



Registered charity number in England & Wales number 1114742

Voluntary Sector Studies Network

INVITATION TO TENDER FOR PROVISION OF A VSSN “EXECUTIVE OFFICER” ROLE

From 1 July 2010 – anticipated three year contract

Deadline for tenders: 21 April 2010

About VSSN

The Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN) is a UK-wide association, and a registered charity, which aims to “promote understanding of the UK voluntary sector through research”. VSSN brings together academic researchers, research students, and researchers based within voluntary organisations who have an interest in any aspect of the work of the voluntary (or third) sector.

Researchers interested in the sector can come from almost any discipline: current members come from social science, management and organisational studies, social policy, law, history, accounting, information systems, and more. VSSN seeks to act as an umbrella for such work, arguing for the importance of voluntary sector research, and providing opportunities for networking and research collaboration between voluntary sector researchers.

VSSN currently has approximately 146 paid-up members, comprising 88 individual members and 13 organisational members covering 58 people. (An organisational member can nominate up to 5 representatives who then have most of the rights of individual members.) It also has over 450 subscribers to a wider e-mail discussion list. The Network aims to grow these figures in the future.

Staff and graduates from almost all UK universities with specific work on the voluntary sector are involved in VSSN, and many charitable organisations with their own research departments also have people actively involved.

Main Activities

The main activities of VSSN at present are:

- Twice-yearly VSSN one-day seminars with a range of research papers – the venue rotates around the UK at the invitation of members
- Joint organisation with NCVO of the annual *Researching the Voluntary Sector Conference* each September
- The journal *Voluntary Sector Review* (VSR) published by The Policy Press under an agreement with VSSN. The Editorial Management Board of VSR is a committee of VSSN. All members receive a printed copy of VSR as a benefit of their VSSN membership.
- An active web site at www.vssn.org.uk with details of events, news, contacts and a wide range of information likely to be useful to voluntary sector researchers
- A *VSSN Members Research Directory* currently being developed as an online resource (previously published in printed form every two years)
- The VSSN e-mail discussion list

- For further details, see the VSSN web site as above, and you may wish to download the most recent Annual Report (available at www.vssn.org.uk/events/agm2009).

Organisation

VSSN was founded in 1996 and became formally constituted in 2003 and a registered charity in 2006. The trustees (who are elected by the members at the AGM) are referred to as the *Steering Group* (SG).

Initially all activities of VSSN were undertaken on a voluntary basis by the SG members themselves and a few other willing helpers. However, since 2007, VSSN has created the role of *Executive Officer* which is provided under contract. From 2007 to 2010 the Executive Officer role has been provided by the Association of University Administrators. However, the initial three year contract for this work is now almost complete, and the SG is inviting fresh tenders from an individual or organisation which can take over this role and develop VSSN further for the period from 1 July 2010.

The Executive Officer Budget and Tender Process

VSSN has set aside a budget of £3000 for the Executive Officer contract and the VSSN trustees (Steering Group) are inviting applications from institutions and individuals to provide this service, including a nominated individual to act as VSSN Executive Officer.

This is an inclusive figure – if you will need to charge VAT, the £3000 figure should be treated as a VAT-inclusive amount.

Tenders are invited indicating how you could provide this service. The SG is particularly looking for tenders from those who share VSSN's goal of developing the field of voluntary sector research in the UK, and who are willing to make a considerable commitment to the role. It must be stressed that although many of the tasks are administrative, the role is strategic, and tenders should indicate clearly how the bidder feels their existing expertise or other activities can provide a source of strength to support the development of VSSN.

Requirements of the Role

VSSN will look to the Executive Officer to provide the following services and keep the records indicated.

1. Financial support and information

Receiving payments from those joining or renewing their membership or paying for seminar attendance and banking these (the Executive Officer will hold the paying in book). Any payments sent to the office will normally be by cheque, although payments may be in cash at VSSN seminars.

Maintain an up-to-date database of the following information.

Details about payments by the executive officer into the VSSN bank account

1. the number of the bank payment (as on the credit slip)
2. the date paid in
3. total amount of the bank payment
4. the individual items included in the bank payment, by type (e.g. subscriptions, donations, day-conference fees, etc.) and the amount under each heading

2. Membership information

Maintain an up-to-date database of the following information, structured so that snapshots can be taken at regular intervals and changes over time can be tracked.

A Record for each member (including individuals covered by organisational membership)

1. name
 2. title
 3. full postal address
 4. email address
 5. membership (maintaining a record for each subscription year)
 - a. year covered
 - b. date subscription paid
 - c. how much paid
 - d. whether organisational or individual membership
 - e. if organisational, name of organisation and whether lead person
 6. day conference by date and location
 - a. whether attended
 - b. when day conference fee paid
 - c. how much paid
 7. annual conference by date
 - a. whether attended
 8. Notes about payment status (e.g. awaiting payment, cheque being chased up etc)
- B Record for each organisational member**
1. name of lead person
 2. title of lead person
 3. full postal address of lead person
 4. email address of lead person
 5. membership (maintaining a record for each subscription year)
 - a. year covered
 - b. date subscription paid
 - c. how much paid
 - d. names of all people covered by the organisational membership
 6. Notes about payment status (e.g. awaiting payment, cheque being chased up etc)
- C Record for each non-member attending a day-conference**
1. name
 2. title
 3. full postal address
 4. email address
 5. date and location of event attended
 6. payment details
 - a. amount of the payment
 - b. whether payment is by cash or cheque
 - c. notes about payment status (e.g. awaiting payment, cheque being chased up etc)

3. Day-conference information

- 3.1. Supply the event organiser with the materials listed under 3A below and with forms on which to record the information listed under 3B below (in a format consistent with what is needed to maintain the above financial and membership databases).

A Materials for day-conference organisers

1. an up-to-date schedule of subscription rate bands and event fee bands (noting that the latter might vary from event to event – consult the organiser on each occasion)
2. an up-to-date list of members, both individual and organisational, and for organisational members, the name of each person it covers
3. a note of any members who have payments outstanding
4. receipts to issue

B Record for each attendee

1. member or non-member, and whether joined on the day
2. the date and amount of the payment

3. whether payment is by cash or cheque
 4. for subscriptions, the financial year covered by the payment
 5. for subscriptions, whether they are organisational or individual and, if organisational, the name of the organisation and the lead person
 6. for day seminar fees, whether they cover members or non-members
 7. for members' day seminar fees, whether they are at the full or concessionary rate
 8. for day seminar fees, the date and place of the event they relate to
 9. for combined day seminar fee and membership subscription payments, the value of each.
- 3.2. Receive the completed forms used for 3B and check and follow up with the event organiser and/or the attendees any inconsistencies or gaps in the information; check that the money received tallies with that recorded as having been collected and follow up any discrepancies with the event organiser; take action as necessary in the light of discrepancies and the notes about payment status by following up with attendees; request payment from no-shows; and transfer all relevant information to financial/membership database.

4. Membership renewals

- 4.1. The subscription year runs from 1 October to 30 September. In September, draft an invitation to renew for the VSSN Chair (currently Chris Cornforth) to edit and approve. Email it to all individual members and lead persons in organisational memberships whose subscription is about to end (that is, excluding those who joined since May). Include a request to check and amend if necessary their title, postal and email addresses. Email two reminders to those who fail to renew, one after two weeks and another after a further two weeks. Update the membership and financial databases as appropriate. If those who fail to renew have an entry on Membership Directory website or Course Directory website, delete these entries.
- 4.2. As soon as practicable after the VSSN/NCVO annual conference, liaise with the NCVO organiser to obtain a list of attendees, from which extract the names and email addresses of all non-members. Draft an invitation to join for the VSSN Membership and Marketing Officer to edit and approve, before emailing it.

5. Reporting

- 5.1. Supply the VSSN Treasurer (currently Cathy Pharoah) with a quarterly report of all the information listed under 1. above, in a spreadsheet. Include a note about any problems arising from 3.2 above.
- 5.2. Supply the VSSN Membership and Marketing Officer (currently Robert Dalziel) with a quarterly report recording a 'snapshot' from the database of the following information, 1 to 6 in a spreadsheet and 7 to 9 in a table:
 1. member names – both individual members and all the people included in organisational memberships
 2. for people included in organisational memberships, their organisational affiliation/institutions
 3. subscription rate paid – both individual and organisational subscriptions
 4. subscription start date
 5. subscription end date
 6. date paid
 7. number and percentage of members in each subscription rate band
 8. total value of subscriptions in each band and percentage of overall subscription income in each band
 9. ratio of percentage of overall value over percentage of members in each band
- 5.3. In the quarterly report to the VSSN Membership and Marketing Officer following the annual conference, include:
 1. the number attending the annual conference, split by members and non-members

2. the number responding positively to the invitation to join.
- 5.4. Three times per year, on 1st February, 1st June and 1st October, supply the editor of Voluntary Sector Review (currently Peter Halfpenny) with a list of the names, full postal addresses and email addresses of all paid-up individual members and the lead individuals of all organizational members. Any new members since the previous list to be clearly identified.

6. VSSN website

The new e-services strategy recently adopted by the Steering Group will lead to the replacement of the current website by one that offers an integrated multi-functional platform and is based on a more interactive and decentralised model. The Executive Officer will support the Steering Group and the Web Officer in the implementation of VSSN's e- services strategy, particularly with regards to the following tasks:

- 6.1. In the near future, the Executive Officer will be requested to provide help with transferring the content from the old site to the new one. Instruction will be provided by the VSSN web officer (currently Véronique Jochum).
- 6.2. Once the new website is up and running, help with basic updates, particularly regarding events.
- 6.3. Receive requests to enter a profile on the Membership Directory website and a course on the Course Directory website. If the request comes from a member, approve it. If the request comes from a non-member, refuse it and email the requester an invitation to join.

7. Other Support

The requirements set out above are the *minimum administrative requirements* that VSSN requires from the Executive Officer, but the role is much more than administrative. The Executive Officer has a significant role in developing the Network. As a minimum we expect you to understand clearly the nature of VSSN's work and activities so you can respond positively to enquirers, giving them clear reasons for joining VSSN and attending VSSN seminars. An excellent standard of customer service is expected for all those who contact you.

Please spell out in your tender how you would address these more strategic issues. In particular, you may consider it important to attend at least some VSSN events to keep in touch with members of VSSN and SG members in particular – please indicate what you feel is realistic.

Please also indicate any other specific strengths you could offer.

8. Organisation of the Work and Facilities to be Provided

You will provide your own IT facilities for the Executive Officer role, including a reliable PC or laptop with printer and internet access. As a minimum you will need Word, Excel and PowerPoint, and a suitable email client.

VSSN will provide you with suitable e-mail addresses (info@vssn.org.uk and execofficer@vssn.org.uk) for incoming messages. You will need to configure your e-mail program to send and receive messages from this address, separately from any other e-mail accounts you use, and your outgoing messages will be routed through your existing Internet Service Provider. (VSSN can provide advice on the details of this if needed, but in general you will need your own IT support arrangements.)

You will provide a clear UK postal address and telephone number for VSSN which will be advertised as the central point of contact for VSSN on the VSSN website and on all VSSN publications. You will be expected to provide an answering machine or voicemail to receive

calls when you are not available, and this should mention VSSN in the message. (However, we are *not* requiring the provision of an exclusive telephone number.)

You will also provide reasonable storage facilities for VSSN paper-based documents.

You will deal promptly with incoming post, e-mails and telephone calls: please indicate in your tender what kind of response you believe you can offer – including allowance for holidays etc. (Bear in mind that this is not a full time role, and we realise you will have other commitments).

9. Your Emphasis and Skills Required

VSSN is willing to consider different approaches to this role. However, good IT skills/internet competence *and* strong administrative/customer relations skills are vital in all cases.

Essential skills

- Highly organised
- Good communication skills, written and oral
- Able to provide all the essential facilities for the role (PC, office, etc) and appropriate IT skills
- Sufficient internet experience to assist with *maintaining the content* of the VSSN website (training will be given on the specific software used).

Desirable skills

- Knowledge of voluntary sector research
- Knowledge of the UK voluntary sector including contacts with relevant agencies
- Experience of working in an academic environment

10. Custody of Information

All VSSN materials – whether paper-based or electronic – remain the property of VSSN and must be passed immediately to the relevant member of the Steering Group at any time on request, or immediately if this contract is terminated for any reason. All intellectual property in any materials created by you for VSSN under this contract is to be assigned to VSSN. The role will include custody of information about individual VSSN members and others which constitutes personal information under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998: you will manage this information in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the specific directions of the SG.

Fees

As indicated, VSSN will pay a flat fee of £3000 p.a. for the service, to be paid quarterly in arrears (£750/quarter) upon receipt of invoices (to be submitted to the VSSN Treasurer).

The work may be undertaken from a location of your choice. Unless otherwise agreed, the fee is intended to *include travel expenses*, for example, if you propose to attend VSSN meetings, which may be at various locations in the UK. In the event of VSSN requiring you to travel, or asking you to undertake any travel requiring an overnight stay, the travel expenses will be reimbursed at cost.

If you are asked to undertake a postal mailing to members (or external parties) VSSN will reimburse the postal costs involved and reasonable costs for photocopying and envelopes. However, you are responsible for any stationery costs related to your own role.

Please note that if this tender is won by an individual, you will be *supplying services* to VSSN (a contract of service) and will be responsible for your own tax and national insurance as a self-employed person: you will *not* be an employee of VSSN.

If you will need to charge VAT, the figures above should be taken to be VAT-inclusive: i.e. VSSN will not pay any amount for VAT in addition to the fees stated.

Time Commitment

You will be providing a service to VSSN and will not be required to work specific hours for VSSN. However, please indicate in your tender the amount of time (in hours per week or days per month) which you expect to devote to this role. Note: whilst a good deal of the work could (if desired) be done in evenings or weekends, you will need at least some times when you are contactable during office hours.

Accountability

Your contract will be with the VSSN Steering Group collectively, as trustees of VSSN. However, the SG will appoint one member to be the principal point of contact, with whom you will be expected to liaise with any queries.

Once a year you will be asked to attend a meeting with one or more members of the SG to review the operation of the role.

Contract Term

VSSN's intention is that once the contract is awarded, it will be for a period of at least three years (subject to the possibility of further renewal) – however, it will be subject to termination by either party upon three months notice in writing.

The successful tenderer will be required to sign a contract with the VSSN SG, which will be based on the information in this document, modified according to the specific services to be undertaken. If your tender is conditional on the inclusion of specific clauses or conditions, please make this clear.

Information to be provided in the tender

In your tender, please indicate:

- Who would be doing the work – in particular the named person to act as Executive Officer.
- Whether this person would be providing all aspects of the role or whether others would be involved.
- What specific personal qualities you could offer to this role: including experience of similar work, knowledge of the voluntary sector, understanding of research processes, and experience of promotional work amongst researchers in various settings.
- Which parts of the role you would wish to emphasise, where you would like to focus your contribution. (Note: as indicated, there are certain core aspects to the role, but beyond these we are seeking someone who will put energy into doing two or three things well, rather than trying to contribute to everything.)
- What specific facilities (IT, office, etc) you could offer – and details of how the work would be managed in practical terms.
- Approximately how much time you would anticipate devoting to this work and whether you would have anyone who would be able to deputise if you were unavailable for an extended period (e.g. holiday/sickness).
- Please include the names and contact details of *two referees* who could comment on your suitability/experience to undertake work of this kind.
- How soon you would be able to start if your tender is accepted. (Ideally, VSSN would hope the work could be fully operational from 1 July 2010, which would require you to take part in handover arrangements with the SG and existing Executive Officer from 1 June 2010.)

Submission of Tenders

Tenders should be submitted (by e-mail if possible) to:
Professor Chris Cornforth, VSSN Chair at chair@vssn.org.uk
Or by post at Open University Business School, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

to arrive not later than 17.00 on Wednesday 21 April 2010.

If you wish to discuss the role informally before tendering, please feel free to contact Chris Cornforth at chair@vssn.org.uk

The Selection Process

Tenders will be reviewed by the SG. Those shortlisted will be invited to attend an interview on Thursday 6 May 2010 at a location to be decided (travel expenses will be reimbursed). It is anticipated that the SG will take a final decision on the award of the tender at its meeting on 19 May 2010.