



National Programme for Third Sector Commissioning

Government announced the National Programme in the Partnership in Public Service: an action plan for third sector involvement, published in December 2006.

The action plan can be downloaded here:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/public_service_delivery

A press release on 14 March 2007 announced IDeA as the delivery partner for the National Programme:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/news/news_releases/070314_idea.asp

The action plan announced that government will establish a two-year National Programme for Third sector Commissioning that will invest in the skills of 2,000 commissioners from across the public sector – including staff in Jobcentre Plus, PCTs, NOMS and local councils – who we consider have the biggest impact on the third sector. In order to ensure its messages become part of mainstream approaches, the Programme will operate in conjunction with existing training and support for Commissioners. Specifically, it will

- Work with an invest in existing programmes seeking to improve commissioning practice in general to ensure commissioners address third sector issues;
- Bring greater coherence, focus and investment to specific programmes on the third sector; and
- Ensure there is a comprehensive package of training on what the third sector can offer commissioners

A programme director...will secure involvement from relevant partners, including, among others, central government departments, sector representatives, the Regional Centres of Excellence, the Centre for Procurement Performance and the Care Services Improvement Partnership by April 2007.

The director and his/her team will develop and establish the programme during the first quarter of the 2007/08 financial year. Working with the Commissioner for the Compact, the National School of Government and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), the programme will:

- Offer awareness and skills training for both elected members and officers;
- Co-ordinate specialist guidance and support on commissioning services from the third sector;
- Increase understanding of the third sector among local commissioning and procurement officers; and
- Take steps to improve the sectors bidding capacity, in particular among smaller organisations.¹

¹ Partnership in Public Services, paragraphs 38 to 40

FAQs

What do you hope to achieve through this programme?

The Government wants to use the strengths of a range of providers to improve public services. Building a better understanding of third sector organisations among those who commission work for public services will help to create greater opportunity for third sector groups that want to be involved in the design or delivery of public services.

How and when will we measure the success of the programme?

One of the first tasks of the Programme Director will be to scope the programme and to develop success measures in conjunction with OTS.

When will the Programme Director be in post?

We are currently recruiting the Programme Director and we hope to have them in post in the near future. The Programme Manager will be starting shortly.

Who will be on the steering group?

The Steering Group will include representatives from the Third Sector, the Office of the Third Sector, IDeA, large public service delivery government departments (DoH, DfES, NOMS, DWP, DCLG) and other stakeholders with a clear interest in the programme. Further announcements will be made in due course.

What will the steering group do?

The group will develop a brief for the programme that will set the strategic direction. It will also monitor the work as it is carried out.

When will the training actually start?

We want to get the programme into action as soon as possible but must consider a range of learning options to get the best results. The programme will be established during the first quarter of 2007/08 financial year but we cannot give a specific start date at the moment. It is probable that some pilots will be run to help shape the programme.

When will we have more detail on what the training will actually involve?

The Programme Director and Programme Manager, together with the steering group, will be determining the detail of the National Programme. It is unlikely to take the form of a traditional "training course" but rather will work with existing programmes, courses and ways commissioners and the third sector learn in order to embed the lessons learnt.

What is the cost of this programme?

The programme will cost approximately £2million over two years (2007/08 and 2008/09). OTS is also providing some funding to IDeA towards start up and wind down.

I have another question / I know about something which might help the National Programme / I'm interested in being kept informed about the programme

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