

**Voice4Change England**

**“Building capabilities for impact and legacy” discussion paper**

**Consultation Response Summary**

**Submitted to Big Lottery Fund**

**March 2012**



## Voice4Change England response to the Big Lottery Fund “Building capabilities for impact and legacy” discussion paper

### Structure of the response

We have responded directly to the questions asked in the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) discussion paper via the online survey provided at the BLF website. This document provides a summary of our key points made in response to each question.

### Methodology for the response

1. This response is informed by two bespoke online surveys, one targeted at BME frontline and one at BME support organisations. We sent and promoted the surveys to a wide range of contacts including Voice4Change England (V4CE) members and all BME VCOs that registered interest in being part of Transforming Local Infrastructure programme delivery partnerships. In total V4CE received 29 complete responses to the surveys: 15 organisations responded to the frontline survey and 14 organisations responded to the support organisation survey.
2. Respondents to our survey included:

*Association of Panel Members  
AWAZ Cumbria  
BAOBAB Venture  
Bedfordshire Race & Equalities Council  
Black South West Network  
Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum  
Cooperative Community Action Ltd  
Centre for Youth and Community Development  
Cheshire, Halton & Warrington Race & Equality Centre  
Cooperative Community Action Ltd  
Council of Disabled People  
Croydon BME Forum  
Diamonds In The Rough CIC  
Ekta Project  
Eritrean Community Association in Greater Manchester  
Hertfordshire Equality Council  
Humber All Nations Alliance  
Interlink Foundation  
Kaleidoscope Enterprise Ltd  
Leeds Reach  
Leeds Refugee Forum  
Northern Refugee Centre  
Pakistan Association Huddersfield  
Racial Harmony Foundation  
Racial Justice in North Yorkshire  
Ring4change  
Sickle Cell/ Thalassaemia Support Group of BDH*

Additionally we carried out an in-depth interview with the Chief Executive of one of our member organisations, Naz Project London, which provides frontline sexual health and HIV prevention services and support services to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in London.

3. Our response also draws on previous consultation responses V4CE has submitted including:
- Supporting a Stronger Civil Society: An Office for Civil Society consultation on improving support for frontline civil society organisations (January 2011).
  - Modernising Commissioning (January 2011).
4. V4CE has also incorporated our own evidence and research we have collected through our work including:
- Findings from our *Shared vision for the future of the BME VCS* research. This included over 100 online survey respondents as well as thirteen in depth interviews with leaders in the BME VCS (September, 2010).
  - Focus groups carried out in Bedford and Manchester to inform our response to the Office for Civil Society's Supporting Civil Society consultation (November/December 2010).
  - A focus group in the North West with BME VCOs looking at the impact of public spending cuts (November 2010).

We are grateful to all that contributed and helped to shape and inform this response.

### **Demand led**

<p><b>1 How can we ensure that frontline organisations have the information that they need to be aware of the most effective ways of developing their capabilities and choose the right provider?</b></p>
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- Overall we support the Big Lottery Fund's (BLF) view that frontline organisations should have a greater say in what support they need and where to get it. However frontline organisations face a number of challenges including knowing: what support is available to them; the quality of support providers offer; whether the support is appropriate to their needs; and whether support providers have a real understanding of how a BME VCO operates.
- Respondents to our online survey were largely supportive of the mechanisms suggested by BLF to help frontline VCOs find the support they need. Frontline organisations reported that:
  - 77% would find bursaries to cover the costs of peer-to-peer support very helpful.
  - 65% would find funding to buy services very helpful.
  - 53% considered a voucher system to be quite helpful, and 33% very helpful.
- We recommend that any online system which BLF develops to help frontline organisations find information builds on and signposts to existing services, such as V4CE's online portal, and avoids reinventing the wheel. We also recommend that any online resources are not the only source of information as they are not always appropriate or accessible, and are not reflexive to the needs of small locally based VCOs.

## **2 Should we consider any other approaches to enable frontline organisations to choose the support that they need?**

- In addition to the mechanisms suggested by BLF, 69% of support organisations participating in our survey, and 63% of frontline organisations felt that **training** would be very helpful. 69% of support organisations and 50% of frontline organisations also felt that **mentoring services** would be very helpful.
- The preference for these mechanisms reflects our research findings that for some organisations, face to face support is an active choice over online resources. It should be considered that some small grassroots organisations may have limited access to the internet and rely on face-to-face advice and guidance.

## **3 Should we require frontline organisations which receive support to develop ways of sharing their learning with others? How can we help them do this?**

- V4CE believes that when frontline organisations receive support it can be helpful for them to share their learning to spread good practice. However any **requirement to share learning should be appropriate and proportionate** to the type of organisation and funding received, and should be supported by the funder.
- Demonstrating the impact of support received can be particularly challenging when working with disadvantaged communities and can incur significant time and resource costs. BLF should provide funded frontline organisations with the resources and support to carry out effective evaluation.
- We believe that learning and experience can be shared using a variety of channels. BLF should consider a more innovative approach using other models, for example, developing an interactive review system which enables frontline organisations to rate support providers against a number of key indicators.
- We also said that the onus should not fall solely on frontline organisations to share learning and good practice. BLF can play a proactive role in facilitating the process. BLF may consider focussing the sharing of good practice on specific themes for example equality, or demonstrating impact.

## **4 What are the key support needs which you think frontline organisations may require in the future?**

- Through our online survey, recent research and consultation, We have identified a number of key areas of support that BME frontline organisations will need in the future to help them become sustainable and resilient:

**Performance support:** Performance management; Demonstrating impact; Meeting recognised quality standards; Articulating 'social return on investment' and 'value for money'; Creating efficiency.

**Funding and sustainability:** Business strategy development and promotion; Establishing trading and new business models; Bidding for contracts and working with commissioners; Consortia bidding; Fundraising and income generation.

**Stronger organisations:** Leadership and governance; Skills development and training for staff and volunteers; Workforce development and staffing issues; Recruiting, supporting and managing volunteers; Equality and diversity issues; Premise and equipment management; Legal requirements to run as a charity, company or social enterprise; Knowledge of employment law; ICT and using computers.

**Working together:** Building relationships with the public sector; Compact and Public Law; Mergers, collaborations, and partnerships.

**Creating change:** Research and evidence gathering; Influencing skills to ensure mainstream services meet specific needs of BME communities; Policy influencing and campaigning skills; Providing evidence of need; Community representation; Marketing and communications; Using social media.

## **5 What role could we play in enabling social enterprises to secure investment?**

- Our survey for frontline organisations identified a number of barriers which social enterprises were facing in securing investment including:
  1. Lack of availability of grants.
  2. Lack of appropriate finance for the purposes of growth.
  3. Lack of engagement in policy making processes.
  4. Lack of clarity about equity got social enterprise.
  5. Financial skill set of the sector still being underdeveloped.
  6. Social return on investment remaining weak.
  7. Lack of market investment.
- We recommended that support services need to help BME social enterprises to tackle these barriers. Respondents to our survey all felt that better access to information and services would help them to overcome the barriers they face to securing investment. One participant suggested that being mentored by a similar organisation would also provide them with the support to strengthen and develop.

## Improving supply

### 6 *Are there particular support services which could not be funded through a demand-led approach? If so what are they and why?*

- We recognise that there are particular support services which could not be funded through a demand led approach. **We welcome BLF's willingness to make targeted investments where needed to support providers to enable them to develop quality services.**
- We strongly agree with the areas highlighted in NAVCA's response to the discussion paper, where BLF should consider targeted investment: Sectoral challenges; **Representational work; Supporting new and emerging groups.**
- **Linked to the notion of sectoral challenges, the policy influence role which BME support providers play is crucial to ensuring that BME VCO's voices are heard within public policy development.** This often requires a top down approach whereby larger support organisations with the capacity and remit to provide a policy voice, engage with their members in order to inform responses to government policy. BLF should consider resourcing support organisations to continue to provide the vital voice function to enable the breadth of the BME VCS to be considered within policy design and development.
- We recommended that BLF should consider providing **targeted investment** to specialist organisations with a strong track record in monitoring and evaluation, demonstrating impact and measuring Social Return on Investment, to provide practical support to other support organisations which find it difficult to demonstrate their value and impact. .

### 7 *How can we get the balance right between encouraging providers to cooperate and rationalise existing services and allowing frontline organisations to choose the right provider?*

- We are concerned that the interpretation of rationalisation could lead to the further marginalisation of BME support providers. A prime example is provided by evidence we have collected of BME VCS involvement in the Transforming Local Infrastructure programme, which aims to consolidate and rationalise support services at a local level. Organisations felt that the tight timescales involved and the way the bidding process was framed were not inclusive and 'heavily weighted towards service providers such as CVS' (Chair, Bedfordshire Race and Equalities Council).
- Our research shows that BME support is required at all special levels. Capacity building is not a generic skill that can be rolled out to meet the needs of all organisations. BME VCOs have specific challenges and capacity building needs.
- Whilst there should be recognition for the need to retain specialist support services, where rationalisation is decided as the way forward, we believe that there is an opportunity for better partnership working between support organisations to ensure BME VCOs can access the full range of support available and to achieve efficiency savings.

- Better collaboration between BME VCOs with generic VCOs that are committed to equality can help the BME VCS to reduce costs. However there is a risk that partnerships with generic infrastructure support providers may lead to the invisibility of the BME VCS and the 'BME perspective'. To be successful the ethos of each organisation should match and the role of each partner should be clearly recognised.
- Support organisations responding to our survey to inform the response to the discussion paper reported that the type of support they needed to help form collaborations included: networking opportunities; good practice examples; relationship management support; and skills in change management, leadership and vision. V4CE has been funded by the City Bridge Trust for a two year project in London on how to build fair and equitable partnerships between BME and generic VCOs. We would be happy to share the findings of our work to share good practice and innovation.

<p><b>8 What are the key areas where support providers could themselves benefit from advice and support?</b></p>
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- We highlighted that limited capacity can prevent BME VCS support providers reaching frontline organisations particularly where there is a demand for intensive one to one support.
- BME support organisations responding to our online survey reported that fundraising and income generation is the area in which they need the most advice and support in order to improve their organisation. Other prominent areas of support identified by support organisations responding to our survey include:
  - Business strategy development and promotion.
  - Mergers, collaborations and partnerships (please refer to answer to question 7).
  - Connecting with the public sector.
  - Policy influencing and campaigning skills.
  - Monitoring and evaluation of impact.
  - Tendering for contracts.
  - Consortia bidding.
  - Articulating 'social return on investment' and 'value for money'.
- It is important that BME VCO support providers have the skills and resources to influence funders and generic providers delivering support. Demonstrating the needs of the BME VCS and the impact of organisations not receiving support is very important. Limited resources in the sector mean that existing data, which is patchy, would be difficult to compile further creating barriers to the sector effectively demonstrating its value.
- Support organisations that V4CE has engaged with have also identified knowledge of **employment law** as an area in which support is required. **BLF should explore options to work with legal advice providers to provide pro bono mentoring support and training opportunities.**

## **9 What role could the private sector play in helping to develop the skills and resources of VCS organisations and social enterprises?**

- Our evidence and research indicates that local businesses could have much to offer and share with small BME VCOs. It is important that BLF works with BME support organisations to support and promote its role and value and to influence Corporate Social Responsibility policies to include working with small and local BME VCOs and the communities they serve.
- Respondents to our survey identified **pro bono mentoring support and fundraising** as being the most significant roles private sector organisations could play in helping support organisations develop their skills and resources.
- Other areas identified by our survey respondents as areas in which support could be provided by the private sector are **marketing, financial management, secondments and job swap schemes, research assistance, and purchasing of VCS services**.

### **About Voice4Change England**

Voice4Change England (V4CE) is a national advocate for the Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community sector (BME VCS). BME voluntary and community organisations (BME VCOs) are a crucial part of civil society that have emerged from and work for BME communities. By supporting the BME VCS we aim to improve the life outcomes for BME and other disadvantaged communities. As the only national membership organisation dedicated to the BME VCS we speak up to policymakers on the issues that matter to the sector; bring the sector together to share good practice; and develop the sector to better meet the needs of communities.

### **About the BME voluntary and community sector**

The BME-led VCS plays a crucial role in tackling race inequalities. Through a range of activities including cultural, social and economic support programmes; advocacy and advice on legal issues; health services; supplementary schools; and day care community centres, the BME VCS empowers communities to design solutions; build social cohesion; tackle race inequalities and discrimination; identify and respond to needs; and to be heard by policymakers. BME VCOs reach communities that others cannot and do not reach. They combine creativity, flexibility and commitment to meet the changing needs of BME communities. They also play an active role in advocating for changes in the policy and practice of generic service providers.

### **Further information**

If you would like to discuss our response further or if you have any questions please contact Ravi Chauhan, Policy Officer, Voice4Change England at [info@voice4change-england.co.uk](mailto:info@voice4change-england.co.uk) or on 0843 208 1252.

For more information about Voice4Change England's activities, please visit [www.voice4change-england.co.uk](http://www.voice4change-england.co.uk).

Our postal address is Voice4Change-England, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Lancaster House, 31-33 Islington High Street, London, N1 9LH.