



Registered charity number in England & Wales number 1114742

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

From 1 October 2019 – 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 124 individual members and 3 organisational members (representing an additional 15 individuals). We also have over 400 subscribers to an email discussion list on voluntary sector issues, and almost 50 on an email discussion list for new researchers. 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.
- Organisation, in partnership with NCVO and a host university, 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, undergraduate and post graduate courses, and a wide range of information likely to be useful to voluntary sector researchers
- The VSSN e-mail discussion lists.

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), 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

Membership information:

- Maintain database of individual and organisational members and their activities within the network (e.g. conference attendance). Currently a MS Access database.
- Provide regular (quarterly) reports on membership to relevant SG members.
- Manage (annual, autumn) membership renewals process, in liaison with relevant SG members.

Member communications

- Act as first point of contact for enquiries re. VSSN from members and others. Timely responses and referring queries to SG members where appropriate.
- Production of e-newsletter for VSSN members, in liaison with SG members. Currently done 2-3 times a year, using Mailchimp.

Financial support and information:

- Receive, bank and keep record of payments relating to membership and day conferences.
- Maintain financial transactions records.
- Liaise with the VSSN Treasurer as required, providing summaries of income etc to support Treasurer in producing accounts.

Day conference organisation:

- Support the organisation of day conferences as required, for example ensuring events are advertised on website, taking bookings via website, providing materials for delegate pack, attending events and registering delegates etc.
- Process payments for events via Worldpay, cheques and bank transfers
- Maintain records of day conference attendance and income

Annual two-day research conference:

- Support the preparation for the annual conference through liaison with the VSSN conference team and others, regarding membership

- Attend annual conference and provide support on the registration desk

Reporting:

- Provide reports on finance, membership, day conference attendance to relevant SG members (inc VSR liaison) at appropriate intervals
- Manage the production and submission of VSSN's annual report to the Charity Commission

VSSN website:

- Manage updates to VSSN's website (www.vssn.org.uk –powered by WordPress), including our online membership directory
- Support VSSN's website officer with the website, as required

Elections:

- Manage the annual election process for the VSSN Steering Group and the Voluntary Sector Review Editorial Management Board. This is currently done using Survey Monkey.

Voluntary Sector Review (VSR) journal:

- Liaise with Policy Press regarding membership and mailing lists

Other support:

- Contribute to the strategic development of the Network, as appropriate, including attending and contributing to VSSN's Steering Group meetings, which generally take place three times a year, to coincide with the day seminars (May and November) and a full day meeting in January.

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

- IT skills, including MS Access and Excel, Wordpress, Mailchimp and Survey Monkey (or equivalents)
- Highly organised
- Attention to detail
- Self-managing and motivated
- Good written and oral communication skills
- Strong numerical literacy
- Excellent customer service skills
- Sufficient experience of website maintenance to assist with updating the content of the VSSN website, particularly through WordPress
- Able to provide all the essential facilities for the role (PC, office, etc)

- Understanding of GDPR data protection principles, proportionate to a small voluntary sector membership organisation

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 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 October 2019. The contract will be reviewed at the end of the first year (30 September 2020) 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, October and November being particularly busy periods due to the annual Research Conference, membership renewal, elections and AGM. 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 October 2019, allowing time for handover arrangements with the existing executive officer prior to their departure in the middle of the month).

Timetable

Proposals should be submitted by **5pm on Friday August 23**

Interviews for those shortlisted will take place on **Friday 13 September 2019**. We envisage that the interviews will take place in central London, but there may be some flexibility depending on the tenders received.

Contract to commence **1 October 2019**

Enquiries & submission details

We welcome informal enquiries about potential tenders. Please contact our Co-Chair Angela Ellis Paine on a.ellispaine@bham.ac.uk or 07753747883. It may be possible to facilitate a conversation with our existing providers, in advance of tendering, if requested.

Please submit all proposals, by **5pm 23 August**, to a.ellispaine@bham.ac.uk