



Registered charity number in England & Wales number 1114742

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

From 1 August 2016 – anticipated three year contract

Introduction

Founded in 1996, the Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN) is an association of people with a shared interest in the study of voluntary organisations and volunteering. As well as academic researchers its members include voluntary sector leaders and practitioners and people involved in the policy-making process. We currently have 125 individual members and 5 organisational members (representing an additional 25 individuals). We also have over 400 subscribers to an email discussion list. What brings us together is a common belief that the study of the voluntary sector is not only important in its own right but can also inform public policy and contribute to the better management and leadership of voluntary organisations.

VSSN aims to contribute to the support and development of this field and to provide a means through which its members can exchange information; share experience; and come together for mutual support. It does this primarily through:

- Twice-yearly VSSN one-day seminars with a range of research papers, hosted by members around the country.
- Joint organisation with NCVO of a two-day annual *Researching the Voluntary Sector and Volunteering 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 members research interests, events, news, contacts, under graduate and post graduate courses, and a wide range of information likely to be useful to voluntary sector researchers
- 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 <http://www.vssn.org.uk/about-us/annual-reports/>).

VSSN is a volunteer-led organisation, which relies heavily on its members, through its Steering Group (SG) (trustees) and beyond, to fulfil its charitable purposes. Since 2007, however, we have benefited from the involvement of an Executive Officer, contracted to provide a range of administrative and support services to the Steering Group and wider membership. At a time when we aim to expand our membership base and further develop our activities, we are looking to recruit a new provider to

fulfil the Executive Officer function and to help us take the development of the Network forward.

Role requirements

Requirements of the role:

- Membership information:
 - o Maintain database of individual and organisational members and their activities within the network (e.g. conference attendance). We currently maintain our database within Microsoft Access.
 - o Provide regular (quarterly) reports on membership to relevant SG members.
 - o Manage (annual, autumn) membership renewals process, in liaison with relevant SG members.
- Financial support and information:
 - o Receive, bank and keep record of payments relating to membership and day conferences.
 - o Maintain database relating to financial transactions.
- Day conference organisation:
 - o Attending and supporting the day conference organisation team, as required, for example through providing materials for delegate pack; running the registration desk etc
 - o Process payments, via Worldpay, cheques and bank transfers
 - o Maintain records of day conference attendees, and their membership status
- Annual conference:
 - o Support the preparation for the annual two-day conference through liaison with NCVO and the VSSN conference team regarding membership
 - o Attending annual conference and providing support on the registration desk
- Reporting:
 - o Provide reports on finance; membership; day conference attendance to relevant SG members (inc VSR liaison) at appropriate intervals
 - o Manage the production and submission of VSSN's annual report to the Charity Commission
- VSSN website:
 - o Manage updates to VSSN's website (www.vssn.org.uk –powered by WordPress), including our online membership directory
 - o Support VSSN's website officer with developing the website, as required
- Elections:
 - o Manage the annual election process for the VSSN Steering Group and the Voluntary Sector Review Editorial Board

- Voluntary Sector Review Journal:
 - o Liaise with Policy Press regarding membership
- Other support:
 - o Timely responses to queries from members and others in relation to VSSN activities including, as appropriate, redirection to a SG member
 - o Contribute to the strategic development of the Network, as appropriate. Included within this will be attending and contributing to VSSN's Steering Group meetings, which generally take place three times a year, to coincide with the day seminars and annual conference.

Skills and competences

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 criteria

- Highly organised
- Attention to detail
- Self-managing and motivated
- Good written and oral communication skills
- Strong numerical literacy
- Excellent customer service skills
- IT skills (e.g. Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, Powerpoint or equivalents)
- Sufficient experience of website maintenance to assist with updating the content of the VSSN website (training can be given on the specific software used - WordPress).
- Able to provide all the essential facilities for the role (PC, office, etc)

Desirable criteria

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

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, Access and PowerPoint (or compatible equivalents), and a suitable email client. You will also need to secure online systems and backups for VSSN electronic files and email.

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 (this could be a PO Box address). 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 do *not* require the provision of an exclusive telephone number.)

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

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. You may on occasions be asked to liaise with another member of the SG to support a specific task.

Contract terms

We are intending to issue a three year contract, commencing 1 August 2016. The contract will be reviewed at the end of the first year (31 July 2017) with the option for either party to withdraw with a one month notice period. After the end of first year, for the remaining contract period, there will be an option for either party to withdraw with three months' notice.

The maximum budget for the function is **£5,300 p.a.**, inclusive of VAT and expenses (e.g. travel, phone, postage). Payment will be made quarterly in arrears (£1325/quarter) upon receipt of invoices and receipts. We estimate the requirements of the role equate to an average of approximately 2.5 days per month. However, there are considerable variations in input requirements over the course of the year, with September and October being particularly busy periods relating to membership renewal and steering group elections. July is also relatively busy due to end of financial year reporting.

Tenders are invited, from individuals or organisations, indicating how you could provide this service. We are 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, there is potential for the role to become more strategic, and tenders should indicate clearly how you feel your existing expertise or other activities can provide a source of strength to support the development of VSSN.

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.

Application process

All proposals should include:

- Your understanding of the organisation and the requirements of the role
- The ways in which you will fulfil the various functions identified
- The ways in which you/your team meet the essential and desired criteria
- An indication of the time commitment (e.g. in hours per week or days per month) which you would expect to devote to this role
- Details of all individuals to be involved, outlining individual roles and responsibilities
- (If team/organisational tender) Named individual point of contact for VSSN SG and members
- CVs for all involved
- At least two references (names and contact details)
- An indication of how soon you would be able to start if your tender is accepted (Ideally, the contract would could commence on the 1 August 2016, allowing time for handover arrangements with the existing executive officer prior to their departure at the end of the month and in time for our busy Autumn period)

Timetable

Proposals should be submitted by 5pm on Thursday 30 June 2016

Interviews for those shortlisted will take place, in central London, on Monday 11 July 2016

Contract to commence 1 August 2016

Enquiries & submission details

We welcome informal enquiries about potential tenders. Please contact our Vice Chair Angela Ellis Paine on a.ellispace@bham.ac.uk or 07970227949. It may be possible to facilitate a conversation with our existing providers, in advance of tendering, if requested.

Please submit all proposals, by 5pm 30 June, to a.ellispace@bham.ac.uk