

Tender for Evaluation for Connecting People into Communities Programme

Bristol City Council, in collaboration with eight VCSE organisations, is inviting bids from interested parties to undertake detailed evaluation of the Connecting People into Communities programme.

1. Background to project

Connecting People into Communities is a programme funded by Bristol City Council to support and nurture an asset-based community development approach to connect with the most isolated members of communities (e.g. the elderly, people who are medically compromised, people with mental health challenges).

Typical interventions include door knocking, setting up community conversations (through meetings, pop-up events, parent chats on school gates, etc.) and engagement activities (art classes, lunch clubs, walking groups, etc.) in community spaces to learn more about individual hopes, skills and aspirations, with the aim of connecting people with each other; linking them in with established voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations and grassroots groups in the area; and enabling them to set up their own activities where appropriate.

Bristol City Council has funded approximately 12 full time-equivalent posts at eight VCSE organisations to deliver this work over a period of two and a half years (April 2022 – September 2024). This includes four equalities organisations:

- Black South West Network
- Bristol Disability Equality Forum
- Pakistani Welfare Organisation
- Somali Resource Centre

Three VCSE locality hubs:

- Knowle West Health Park
- Southmead Development Trust
- Wellspring Settlement

And one infrastructure organisation:

- VOSCUR

The work builds on the One City Many Communities approach was developed during the early Covid-19 waves and as part of the Cost of Living community response, and which now serves as a framework for a way of working across the city of Bristol.

2. Purpose of evaluation

We firmly believe that a community development approach can play an integral role in improving an individual's mental and physical health and wellbeing, reducing social isolation and building community connections. Our ambition through this evaluation is to:

- Celebrate the people and groups that have been a part of the programme;
- Record and recognise the efforts and work of the organisations involved in the programme;
- Build an evidence base that informs the case for ongoing funding from the emergent Integrated Care Board and other partners.

3. What we are looking for

We are looking for an organisation, business or individual that can develop and implement evaluation methods that are in tune with the nature of community development work and the people that our programme works alongside. We are open to different approaches to undertaking the evaluation, but we would expect them to be underpinned by certain core principles:

- An understanding of voluntary and community sector organisations, and of sector dynamics;
- An asset-based approach to working with people, which will involve among other things trust, humanity and inclusivity;
- An understanding of equity and inequity, and the dynamics of power;
- The ability to be patient and flexible in the context of the potentially complex and fluid circumstances of the people and organisations involved in the evaluation;
- The ability to devise an approach that is adaptable and adapted to the diversity of the people that this programme works with;
- A commitment to integrity and accountability to the communities involved in this programme;
- A commitment to social value;
- A place-based approach that understands complexity and the strengths, needs and priorities of people and the importance of co-production;
- A delivery team that is informed by lived experience or can demonstrate a track record of working closely with diverse communities.

Similarly, we are open to suggestions in terms of the profile of the evaluation output, however we would expect it to meet as a minimum the following requirements:

- A high quality final written report, capturing main findings and reflections, that can be disseminated to policymakers within the public and health sectors;
- A creative output that is accessible to the communities that will have taken part in the evaluation, with due consideration for the range and complexity of the communities that will be covered by this work;
- Regular meetings with the programme's evaluation subgroup to provide updates, sense check and course correct as required;
- A minimum of two presentations: the first to the programme management group, and the second as part of a public event still to be defined.

There is no set timescale for the work to take place: we would anticipate bidders to set out a timescale based on their chosen approach. However, there are two key dates to take into account:

- Several organisations are currently funded by this programme only up to the 31st March 2024, so we would expect them to be prioritised in the early stages to ensure that the staff involved are able to contribute to the evaluation;
- We are planning on organising an end of programme event in September 2024, at which the successful applicant would be expected to present their evaluation findings.

4. Managing scale and encouraging collaboration

We recognise that the evaluation brief contains multiple, complex requirements and that not all bidders may have the capacity or ability to fulfil all of them. In keeping with the spirit and ambition of the Connecting People into Communities programme, however, we are keen to recognise the assets that various individuals, groups or companies might be able to bring as part of a wider collaboration. We would therefore invite anyone that has an interest in this project to contact us using the details below and to discuss how they might be able to contribute.

Please note, however, that any collaboration that is enabled by Wellspring Settlement and its programme partners will need to be led and managed by a single lead organisation. In the case of bidders proposing a collaboration comprising individuals from other companies or acting as self-employed consultants, the lead organisation will be responsible for agreeing subcontracting arrangements with them. The lead organisation will also be responsible for quality assurance and day-to-day management of their subcontractors' work.

5. About the project

The development worker goes into their communities and meets and chats with as many individuals in communities as possible. Through this approach they learn who is isolated in their community, what kind of support and activities are already happening, which people within the neighbourhood act as connectors and get things done. We offer a route to link the individual to what they need for their wellbeing. This is tailored to each situation (e.g.: somebody lacking in confidence might want to regularly meet up with someone on a 1;1 basis to start with, someone with a particular interest might want to join an established group, a motivated individual might set up their own group if they are supported to find people with similar interests).

Each organisation has been asked to measure:

- Community Building conversations;
- People connected into existing activities;
- Existing groups supported;
- New groups established;
- New people taking leadership roles in community activities.

Based on these activities, we expect to see the evaluation test the following outcomes:

- A reduction in isolation: numbers of people in community activities has increased, knowing or connected to more neighbours than before the intervention;
- Community building: more activities happening with a greater share that are community-led, thereby building community resilience and social capital;
- Conditions enabling community action to improve: more spaces available for community activity and small amounts of funding happening for more community linking;
- Improvements in both mental and physical health and wellbeing through self- and practitioner reporting.

6. Deadlines

The deadline for questions is Tuesday 17th October 2023. We will aim to provide a personal response to any questions sent to us and will summarise all the questions and answers with all interested bidders by this date.

The deadline for bids is 10am, Monday 30th October 2023, with the shortlist to be confirmed by Wednesday 1st November 2023.

Shortlisted bidders will be invited for a presentation and interview on Wednesday 15th November 2023.

7. Budget

We have allocated a maximum of £30,000 for the evaluation. We will apply a 'most economically advantageous tender' approach to assessing the bids, which means that the lowest bid is not necessarily guaranteed to be successful.

8. How the bid will be assessed

We would expect any successful bid to meet the minimum requirements and demonstrate an understanding of the core principles set out in section 5.

The expression of interest for undertaking the work should include:

- A keynote statement regarding the bidders' understanding of the brief and factors that need to be considered;
- A detailed statement of how the project will be approached, with an emphasis on the complexities and how they might be addressed;
- Evidence of a track record of work relevant to the brief;
- An outline methodology or approach for undertaking the work;
- A timescale for carrying out the project, considering the timelines outlined in the brief;
- CVs of the team lead(s) alongside an outline of the roles required to undertake the work;
- The overall cost for the work, inclusive of VAT, with a breakdown of costs.

Proposals submitted will be assessed against the following questions:

- To what extent does the proposal demonstrate an understanding of the issues related to this brief?
- To what extent are the methodology and methods appropriate to the requirements set out in this brief?
- What degree of experience does the bidder demonstrate to successfully complete the work?

For more information and how to apply:

We welcome the opportunity for a more detailed discussion about the brief and the programme as a whole.

For any queries, please contact edouard.guidon@wsb.org.uk or on 0117 304 1403.

To apply, please send your expression of interest with any supporting documentation to edouard.guidon@wsb.org.uk.