

Evaluating the VCS Infrastructure Investment Programme

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1. Executive summary

The aim of the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra's) Rural Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Social Exclusion Programme is:

To strengthen the ability of the voluntary and community sector to understand and meet the needs of socially excluded groups in rural areas.¹

Defra has taken an innovative approach to programme delivery, requiring the formation of consortia of voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations, their users and their funders in every county. These consortia are tasked with developing Infrastructure Investment Plans (IIPs) which set out what support the voluntary and community sector needs in that county or sub-region to tackle rural social exclusion. Defra will then invest in this support.

1.1 Positive outcomes

▪ **Benefits of consortia working**

For the most part VCS infrastructure providers are very positive about the consortium approach. Historically many Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCOs) have not collaborated well. This programme has required a wide variety of organisations to work together and in a number of places this is for the first time. As a result, communications between VCS infrastructure organisations have already improved, resulting in better partnership working. It has also been an opportunity to identify duplications and gaps in provision and put together a strategy to combat any problems.

▪ **Maximising economies of scale**

By working collaboratively, VCOs are more likely to identify costs which can be shared, enabling each partner to focus scarce resources on delivery.

▪ **Needs of the user**

The focus of this programme on the needs of infrastructure users means that their voice is beginning to be heard. There is increased understanding and awareness by all organisations, both rural and urban, of rural and social inclusion issues.

▪ **County level approach**

The county/sub-regional level approach has provided a structural link between the VCS and the statutory sector which wasn't necessarily there before. This has provided an increased opportunity for the VCS to link up with strategic initiatives such as Local Area Agreements, Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), or Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) which operate at county level.

▪ **Learning curve for all involved**

The whole programme has been an intense learning curve for all involved and has provided the opportunity for the acquisition of new skills; for individual workers, organisations, and groups of organisations. The consortia are learning to work together, prioritise and focus on what needs to be done in a short space of time. Defra and

¹ *ChangeUp and Defra Infrastructure Investment Programmes, Guidance for Government Offices, October 2004.*

regional Government Offices (GOs) are developing a better understanding of working with the VCS.

- **Improved relationships with the statutory sector**

The programme has and will provide increased opportunities to build relationships with statutory partners, particularly if regional and national government take steps to raise awareness of the programme.

- **Improved relationships with Government Offices**

The regional devolution of the programme has enabled the VCS to develop and strengthen relationships with the regional face of government departments.

A number of GO staff report that delivering this programme in conjunction with a Home Office Active Communities Unit (ACU) sister initiative has strengthened relationships between departments within the GO, leading to improved work on other Defra and Home Office programmes.

- **Flexibility of Defra's approach**

The flexibility of Defra's approach has meant that IIPs really reflect local needs and progress at a pace to suit the state of development of the sector on a county by county basis.

By encouraging the joining of programmes Defra and the Home Office are leading consortia by example, demonstrating that Government too understands the benefits of collaboration.

1.2 Challenges

- **Timescales**

In order to achieve Defra's aim of social inclusion we believe that four things need to be in place:

1. A strong effective consortium with good internal relationships.
2. A strong relationship between VCS infrastructure and their users.
3. An increased awareness, knowledge and understanding of rural issues, concepts such as rural proofing and equality proofing.
4. A strong operating environment in terms of effective VCS infrastructure and good relationships with the statutory sector.

Emergence of each of these attributes can be tracked through recognised change management or development cycles. There is general recognition that implementation of any one such cycle takes at least 18 months per cycle. This tends to be longer if change is driven from the grass-roots as opposed to top-down development.² To reach the point of successful delivery in all areas might require a consortium to progress the whole way through four change or development cycles.

² Safari Institute of Organisational Rethinking, *Introduction to Change Management, Perspectives, Models, Strategies* published on the internet: <http://www.safari-institute.de>

Consortia are reporting difficulties in achieving all of these things simultaneously within the given timescale. Some consortia had one or two elements in place coming in to the programme, for example an existing partnership to build on, or good relationships with statutory partners, however it is doubtful that any consortium has yet reached the point of being strong enough to fully achieve the aims of the programme.

- **Poor infrastructure**

Consortium development is not a fast process particularly in areas with very little infrastructure. Many areas need investment in infrastructure so that they have the mechanisms to be able to fulfil Defra's aims. It has been very difficult for the consortia to achieve Defra's aims when they do not have a fully formed consortia or strong effective infrastructure in place.

- **Lack of clarity**

Both consortia and GOs told us that they felt Defra's aims had changed during the preparatory part of the programme. As a result those consortia and regions who were quick off the mark feel that they may have headed in the wrong direction. This will be less of an issue for those regions and consortia who have been slow to engage in the programme.

- **Engaging the statutory sector**

Local authority support is very important. In areas where this support is in existence the consortium approach works better. Where the relationship is poor, infrastructure is also poor or non-existent. Many of these areas appear to be rural districts. Equally, statutory partners are concerned that this programme will create a raft of unsustainable projects which they will be expected to fund in future.

- **User engagement**

In many IIPs the consultation methodology was unclear, only 43 per cent consulted with socially excluded groups, and we have reservations as to the robustness of the research in some cases.

Many consortia are using resources to further map and gap their areas with little attempt to produce specific projects.

- **Black and minority ethnic (BME) engagement**

There is a trend in some consortia towards tick box inclusion: if an organisation was present, it was assumed that the needs of the constituents of that organisation would be met. The same could be said about the participation of rural organisations not being a guarantee of rural proofing within a document.

Currently only half of the consortia have BME representation and only four per cent of the proposed projects seek to develop BME capacity. It must be recognised though, that,

1. Some counties do not have a large ethnic population.
2. BME infrastructure in some counties is poor and those organisations are at the present time incapable of participating.
3. Some BME infrastructure bodies have elected not to participate.

- **Tackling rural issues**

Rural Proofing was not tackled well in IIPs, with many failing to link in any specific actions and others failing to undertake any research into the needs of rural communities or rural CVS organisations.

Parish plans and the empowerment of Parish Councils are, or should be, an important part of consortia's approach to community development. They give local communities an opportunity to shape their own futures, influencing community plans and thus the services delivered within their community. Consortia should be encouraged to explore this avenue for tackling social exclusion.

1.3 Delivering the programme

- **GO management approach**

Government Offices for the regions (GOs) have been given a great amount of autonomy in delivering the Defra and ACU programmes. As a result there are significant differences in approach across the country. In some regions the early phases of the Defra and ACU programmes have been implemented separately, in others there has been a modicum of overlap, whilst in a few places they have been totally combined.

- **GO capacity**

Prior to the programme many GOs lacked the knowledge or relationships with the VCS necessary to achieve the consortium approach. During the early part of the programme the most successful Government Offices appear to be those who have brought in independent consultants or secondees from the voluntary or community sector with the knowledge needed to energise delivery. This approach is now being copied in many more regions. However, although the programme may have progressed apace in areas with specialist staff, the knowledge, relationships and expertise utilised by the staff member to achieve this have not necessarily been transferred to permanent GO staff so the departure of the specialist means that the GO will be no better placed to achieve Defra's broader aims than they were at the outset of the programme. GOs will need to guard against this if a real partnership between sectors is to be sustained.

- **Relationship with ACU investment**

The approach the GOs have taken in delivering the programme seems to have had the biggest impact in this area.

If the ACU/Defra schemes are run completely in tandem with a single consortium for both programmes, consortia appear to have concentrated on fulfilling ACU aims at the expense of Defra. Where it has been purely Defra funding with the consortium totally focussed on Defra's agenda, they have fulfilled Defra's aims but there is little evidence that they have leveraged ACU funding for rural areas or influenced ACU focused consortia to address rural needs.

Whichever the approach, it seems that GO intervention is crucial and has a major impact on the progress of the programme.

1.4 Future approach to achieve Defra's aims

To achieve the programme aims, the onus will be on Government Offices to ensure that consortia have support to achieve all of the elements necessary to deliver the programme successfully:

1. A strong effective consortium with good internal relationships

Consortia need to go through a team development process before they can function effectively. (see figure1)³ Whilst a number are norming, many are still forming.

Where there was an existing relationship between members, consortium development is much faster as trust has already been established. However in some consortia the introduction of this programme has upset the status quo, taking the consortium backwards on the team development model.

2. A strong relationship between VCS infrastructure and their users

The places where it seems most likely that social exclusion will be tackled in the longer term are those where there are plans in place to empower rural communities with the knowledge, skills and tools to find and sustain their own solutions. This can only be achieved if there is a strong partnership between infrastructure organisations and the groups who use their services.

3. An increased awareness, knowledge and understanding of rural issues, concepts such as rural proofing and equality proofing

The first step towards achieving the aims of the programme is recognising that current infrastructure delivery mechanisms are imperfect and need to be improved if social exclusion is to be tackled in rural areas. Although the majority of consortia have acknowledged this, it is evident that some have not. This realisation can cause a crisis of confidence within a consortium. Consortia risk being caught in a mapping cycle in their search for new skills and knowledge. Research points to gaps in knowledge, resulting in more research being commissioned, which identifies new gaps and so on. It is not until consortia are able to translate their newly acquired knowledge into action that Defra's aims will be fulfilled. A few consortia are beginning to do this, but many more are still in the research phase.

4. A strong operating environment in terms of effective VCS infrastructure and good relationships with the statutory sector

In places a vicious circle of poor relationships between sectors can be seen in IIPs, where low levels of investment in the VCS leads to a lack of capacity. This in turn leads to a failure to deliver, thus justifying the low levels of investment made. Until this cycle is broken, VCOs will have little capacity to engage in the Defra programme.

1.5 Conclusions

The programme is innovative and the consortium approach appears to offer a better, more sustainable and permanent solution to improving support for tackling social exclusion in rural areas than a traditional grant funding programme would have. It has the potential to

³ B. W. Tuckman, *Developmental Sequence in Small Groups*, Psychological Bulletin, 1965, Vol. 63, No.6, 384-399.

change culture within the VCS, moving it away from damaging competitiveness between infrastructure providers to a collaborative focus on users of services.

Potential outcomes

Having evaluated the work undertaken to date, we see two beneficial outcomes which this programme could deliver for Defra:

1. The VCS will be better placed to deliver future Defra programmes, with strong collaborative partnerships between organisations and sectors in place, and the knowledge and relationships with communities to ensure that activities which Defra funds in future are appropriately tailored to reach those whom Defra wishes to benefit most.
2. In the longer term there will be fewer socially excluded groups in rural areas, as VCOs will be better equipped and supported to identify and address need.

However, change management theory supports the view that change, particularly change driven by the grass roots, takes time. Although many projects will be delivered during the programme, not all consortia will have fully evolved and been able to develop their operating environments to the extent which Defra might hope, nor will all consortia be able to demonstrate success in tackling social exclusion by the end of the programme.

Indicators of success

If the change process within and between is seen as a journey, it will be important for Defra to be able measure distance travelled to identify success. Given the mountains which IIPs show many consortia will have to climb to reach their ideal operating environment, a significant number might fail to reach this destination before the end of the programme. However, this should not be seen as failure if Defra's investment has enabled these consortia to move much nearer to their goals.

By tracking consortia through the various developmental processes required, both GOs and Defra should have the ability to measure progress towards achieving a better VCS environment. Use of change management and developmental models could also highlight the points at which consortia are likely to need particular interventions.

Achievement of the second outcome of tackling social exclusion is harder to gauge. Whilst GO and consortium outputs can be measured as the programme progresses, we are not convinced that they are the best indicator of progress towards tackling social exclusion. BME inclusion in a consortium does not equate to the needs of BME communities being met, for example. This outcome would be better measured through direct engagement with the frontline, first tier users of VCS infrastructure, perhaps through the ACU's State of the Sector Panel.⁴

Action to achieve success

The two most crucial elements which will ensure the success of the programme are the ongoing provision of:

- Learning and support opportunities for GOs from Defra
- Learning and support opportunities for the VCS from GOs

⁴ See the Research and Development Statistics section of the Home Office website: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/sosp.html>

2. Introduction

The aim of Defra's Rural (VCS) and Social Exclusion Programme is:

To strengthen the ability of the voluntary and community sector to understand and meet the needs of socially excluded groups in rural areas.⁵

Within that programme, just under £7 million is allocated to the Infrastructure Investment Programme, to develop infrastructure within a rural context. It will fund specific measures for developing assistance to frontline voluntary and community sector organisations operating within or on behalf of rural communities.

By making this investment Defra is seeking the following outcomes:

- **Improved quality of life for socially excluded groups and individuals within rural areas.**
- **Frontline VCS groups that are equipped to meet the needs of rural communities.**
- **Infrastructure support for frontline VCS groups serving rural areas that better meets the needs of users (co-ordinated, efficient, and sustainable).**⁶

This early evaluation has been undertaken by Jennie Jordan, Frances Newbury and Philippa Morley (see annex 1). Its purpose is:

- To obtain early indications of the likelihood of the investment meeting its aims and objectives.
- To identify lessons learnt and examples of good practice in order to help those involved in the programme delivery understand how they can improve their programme delivery during the remaining 18 months of the programme.
- To identify any immediate actions that Defra might usefully undertake to help deliver the programme aims and objectives.

2.1. Programme context

The Defra programme sits alongside the ACU's ChangeUp Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the VCS, which is underpinned by Home Office investment of £80 million over 2003/04 – 2005/06. Both programmes consist of two phases – an Early or Preparatory phase from January to Summer 04 leading in to a Main investment phase from Summer 04 to the end of March 06.

Government Offices for the regions (GOs) have been given a great amount of autonomy in delivering the programmes, enabling them to tailor development to best meet the needs of the VCS in their areas. As a result there are significant differences in approach across the country. In some regions the early phases of the Defra and ACU programmes have been implemented separately, in others there has been a modicum of overlap, whilst in a few places they have been totally combined.

⁵ *ChangeUp and Defra Infrastructure Investment Programmes, Guidance for Government Offices*, October 2004.

⁶ *ibid*

The joint guidance issued to GOs by Defra and the ACU illustrates the differences and links between the two programmes:

ACU's programme is a nationwide investment, intended to benefit both rural and urban areas of England. Defra's investment is specifically intended to 'add value' and be used for specifically defined, additional rural activities.

Taken together these two programmes will make a significant immediate impact on the levels of support available to frontline voluntary and community organisations and provide a step change for provision for the longer term.⁷

2.2. Programme outputs

The delivery of the programme relies upon the formation of consortia of voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations, their users and their funders, in each county or sub-region. These consortia are tasked with developing Infrastructure Investment Plans (IIPs) which set out what support the voluntary and community sector needs in that county to tackle rural social exclusion. Defra will then invest in this support.

Defra has asked Government Offices to deliver the thirteen specific outputs on its behalf.⁸ (see annex 4). These outputs are intended to be indicators for Defra to assist in monitoring progress. Defra recognises that external circumstances can sometimes make it very difficult to deliver agreed outputs and, provided that the GO can show that it has taken measures to try to deliver a given output but failed for valid reasons, Defra will not pursue the issue. Failure to reach any targets across the board will provide information which will help Defra to review its activities and to consider any necessary adjustments to the programme.

2.3 Research methodology

The researchers analysed all documents submitted by consortia to GOs prior to January 2005, as supplied by Defra. A standard set of indicators was used, capturing quantitative and qualitative data. The findings were logged into a database.

It should be recognised that most of the documents were more than six months old by the time of analysis. Whilst some of the documents analysed were IIPs, a number were purely initial bids for funding to deliver a specific project or develop a consortium, as IIPs were not available in those areas.

This programme is a fast-moving development process. Many things have changed within the consortia since these documents were submitted. New members have joined, others have left; further research and consultation have taken place; thinking has evolved and strategic plans have been put in place or changed.

To ensure that the information used was correct, capture changes within consortia and gain feedback about the progress of the programme, a complete set of findings relating to

⁷ *ChangeUp and Defra Infrastructure Investment Programmes, Guidance for Government Offices*, October 2004.

⁸ *ibid*

each consortium was sent via email to the consortium concerned, along with a questionnaire (see letter and questionnaire sent to all consortia – Annex 3). Consortia were given the opportunity to challenge and amend findings; describe developments since the submission of the document; contribute their thoughts about the most and least useful aspects of the programme; and outline potential future developments in their areas. Consortia were offered £50 towards the cost of time spent participating in the research. There were sixteen responses to this communication from consortia.

The researchers conducted a telephone interview with each GO using a pre-set range of questions.

The researchers also used follow up telephone interviews and email correspondence to capture further information from consortia where it seemed a case history or example of good practice could be found.

Specific information

Defra asked us to capture the following information in relation to each consortium:

- Is a basic consortium in place?
- Is there BME representation on the consortium?
- Is there a clear intention to reach rurally excluded people?
- Has a needs analysis taken place?
- Have the views of frontline organisations been taken in to account?
- What issues did consultation with these groups reveal?
- To what extent does the document produced focus on Defra's aim of tackling rural social exclusion?
- Is there an agreed, county level vision for the future of infrastructure needed by front line rural VCS?
- Are rural specialist needs being taken in to account?
- Are links being made to statutory partners and, in particular, LSPs?
- Is a transparent mechanism to rural proof the work in place?

These factors, and others we noted, were used to indicate the likelihood of GO required outputs being achieved (See Annex 8).

2.4 Report layout

This report is split into two sections. The first section of the report deals with the major themes that we have found during our evaluation. The second section outlines the lessons learnt and gives our recommendations for immediate actions that Defra might usefully undertake to deliver the programme aims and objectives.

A statistical analysis of how far Defra is towards meeting the stated aims and objectives of the programme, based on the programme outputs is listed in Annex 8. Further statistical findings can be found in Annexes 6 and 7.

3. Findings

3.1 Consortium development

100 per cent of counties have now established a basic consortium, although the size, structure and level of participation varies from 5 members up to 137.

All the consortia who responded felt that the consortium process was a really positive step forward and that they were benefiting from the new partnership working. Many counties didn't have history of working together and the intensity of the programme has forced them to do this, with some success.

The variability of consortia

Whilst 88 per cent of IIPs were submitted by January 2005, there are still counties that have only just formed consortia and are currently putting together their action plans. Nationally the counties are at vastly differing stages of development.

The variability of consortia is one of the key issues that has arisen during our evaluation and is, therefore, worthy of more detailed consideration.

- **New consortia**

Where county based fora were not already in existence, consortia are beginning to find that by working at a county or sub-regional level, they can feed into other county level initiatives such as LSPs, Sub Regional Strategic Partnerships (SSPs), LSCs, Community Safety Partnerships and Neighbourhood Renewal work, sometimes for the first time. At least one local authority which is piloting Local Area Agreements has said that the consortium will be vital to implementing this new way of working. Existence of consortia also makes work on COMPACTS easier.

“The future role (for the consortium) is as the county-wide strategic partnership, feeding in to other strategic partnerships and initiatives, such as the County Strategic Partnership, investing in communities etc.”

Case study 1

Effective consortium development from scratch Cornwall

There is not a great history of working together within the South West VCS. Thus for a significant number of organisations within the region this is the first time they have worked in partnership with others. There was no existing countywide network of VCOs in Cornwall.

The Cornwall consortium is finding the consortium approach very valuable. It has been difficult defining who should be on the consortium and it is challenging finding the balance between being as inclusive as possible and having a workable number of people who are all prepared to work hard at this process. However, whilst others have found the tight programme timescales to be an issue, the Cornwall consortium has used them to its advantage. Because of the need for an intense period of work and a demanding agenda, the consortium has taken full days to work intensively together, which has really helped them to bond with each other.

Although a very new body, the consortium aims to have a full business plan in place by the end of March 05. The strong links between organisations means that this is an achievable target.

The existence of a county level VCS body is already paying dividends as the consortium is already in discussion with the Learning and Skills Council with a view to joint working.

- **Existing groups**

Those that had a network or forum in place prior to this programme are generally further along the road to an inclusive consortium with a clearly defined role than those that have started from scratch.

However, some of the existing groups, the programme has placed a strain on relationships and some organisations have ended up squabbling about money and priorities:

“The money has obviously helped us move things forward at a greater speed, but there are times when it feels like a poison chalice.”

Some pre-existing groups have been required to expand to meet Defra’s inclusion targets. Introducing new members to any established group runs the risk of disrupting established dynamics; however this is not always a bad thing, particularly if the contribution and added value of the new member is quickly established. The challenges which a new group member might make to established patterns of working provide a useful prompt to evaluate whether the consortium is still using best practice in decision making and delivery, basing action firmly on the needs of users. However, as with all change processes, such agitation can be uncomfortable for established group members.

Understanding the nature of team dynamics and applying this knowledge to their consortium’s development will help members to recognise these issues and find positive ways to work through them. This will be particularly important if consortia are to continue in the longer term. Given that a number of IIPs outline plans to establish new infrastructure organisations within counties, it must be assumed that these consortia are planning to integrate the new bodies into their working groups once they are established. Equally, having built trusting relationships with existing consortium members and begun to see the benefits of finding new partners in collaboration, 52 per cent of consortia expressed the intention to expand. However there will always be a risk that, unchallenged, consortia will lapse in to exclusive clubs of established organisations. The challenge to maintain inclusivity could come from existing or future funders, or, if the self-evaluative nature of this programme becomes an established way of working, from within the consortium itself.

Case Study 2

Effective consortium development from an existing consortium Shropshire

The vision of the Shropshire CVS Partnership is for a VCS in Shropshire which is:

- Strong, vibrant, independent and accountable
- Relevant to the needs of this predominantly rural area

- Able to operate effectively and in partnership at all levels.

The initial members of the Shropshire Consortium first came together in the summer of 2002 to launch a programme of county-wide development work. There is a complex history behind the evolution of these consortium members, which included some historic difficulties and rivalries to be overcome.

The network secured ACU Partnership Development Funding which it has used to employ and manage a consultant to produce a development strategy for the VCS in Shropshire and to identify effective collaborative working arrangements between all partners. Through working with an external consultant the Partnership was able to move forward on issues which had been discussed in length over several years but never resolved, and to better understand both the organisations in the Partnership and infrastructure support for the VCS as a whole. Once organisations understood each others' strengths and weaknesses they were able to agree a way forward together. Much of the work undertaken during this time forms the basis of what the consortium is doing today.

The consortium recognises that to realise its vision the members of the partnership will need to work together more closely and, in some cases, to change ways of working from organisationally or district-focused to thematic or county-wide focused. Such a cultural change can be difficult for organisations which are well established and hitherto independent. Demand for funding always exceeds supply and the drive for individual organisations to survive in a competitive situation can be a powerful disincentive against co-operative working. However, the VCS outlined in the vision will be best achieved with the support of a cohesive and comprehensive consortium of infrastructure providers, delivering efficiently and cost-effectively. The consortium will be able to provide comprehensive coverage even where the specialist knowledge or expertise is located in a different district and, by bidding jointly for larger sources of funds, greater capacity and longer term sustainability will be achievable at the local level.

At the time its IIP was submitted the consortium was seeking opportunities to expand beyond the existing network of generic organisations to include specialist infrastructure providers.

Timescales

Consortium development, as with any collaborative course of action, is not a fast process.

⁹ The benefits are that once a well-functioning group does form and start to perform, there is better understanding of the issues and the solutions are likely to reflect a more creative, widely supported approach. This takes time and cannot be achieved in a few months.

Although one of the common problems with the programme has been the short timescales, some consortia felt that in some respects this has made the consortium stronger as they have had to work together under pressure.

"We have taken full days to work intensively and really bond with each other."

⁹ Christopher Leslie MP, (14 May 2003) *Crossing boundaries - new ways of working*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister;
Fisher, S et al, (2000), *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action*, ZED Books;
Susan J. Bodilly et al, *Challenges and Potential of a Collaborative Approach to Education Reform*, (2004), RAND Education for the Ford Foundation, pp. 10-11

Consortium membership

Many consortia have difficulties defining who should be on consortium. They don't want to exclude people but equally they don't want people/organisations who are not prepared to engage fully in delivering consortium activities.

"We don't want passengers."

Many consortia found that, in reality, it is only the larger generic infrastructure organisations that play an active role. Whilst the specialist umbrella groups want to take part they often do not have the capacity to do so. It is proving difficult to engage specialist infrastructure agencies, many of which are small and under-resourced, as well as being subject to many other pressures on their time.

"We feel it is going well, however we do have capacity issues and it often proves difficult to get the players round the table."

Sustainability - dependence on Defra funding

As with all bodies created as a direct result of a funding scheme, there is a risk of dependency on Defra funding for consortium existence. This is more likely to happen in new consortia which have never had to survive without this programme. Pre-existing groups will have a better idea of how they might operate beyond the period of this investment. Dependency on Defra (or indeed ACU) funding is only an issue if the consortium wishes to continue beyond the life of the programme. A significant number have expressed the desire to do this. They envisaged working together into the future regardless of whether extra funding is forthcoming.

"Even if there wasn't any more money available to do specific work we would say that taking part in this process has been worth it. Being part of the consortium and building links with other organisations will make a huge difference to us."

"The IIP has bought us together and will benefit us all. We envisage working together to ensure that we maximise on the opportunities available."

The real question of long term sustainability of consortia rests on whether members feel that the benefits of investing either resources, time or their own finance in a collaborative body are worth the cost. Will stronger, more sustainable VCOs be more able to operate effectively on their own? Will there be savings if more social enterprises are created etc. If the participating VCOs are more sustainable and see the benefits of the consortium, they are far more likely to find ways of preserving it, through bidding to other funders, perhaps paying a subscription, or building participation in to the regular workload of staff members.

Ability to plan strategically

Although 60 per cent of the consortia did try to take a long term view, the majority of the documents submitted prior to February 2005 concentrated on the short term which, at most, considered only the 18 months of the funding stream. As some of the consortia are in their very early stage of development, the documents tended to concentrate on building up the consortium and tackling immediate problems in infrastructure rather than long term visions. Some consortia are focusing their work over the next year on making the work of the consortium more sustainable.

Case Study 3

Looking at sustainability

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Consortium of Infrastructure Organisations (SCIO)

Whilst SCIO's statutory partners and other funders have indicated that they are not in a position to offer any commitments to ongoing support at this stage, SCIO has, with ACU funding, put together a sustainability business plan.

This involves four key strands of work:

1. Trust building amongst members of the consortium. They believe that to gain a long term sustainable consortium and outside support they need to agree a vision for development and to have the ability to work collaboratively together. To this end they are taking proactive steps to improve relationships.

- The lead organisation will be meeting VCS organisations individually to get an understanding of the barriers to participation.
- Evaluation of project working identifying where and why organisations work well together and identifying good practice for the future.
- Carrying out a residential session with an external facilitator for all members to explore roles and barriers.

2. Working with trustees. They will be carrying out a series of workshops with each board to consider their roles and responsibilities and how they might change with the role of the consortium and also to raise awareness amongst trustees about ChangeUP and why they should encourage their organisations to work collaboratively. They will also be holding county wide meetings with Chairs and Chief Officers to agree a collective way forward.

3. Developing a vision by learning from the results of this year's collaborative projects

4. Partners in Change Project. This is a proactive project to engender good relationships and understanding with LSP and other statutory sector partners. It aims to raise awareness about ChangeUp and its relationship to COMPACT and the value of strong voluntary sector infrastructure in service delivery.

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Strategic planning is often an issue within the voluntary and community sector for a variety of reasons:

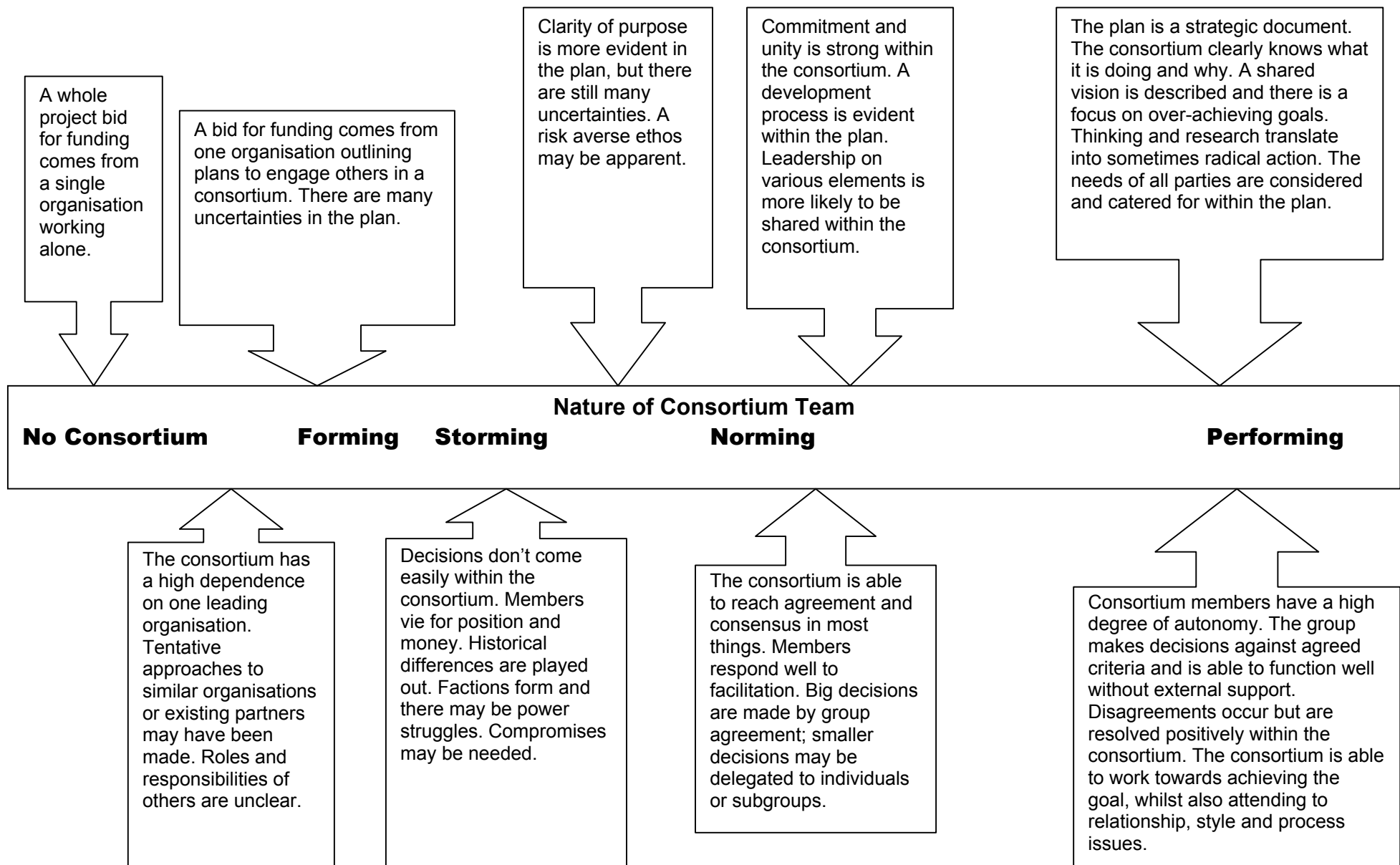
- The disparate nature of the sector means it sometimes lacks leadership
- A reliance on short-term funding results in great uncertainty about the future and discourages long-term planning
- Where resources are tight, staff are recruited because of their ability to deliver frontline services, not their business acumen. Very few organisations have the resources to employ a chief executive who can focus all their efforts on the welfare of the organisation itself.

- The majority of funding streams do not cover the organisation's core costs, thus dedicated training, research and development budgets are at best tight and at worst non-existent.

The result of this is that a number of IIPs seem to be wish lists; outlining ideal situations with little regard to what might be feasible given the capacity, likely future funding and operating environments of infrastructure organisations. The best IIPs were evidently couched in good strategic thinking, where a prioritisation exercise had taken place and recommendations were strategic, measurable, agreed, realistic and time constrained.

The following diagram shows indicators of consortium development as found in IIPs:

Figure 1: Symptoms of progression through consortium development



3.2 The importance of the involvement of frontline services/users of infrastructure

Robustness of needs analysis

66 per cent of consortia carried out a needs analysis or consulted frontline groups when writing their IIP. It was unclear in many cases as to the chosen methodology and the scope or accuracy of the research. Some of the consultations that were carried out appeared to be mapping exercises rather than robust research into needs and gaps in provision. It is significant that only 43 per cent of the consortia attempted to reach socially excluded groups. Many limited their needs analysis to members of the consortium itself.

Where Early Spend money was used to fund this needs analysis the results were more useful and consultations were much more inclusive.

Accessing research material

Secondary research was also used widely. In most cases this seemed to be an effective approach. There appears to be a correlation between the use of secondary research and connections to local authorities or regional level VCS infrastructure support. This could indicate that there is already a higher level of joint working and awareness than in other areas.

Case Study 4

Good needs analysis

York and North Yorkshire

In response to an infrastructure issue in the sub region and in anticipation of the ChangeUp programme, York and North Yorkshire Infrastructure Consortium commissioned detailed research in late 2003 into the infrastructure situation in the county. They followed this up with a comprehensive programme of research, some of which made use of Early Investment funding, again commissioning outside consultants to carry it out.

There were seven strands to the research work:

1. Desk research – an analysis of national, regional and local literature on infrastructure.
2. Interviews with infrastructure organisations in York and North Yorkshire.
3. Two round table meetings with the consortium members.
4. Surveys and interviews with stakeholders/funders.
5. A working session with a designated task group to assess what might be the best approach to working out who should do what.
6. An ideas exchange. A full session of infrastructure organisations (Chief Officers and Trustees) to agree the thrust of the IIP and assess some strategic options.
7. Customer Research which focused particularly on the needs of users as the initial research had highlighted the need to become more customer focused.

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Some consortia have followed Defra's cues and defined the need to take more time to really understand the issues. Several have achieved comprehensive assessments of the potential for social exclusion in their counties by meshing the expertise of other agencies (i.e. Countryside Agency, PCT) with demographic indicators and the consortium's own research findings. This is used to inform plans by:

- Researching ways to better engage smaller and more isolated groups with generic infrastructure provision.
- Developing relationships between generic and specialist infrastructure providers.
- Using the consortium process to develop the capacity of networks and organisations to identify needs.
- Improving communications between infrastructure organisations themselves and with their users.
- Identifying specialist infrastructure needs.
- Identifying the role each consortium member should be playing in tackling social exclusion.
- Increasing the visibility of socially excluded groups.

From consultation to participation and empowerment

The places where it seems most likely that social exclusion will be tackled in the longer term are those where the relationship between infrastructure providers and their potential users has developed beyond information-giving and consultation.

Parish plans and the empowerment of Parish Councils form an important part of a number of consortia's approaches to community development. Such plans give local communities an opportunity to shape their own futures, with the potential to influence wider community plans and thus the services delivered within their community.

Some consortia pointed to issues relating to the long term sustainability of community development projects. They determined that the best hope for achieving long term social inclusion was to empower bodies such as parish councils or village hall committees within rural communities with the knowledge, skills and tools to find and sustain their own solutions. This can only be achieved if there is a strong partnership between infrastructure organisations and the grass roots groups who use their services.

Case Study 5

Engaging with community planning Herefordshire Infrastructure Consortium

As part of the IIP development process, the Herefordshire Infrastructure Consortium undertook a 'quick and dirty' mapping and gapping exercise to establish where there was the potential for Infrastructure Organisations to work together.

This exercise established that, whilst Herefordshire had been very successful in developing and supporting an active parish planning programme, the funding for a Co-ordinator (that had been in place from the LSP) has recently finished and it was not possible to mainstream the project. Herefordshire is a very rural county and most parts are parished, with the exception of Hereford and the market towns, and the Consortium felt that parish planning is important in developing the capacity of rural communities to engage

with the broader community planning process and, therefore, to have their voices heard within the LSP. A Parish Plan Steering Group still exists and the Rural Community Council has been employing a rural social inclusion worker to develop the engagement of those groups who would not normally be included, although this post, too, is insecure.

The project has identified the need for a Community Planning Co-ordinator who will work with groups engaged with parish and community planning to:

- Improve communication between local communities and the LSP in order to ensure they can influence the community plan.
- Take an overview of the needs being identified by these groups to establish if there are shared needs that could be provided for in a more strategic, better co-ordinated way.

The objectives of the project are:

To enable rural communities to become involved in local democracy,
Build social capital and contribute to community cohesion.

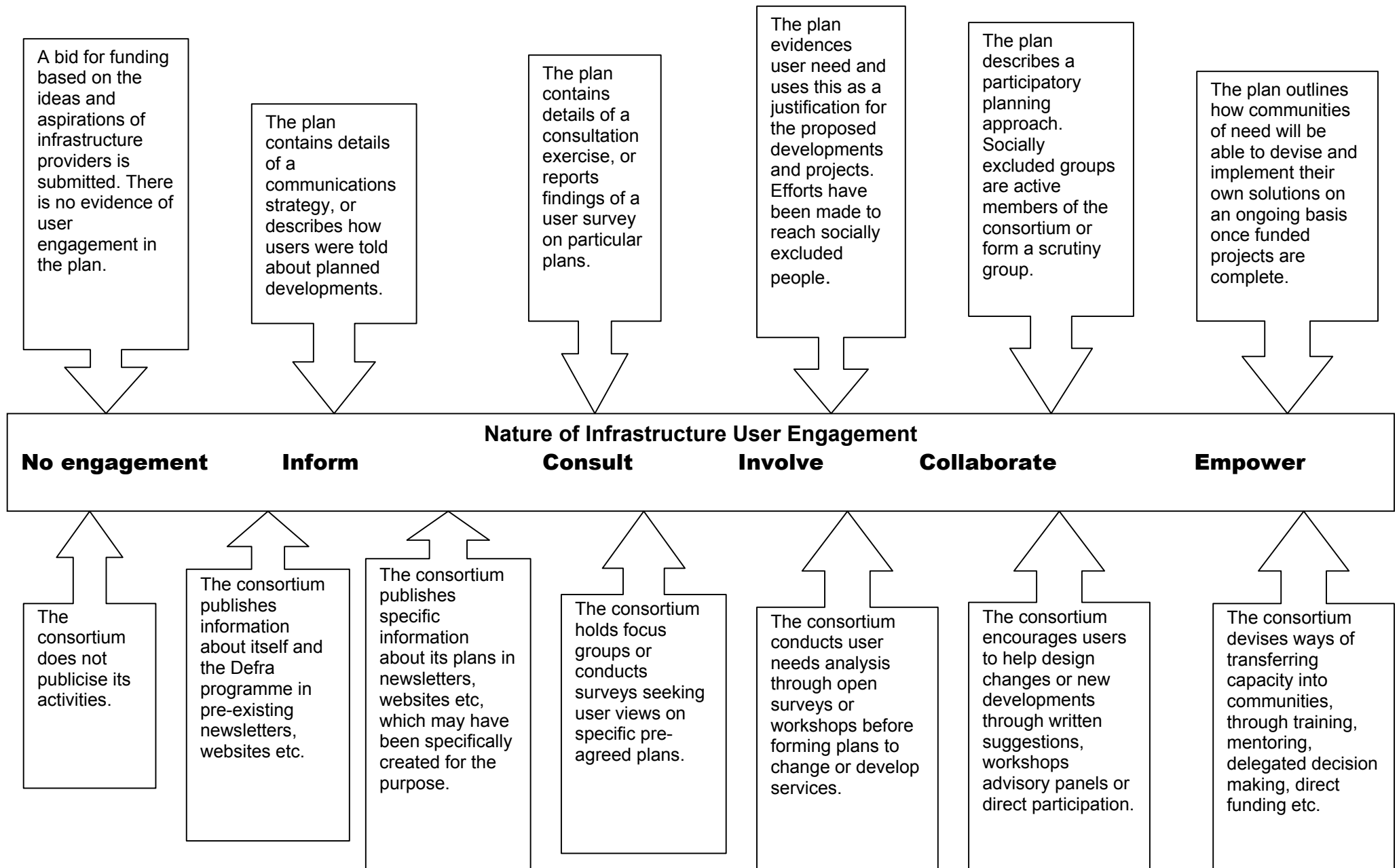
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The following table shows indicators of engagement with service users, as found in IIPs:

Figure 2: Symptoms of progression towards empowerment of user groups



3.3 Inclusion

Defra has given a specific target that all consortia must have BME representation June 2006. We discovered that only 52 per cent of consortia had achieved this at the time the IIPs were submitted. We were concerned about this for several reasons:

Tick box inclusion

In some areas where BME communities were represented on the consortium we saw little evidence that there was any additional understanding of their needs, particularly in relation to the projects identified for investment. We think of this as tick box inclusion.

Case Study 6

Good BME needs analysis

Hampshire

Interestingly one of the best analyses of BME needs was written by this consortium which does not have a BME group listed in its membership. The consortium commissioned a consultant to identify existing good practice in BME inclusion work going on across the county. The resulting report identified a number of disparate examples of good work, for example New Forest and Hart with travellers and gypsies; and Basingstoke and Eastleigh with primarily Asian groups.

The consortium identified the following gaps in culturally acceptable services for members of BME communities in rural areas:

- parent support groups and early education,
- library services,
- homework clubs,
- Connexions,
- teenage pregnancy advisers,
- medical counselling for race specific conditions,
- healthy eating,
- confidence building and volunteering,
- accessing work and training opportunities,
- having a voice in the community,
- single sex leisure opportunities,
- helplines / other materials not translated,
- too few places of worship,
- inappropriate housing,
- inappropriate street lighting.

A significant part of the proposals outlined in the IIP is aimed at tackling the social exclusion faced by rural members of BME communities. The consortium wishes to appoint a project officer to pull together work which is already happening, develop links and further research grassroots activity. The worker will avoid replicating existing work but will be a specialist support and training resource for community development workers.

Mainstream specialism

Many rural areas have very small numbers of BME families. This led us to ask whether creating a specific infrastructure body is the best solution to solving their problems. Might it

not be better to have an education programme for generic infrastructure bodies that enables them to provide the solutions more cost effectively? As the Hampshire consortium demonstrates, some consortia have already begun to identify and build upon specialist skills amongst mainstream organisations.

Poor specialist infrastructure

BME infrastructure in some counties is poor and those organisations are at the present time incapable of participating. In addition, some BME infrastructure bodies have elected not to participate.

More than just BME

In those IIPs that included a demographic analysis, there appeared to be a broad range of excluded communities, including older people, travellers, young people and asylum seekers, for example. It seems inequitable that the programme requires BME representation, but does not specifically address the needs of other minorities.

This problem could be resolved if all consortia undertook high quality needs analyses and then created programmes to address the needs rather than simply seeking to serve specific groups of people.

Meeting Defra's target

Given the lack of BME infrastructure identified in a number of IIPs, meeting the GO output might prove challenging. Equally, where BME organisations do exist, consortia discovered that they do not always operate in rural areas or wish to engage with a specifically rural consortium, generally because of a lack of capacity and the need to prioritise workloads. If Defra does wish to specifically target BME communities it might be more appropriate to require consortia to undertake a thorough needs analysis relating to BME communities and propose measures to meet these needs.

In some places, however, BME infrastructure does exist, but generic and specialist organisations seem to have developed entirely separately and there is no relationship between the two. It is in these areas where it is vital that the two come together and begin to collaborate. We found several examples of consortia where this is beginning to happen.

3.4 Rural issues

Inclusion of rural proofing

We did not feel that rural proofing was tackled well on the whole. Only 40 per cent of consortia had plans to rural proof work and, of those, many failed to link proofing with any specific actions. Other consortia completely failed to undertake research into the needs of rural communities or rural VCOs.

Where rural proofing was included it often seemed to be an add-on rather than a well-thought out, transparent and agreed mechanism. This may relate to misunderstanding of what rural proofing actually means. It also relates to the relatively low number of rural projects considered. For those that didn't include specific rural elements and were more ACU focused, rural proofing was possibly seen as irrelevant.

Of those that did look at issues for rural areas, many appeared to be unsure about how to move forward and most opted for further mapping and gapping research into rural

infrastructure and support needs. Whilst this is important, it can also be used as a way of delaying action. One consortium actually raised this point and opted instead for an action research approach.

Tackling rural social exclusion

49 per cent of consortia planned to tackle rural social exclusion through projects outlined in their IIPs. 239 projects were listed in documents submitted to GOs before February 2005 and, of these, 49 per cent went some way towards showing benefits for VCS groups in rural areas, albeit indirectly. Only 5 per cent of the projects listed demonstrated direct benefits for rural areas.

However, it should be recognised that many of the projects devised to date are more lines of thinking than plans for action, whilst others are simply about organising infrastructure providers and developing consortia so that the needs of rural communities can begin to be considered. Until GOs submit the relevant paperwork to Defra it is virtually impossible to ascertain precisely what has actually been funded.

A number of IIPs identified the vital role which parish plans can play in addressing specifically rural causes of social exclusion. We felt that consortia that had identified this need and made suggestions as to how it could be met were more likely to succeed in addressing Defra's aims through this programme.

It appears that there have been difficulties ensuring that Defra's investment was considered by consortia where the programmes were run jointly. However, these GOs also appear to have avoided the ACU for urban, Defra for rural threat. Several GOs are taking steps to redress imbalances arising from their early programmes.

Case Study 7

Addressing rural social exclusion

Surrey Rural Infrastructure Consortium

Surrey's approach was to ensure that the infrastructure support for rural communities was available to a similar standard to the support available in the town. Although Surrey is perceived as an affluent area, rural social exclusion was identified during an Early Spend project as one that required action.

The consortium put forward a bid specifically designed to contribute towards addressing these issues. All three projects proposed are due to finish by March 2006 and rely on action research to put into place systems and plans for the future. Specifically one of the three projects put forward aims to increase the effectiveness of the infrastructure support for rural community capacity building. It has three objectives:

1. Community led planning and project development which aims to develop a community planning toolkit to guide and support communities on producing sustainable parish and community plans and also to provide training in participatory techniques to ensure that groups work inclusively, involving and taking into account the needs of socially excluded groups.

2. Developing a community mentors pilot project to focus initially on the issue of community planning but which could be broadened out after the initial 18 months to include other activities such as village hall committees or voluntary car schemes.

3. Connecting communities and achieving a rural voice by consulting the communities on the best model for delivering networking opportunities to enable and facilitate local groups to share experiences, learn from each other and develop a voice in rural proofing services.

Although these are all discreet time-limited projects they all aim to achieve a step change in the effectiveness of community capacity building so that the work is sustainable at the end of the project and communities are in a better position to help each other.

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Impact of consortium membership

Most of the consortia have some representation from Rural Community Councils (RCCs). In some areas where the consortium is made up of generic infrastructure bodies and has good representation from Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) in rural districts (as opposed to a mixture of specialist and generic) this is causing problems as RCCs have a different structure compared to the rest of the VCS and work in different ways. These differences between RCCs and CVS also result in duplication of work or difficulty defining roles and confusion amongst users.

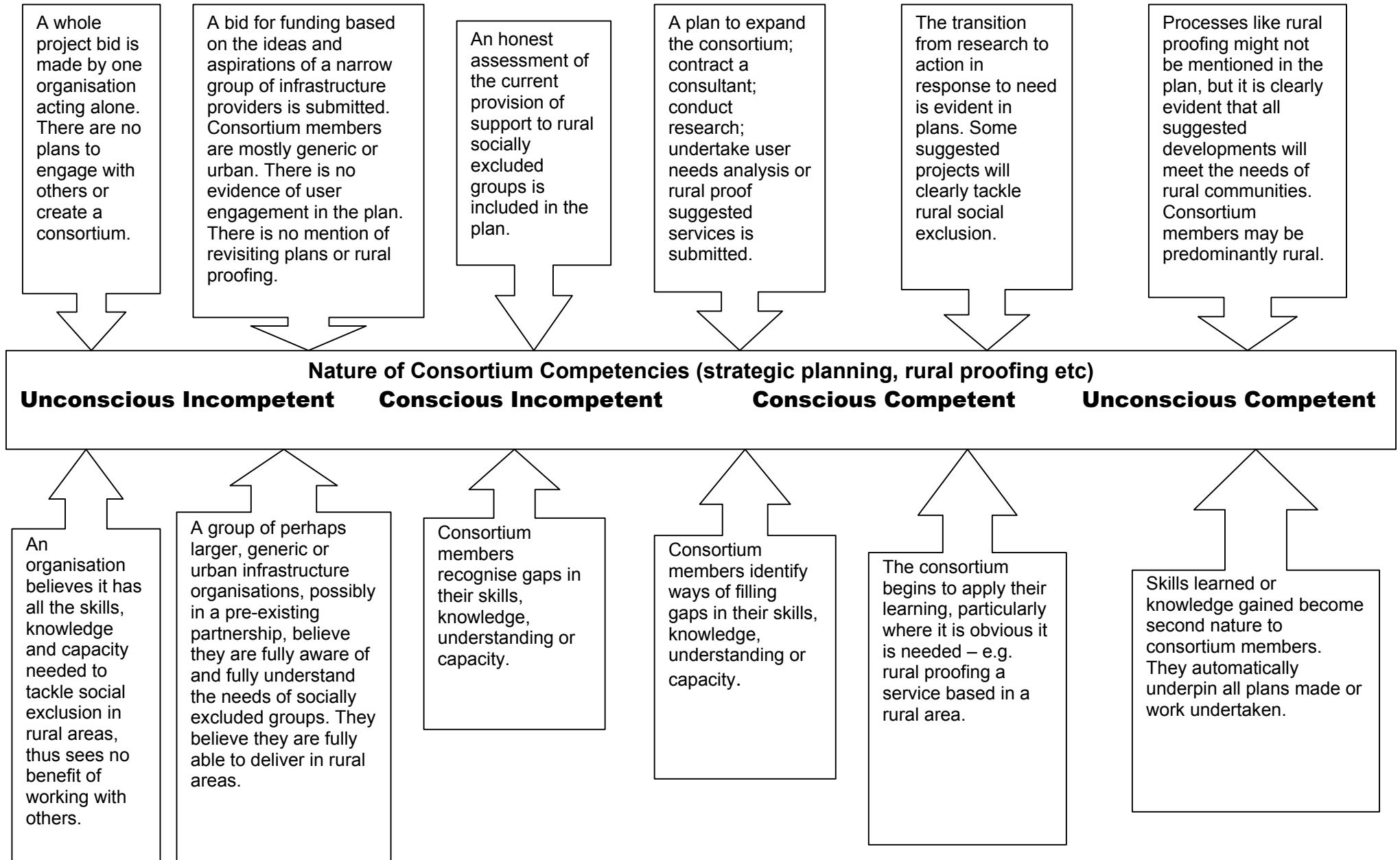
As with BME groups, the participation of rural organisations does not automatically equate to the inclusion of rural proofing within a document. For example, some consortia seemed to assume that because the RCC was present, the planned work must, therefore, be rural proof.

In some areas, the rural and non-rural infrastructure bodies appear to be working together for the first time. Even where they have not undertaken mapping and rural proofing or developed specific projects, we have a sense that there has been a raising of awareness of the particular issues facing rural communities and the rural VCS. If this awareness can be translated into an understanding of rural proof working by the wider sector it is likely to be one of the big wins for Defra in terms of the approach to the programme, particularly where it is integrated with ACU work.

Many of the strategies took more of an holistic approach and didn't focus on any particular rural problems. This was particularly true for the more rural counties. Our interpretation of this fact is that, in rural areas, the problems have always been there and consortium members routinely take account of rural barriers in plans without necessarily thinking too deeply about them.

The following diagram illustrates aspects of the possession of skills and knowledge necessary to tackle rural social exclusion as demonstrated in IIPs:

Figure 3: Symptoms of the skills and knowledge necessary to tackle social exclusion in rural areas



3.5 Effect of poor existing infrastructure

Most consortia provided an honest view of infrastructure problems both from the point of view of the VCS itself and from the statutory and public sectors. 62 per cent of IIPs looked at filling gaps in infrastructure and extending its reach.

Lack of capacity to engage

A key issue for many consortia seems to be either a fundamental lack of infrastructure provision in some rural areas, or a lack of relationships between organisations. This has three impacts on IIPs:

1. The lack of a voice from rural areas to inform understanding of the needs of rural communities.
2. A lack of examples of best practice to be replicated within an area, creating difficulty in moving from the identification of need to making recommendations for action.
3. Seeing the need to concentrate planning and resources on the infrastructure itself, without necessarily demonstrating how this will benefit the grass-roots. In these cases some consortia can be seen to have geared their proposals around things which they feel Defra will fund. The language of social exclusion might be used, but understanding is not necessarily demonstrated.

In an attempt to solve this problem of lack of capacity to participate, some consortia have included the provision of payments to members in their bids to enable organisations to take part.

Case Study 8

Resourcing consortium participation in Shropshire

The consortium is governed by its protocol and members' participation is managed and accounted for by their management committees or Boards.

Where partners take the lead or work on different pieces of work on behalf of the consortium they will be commissioned to do so by the Co-ordinator who will act on behalf of the consortium's recorded decisions in this respect. It has been agreed that the Community Council of Shropshire will be the accountable body for receiving and handling funds for the consortium in the first instance.

The partnership takes seriously the interests of all its stakeholders and is committed to open and transparent ways of working and a consultative as well as strategic approach to its work. A costing structure was agreed as follows and has been used in the preparation of the IIP:

- Consultants £450 per day
- Financial or contract management fee, £30 per hour or £210 per day
- Work contributed by partners, £250 per day.

Recognising the need for change

The VCS also has a problem with duplication of services in some areas, thus provision is not always seen as good value for money by the statutory sector. The VCS has a very competitive culture due to the pressures of short term funding and historically some areas do not work together well. The IIP process has highlighted the need for organisational change and organisations are considering mergers and rationalisation. However this is a very sensitive area and support is needed from all stakeholders to allow this to happen in a productive way.

Case Study 9

Proposal for the rationalisation of services

Leicester and Leicestershire Consortium for Voluntary Sector Infrastructure

The process of the infrastructure review in Leicestershire had pushed mergers and rationalisations up the local agenda.

The consortium recognises the need for resources for a variety of purposes to facilitate this including:

- Legal and other costs arising from investigating or implementing mergers
- Consultancy work to look at potential benefits from working across organisations and operating across geographic boundaries
- Consultancy, legal and training costs to make it easier for organisations to change, particularly to grow and reskill staff, or if that is not appropriate, to cover redundancy costs.

Mergers and rationalisations should not necessarily mean closing offices or excluding involvement. If, with a clear focus on improving services for users, mergers or other modernisations deliver better or equal service at lower cost, they should be on the agenda. The consortium's proposal to allocate funds to this is designed to encourage discussion, uptake and, wherever the case is clear, fund the change.

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3.6 The importance of local authorities and LSPs

Proper engagement with the statutory sector is a longstanding issue for the VCS, which has affected VCS infrastructure in all regions.

The approach local authorities take appears to impact directly on the effectiveness of the VCS and, therefore, the speed with which consortia have developed and the competence with which they approach Defra's objectives. The understanding, or otherwise, of the VCS by local authorities and LSPs also affects how quickly consortia can develop relationships and leverage additional support from these bodies.

Strong relationships

Where the relationship with the statutory sector is strong, then VCS infrastructure is also good and the consortia are moving forward with the support of and potential funding from the statutory sector.

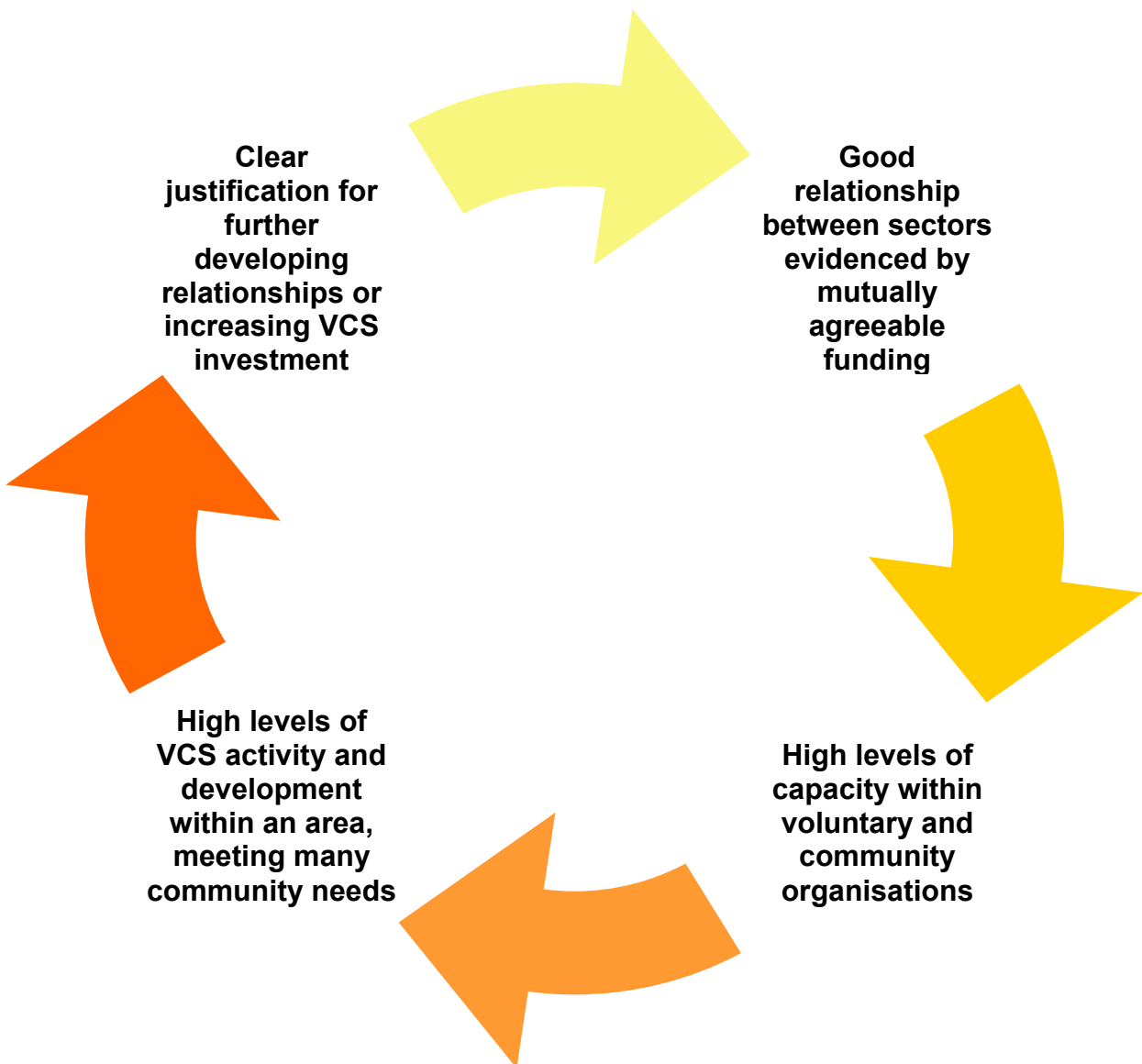


Figure 4 Indicators of a strong relationships with the statutory sector

“We have received an enthusiastic response from statutory partners and LSPs and have received numerous invitations to present the key aspects of the plan to these bodies. S. Norfolk is very enthusiastic about the project which focuses on its area, particularly as it is seeking to re-focus its community development work”

“The consortium approach has been really valuable. We are already talking to the LSC and looking at joint working.”

31 per cent of consortia have made links to LSPs either as members or funders.

Weak relationship

However, where the relationship with the statutory sector is weak which appears to often be the most rural areas, there are historically low levels of funding and IIPs show that VCS infrastructure is very poor.

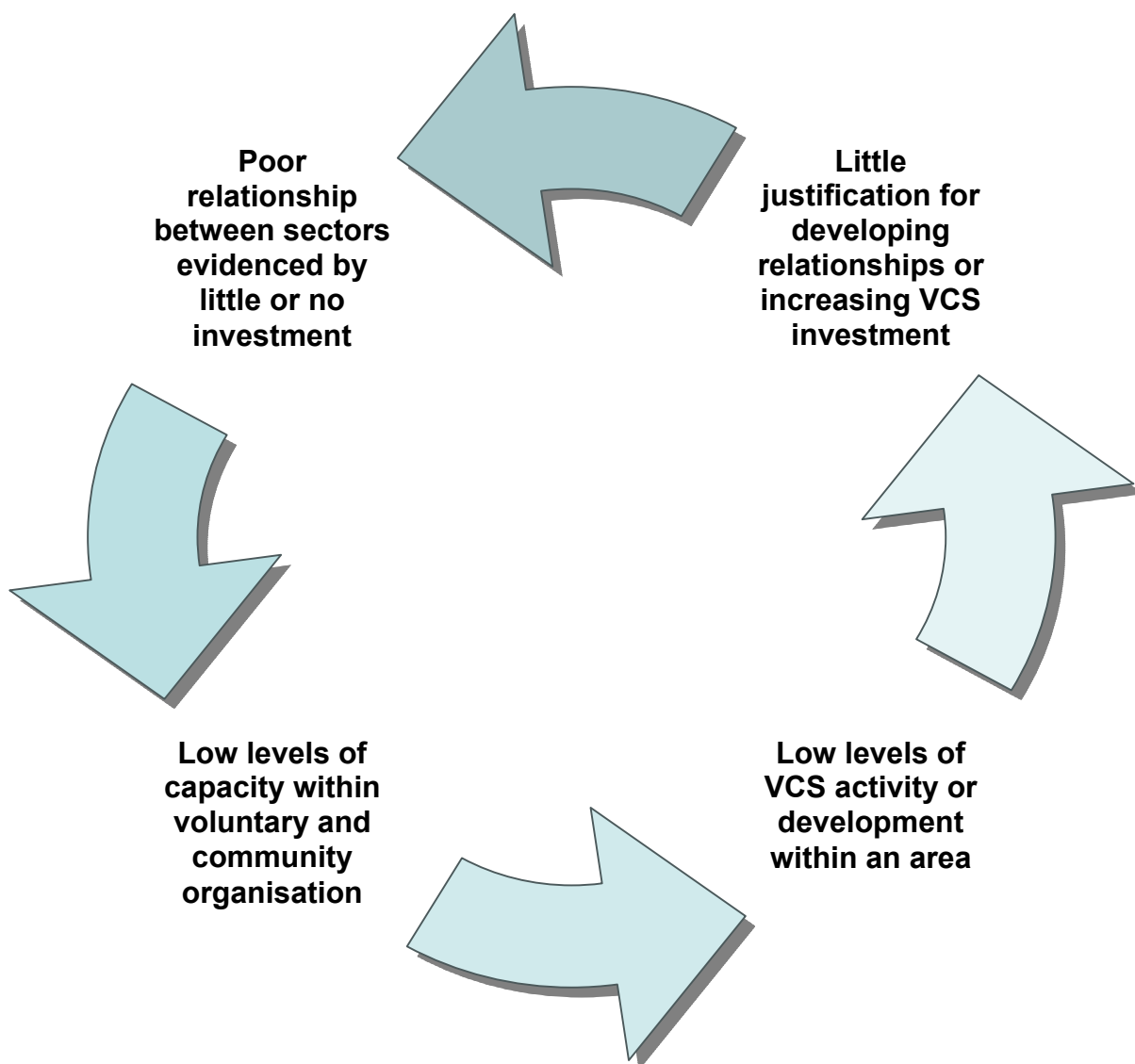


Figure 5 Indicators of a weak relationships with the statutory sector

Many local authorities do not understand the role of the sector or how the sector can meet their own goals and, thus, do not prioritise funding of them.

Rural weakness

IIPs reveal that many rural districts do not have a dedicated infrastructure organisation other than the county-level RCC and this makes it very difficult for these areas to have an input into the consortium. The result of this is that the other consortium members may not have the expertise to assess the issues facing these communities or to know how to begin to address them. This has led to many consortia asking for research funding to map and gap rural provision, rather than moving on to developing projects to solve problems.

Infrastructure – a misunderstood role

As a result of statutory sector misunderstandings, many local authorities are not prepared to fund infrastructure services and will only fund project work.:

“We did two sets of research – one asking statutory partners how much they thought they were investing in infrastructure provision, and one asking infrastructure providers how much they thought they were getting to provide infrastructure. The two figures simply didn’t tally. The statutory partners considered money to be infrastructure funding just because it went to the CVS, but the CVS saw it as specific project funding based on a Service Level Agreements which had little to do with proper infrastructure provision.”

This initiates problems within the sector itself as infrastructure bodies set up to serve frontline delivery agents have to undertake project work to survive and become competitors of the organisations they hoped to serve. This situation means that it is very difficult to build up trust.

Positive Collaboration theories assume that partners are operating in an environment where there are enough resources for everyone and joint working will enable the partners to increase them.¹⁰ This is a difficult position to take if there is a history of poor resourcing of the VCS in the district or county.

Some consortia have recognised this low level of understanding between sectors as an issue in their area and have identified advocacy work between sectors as a priority for the next stage.

Case Study 10

Building relations with statutory sector

RAISE (Regional VCS Forum for the South East)

Using both Defra and ACU main spend money GO SE and RAISE broadened an existing Early Spend Steering Group to set up a Regional Consortium. The aim of this group was to monitor current activity and initiate further work including a Finance and Funding programme. Membership of this consortium is split 50:50 between VCS and the public sector and is chaired by the VCS (currently a Rural Community Council) at the GO’s suggestion.

Members of this consortium were put forward using a transparent selection process and include a GO Director and five team leaders, and representatives from the Big Lottery Fund, Health Development, the LSC, four local authorities, RAISE, an RCC, two BME groups, Regional officer from Volunteering England, a FAITH group, four frontline VCOs and a CVS.

In addition approx. 60 per cent of the local authorities and interested public sector stakeholders are now members of RAISE (a previously closed VCS organisation) as a result of wanting to get information direct and receive all relevant disseminated material.

¹⁰ Len Leritz, (1987) *No-Fault Negotiating*, Warner Books

By working closely with the public sector in this way RAISE has found that there is a greater understanding and awareness of the VCS's abilities, needs and ways of working and more buy in to the ChangeUp process. It has been a two way learning process as RAISE has also learnt a lot about the work of the GO and the environment they operate in.

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Impacts of low funding levels

A number of consortia have pointed to the irony of being engaged in a strategic planning process relating to a relatively low level of short-term investment from national government, whilst consortium members are closing because of a lack of support from local government agencies.

“The key issue for us, which I don't think Government seems to understand, is trying to sustain this work around the day job when infrastructure organisations are closing or curtailing their activities around us because they don't have the funding to survive. We recognise the value of ChangeUp and its rural sister initiative. We really welcome them and have been, and remain, active players in moving them forwards. But we are meeting a resounding 'how interesting but we don't have the money' as a fairly universal response from the local statutory sector. It does feel a bit like rearranging deckchairs on the Titanic at times! I'm exhausted!”

“During the protracted deliberations around this programme two CVS in our area have gone into voluntary liquidation, so capacity has reduced even further!”

Clearly, the loss of member organisations will impact on a consortium's ability to perform within the programme. Equally, further down the line, the growth of new organisations to replace those which are lost will have implications for the consortium team, as new organisations will need to be incorporated.

The right time to bond

In a couple of consortia there have been problems with attempting to get LSP support too early in the process and finding that the LSP weren't aware of the ChangeUp programme and didn't understand the purpose of the consortium or how it differed from LSP sub groups.

For those where the level of understanding is low, it is important that the consortium has a clear, shared vision of its role and purpose, otherwise the negative views that are held within the council and other agencies are likely to be reinforced. Some GOs and some consortia have deliberately held back from involving LSPs or other statutory partners until the consortia are operating more professionally, with a clearer vision for what needs to be achieved.

Some of the GOs are encouraging consortia to focus on the engagement of the statutory sector as priority projects over the coming months. However, as local authorities will be signing off the following year's funding in November it does not give much time for synergy to take place.

Benefits of the consortium approach

There is potential for the consortium approach to be used to alleviate this double whammy of poor understanding and low investment. Where a group of organisations go together to present the case for infrastructure funding this overcomes the traditional suspicion held by some Local Authorities that organisations are nest feathering.

Case Study 11

Consortia tackling local authorities about funding Northamptonshire and Shropshire

In Northamptonshire county level specialist infrastructure providers met with district authorities to argue the case for increased investment in local generic infrastructure.

In Shropshire consortium members met with Bridgnorth district council to explore options for infrastructure provision in a district where the infrastructure provider had closed.

Case Study 12

Engaging LSPs/statutory sector Cheshire

The Chief Executives of all the sub-region's local authorities have committed their support to the programme and allocated officers to take an active role in developing the consortium and designing a framework for VCS support and activity. The Cheshire county-wide LSP Chairman has expressed a similar commitment and will be encouraging two way links with the consortium that will enable the priorities and activities of each to inform the development and progress of both with regards to rural delivery and VCS development. The programme is seen as a means of resourcing the VCS infrastructure bodies to carry out work to identify its future role and put in place agreements and funding arrangements that acknowledge the abilities of the sector and its' capacity to support service delivery to rural areas.

When asked how these positive relationships had been achieved, a Cheshire Community Council representative felt that it was because of a relationship with the statutory sector that the RCC has been nurturing over the past five years. When Cheshire RCC receives an offer of partnership or an service level agreement they work hard to deliver effectively and be a good partner. They do not request core funding, but operate a full cost recovery policy and are transparent with their finances. They deliver targets, meet deadlines and stay within budgets. They recognise that statutory partners are in the business of delivering services to electors. They find commonalities in mission with statutory agencies and then prove that they are a cost effective and reliable way of helping statutory partners to achieve their aims.

The power to change

There is some frustration from consortia that this is an issue that needs urgent attention from both regional and national government. Local Authorities are not aware of the ChangeUp initiative and do not know what it is or how it affects them. They are, therefore, not prioritising it. Local Authorities need persuasion from a high level to engage in ChangeUp.

From telephone interviews with the GOs it appears that most GOs are aware of the problems engaging the statutory sector and are taking some action to rectify the situation. However, at times this action seems to be of an ad hoc nature rather than a considered programme of activities.

Because of the major impacts which voluntary / statutory sector relationships are having on the capacity of VCOs to deliver this programme, and are likely to have on the long term sustainability of projects initiated with Defra's money, it is crucial that both GOs and Defra act to address the situation. This presents an opportunity for Defra and the GOs to demonstrate leadership and commitment to the programme principals alongside consortia efforts to change the working culture of the VCS.

Case Study 13

Go activity to engage the statutory sector

GOEM has commissioned East Midlands Funders Forum to establish and support sub-regional funders groups which run in parallel to consortia. When bids for funding are received GOEM will discuss these with local funders before making a decision to fund. Through further development work of both consortia and funder groups it is hoped to build strategic links within and between them, which should be a lasting legacy of the Defra and ACU programmes.

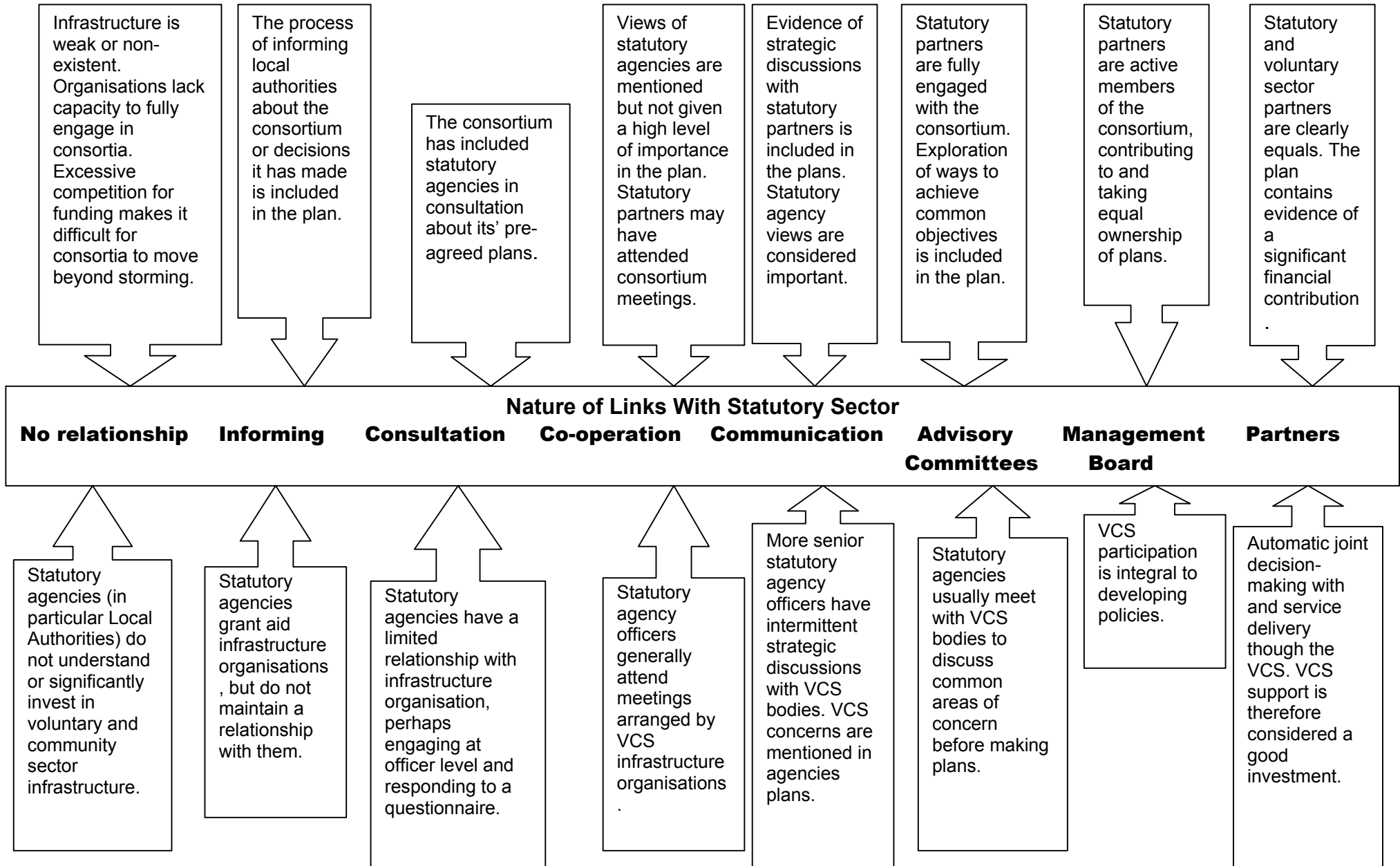
GOSW are setting up cross team groups and heads of teams are meeting with members of steering groups (Regional Development Agency and regional bodies) to look at how they can interface with local authorities and create a level of understanding.

GONE are conducting face to face interviews with all local authorities and LSPs talking to each in respect of ChangeUp and other VCS initiatives and also working with the LSC on their *Working Together* initiative which also has 18 months to run to ensure compatibility.

GO East has worked with the Regional Assembly and LSPs to raise the profile of the programme but consortia themselves are doing most of the work

The following diagram illustrates stages in development of the relationship between voluntary and statutory sectors as demonstrated through IIPs:

Figure 6: Symptoms of the nature of the relationship with the statutory sector



3.7 Differences in GO approaches

Each GO was given discretion over how they handled the programme in their region. The only seemingly intransigent factor is timescales. The approach taken, has, without a doubt had an impact on the progress of the programme. We have identified regional differences in the approaches that consortia have taken to their IIPs which indicate that the methodology of the Government Offices (GOs) has also had an impact on consortia activity. The biggest and most consistent difference we noticed between regions was how well Defra's objectives were addressed in relation to the ACU ChangeUp programme.

Two separate programmes

In some GO areas the programmes were run completely separately, particularly in the Early Spend. Consortia only had to consider the demands of one funding programme and in these areas have really focused on Defra's guidelines. This made it easy for us to identify particular outcomes, such as BME inclusion or rural proofing during the evaluation process. However, from consortia accounts of the process in these areas we also noted little evidence of leverage of ACU funding into rural communities.

A joined up approach

In those areas where the programmes were run completely together the consortia were under pressure to fulfil two lots of criteria and in some cases it appears that some of Defra's priorities, such as consultation with frontline organisations or rural social exclusion, have been missed.

During our interviews with consortia and GO staff in these regions, it was interesting to note a different reaction. They argued that the consortium development process has raised awareness of rural issues amongst consortium members and GO staff from other teams. There is an acknowledgement that this isn't true for all sub-regions and hasn't translated into action yet, but that it is an important part of the process.

"The most useful part of all this for us has been the support of our Home Office colleagues here in the GO."

"We are now beginning to join up other programmes across the Defra and Home Office agendas too. This relationship within the GO has been one of the real wins for us, and it will benefit the organisations and communities we are working with too. They've been saying for a long time that they wish the GO was more cohesive."

The best approach?

When questioned, each GO had sound justification for their chosen approach, whether guided by internal capacity within the GO, the lagging nature of the ACU Early Investment programme, the need to focus on Defra's aims etc. There were merits associated with each approach, and the subsequent interventions taken to address weaknesses. Thus it would be inappropriate and unfair to pinpoint a "best" approach at this stage

The importance of intervention

Whichever the approach, it seems that Government Office intervention is crucial to progress both programmes.

"Go East agreeing to commission work based on the original IIP (has really helped); allocating known amount of funding to the consortium so that priorities and projects can be

worked up accordingly; keeping us informed of investment criteria, guidance, reporting criteria etc. and including a representative from the consortium on the Regional Advisory Group.”

Case Study 14

Different approach taken by Government Offices GOEM and GOWM

In the East Midlands, the programmes have been entirely merged and Defra’s aims seemed in danger of being missed in IIPs. Thus the GO asked for rurally beneficial projects to be given highest priority during the first tranche of main investment bidding. To a certain extent this approach has refocused consortia on Defra’s aims and will ensure ACU funds are also drawn in to rural areas.

In the West Midlands, Infrastructure Investment Plans were created solely for Defra. Consortia were asked to prioritise their projects and the top priorities are being funded with Defra main investment. However it was also realised that little ACU early investment had reached rural areas. Thus the Defra-focused consortia were asked to nominate their next most important projects which are now being funded with matched ACU funding. Rural consortia are also being given the opportunity to bid for further ACU funding in competition with specialist themed consortia developed under the ACU banner.

GO capacity to deliver

It is clear from telephone interviews that prior to the programme many GOs lacked the knowledge or relationships with the VCS necessary to achieve the consortium approach which the programme requires. Thus, during the early part of the programme the most successful Government Offices appear to be those who have brought in specialist staff with the knowledge needed to energise delivery, whether independent consultants or secondees from the VCS. This approach is now being copied in many more regions for the main programme, whether funded by ACU or Defra investment.

However, although the programme may have progressed apace in areas with specialist staff, the knowledge, relationships and expertise utilised by the staff member to achieve this have not necessarily been transferred to permanent GO staff. The departure of the specialist means that the GO is no better placed to achieve Defra’s broader aims than they were at the outset of the programme. GOs will need to guard against this if a real partnership between sectors is to be sustained.

“The GO has changed staff three times, there are four sub regions in this region, all very different and the new GO person has not always understood the dynamics in the region.”

The benefits of diversity

The huge amount of difference in delivery mechanisms and programme organisation in both Defra and ACU programmes adopted across the Government Offices makes defining a one size fits all best practice model of GO approach difficult. Some national level voluntary organisations also point to this as a barrier to engaging with regional and sub-regional processes and information emerging from national organisations has, at times appeared to conflict with guidance issued at regional level, causing confusion for consortia.

However the response of both GOs and consortia to the ability to tailor the programme regionally has been overwhelmingly positive.

“We’ve been really impressed with the approach that sets out what Defra wants to achieve but gives the consortium the flexibility to deliver locally tailored outputs. Please don’t change this, just give us more time to maximise the opportunity.”

The need for clear guidance

Where both consortia and GOs are less positive is in relation to guidance from Defra. Both told us that they felt Defra’s aims had changed during the course of the preparatory part of the programme. As a result, those consortia and regions who were quick off the mark feel that they have perhaps headed in the wrong direction. This will be less of an issue for those regions and consortia who have been slow to engage in the programme.

“The drip feeding of guidance made it hard to focus for both the GO and the VCS. We ended up having to launch consortia before we really knew what we were doing. If we did all this again I would like more notice and preparation time; one set of guidance issued and then a GO seminar on how to do it.”

The following table highlights the approach taken and spending by each regional GO.

Figure 7 A comparison of the approach taken by each GO

Government Office	Approach	Approach to Early Spend	Allocation of funds
GO SW	<p>Since September ACU and Defra programmes have been jointly run. They split the ChangeUp money into three tranches of funding with different deadlines: Consortium Capacity Building Funding Dec 04 Regional Thematic funding Jan 05 Infrastructure Investment Funding March 05</p> <p>They have requested that three projects be prioritised in the IIPs and all should contain three cross cutting themes: 1. Rurality 2. Equality 3. Sustainability</p>	<p>Much of the Early Spend money was used to carry out mapping and needs analysis projects. These were mostly carried out by individual organisations rather than fora or consortia and they identified in so doing the pressing need for collaborative action.</p>	<p>Money has now been allocated for Consortium Capacity Building and regional thematic funding from both funds</p>
GO NE	<p>They encouraged the Consortia to get a funding bid into Defra by the July 2004 deadline and then focus the IIP on the ACU strategy which was handed in January 2005.</p>	<p>No money was issued from the Defra's early spend as the consortia felt it would be more useful in the main spend. Money was therefore rolled forward and no Defra Early Spend projects were carried out. GO NE utilised £289,000 from ACU early spend for mapping activities.</p>	<p>Defra funding was issued in October and was above the baseline as money had been rolled forward from the Early Spend pot. Consortia received up to £110K from Defra. ACU money is being allocated now</p>
GO SE	<p>The projects are now joined up, although they weren't at first. The rural county consortia were already developing before Change Up came on stream and the GO then put the deadlines together. The County Consortia are aware that there are two different strands to the work and this has been made clear in offer letters that have been sent out.</p>	<p>Most of the Early Spend money was given to RAISE (regional VCS network) who managed research and exemplar projects and produced a report detailing suitable Change Up delivery mechanisms and a strategic way forward</p>	<p>The GO allocated £60K to each county consortium, topped up with £40K ACU money for developing IIPs. They have also allocated £700K for BME engagement and £500K for ICT which will have benefits for rural areas.</p>
GO East	<p>GO East ran the programmes jointly from the start and set a deadline of June 04 for a development plan. Some counties had already started developing networks prior to the programme launch in response to the information coming out of the Infrastructure Review. They have repeatedly stressed that this is a joint programme and the Community and rural teams</p>	<p>As there was equity between the two programmes the GO matched £20k of Defra money with £20K of Change Up money at the start of the process</p>	<p>GO East started to hand out money in September 04,. £418K went to each county consortium. The programmes are so closely joined now that the GO is struggling to disentangle money for funding purposes!</p>

	at GO level are giving out the same message.		
Go Y&H	The programmes were run jointly from the start.		The four consortia have had money allocated against an action plan from both Defra and ACU pots. More money will be allocated against IIPs which have still to be passed by GO Y & H. Money allocated so far: South Yorkshire : ACU: £49,376.50, Defra: £8,713.50 North Yorkshire: ACU: £29,882.60 Defra: £1,907.40 West Yorkshire: ACU: £42,340.00 Defra: £2,700.00 Humber: ACU: £19,300.00 Defra: £1,208.00
GO WM	<p>When the Defra main programme launched, county consortia were asked to prioritise targets to the cost of £60,000 for Defra funding. Once the ACU main programme began consortia were asked to go through another prioritisation process and bid for between £60,000 and £100,000 ACU funding. There are also thematic consortia operating in the region which related to the ACU ChangeUp programme, however they tend to concentrate in the urban areas. Both county and thematic consortia have the opportunity to bid in for further ACU funding.</p> <p>ChangeUp funding is being used to pay for six secondees to service the main investment programme – one of whom will focus on supporting rural consortia.</p>	The Early investment programmes were run separately as the Defra programme was moving much faster than the Home Office one and reached a point where they couldn't wait any longer. Consortia were asked to write plans that could be used for both programmes, but predominantly the guidance was from the Defra side. A consultant was appointed who supported consortia development and the writing of the plans. When ACU Early Investment money came on stream the VCS said it did not want to join the two programmes up as they had separated the two programmes in their minds. However it became clear that ACU money was not being drawn in to rural areas well.	Consortia have had offer letters devolving the money to them.

GONW	<p>Since the launch of the main programmes both Defra and the Home Office programmes have been joined up. This has been challenging because the Early Investment was done separately and the was the danger that the Defra consortia and their IIPs would be lost. The three rural consortia are now evolving in to ChangeUp consortia, and probably have an advantage over the ACU focused consortia in Manchester and Merseyside which have had to start from scratch. The geography of the region has made the consortium approach challenging, especially in Cumbria where the Lake District cuts through the county. However it has made people consider the possibility of county level delivery. Overall the signs are good in the region. Despite the problems of the county consortia route this does seem to be the best way to deliver the programme.</p>	<p>Because of timing the Home Office and Defra programmes were run separately in the early investment phase. Defra allocated funding for the three traditional counties, however this meant that the rural elements of the metropolitan boroughs missed out. The head of the rural team served on the funding panel making ACU early spend decisions, with a remit of rural proofing bids and ensuring equitable spend in rural areas. IIPs were produced specifically for Defra.</p>	<p>Offer letters have been signed and sent to Defra for payments to be made.</p>
GOEM	<p>The main investment programmes are being delivered in an equally joined up way. The GO has devolved the consortium support function to the regional VCS Forum and tasked East Midlands Funders Forum with supporting the development of parallel groups of funders (including statutory sector partners) to relate to consortia. The design and hosting of a regional programme website has been awarded to a rural CVS which is developing an IT related social enterprise. A part-time programme co-ordinator has been seconded from the VCS and is being paid for with Early investment underspend. The regional consortium's IIP contained a proposal to form a rural hub, a regional level repository of knowledge and expertise drawing together all of the main VCOs operating in rural areas. This is now being funded out of Defra's money and will be an additional support for rural organisations engaging in the programme.</p>	<p>The two programmes were utterly joined together from the outset. 7 consortia were formed, covering the five major counties, Rutland and Regional level. The unitary cities chose to work in with their surrounding counties. Consortia were supported by a secondee from the VCS. Each of the 5 major counties was given £20,000 Defra money and £30,000 Home Office money, plus money for mapping and exemplar projects to inform IIPs. Rutland and the regional consortium only received ACU funding. All consortia delivered IIPs in September 04. At the draft stage these plans were rural proofed by the GO in conjunction with the Countryside Agency.</p>	<p>Funding is being distributed in 3 windows, the first of which closed at the end of February. The GO will discuss the bids made with local funders and offer letters will be issued in the second and third week of March. Balancing the various funding streams which, despite being part of a joined up programme, have multiple cost-codes and payment methods is proving challenging in such a joined up environment.</p>

3.8 Support to consortia

To achieve the programme aims, the onus will be on Government Offices to ensure that consortia have support to achieve all of the elements necessary to deliver the programme successfully. This support will need to be tailored to the needs of each consortium.

Support at regional level

The IIPs that have taken the most strategic approach are those where there has been regional level support and guidance, either from the GO or a regional VCS infrastructure body. This includes background research into the sector, or sharing of learning through networking and conferences at a regional level.

Case Study 15

Support from a regional VCS forum

RAISE (Regional VCS Network)

The Early Spend work in the South East was developed by GO SE in partnership with RAISE. They commissioned RAISE to lead the programme to ensure that the VCS had the maximum input into the work.

RAISE led on the Early Spend work by carrying out region-wide research and development work to prepare for the Main Spend. Overall 3500 VCS organisations were involved in this work. Projects run by RAISE at this stage included:

- Mapping in each of the sub regions in the South East
- Frontline VCOs were surveyed with a view to researching the needs of the users of infrastructure and how they are met by current infrastructure provision
- Managing and running 15 Exemplar Projects to
 - Develop existing good infrastructure to work better
 - Development projects to assist struggling infrastructure
 - Identifying gaps in provision
- Sub regional face to face meetings with the VCS in the South East
- Production of a report based on the findings of the above activity which put forward a range of recommendations for both the Defra and ACU Main Spend and suggested delivery mechanisms. This was put forward to GO and formed the strategy for the Main Spend.

During the Early Spend period RAISE set up the RAISE Reference Group, which consisted purely of VCS members with the GO overseeing the process to ensure due Governance. The group was pulled together to appraise the project expression of interests and to inform the process with their local knowledge.

Once Change Up was launched and it was realised that more money was available than originally thought, this group formed a more formal Regional Consortium, financed by both Defra and ACU Main spend. This group monitors the activities of the sub regional consortia and initiates regional thematic programmes. RAISE provides the secretariat for this function and carries out activities to keep everyone up to date on new developments and initiatives through newsletters, bulletins and road shows.

Contact: Catherine Johnstone
catherine@raise-networks.org.uk

Support at national level

Although few IIPs mentioned national VCOs, it must be assumed that national level VCS Infrastructure providers might have a role to play in supporting consortia. Given the disparate, sometimes sectarian nature of some national level infrastructure organisations, it is perhaps difficult for diverse consortia to find an easy way in. However, there are examples of good practice emerging. For example, the National Association of CVS (NACVS) has been in touch with a significant number of consortia and has endeavoured to share good practice between them. Defra could potentially look to national VCOs to build on good practice and bolster support for the programme.

It would be useful to find ways of sharing best practice within and between regions, as some consortia have found solutions to issues that others are still struggling with. This could be achieved in a number of ways including:

- **Developing a national rural hub that the consortia can engage with.**

This could, in effect, be a national level consortium of organisations with an interest in tackling social exclusion and providing infrastructure support to rural communities. It would relate directly to Defra and/or the ACU.

The most helpful resource for people acquiring knowledge as part of a change cycle is other people who are addressing the same change but who are further down the same path to successful implementation¹¹. Thus the access to networking, examples of best practice and case histories of other similar developments which such a national hub could facilitate might be crucial in supporting change. With the ability to tap in to excellence in all consortia, such a hub would have the economy of scale and critical mass which rural infrastructure at local level lacks. It would mirror the ACU initiated national hubs of expertise, raising the profile and understanding of skills such as rural proofing and meeting the needs of harder to reach groups in rural areas. It could undertake a rural proofing role for other national level initiatives.

Such a hub would also strengthen the voice of a wider range of rural VCS infrastructure providers at national level, enabling Defra to have ease of access to a breadth of views when planning future programmes or consulting on policy developments.

- **Developing mentoring or “buddying” relationships between consortia around specific issues or types of projects.**

'Buddying' is informal mentoring, providing a helping hand as and when required. Consortia which are more developed or which have demonstrated success in a particular area of delivery could give support to those that are in the earlier stages of development. 'Buddying' harnesses the skills and expertise that exist within the sector to address the challenges it faces and stimulates and fosters co-operation and collaboration within the sector, which is very much in keeping with Defra's delivery ethos.

- **Create an ideas bank on a website, possibly linked to a ChangeUp or existing VCO website. This might also include case studies.**

Ideas banks are useful tools to inspire creative thinking and give users the opportunity to learn from the experience of others. Such a resource could enable consortia to post,

¹¹ Tough, A, *The Adult's Learning Projects*, OISE Press, Toronto, 2nd Edition, 1979

share and discuss ideas, best practice and the projects they wish to develop. Similar initiatives have been used to support the development of social enterprises in the UK¹²

- **National / cross regional conferences and workshops.**

The most efficient way to implement change is to avoid reinventing the wheel. It is worth spending time considering what each member of the group already does and whether there are lessons to be learned which might present a solution to another area of need. Equally opportunities to network, identify and study successful approaches elsewhere are vital. Exploring other people's case histories can be inspirational in the search for suitable local solutions¹³.

Case Study 16

Government Office support

GO WM is holding 3 seminars in March to bring people together – one in an urban area, one in a semi rural area and one in a totally rural area. Thematic workshops will encourage rural consortia to engage with colleagues in thematic consortia.

GO SW will be holding networking events throughout the year to encourage consortia to work together and to link in with the regional thematic partnerships/consortia which have been set up. These will focus on commonalities, overlaps and gaps in provision.

GO NE recognises that at present there is little communication between consortia but are encouraging them to learn from each other in the Defra project in particular. They have specified in the funding agreement with each consortium that the consortia have to find time to get together and exchange information. The regional VCS forum, VONNE, has been charged with disseminating best practice.

3.9 Defra's approach

The benefits of flexibility

The consortia and Government Offices have, on the whole, appreciated the flexibility of the approach taken by Defra as it sets out what Defra wants to achieve and the consortia then have been given the flexibility to deliver locally tailored outputs.

“The leeway was very useful. It sent a message that this was a real partnership between the VCS and the GO because the GO was able to respond to comments.”

The need for clarity

This approach has also had its problems. As there is no written guidance as to what is acceptable and what is not, consortia have been confused and have had some difficulties understanding what is being asked of them. Each region has come up with different approaches and interpretations. There have also been tensions within consortia.

“Whilst the money should have been useful it has, in fact, caused more problems than solutions. This is largely because so far the programme has not been clear what it wants

¹² <http://www.unltdideasbank.org.uk/site/home/> - UnLtd

¹³ Scott, G, *Key Lessons from Research on Effective Change Management & Implementation in Post-Secondary and Higher Education*, QDU, 2001

to achieve, how much money is available and what it is for. The timescales have been ridiculously short and have forced (the consortium) into trying to make decisions it wasn't in a position to make. This has created a rift and arguments amongst colleagues who were, until that point, working well together."

It was felt by both consortia and GOs that there had been a lack of clarity in the guidance received from Defra. One GO officer did highlight some communication difficulties that had arisen because some national VCS bodies were sending out information about the Defra and ACU programmes that conflicted with the information that the GO was sending out.

"The promise of funding has continued to bring people to the table – because no-one wants to miss out on the spoils. The difficulties in actually delivering an acceptable plan to GO (because of the continually moving goal posts) have given us some common ground which has helped the group gel!"

"The process has been hindered by the way it has been handled by Defra – continually changing the goal posts and what was required."

Difficulties with timescales

Timing has been an enormous problem. Change takes a long time and the time and resources needed have been underestimated. What was a three year programme has become, on the ground less, than 18 months

"There will be some useful things coming out of the programme but if you spread the spending of the money over three years they would have been more strategic."

"The three year initial funding programme, has now become a 15 month delivery programme (for the Defra funds) and less than 12 months for any ACU funds."

Delays in the programme

Many consortia have been frustrated with the delays in rolling out the funding, particularly having worked hard to get the IIPs in by September. In some cases it has been almost 6 months after submitting the IIP until funding is forthcoming, despite this being such a short programme.

"It was intensely frustrating. We were given four months to develop the IIP from scratch to get it in for June... And then nothing appeared to happen for six months! If we had been given ten months to write the IIP, it would have been much better."

"We are making progress, but have been frustrated by the delays rolling out the funding, as it is not possible to proceed without being fully confident that the plan would be approved. To date we have received no 'main spend' funding even for our co-ordinator post which was established in December 2004."

In some regions this been a much smoother process with money being allocated and rolled out so that projects can be worked up accordingly.

"There is a massive amount of work still to be done to develop the consortium and produce an IIP. A plan for the next stage has been submitted for funding to GOYH. We are still at the beginning of the process."

4. Lessons Learnt

The indications are that the consortium approach appears to offer a better, more sustainable and permanent solution to improving support for tackling social exclusion in rural areas than a traditional grant funding programme would have. It has the potential to change culture within the VCS, moving it away from damaging competitiveness between infrastructure providers to a collaborative focus on users of services.

Having evaluated the work undertaken to date, we see potential for two beneficial outcomes for Defra:

1. The voluntary and community sector will be better placed to deliver a raft of future Defra programmes, with strong collaborative partnerships between organisations and sectors in place, and the knowledge and relationships with communities to ensure that activities which Defra funds in future are appropriately tailored to reach those whom Defra wishes to benefit most.
2. In the longer term there will be fewer socially excluded groups in rural areas, as VCOs will be better equipped and supported to identify and address need.

4.1 Measuring success

We questioned whether the outputs identified in the Guidance which Defra gave to GOs, and which we used as our baseline, had adequately captured all of the softer programme successes that consortia and GO staff have reported to us. We also asked ourselves what useful recommendations we could make to Defra and the Government Offices which could help the future progress of the programme given the vast differences in approach in each region.

To achieve the programme aims, we feel that the onus will be on Government Offices to ensure that consortia have support to achieve all of the elements necessary to deliver the programme successfully:

1. A strong effective consortium with good internal relationships

Consortia need to go through a team development process before they can function effectively. We felt that consortia development as demonstrated through IIPs and proposals for funding submitted to date is consistent with Tuckman's Team Development Model.¹⁴



Figure 1 (page20) illustrates the factors we have found in IIPs which indicate the progression of consortia along this model. Whilst a number of consortia are norming, many are still forming and some are still storming.

¹⁴ B. W. Tuckman, *Developmental Sequence in Small Groups*, Psychological Bulletin, 1965, Vol. 63, No.6, 384-399.

2. A strong relationship between VCS infrastructure and their users.

The places where it seems most likely that social exclusion will be tackled in the longer term are those where there are plans in place to empower rural communities with the knowledge, skills and tools to find and sustain their own solutions. This can only be achieved if there is a strong partnership between infrastructure organisations and the grass roots groups who use their services.

We feel that the developing relationship between infrastructure organisations and their users can be mapped on the International Association for Public Participation's Public Participation Spectrum:¹⁵

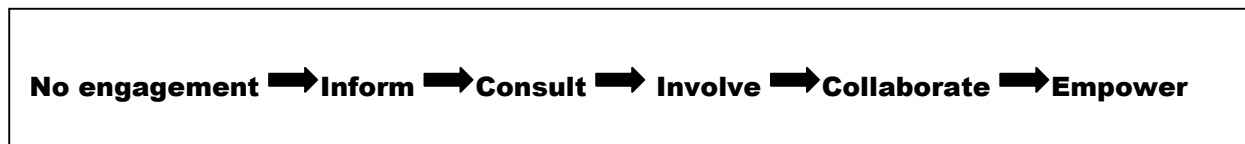


Figure 2 (page 24) illustrates the factors we have found in IIPs which indicate the progression of consortia along this model.

3. An increased awareness, knowledge and understanding of rural issues, concepts such as rural proofing and equality proofing

The first step towards achieving the aims of the programme is recognising that current infrastructure delivery mechanisms are imperfect and need to be improved if social exclusion is to be tackled in rural areas. Although the majority of consortia have acknowledged this, it is evident that some have not. This realisation can cause a crisis of confidence within a consortium. Consortia risk being caught in a mapping cycle in their search for new skills and knowledge. When research points to more gaps in knowledge, it results in more research being commissioned, which identifies more gaps and so on. It is not until consortia are able to take their newly acquired knowledge and translate it into action that Defra's aims will be fulfilled. A few consortia are beginning to demonstrate the ability to do this, but many more are still in the research phase.

We feel that the variation between not including rural proofing because a consortium couldn't see the relevance (unconscious incompetence) to automatically dealing with rural barriers (unconscious competence) fits within a cycle of learning that it seems all consortia need to go through if their knowledge and skills are to be at the point necessary to produce a robust IIP and implement high quality projects to tackle social exclusion in rural areas¹⁶.

¹⁵ IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation). 2000. *IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum*. International Association for Public Participation. <http://www.iap2.org/practitionertools/spectrum.html>.

¹⁶ Conscious Competence Learning Model

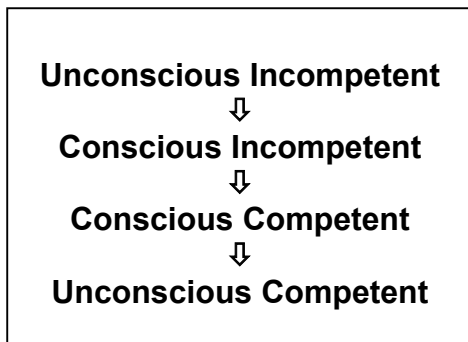


Figure 3 (page 29) illustrates the factors we have found in IIPs which indicate the progression of consortia along this model.

4. A strong operating environment in terms of effective VCS infrastructure and good relationships with the statutory sector

In places a vicious circle of poor relationships between sectors can be seen in IIPs, where low levels of investment in the VCS, leads to a lack of capacity. This in turn leads to a failure to deliver, thus justifying the low levels of investment made. Until this cycle is broken, VCOs will have little capacity to engage in the Defra programme.

We feel that the development of the relationship between the statutory and voluntary and community sectors can be modelled using Berkes' *Levels of Co-Management Model*¹⁷

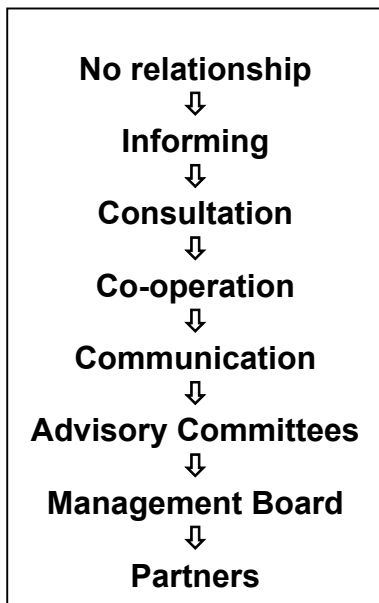


Figure 6 (page 38) illustrates the factors we have found in IIPs which indicate the progression of consortia along this model.

Measuring distance travelled

We concluded that if the many change processes which this programme has catalysed in both the voluntary and statutory sectors are seen as journeys, it will be important for Defra to be able measure distanced travelled in order to identify success. It is evident that the

¹⁷ Berkes, Fikret. 1994. Co-management: Bridging the Two Solitudes. *Northern Perspectives* 22:2-3. http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~berkes/berkes_1994.pdf

VCS started this programme from many different points, thus using a standard set of arrival points to gauge success seems inappropriate and unfair.

By tracking consortia through the various developmental processes required, a standard set of indicators can be used. However success can be measured in terms of progress towards achieving the first potential outcome from the programme, a better VCS environment. Use of such models will also highlight the points at which consortia are likely to need particular interventions or support to encourage them to progress.

For example, the use of Tuckman's model enables us to test progress towards performing in terms of programme delivery and thus measure success despite many of the consortia still being in the forming, storming or norming phases of development. Recognition of this particular progression also gives scope for GOs to identify the timing and nature of support and intervention which each consortium might require in order to progress towards performing. Our thoughts on how to do this are explained in *Attributes and Indicators of Progression Through Cross Sectoral Partnerships, a Diagnostic Tool-kit*, (Jordan, Newbury & Morley, 2005) which is included as annex 9 of this document.

Achievement of the second outcome of tackling social exclusion is harder to gauge. Whilst GO and consortia outputs can be measured as the programme progresses, we are not convinced that they are the best indicator of progress towards tackling social exclusion. BME inclusion in a consortium does not equate to the needs of BME communities being met for example.

To identify whether needs of grassroots communities are better met at the end of the programme than they are now, Defra needs to directly capture the views of VCS infrastructure users. Given the growing relationship between Defra and the Home Office through this programme, Defra could perhaps utilise the Active Communities Unit's *State of the Sector Panel*¹⁸. The panel is made up of 5,600 voluntary and community organisations selected to reflect the range of voluntary and community organisations in England and to pay particular attention to those which provide key public services. The Home Office surveys the Panel on a regular basis in order to monitor progress in increasing voluntary and community sector activity as set out in Public Service Agreement 8

To increase voluntary and community sector activity, including increasing community participation, by 5 per cent by 2006

and as set out in Public Service Agreement 6

To increase voluntary and community engagement, especially amongst those at risk of social exclusion

We feel there might be the potential for Defra to negotiate the development of a specifically rural perspective to this work.

¹⁸ See the Research and Development Statistics section of the Home Office website: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/sosp.html>

4.2 The need for change management

Change management is at the heart of the support which consortia need. A synopsis of the key factors to consider is included in annex 9.

4.3 Conclusion

Change management theory supports the view that change, and particular change driven by the grass roots, takes time. It is also clear that progress does not necessarily equate to change¹⁹. Although many projects will be delivered during the programme, not all consortia will have fully evolved and been able to develop their operating environments to the extent which Defra might hope, nor will all consortia be able to demonstrate success in tackling social exclusion by the end of the programme.

Defra has taken a brave and groundbreaking approach to the delivery of this programme. Whilst a simple funding programme might have paid for a significant number of individual projects which might have made short term differences to social exclusion, we feel that this approach will have longer term benefits.

At this point in the programme it is difficult to see a huge number of solutions to social exclusion emerging. However we believe that, given enough time and a consistent approach, the programme could deliver changes which will ultimately have a greater impact on voluntary and community sector activity and thus promote social inclusion.

¹⁹ Scott, G *Key Lessons from Research on Effective Change Management & Implementation in Post-Secondary and Higher Education*, QDU, 2001

5. Recommendations

5.1 Programme delivery

1. Consortia need more time and greater flexibility of spending deadlines to be able to use the money effectively. They do not wish to see substantive changes in the programme.²⁰
2. Measures of success need to take account of the journey travelled. Consortia need time to develop, gain understanding and improve relationships with statutory sector partners before they can be expected to fully achieve social inclusion.²¹
3. GOs need to identify where each consortium is on the suggested developmental scales at present and ensure interventions to allow them to develop more quickly. GO could do this in each region and provide facilitation to allow consortia to understand where they are and where they need to go.²²
4. Long term impacts on rural social exclusion should be measured through direct contact with first tier / grass roots organisations.²³
5. The inclusion of a performance measure relating to BME participation may well have skewed the composition and focus of consortia, with other socially excluded groups being excluded. Defra could alter its guidelines and outputs to:²⁴
 - Ensure that consortia undertake a BME needs analysis.
 - Base the requirement of participation of BME on the needs analysis rather than insisting that a BME organisation is included in the consortium. Where there is a BME organisation that has the capacity to participate this should be included.
 - Try to create equity in the outputs identified for all socially excluded groups.

5.2 Interventions needed

Nationally

- Defra should make efforts to influence other national government departments who relate to local authorities and other local level statutory agencies. It is vital that such bodies understand the importance of VCS infrastructure and are measured on the relationship they have with infrastructure agencies (including investment levels).²⁵
- Defra could provide a menu of resources to Government Offices, including:
 1. Funding for each GO to provide objective facilitation for consortium development²⁶

²⁰ See page 16/48 in main text under Timescales

²¹ see page 50 4.1 Measuring success

²² see page 52 Measuring distance travelled

²³ ibid

²⁴ see page 26 More than just BME/Meeting Defra's targets

²⁵ see page 36 The Power to Change

²⁶ see page 52 Measuring distance travelled

2. Dissemination of good practice through:²⁷

- Workshops for Government Office staff or others supporting the programme, providing action learning opportunities around particular issues such as consortium development or change management.
- Defra could identify and use an existing VCS website to disseminate good practice on rural proofing, equality proofing, consortium development etc
- The potential to form a rural hub, mirroring the ChangeUp national hubs. This should not be overly funded for fear of causing resentment amongst sub-national organisations, however it could sit within an existing organisation or build on existing functions, such as Acre and/or NCVO's rural team and provide a central repository of good practice, linked to the website.²⁸
- Defra could commission NACVS or a similar agency to implement a mentoring scheme between consortia. Consortium members would need to be paid for their participation. Such facilitated "buddy" schemes have been proven to be highly beneficial for the sector in other spheres.
- Workshops for consortia engaged in similar activities. These might need to be in a rolling programme and delivered in several locations around the country to increase the likelihood of participation.

3. Additional advice could be provided for consortia that addresses common gaps in IIPs and highlights useful approaches. This might include:

- The importance of LSPs and parishes in community development.
- The key role that local authorities, particularly districts and boroughs play in ensuring the sustainability of VCS infrastructure and, therefore, the importance of engaging them in the consortium.

Regionally

- Government Offices should intensify efforts to engage statutory partners in the programme, communicating the importance and benefits of strong VCS infrastructure.
- Diagnostic and change management techniques should be applied to support consortia in moving through the required developmental processes. (see suggested methodology in the example toolkit in annex 9).

²⁷ see page 46

²⁸ see page 46 Developing a national hub

6 Annexes

Annex 1 Biographies of evaluators

Frances Newbury BA (Hons)

Frances has worked in the voluntary and community sector for thirteen years. Most recently she worked with Engage East Midlands on 'Tomorrow's People' a strategy to improve workforce development in the sector in the East Midlands. This involved focus group research into the barriers facing organisations both urban and rural, then consultation on a draft strategy, which is shortly due to be published. In September she and Jennie Jordan worked with NIACE conducting telephone research on case studies in good workforce development practice for the Learning and Skills Council. She has also recently managed a project to develop and support the infrastructure in Northamptonshire. This involved her and Jennie conducting research into good practice in developing voluntary sector fora, then setting up a new forum in Northampton and a new cross-county forum into which all existing district fora could feed. She and Jennie also worked with Northampton Learning Partnership to develop a strategy for a Northamptonshire voluntary sector learning consortium, following consultations with the sector.

Previously she was Development Manager at Engage East Midlands, where she worked strategically with East Midlands Development Agency (emda), GOEM and the Learning and Skills Councils on regional infrastructure strategies, particularly for learning and skills. She has initiated and developed a learning and skills consortium in Lincolnshire, including organising three consultation events and a launch, as well as supporting and developing consortia in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. She ran a regional network for county consortium managers. She has also been involved as a facilitator in developing partnerships between organisations to work in clusters.

She supported infrastructure work in Derbyshire and the High Peak district and was involved in consultations with the voluntary sector to define their role in the two Subregional Strategic Partnerships (SSPs - a delivery mechanism of emda) based in the county. She also organised a "Pick 'n' Mix" conference to disseminate funding information in rural Derbyshire.

Jennie Jordan BA, MBA

Jennie has worked in the not-for-profit sector for fourteen years in marketing, research and development. Like Frances she has recently been working with Engage East Midlands on the "Tomorrow's People" initiative, exploring workforce development for the VCS. She previously worked with Engage East Midlands developing networks and clusters to enable voluntary organisations to be more sustainable. She has worked closely with the East Midland Development Agency (emda) and Government Office East Midlands as well as voluntary organisations, Local Strategic Partnerships and Subregional Strategic Partnerships. Successes include organising a conference on workforce development issues for the VCS with a key note speech by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the development of a disability network for the sector and the two "Pick'n'Mix" conferences that brought national and regional speakers to rural Lincolnshire and Derbyshire. She has a good knowledge of rural infrastructure having supported VOCAL,

Lincolnshire's countywide voluntary sector forum, through a difficult change process. In recent times, Jennie has also produced a well received research paper into the development of VCS forums in Northamptonshire.

Prior to her work at Engage East Midlands Jennie undertook a research project evaluating the social impact of touring theatre in rural communities in Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire. With Frances Newbury, she is currently evaluating the social impacts of the Corby and Kettering Youth Music Action Zone.

Philippa Morley

Philippa has worked in the Voluntary and Community Sector, both paid and unpaid for more than 16 years. She is currently employed on a part-time contract seconded to Government Office East Midlands co-ordinating the ChangeUp Investment Programme for both Defra and the Home Office.

She has unique operational and strategic knowledge of voluntary and community sector infrastructure at all levels. During her present secondment she has gained expertise in developing and working with voluntary and community sector consortia, identifying the development needed to deliver top-class infrastructure services in the future.

Philippa previously managed a volunteer bureau in an area without a CVS thus appreciates the challenges faced by local infrastructure organisations and the opportunities open to them. During this time she was also involved in steering a fledgling LSP and understands the impact that policy developments and involvement can have on smaller organizations.

She has sound understanding of local infrastructure funding, having successfully juggled complex agreements with county and district councils, PCT and social services, the community fund and other philanthropic donors.

In more recent times Philippa worked for Engage East Midlands, facilitating the East Midlands CVS network, supporting the East Midlands Regional Volunteer Bureaux Network and working with the East Midlands Acre Network. She has liaised with colleagues from national infrastructure organisations (Volunteering England, NACVS and NCVO for example), working through the implications of national initiatives at regional and local level and ensuring that grassroots expertise and innovation is shared at regional and national level. Philippa played a key role in the development and facilitation of specialist regional infrastructure for the voluntary youth and disability sectors. She established the East Midlands SuperNetwork, which brings many diverse regional organizations together to identify and address common issues. She has also been involved in the development of non-traditional infrastructure, working towards the development of clusters and also facilitating informal partnerships between groups. Philippa led Engage East Midlands' engagement with the East Midlands Rural Affairs Forum, promoting voluntary and community sector concerns and championed rural issues within Engage East Midlands.

Annex 2 Consortia information

County	Consortium Name	Region	Accountable body	Contact Name
Cambs	Cambridgeshire Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Cons	GO East	Cambs ACRE	Kirsten Bennett
Suffolk	One Voice Suffolk	GO East	Suffolk ACRE	Hazel Pidsley
Beds	Bedfordshire & Luton VCS Infrastructure Consortium	GO East	Voluntary and Community Action S. Bedfordshire	John Gelder
Essex	Essex, Southend & Thurrock VCS Infrastructure Consortium	GO East	Rural Community Council of Essex	Nick Shuttleworth
Herts	Herts County Infrastructure Consortium	GO East	Stevenage CVS	Robin Charnley
Norfolk	Norfolk Voluntary Sector Strategy Group	GO East	Norwich and Norfolk Voluntary Services	
Derbyshire	Derbyshire VCS Infrastructure Consortium	GO EM	Derbyshire RCC	Helen Lidgett
Leics	Leicester and Leicestershire Infrastructure Review Consortium	GO EM	Rural Comm.Council Leics and Rutland	
Lincs	Lincolnshire Consortium	GO EM	Lincs Community Foundation	
Northants	Northamptonshire VCS Consortium	GO EM	Northants Community Foundation	Tina Matthews
Nottinghamshire	Nottinghamshire Infrastructure Consortium	GO EM	NAVO	Jon North
Rutland	Rutland Infrastructure Consortium	GOEM	Voluntary Action Rutland	Kathy Braddock
Durham	County Durham Community Buildings Group	GO NE	Durham RCC	Ken Hazelwood
Northumberland	VCS InfrastructCommunity Council of Northumberland	GO NE	Community Council Northumberland	
Tees Valley	Tees Valley Voluntary Sector Consortium	GO NE	Tees Valley RCC	
Cumbria	Cumbria Infrastructure Consortium	GO NW	Cumbria Assn of Councils for Voluntary Services	David Jones
Lancs	Lancashire VCFS Consortium	GO NW	Community Futures	Denise Partington
Cheshire	Cheshire & Warrington Rural VCS Consortium	GO NW	Cheshire Community Council	Ray Dodd
Berks	Berkshire Voluntary Sector Forum	GO SE	Community Council for Berkshire	
Bucks		GO SE	Buckinghamshire Community Action	Francis Gomme
Kent	Kent Rural Infrastructure Consortium	GO SE	Action with Communities in Rural Kent	
IOW	Island Infrastructure Group	GO SE	Isle of Wight Rural Community Council	
East & West Sussex	The Heart Of Sussex Rural Community	GO SE	Sussex Rural Community Council	
Hants	The Hampshire Consortium	GO SE	Community Action Hampshire	
Oxon	Oxfordshire VCS Infrastructure Development (OVID)	GO SE	Oxon RCC (OVID)	John Hardwicke
Surrey	Surrey Rural Infrastructure Consortium	GO SE	Surrey Community Action	Abby Thomas
Dorset		GO SW	Dorset Community Action	
Cornwall	The Cornwall Infrastructure Partnership	GO SW	Cornwall Rural Community Council	

Devon		GO SW	Community Council Devon	
Avon (west of England)	West of England Social Enterprise Group	GOSW	Community Action	Hilary Sudbury
*Glos	Gloucestershire Consortium	GO SW	Gloucestershire Rural Community Council	Stephen Wright
Somerset	Somerset Voluntary Sector Network	GO SW	Community Council for Somerset (SVSN),	Carolynne Beadmann
Wiltshire	Wiltshire and Swindon Consortium	GO SW	Community First	Philippa Read
Warwickshire	LDA Forum	GO WM	Warwickshire Rural Community Council	Alison Chappell
Shropshire	The Shropshire CVS Partnership	GO WM	Community Council of Shropshire	Julia Baron
Herefordshire	Herefordshire Infrastructure Consortium	GO WM	Community First in Hereford and Worcester	Sarah Fishbourne
Staffordshire	SCIO	GOWM	Tamworth Council for Voluntary Service	Simon Johnson
Worcestershire	Worcestershire Infrastructure Consortium	GO WM	Worcestershire County First	
Humber and the Wolds	Humber Federation of Local Development Agencies	GO Y&H	Hull Council for Voluntary Service Ltd	
North Yorkshire	North Yorkshire Sub regional VCS Infrastructure Consortium	GO Y&H	North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Organisations	Neil Irving
South Yorkshire	South Yorkshire VCS Infrastructure Consortium	GO Y&H	South Yorkshire Open Forum	
West Yorkshire	WYLDA	GO Y&H	The Charities Information Bureau	

Annex 3: Letter/questionnaire sent to consortia

(This was accompanied by database printout of our findings related to their consortium)

Dear colleagues

We have been given your contact details as a lead agent of a voluntary and community sector infrastructure consortium relating to the rural strand of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure Investment Programme (ChangeUp).

As you will know, Defra have a responsibility to evaluate their funding programmes. We have been contracted by Defra to undertake an interim evaluation of this programme. Our brief is:

- To obtain early indications of the likelihood of the investment meeting its aims and objectives.
- To identify lessons learnt and examples of good practice in order to help those involved in the programme delivery understand how they can improve their programme delivery during the remaining 18 months of the programme.
- To identify any immediate actions that Defra might usefully undertake to help deliver the programme aims and objectives.

We have begun this piece of work by reading and making notes on all the Infrastructure Investment Plans (IIPs) submitted to Government Offices so far. We have been looking for evidence of Defra's key indicators of success:

- Is a basic consortium in place?
- Is there BME representation on the consortium?
- Is there a clear intention to reach rurally excluded people?
- Has a needs analysis taken place?
- Have the views of frontline organisations been taken in to account?
- What issues did consultation with these groups reveal?
- To what extent does the document focus on Defra's aim of tackling rural social exclusion?
- Is there an agreed, county level vision for the future of infrastructure needed by front line rural VCS?
- Are rural specialist needs being taken in to account?
- Are links being made to statutory partners and in particular LSPs?
- Is a transparent mechanism to rural proof the work in place?

However, we recognise that many of the IIPs we have read are more than six months old and that this programme is a fast-moving development process. Many things may have changed within consortia since these documents were submitted – new members may have joined, others may have left; further research and consultation may have taken place; thinking may have evolved and strategic plans may have been put in place or changed.

Our initial impressions of how the documents from your consortium contribute to the indicators above is attached. These findings have not been shared with anyone but you to

date. We would like your views on our findings before we include them in any reports to Defra. We must emphasise that the purpose of this evaluation is to check Defra's progress towards its goals and is not performance management of your consortium. The report we produce will contain anonymous data, apart from where we are highlighting examples of good practice.

Attached is a brief questionnaire for you to complete and return to us. We hope it will not take too long to fill in, but, recognising that your time is a limited and valuable resource we would be willing to pay up to £50 expenses to recompense your organisation for the time you spend working with us on this. If you feel that you may need to claim expenses please do let us know.

We are working on tight timescales for the evaluation so we would ask you to have the questionnaire back with us by **Friday 18 February**. If we do not hear from you we will have to assume that our findings to date are correct. It may be possible for us to telephone you. If you would rather discuss the issues raised with us in this way please let us know.

Thank you for your time. If you require any further information about this evaluation or would like to discuss any of the issues raised in confidence please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Frances Newbury, Jennie Jordan, Philippa Morley



Defra ChangeUp VCS Infrastructure Investment Programme
Interim Evaluation Questionnaire

Consortium name _____

Area covered _____

Name and contact details of lead person:

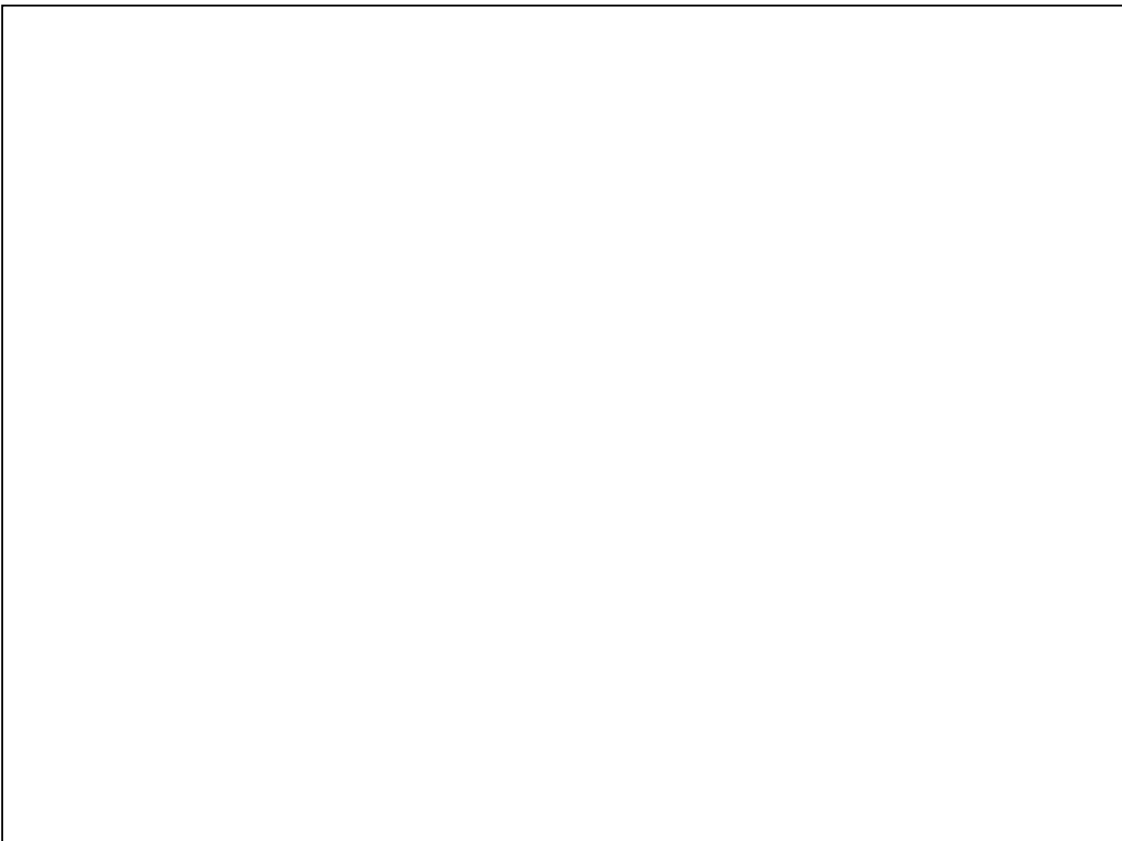
Having read our initial thoughts on your IIP we would ask you to consider the following questions:

- 1) Are our findings accurate? Is there anything we have missed or misunderstood from your IIP?

2) What has changed since the submission of your IIP? Do we need to add to or change our data?



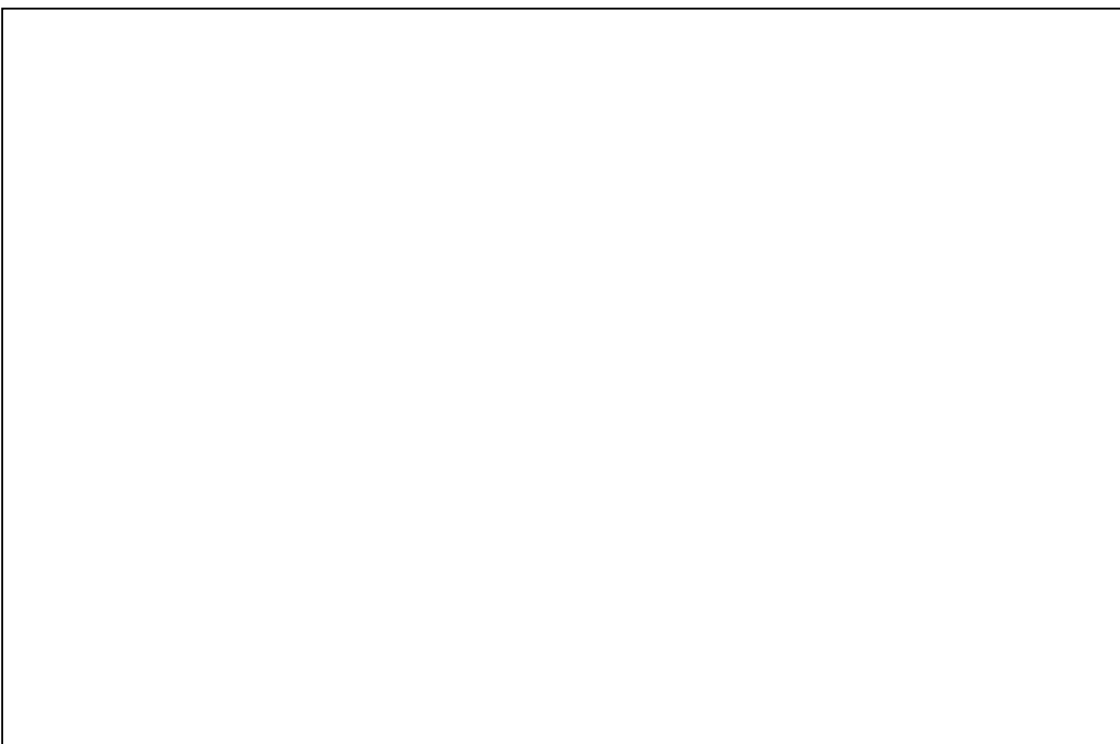
3) Do you anticipate any further changes? Have you plans to develop your consortium further or revisit your IIP?



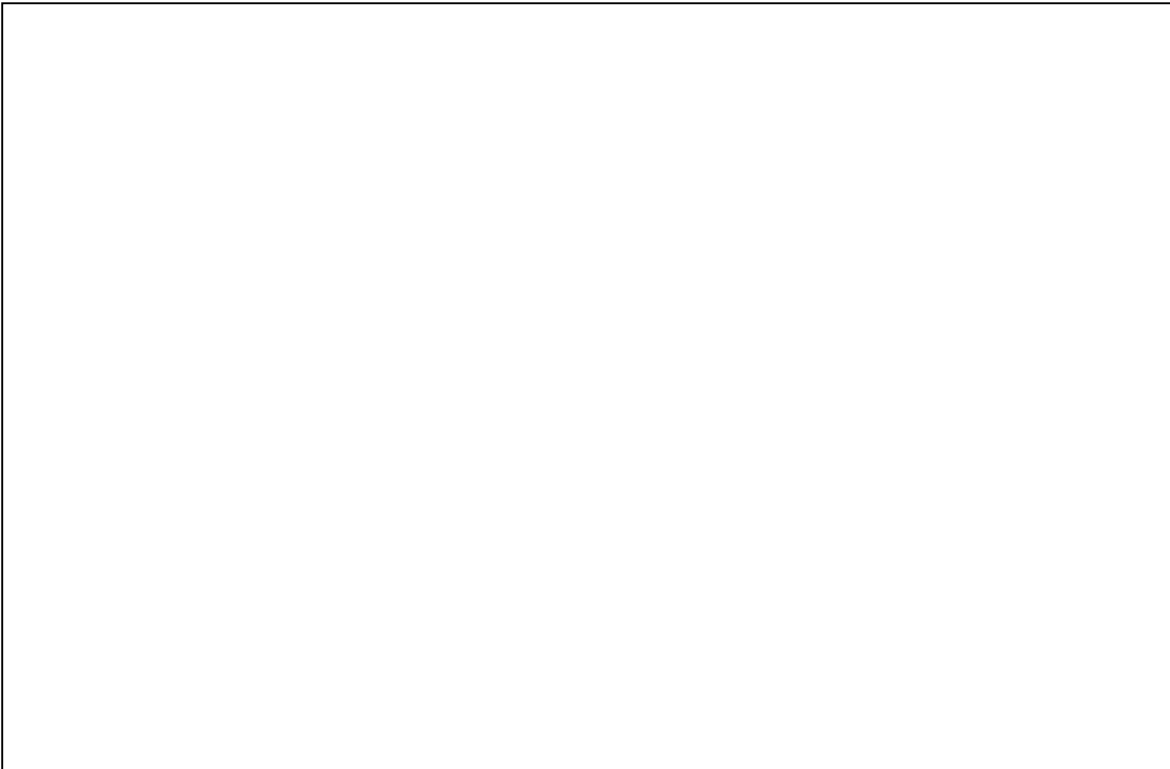
4) How do you feel the programme is going in your area? Are you making progress towards collaborative working? What are the strengths and weaknesses of your consortium?



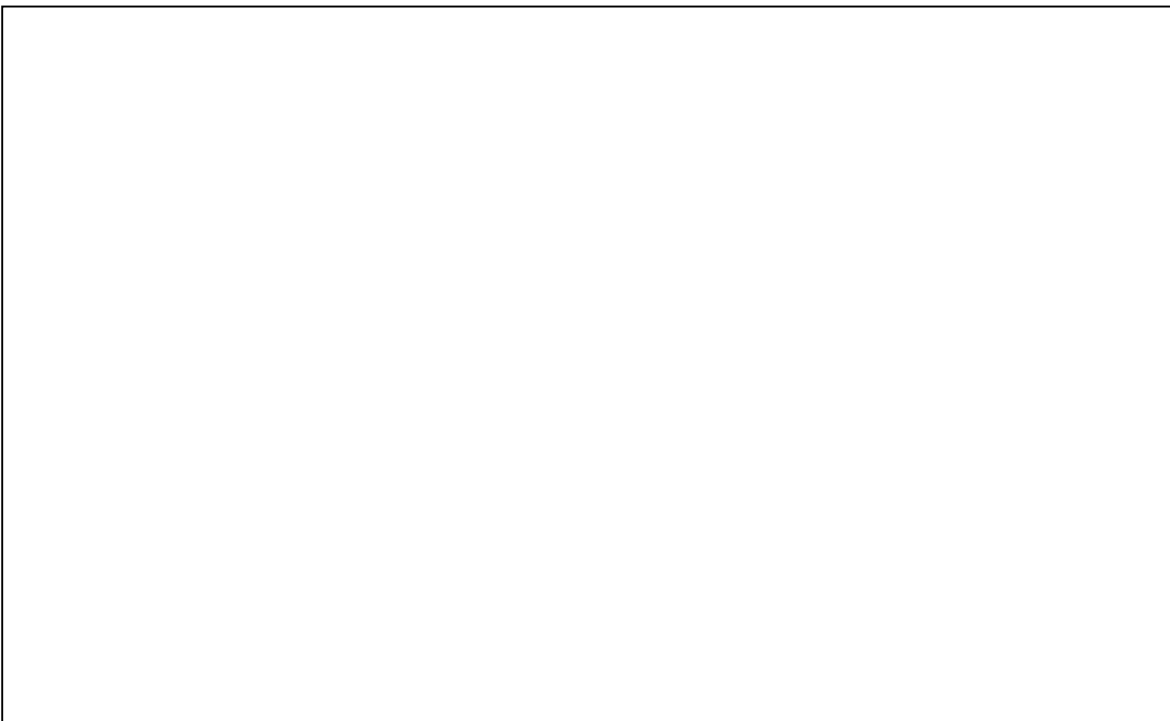
5) What has most helped you in developing your consortium and progressing towards the aims of the VCS Infrastructure Investment Programme?



6) Do you foresee your consortium having a life beyond the end of this programme?
What future role might it play?



7) Is there anything else you think it would be useful for us to know?



Annex 4 Programme outputs

Infrastructure Investment (II) Outputs	Relevant Programme Objective
<p>II1. A successful bid for funding which clearly indicates the intention to reach rural socially excluded people received from 90% of counties by Oct 2004.</p> <p>II2. 70% of successful bids for funding from the programme can demonstrate that their proposals to reach rural socially excluded people are based on a needs analysis and/or the involvement of socially excluded groups.</p> <p>II3. All county consortia have BME representation by June 2006.</p>	<p>1.1 A VCS which is equipped to understand and meet the needs of socially excluded people in rural areas including BME, disabled people, older people, and young people.</p>
<p>II4. 90% of county consortia have agreed county level visions of the infrastructure needed by front line rural VCS in their area by March 2005.</p> <p>II5. All successful bids for funding from the programme show intended benefits for local VCS groups in rural areas.</p>	<p>2.1 Support available to local groups and community leaders on matters such as training, advice, ICT, funding, volunteering etc.</p>
<p>II6. 50% of successful bids for funding show linkages with district and or county LSP.</p>	<p>2.2 Frontline rural VCS are able to contribute to policy making and service delivery processes.</p>
<p>II7. A basic consortium established in 90% of counties by July 2004.</p> <p>II8. An inclusive consortium with a clearly defined role established in all counties by March 2006.</p>	<p>3.1 Collaborative working between VCS infrastructure bodies.</p>
<p>II 9 Each county consortium to have a transparent and agreed mechanism for rural proofing its own activities in place by March 2005.</p>	<p>3.2 Effective rural proofing of current and future investment.</p>
<p>II10. Each county consortium to have made formal links to the statutory sector by the mid term evaluation.</p> <p>II11. Delivery of a programme of activities in each region, commissioned or co-ordinated by the GO, to engage the statutory sector during the programme period.</p>	<p>3.3 Support for VCS bodies that serve rural areas continued in the long term by other public bodies.</p>
<p>II13. A programme of activities to disseminate good practice is held in each region by June 2006.</p>	<p>3.5 Good practice is identified and disseminated and the experience of the programme is able to be used in future policy development</p>

Annex 5 Membership of consortia

Membership of the Consortia	No/42	%
Rural Community Council	32	76%
Local Infrastructure Organisations	28	67%
BME representation	22	52%
Children & Young People's specialist	22	52%
County level infrastructure organisation (non-RCC)	17	40%
Older people specialist	15	36%
Community development specialist	13	31%
Health related specialist	11	26%
Faith specialist	9	21%
Training specialist	8	19%
Regeneration specialist (including statutory partners)	8	19%
Disability specialist	8	19%
Community / Social Enterprise specialist	6	14%
Funding specialist	5	12%
Environment specialist	5	12%
Regional level infrastructure	3	7%
Heritage & Culture specialist	3	7%
Advice providing specialist o	3	7%
Housing specialist	3	7%
Parish Councils	3	7%
Women's Institute	2	5%
Village Halls	2	5%
Crime / Prison specialist	2	5%
Other (ICT, sport, farming, lesbian, gay bisexual group, credit union)	6	2%

It should be noted that, even where there are consortia in place, the documents we received did not list all consortium membership, thus consortia with membership from many of the categories above may in fact be higher.

Annex 6: Results of the analysis of information submitted to Defra re the VCS Infrastructure Investment Programme*

	Number of organisations	% out of 42	Total amount of funding (as appropriate)
Number of IIPs received	37	88%	
Frontline organisations consulted	28	67%	
Efforts made to reach socially excluded groups	19	45%	
Honest assessment of current infrastructure provision	26	62%	
Strategic document expressing long term visions	25	60%	
Specific rural issues identified?	27	64%	
Plans to rural proof broader IIP / ACU work?	17	40%	
Focus on Defra's aim of tackling social exclusion?	26	62%	
Links made to statutory partners?	29	69%	
Plans to expand consortium	22	52%	
Plans to develop / revisit IIP	28	67%	
Exit strategy included / long term sustainability addressed?	20	48%	
Evidence of support from other funders?	20	48%	
Amounts committed by other first funders			£81,150
ACU ChangeUp investment sought?	25	60%	
Amount of ChangeUp money sought			£4,648,811
Infrastructure reconfigured for maximum value of money	20	48%	
Filling gaps in infrastructure	26	62%	
Improving quality of existing infrastructure	25	60%	
Extending reach of existing infrastructure	26	62%	
Modernising delivery of services	10	24%	
outcome other	6	14%	
Rural Social Exclusion tackled if project successful?	20	48%	
% of consortia with BME groups representation**	22	52%	

* Taken from information (either IIPs or funding bids) submitted mostly in September 2004

This information was updated in March 05 by means of an email questionnaire to all consortia. Some consortia did not submit IIPs

** Figures for BME representation were taken from IIPs most of which were submitted prior to Sept 04. Some IIPs did not list members

Annex 7: Analysis of all projects submitted for funding

Total number of Projects=239

Clear evidence of user need for this project?	62%
Evidence that appropriate level of subsidiarity explored	44%
Consideration of longer term sustainability included?	38%
Transparent process for selection of deliverer	16%
Does project meet Defra's rural exclusion aims?	49%
Cost of all project combined	£21,173,299
Total amount of money received from other sources	£165,000

NB. Some consortia did not put forward any projects

Summary per project Category

	Number	% of total number of projects (235)	% of number of consortia (42)
Back Room Services	10	4%	24%
BME	10	4%	24%
Collaborative Working	6	3%	14%
Communication	11	5%	26%
Community Development	9	4%	21%
Consortium Development	26	11%	62%
Evaluation	5	2%	12%
Funding	13	6%	31%
ICT	22	9%	52%
Infrastructure Development	21	9%	50%
Mapping	8	3%	19%
Network Development	7	3%	17%
Organisational Capacity building	5	2%	12%
Quality Standards	6	3%	14%
Representation	6	3%	14%
Rural inclusion	12	5%	29%
Service delivery	5	2%	12%
Social Enterprise	10	4%	24%
Statutory Sector engagement	5	2%	12%
Training	11	5%	26%
Volunteering	13	6%	31%
Other	14	6%	33%
	235		

Annex 8: Progress made towards achieving Defra's required outputs as at February 2005

Output	Indicator	Number of consortia	%
A successful bid for funding received from 90% of counties by October 2004, each of which clearly indicates the intention to reach rural socially excluded people.	1 Infrastructure Investment Plan Submitted	37	88%
	2 Focus on Defra's aim of tackling social exclusion	25	60%
	3 Rural social exclusion tackled through suggested projects	20	48%
	4 Efforts made to reach socially excluded groups	18	43%
70% of successful bids for funding from the programme can demonstrate that their proposals to reach rural socially excluded people are based on a needs analysis and/or the involvement of socially excluded groups.	1 Frontline organisation consulted	27	66%
	2 Specific rural issues identified	26	62%
	3 Efforts made to reach socially excluded groups	18	43%
All county consortia have BME representation by June 2006	1 BME representation on the consortium	22	52%
	2 Plans to extend the consortium	21	50%
	3 Number of consortia with projects to develop BME	10	24%
	4 Total Number of projects to develop BME capacity (out of 239 projects)	10	4%
90% of county consortia have agreed county level visions of the infrastructure needed by front line rural VCS in their area by March 2005.	1 Plans to revisit the document submitted	28	67%
	2 Honest assessment of current infrastructure provision contained within plan	26	62%
	3 Suggested projects would fill gaps in existing infrastructure	26	62%
	4 Suggested projects would extend reach of existing infrastructure	26	62%
	5 Strategic document expressing long term vision	25	60%
	6 Infrastructure reconfigured for maximum value for money	20	48%
	7 Exit strategy included / long term sustainability addressed	19	45%
	8 Suggested projects would modernise delivery of services	9	21%
All successful bids for funding from the programme show intended benefits for local VCS groups in rural areas.	1 Rural Community Council on consortium	32	76%
	2 Frontline organisation consulted	27	66%
	3 Specific rural issues identified	26	62%
	4 Focus on Defra's aim of tackling social exclusion	25	60%
	5 Rural social exclusion tackled through suggested projects	21	50%
	6 Efforts made to reach socially excluded groups	18	43%
	7 Projects seeking rural inclusion (out of 239 projects)	12	5%
50% of successful bids for funding show linkages with district and or	1 Links made to LSPs	13	31%
	2 Links to statutory partners made	29	69%

county LSP.	3	Funder on consortium (may include statutory partners)	9	21%
	4	Local Authorities sitting on consortium	6	14%
	5	LSPs sitting on consortium	5	12%
A basic consortium established in 90% of counties by July 2004.	1	Number of consortium members = 5 or more	35	83%
	2	Plans to extend the consortium	21	50%
An inclusive consortium with a clearly defined role established in all counties by March 2006.	1	Plans to revisit the IIP	28	67%
	2	Strategic document expressing long term vision	25	60%
	3	Plans to extend the consortium	21	50%
Each county consortium to have a transparent and agreed mechanism for rural proofing its own activities in place by March 2005.	1	Rural Community Council on consortium	32	76%
	2	Plans to rural proof broader IIP / ACU work	17	40%
Each county consortium to have made formal links to the statutory sector by the mid term evaluation.	1	Funder on consortium (may include statutory partners)	9	21%
	2	Regeneration specialist on consortium (including statutory partners)	8	19%
	3	Local Authorities sitting on consortium	6	14%
	4	LSPs sitting on consortium	5	12%
	5	Links to statutory partners made	29	69%
	6	Evidence of support from other funders	20	48%

Annex 9: An example of a diagnostic toolkit

Attributes and indicators of progression through cross sectoral partnerships, a diagnostic tool-kit,

Jordan, Newbury & Morley, 2005.

We believe that successful partnerships between the voluntary and statutory sectors depend on a number of elements being in place:

1. A strong and effective grouping or team with good internal relationships
2. A strong relationship between Voluntary organisations and their users.
3. An increased awareness, knowledge and understanding of key issues and concepts and....
4. A strong operating environment

Development of these attributes can be tracked through a number of developmental models:

1. A strong and effective team with good internal relationships

All teams need to go through a development process before they can function effectively. This is well illustrated by Tuckman's Team Development Model²⁹:

1. **Forming**
2. **Storming**
3. **Norming**
4. **Performing**

Features of each phase are³⁰:

Forming - stage 1

There is a high dependence on one leader for guidance and direction. There has been little consideration or agreement of the team's aims to date, only the views of the leader. Individual roles and responsibilities are unclear. The team leader must be prepared to answer lots of questions about the team's purpose, objectives and external relationships. Processes are often ignored. Members test tolerance of both the system and the leader. The leader directs activity.

Storming - stage 2

Decisions don't come easily within the group. Team members vie for position as they attempt to establish themselves in relation to other team members and the leader, who might receive challenges from team members. Clarity of the team's purpose increases but plenty of uncertainties persist. Cliques and factions form and there may be power struggles. The team needs to be focused on its goals to avoid becoming distracted by

²⁹ B. W. Tuckman, *Developmental Sequence in Small Groups*, Psychological Bulletin, 1965, Vol. 63, No.6, 384-399.

³⁰ Chapman, A <http://www.businessballs.com/>

relationships and emotional issues. Compromises may be required to enable progress. The leader coaches team members, selling the concept of the team.

Norming - stage 3

Agreement and consensus is largely formed amongst the team, who respond well to facilitation by the leader. Roles and responsibilities are clear and accepted. Big decisions are made by group agreement. Smaller decisions may be delegated to individuals or small teams within group. Commitment to the team and unity is strong. The team may engage in fun and social activities. The team discusses and develops its processes and working styles. There is general respect for the leader and some of the leadership is more shared by the team. The leader facilitates and enables decision making and activity.

Performing - stage 4

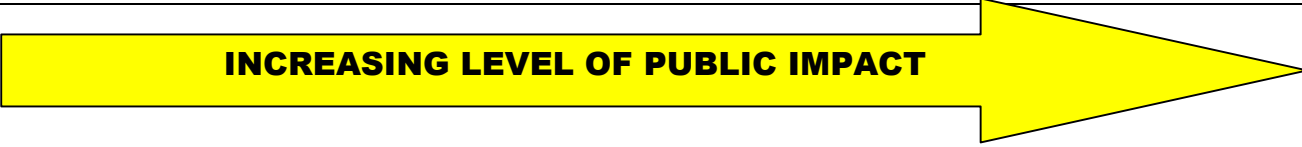
The team is now more strategically aware; knowing clearly why it is doing what it is doing. The team has a shared vision and is able to stand on its own feet with no interference or participation from the leader. There is a focus on over-achieving goals, and the team makes most of the decisions against criteria agreed with the leader. The team has a high degree of autonomy. Disagreements do occur but are resolved within the team positively and necessary changes to processes and structure are made by the team. The team is able to work towards achieving its' goals, and also to attend to relationship, style and process issues along the way. Team members look after each other. The team might still require delegated tasks and projects from the leader, but does not need to be instructed or assisted. Team members might ask for assistance from the leader with personal and interpersonal development. The leader's role is to delegate and oversee

2. A strong relationship between VCOs and their users.

We feel that the best VCOs are those who see their mission as empowering their users, considering them the most important element of any planning or decision making process. Whilst actually targeting service user participation rather than that of the general public, we feel that the developing relationship between voluntary organisations and their users can be mapped on the International Association for Public Participation's Public Participation Spectrum³¹

³¹ IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation). 2000. *IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum*. International Association for Public Participation. <http://www.iap2.org/practitionertools/spectrum.html>.

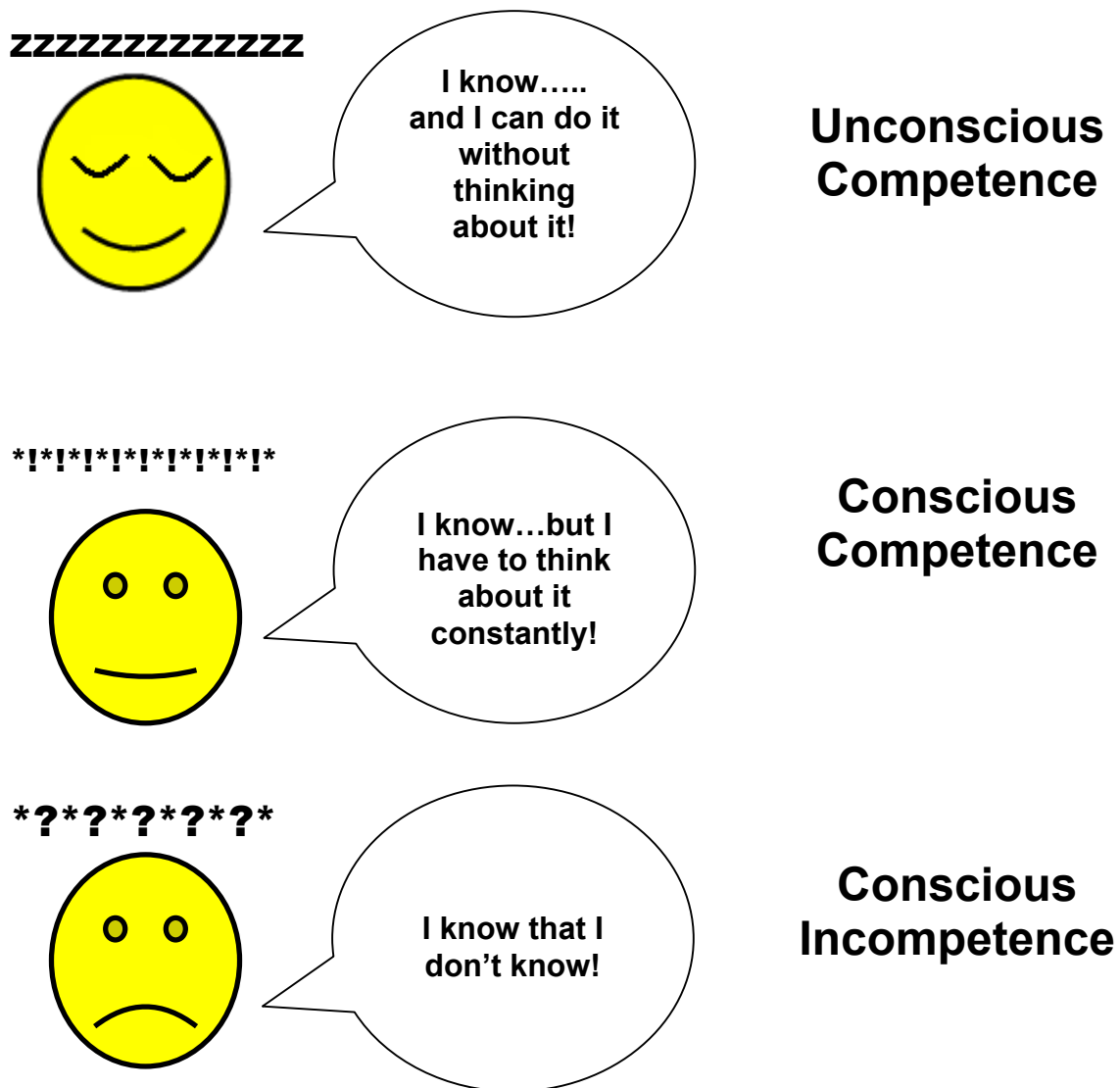
Figure 1: Public Participation Spectrum (IAP2 2000)

				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
<p>Goal:</p> <p>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and / or solutions</p>	<p>Goal:</p> <p>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and / or solutions</p>	<p>Goal:</p> <p>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered</p>	<p>Goal:</p> <p>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution</p>	<p>Goal:</p> <p>To place final decision-making in the hands of the public</p>
<p>Promise to the Public:</p> <p>We will keep you informed</p>	<p>Promise to the Public:</p> <p>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision</p>	<p>Promise to the Public:</p> <p>We will work with you to ensure that your issues and concerns are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision</p>	<p>Promise to the Public:</p> <p>We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporating your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible</p>	<p>Promise to the Public:</p> <p>We will implement what you decide</p>
<p>Example Tools:</p> <p>Fact sheets</p> <p>Websites</p> <p>Open houses</p>	<p>Example Tools:</p> <p>Public comment</p> <p>Focus groups</p> <p>Surveys</p> <p>public hearings</p>	<p>Example Tools:</p> <p>Workshops</p> <p>Deliberative polling</p>	<p>Example Tools:</p> <p>Citizen advisory committees</p> <p>Consensus building</p> <p>Participatory decision-making</p>	<p>Example Tools:</p> <p>Citizen juries</p> <p>Ballots</p> <p>Delegated decisions</p>

3. An increased awareness, knowledge and understanding of issues and concepts

Partnerships tend to form to effect change. The first step towards achieving this is recognising that current methods are imperfect and need to be improved. This realisation can cause a crisis of confidence within a group or individual organisation. Partnerships risk being caught in a mapping cycle in their search for new skills and knowledge – when research points to more gaps in knowledge, resulting in more research being commissioned etc. It is not until they are able to take their newly acquired knowledge and translate it into action that their aims will be fulfilled. This need to develop and use knowledge fits within a cycle of learning that many partnerships need to go through if they are to be successful³²:

Figure 2



³² Conscious Competence Learning Model Socrates (?) cited by Fugitt, L
<http://isobe.typepad.com/sketchpad/>



Figure 3

Measuring Distance Travelled

We concluded that if the many processes necessary for the development of a successful partnership are seen as journeys, it should be possible to measure distanced travelled along those roads as an indicator of likely success.

Use of such models could also be used to highlight the points at which partnerships are likely to need particular interventions or support to encourage them to progress:

Figure 4

“Traffic Light” Indicators Of Likelihood that A Partnership will be able to achieve its’ aims and objectives

Unlikely to succeed			Has the potential to succeed with appropriate intervention and support			Likely to succeed		
No Team			Nature of Team			Performing		
	Forming	Storming	Norming					
No engagement			Nature of VCO User Engagement			Empower		
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate				
Unconscious Incompetent			Nature of Partnership Competencies (possession of knowledge, skills etc)			Unconscious Competent		
		Conscious Incompetent	Conscious Competent					
No relationship			Nature of Links Between Sectors			Partners		
	Informing	Consultation	Co-operation	Communication	Advisory Committees	Management Board		

The Diagnostic Process

To plot where a partnership is on any given cycle it is first necessary to identify the particular indicators which might occur, in either partnership behaviours or work produced.

Once these indicators have been agreed they can be plotted along the model line. (See figures 1 to 4 in the main body of this document).

Blank versions of these models should then be produced by leaving the indicators and the central box in place, but removing the details of the developmental model itself (see figures 6 to 9 of this annex).

All members and stakeholders of the partnership should then be asked to mark where they feel the partnership is currently sitting along the line of indicators. Ideally these contributions will not be discussed.

All responses should then be collated and individual marks along the line compared. The furthest left and furthest right suggestions should be noted and the midway point between the two calculated. This should be compared with where the majority of individuals felt the partnership is sitting in the development process. If there is a major discrepancy between the mean marker on the line and the majority view, an adjustment should be made.

Once an average position has been decided for all four indicator lines they should be plotted onto a traffic light chart and lines drawn between the four markers (see figure 5).

Lines of Consequence

Where lines between these markers are vertical they could be described as lines of consequence, as they are likely to indicate a correlation between indicators. For example, if a VCO is not engaged with its' users, it is significantly less likely to realise that it is not meeting their needs; or if there is a strong relationship between the sectors it is likely that investment in the VCS is good and therefore organisations have the capacity to commit time and energy to participating in the team, thus the team is more likely to perform.

If your chart shows that the partnership is at a similar point along each of the development lines, members can discuss which aspect of development is likely to be the greatest enabler, and thus decide upon strategies to move the partnership forward.

Lines of Tension

If the lines between indicator points are diagonal they could be described as lines of tension. This is because an extreme position or change in one cycle is likely to lead to a change in another. For example if a partnership has reached conscious incompetence and realised that it needs to change the way it delivers services members are more likely to seek ways to engage with the users of services to decide exactly what changes are needed, thus the marker on the user engagement line will eventually move along as well; equally an increased investment in the VCS by statutory partners might well lead to an increase in capacity within the sector and thus move both the nature of the team and the engagement with users indicators along too.

However, lines of tension are not always positive influencers. For example, if the relationship between sectors indicator is scoring quite highly because the statutory sector is seeking to build the partnership, but the nature of the VCS team is disparate and destructive thus scoring lower down the scale, there is the danger that statutory sector partners will lose patience and abandon the partnership approach, thus pulling the relationship between sectors score back down. The further apart the marker points at each end of a line of tension are, the more likely they are to result in a sudden, potentially negative shift.

Crisis Points

Clearly unless all the indicators for a partnership are falling within the green zone of a traffic light table, there will always be a need for support (and even then there is not room for complacency). However the points at which partnerships pass from one coloured zone to another are the points at which they need most support. For example, the storming part of the team's development; the point at which a partnership reaches conscious incompetence and realises that it does not have all the answers or the point at which it needs to begin to apply learning, having the courage to test ideas and becoming consciously competent.

Figure 5: "Traffic Light" Diagram showing lines of consequence and lines of tension

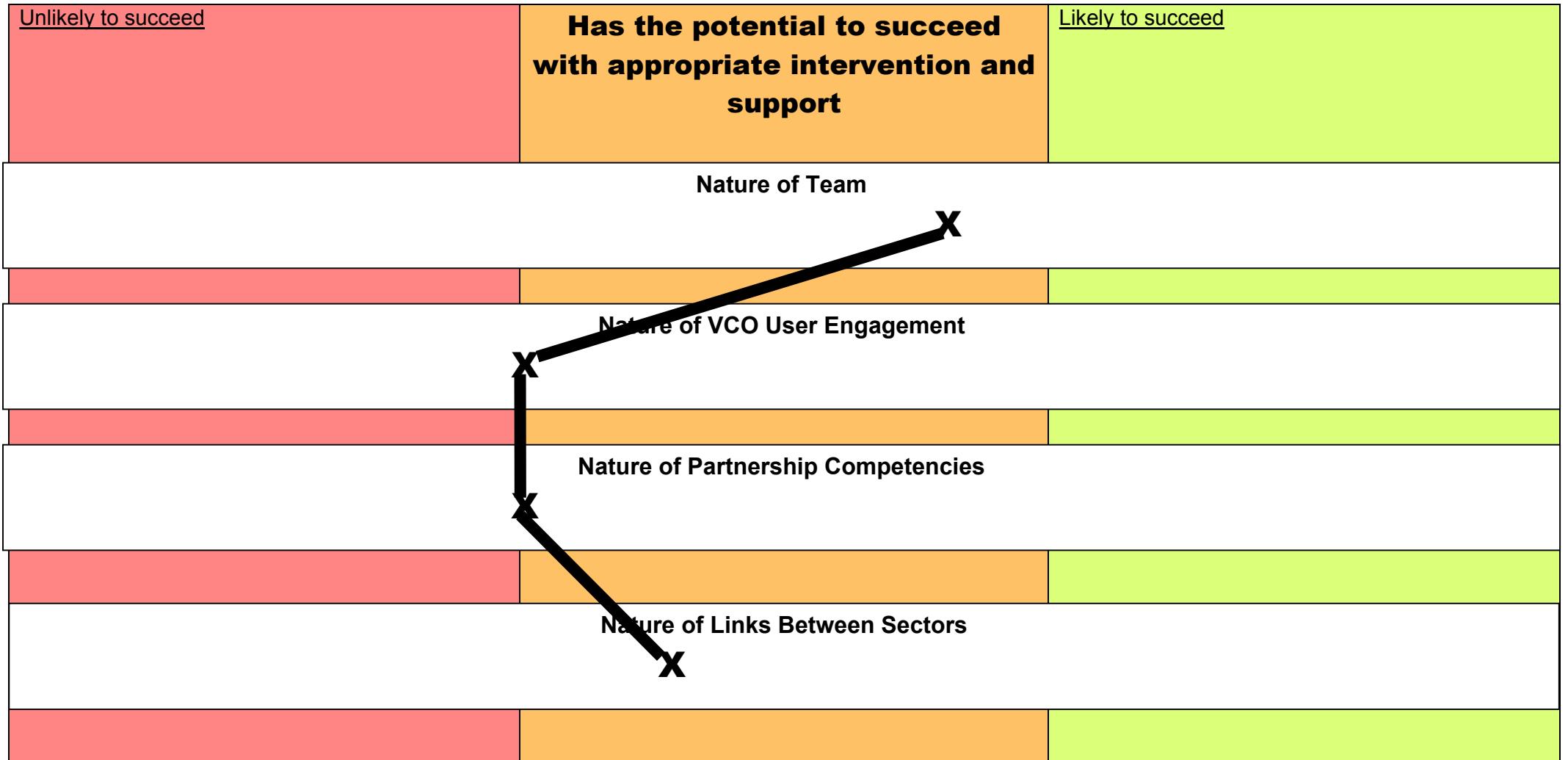


Figure 6: Diagnostic Tool - Symptoms of Progression Through Consortium Development

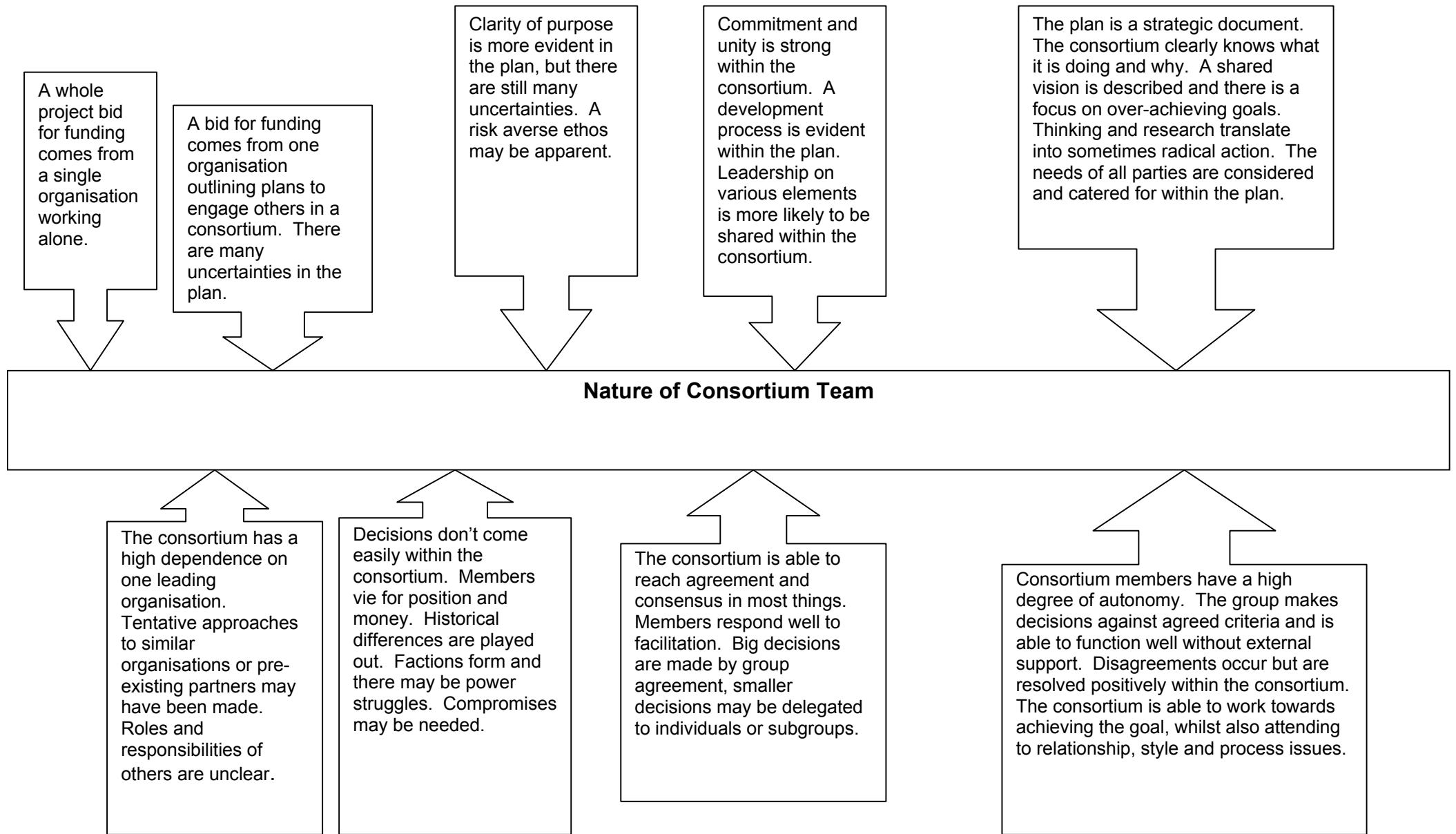


Figure 7: Diagnostic Tool - Symptoms of Progression Towards Empowerment Of User Groups

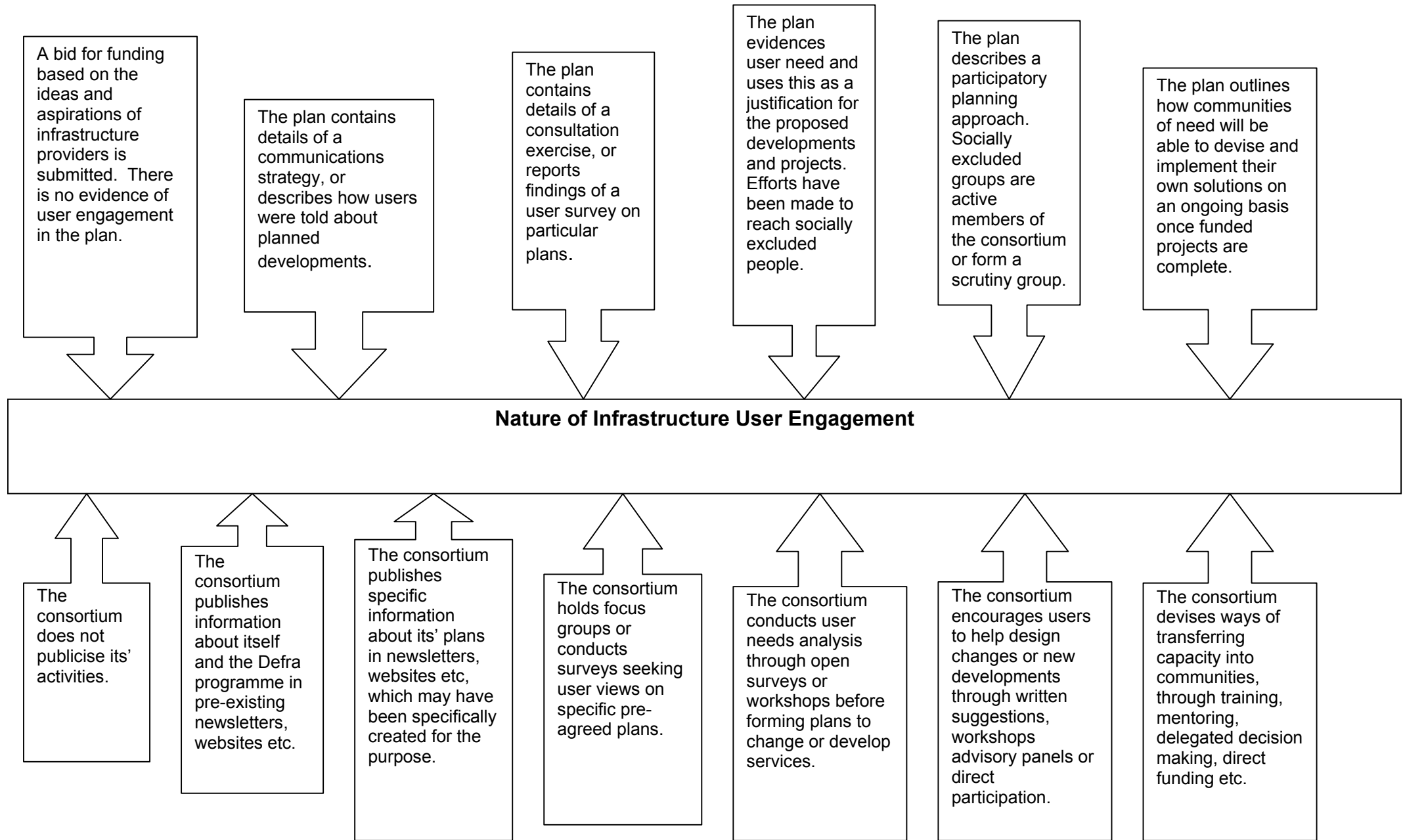


Figure 8: Diagnostic Tool - Symptoms of the Skills and Knowledge Necessary to Tackle Social Exclusion in Rural Areas

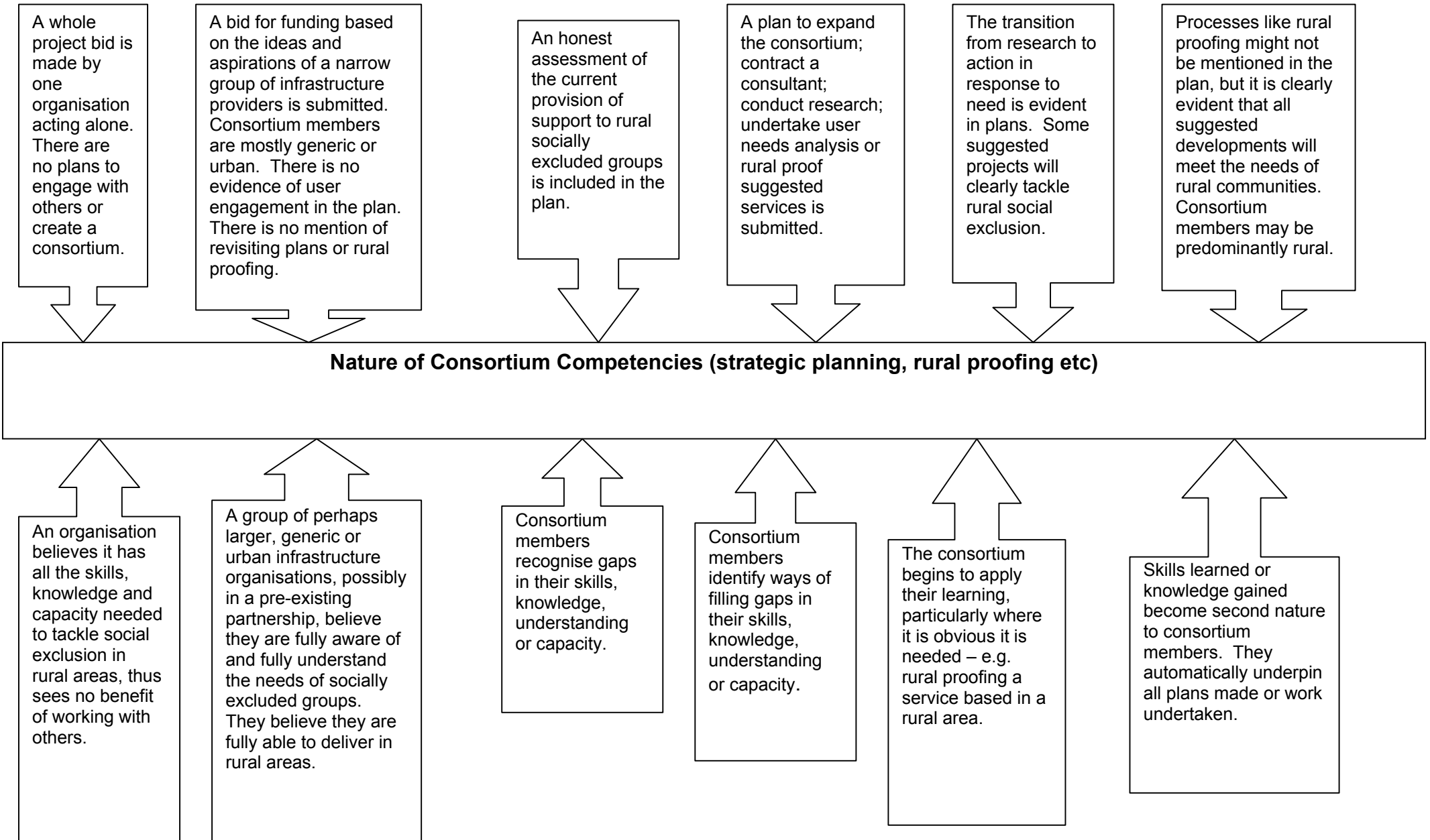
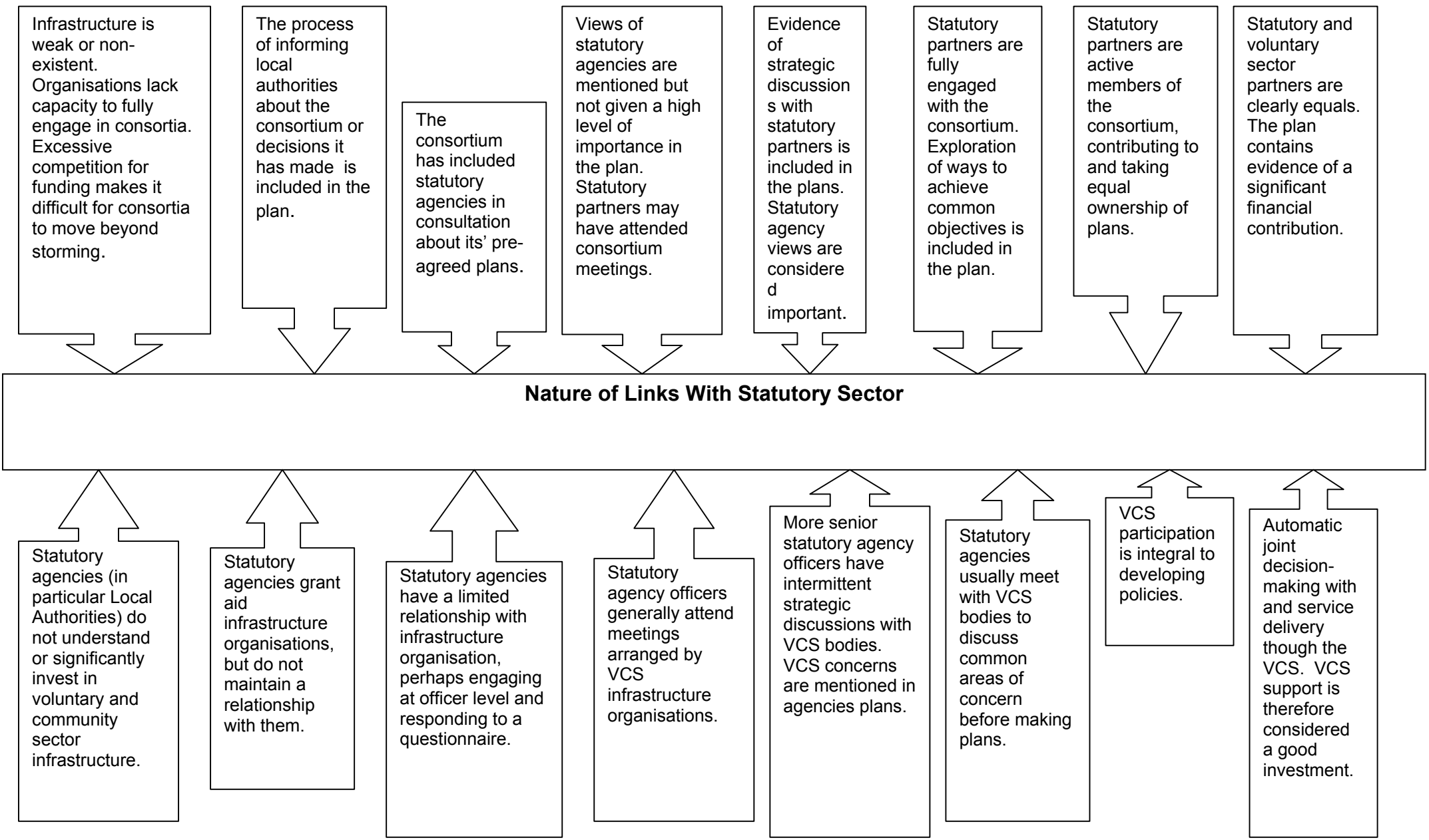


Figure 9: Diagnostic Tool - Symptoms of Nature of Relationship With Statutory Sector



The Need for Change Management

We believe that change management is at the heart of the support needed by partnerships. Experts in the field advise the following key steps to support change³⁴:

1. Ensure that those involved in effecting change understand why it is necessary and can see how it can be achieved.

An emphasis on capturing the views of service users and thorough needs analysis should go some way towards enabling members to understand why change is needed. However they may need time to synthesise this new knowledge with their previous assumptions about the future direction of their organisation. If individuals do not understand the need for change or see the personal relevance to them they are highly unlikely to actively engage in or persevere with its implementation.

When groups feel that they are simply rearranging deckchairs on the Titanic they will find it hard to see how necessary changes can be achieved. In this instance a backwards planning exercise might be useful, where the group begins with a specific change they want to effect and then pin-points the individual steps that stand between the changed state and the position they are now in. Bite-sized strategies can then be put in place to achieve each of these steps. Equally a force field analysis might help. In this exercise the group describes the present situation and the situation as they would like it to be. They then list the forces for, and those against the new situation. They underline the most important forces, and identify those they can influence, then brainstorm how they can increase the forces for, and reduce those against.

2. Recognise that change is a learning process, not an event.

Change will not automatically happen with the launch of a document or the production of a strategic plan. It is a complex learning (and unlearning) process for all concerned. Those involved need to first let go of the things they thought they knew and then learn a new set of competencies (passing through the competence cycle identified with consortium knowledge and understanding above). This is not an easy process and those supporting the change must be prepared for reactions of denial, anger, disappointment and a loss of motivation as people grieve the loss of their previous state and question their abilities and their place in the new world order. It will be important for the supporter to understand and empathise with the positions of all involved.

The most helpful resource for people undergoing this part of the change cycle is other people who are addressing the same change but who are further down the same path to successful implementation³⁵. Thus enabling access to networking, mentoring / buddying and case histories of other similar developments will be crucial in supporting change.

³⁴ Scott, G, *Key Lessons from Research on Effective Change Management & Implementation in Post-Secondary and Higher Education*, QDU, 2001

³⁵ Tough, A, *The Adult's Learning Projects*, OISE Press, Toronto, 2nd Edition, 1979

3. Change does not just happen, it must be led.

However, the most effective leaders of change do not force others along the change pathway, but encourage them to come willingly. They provide the space and resources for participants to go through the necessary learning processes for themselves.

The best way to do this is for those initiating or supporting the change to actively demonstrate their own commitment and enthusiasm for what is happening, investing money as well as time where appropriate. Active feedback, support and praise for progress are key motivators for participants in this part of the change cycle.

4. Successful solutions for change can be found both within and outside the group.

The most efficient way to implement change is to avoid reinventing the wheel. It is worth spending time considering what each member of the group already does and whether there are lessons to be learned which might present a solution to another area of need. Equally opportunities to network, identify and study successful approaches elsewhere are vital. Exploring other people's case histories can be inspirational in the search for suitable local solutions.

5. Effective implementation is a collaborative not a solitary activity.

If the local culture is antagonistic, competitive or if morale is low then partnership members are unlikely to engage in quality improvement and innovation initiatives. Improvement efforts work best when they are addressed by action teams who see the benefits of working together and who are best placed to make a particular change work. Selection of who is in each group, and who leads it is crucial. Groups will not necessarily know how to work together³⁶.

To support a group through this element of the change cycle it will be important to help them find synergies between themselves and define their common vision. A vision of the future should be broader than simply defining purpose or mission, because it places more emphasis on values and approach - how you do things as well as the result you achieve. Vision may be a helpful term if using participation techniques that encourage people to create pictures of what they want, or develop models³⁷.

It will be equally important for everyone in the group to be clear about their individual remits and agree the boundaries which each will respect. Agreed protocols can be used to establish trust between members of the group, empowering individuals to make decisions and enabling them to feel secure when acting on behalf of the group. Participants respond best to change when they can see now their role is essential to collective success.

³⁶ Scott, G, *Key Lessons from Research on Effective Change Management & Implementation in Post-Secondary and Higher Education*, QDU, 2001

³⁷ Wilcox, D *The Guide to Effective Participation*, <http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide>, 1994

Given that change is a learning process, the emphasis should be on change in practice not having meetings³⁸. Once a potential solution has been identified it should be piloted under controlled conditions, monitored, evaluated and then refined in the light of experience.

6. Evaluation is Key.

Evaluation is a step by step process³⁹:

- First identify the target group that you wish to benefit from the change you are testing out.
- Next describe your aims – the changes you want to see in or for your target group.
- Finally identify your objectives – the practical activities you will carry out to bring about these changes.

When evaluating:

- Ask yourselves have you carried out the tasks you planned to undertake? - Have you achieved your objectives by delivering the agreed outputs?
- Then ask if these tasks have had the impact on your target group that you hoped? - Have you achieved your aims by delivering the hoped for outcomes?
- If the answer to both these questions is yes it is worth trying to identify what exactly it was that has made this so successful. There might be lessons which could be applied elsewhere.
- If the answer to either question is no then it is essential to establish why you haven't achieved either your aims or objectives and to then come up with suggestions as to what you would do differently next time.

Objectives are easiest to monitor as they can typically be framed with 'hard' outputs – number of courses run, number of attendees at an event, income generated, jobs created etc;

Monitoring achievement of aims tends to rely on 'softer' outcomes – what people learned, whether attendees enjoyed the event, the impacts of increased income, the benefits of gaining a job etc. These are often best captured through things like feedback forms, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and case studies.

Cautions

Although this model sets out neat lines of progression in a traffic light system, it is important to understand that both change and these development cycles are cyclical not linear processes.

³⁸ Scott, G *Key Lessons from Research on Effective Change Management & Implementation in Post-Secondary and Higher Education*, QDU, 2001

³⁹ *Measuring Effectiveness – A self evaluation tool-kit for the national network of CVS NACVS & Charities Evaluation Service*, 2002.

For example, a partnership which feels it has achieved what it set out to do may ultimately disband, breaking relationships within and between sectors; an unconscious competent can easily become complacent, failing to notice changes in need or policy which are happening around them, thus they soon return to unconscious incompetence; whilst a user group might become so empowered that it no longer feels the need to rely on a service provider, thus the link between the two is lost.

Equally a partnership can become stuck in a particular part of the cycle, returning to the same point over and over again. The solution here is awareness of the cycle itself. It is only when a group recognises that it is in a process such as this that it can understand the need to find strategies to move forward. Otherwise there is the danger of simply accepting the status quo. External facilitation and challenge is very useful in these circumstances.

Identifying Success

For this model to be of use it is important to revisit the diagnostic tool on a relatively regular basis. It is only by demonstrating the movement of a partnership up or down the developmental scales that progress (or the lack of it) can actually be measured.

Annexe 10 Jargon buster

Defra	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
ACU	Active Communities Unit for the Home Office
GO	Regional Government Office
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector
VCO	Voluntary and Community Organisation
RCC	Rural Community Council
IIP	Infrastructure Investment Plan
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
SSP	Sub-regional Strategic Partnership
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
ACRE	Action with Communities in Rural England
CVS	Councils for Voluntary Service
NVCO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NACVS	National Association of CVS
Social Exclusion	a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown ⁴⁰
Infrastructure Organisation	VCS infrastructure organisations provide capacity building support to Voluntary and Community Organisations (VCOs), they represent VCO interests and provide a voice for VCOs in policy making. Infrastructure organisations exist at national, regional and local levels and may also be known as ‘umbrella’ or ‘second tier’ organisations. This is because they provide support to ‘first tier’ or ‘front-line’ VCOs. ⁴¹
Generic Infrastructure Organisation	Generic infrastructure organisations provide support to all VCOs within a particular geographic area ⁴²
Specialist Infrastructure	Specialist or sub-sectoral infrastructure organisations provide support to VCOs working with specific communities/client groups or within specific service areas. ⁴³

⁴⁰ *ChangeUp and Defra Infrastructure Investment Programmes Guidance for Government Offices.* Defra, 2004

⁴¹ *Strengthening Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure: The Rural Analysis*, NCVO, 2003

⁴² *ibid*

⁴³ *ibid*