the Assembly
3. Gloucestershire Model for Infrastructure Provision 2007
4. Milestones and targets
5. Lead organisations
6. Summary of how organisations will monitor the outputs and outcomes
7. Summary of consortium costs
8. Estimated staff requirements
9. Summary of fundraising plan
10. Summary of marketing plan
11. Track record of delivering similar projects