



performance hub

## Summary of Activity April 2007 – March 2008

***The Performance Hub's vision is of high performing third sector organisations (TSO) having a positive impact upon the lives of millions.***

### **Introduction**

The national Performance Hub, funded by Capacitybuilders through the ChangeUp programme, is a partnership of leading infrastructure organisations<sup>1</sup> working together to improve the support available to the third sector.

We define “performance” as the ability of a TSO<sup>2</sup> to determine, express and achieve its mission. Approaches to performance improvement help organisations to assess whether they are “doing things right” and “doing the right things”.

### **Aims and Objectives**

Our overall aim is improved third sector performance, and for performance to be an integral part of the third sector's agenda. We have four specific aims and objectives:

#### **Our aims:**

- To increase TSOs' awareness of the benefits of focusing on performance and improve their ability to use performance tools and approaches.
- To increase and improve the performance support offered to frontline organisations by local, sub-regional, regional and national infrastructure of all types.
- To develop a more relevant, more effective and more accessible knowledge base about third sector performance.
- To strengthen the two way relationship between funders and TSOs on performance issues

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<sup>1</sup>The partners are: Advice UK, British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres (Bassac), Black Development Agency, Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG), Charities Evaluation Services (CES), East of England Development Agency (EEDA), Homeless Link, Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), New Economics Foundation (nef), Norwich and Norfolk Voluntary Services, and Quartet Community Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> We say 'third sector organisation' (TSO) to refer to charities, community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises.

### **Our objectives:**

- We will provide opportunities for TSOs to learn about the benefits of performance, how to get started and where to find out more
- We will provide infrastructure workers with tools, resources and support so they can offer improved performance support to frontline TSOs
- We will produce clear and accessible guidance about ways to plan, assess, report and improve performance, and where such information already exists we will signpost to it
- We will develop an evidence base about good performance practice in the funding relationship and influence funders and TSOs to better understand each other's performance needs

### **Our Principles**

#### *The way we work*

Our range of services and publications fill gaps in, or signpost to, existing resources, ensuring proper and constructive integration with performance support services provided at the national, regional and local level. Drawing on actual experience and needs of practitioners at all levels, activity includes development projects, training, peer learning and mentoring support. In this way, we empower TSOs to decide for themselves how to improve their performance.

#### *Our approach to performance*

We recognise that improvement is more likely in an organisation where good internal communications systems are in operation, the views and needs of the users are considered, and processes enhance their independence and value. An organisation that has made its own decision to focus on performance and selected appropriate tools is also more likely to improve.

### **Topic Areas**

Performance is a broad subject area, so to focus resources we prioritise the following topic areas:

- Getting ready to focus on performance
- Market research into user needs and communicating success
- Assessing and improving quality
- Strategy
- Operational planning
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Benchmarking

### **Activity**

We undertake work in the following activity streams, which flow from our specific aims and objectives:

*Raising awareness* through communication channels such as the performance hub website, including 'support finder' and 'performance tools directory'; our quarterly 'Achieve More' magazine; a monthly e-update and a cross-hub telephone information line.

*Improving understanding* through a range of commissioned research and reports on topics including the use of ICT to manage monitoring data; the performance needs of community organisations; and guidance on change management. We also publish a series of guides for small TSOs under the title 'Future Focus'.

*Increasing knowledge and skills* through a programme of training courses for development workers on strategic planning; benchmarking; monitoring and evaluation; quality; and an introduction to performance improvement. Other activity includes peer learning services such as on and offline action learning sets; provision of an e-community; a visits programme and other networking opportunities.

*Creating a more supportive environment* through our policy work by promoting messages emerging from the hub publication 'Funding Better Performance'; and researching and producing guidance on the relationship between funders and TSOs.

In support of this activity, the Performance Hub maintain effective communication channels with all stakeholders and service users; ensures robust governance and management arrangements; and optimises the sustainability of its key outcomes and services.

### **Budget**

The total budget for the Performance Hub in 2007-08 is £1.3million.

### **Governance**

Charities Evaluation Services (CES) is the accountable body for the Performance Hub, responsible for finances, operations and reporting to Capacitybuilders. Charities Evaluation Services (CES) and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) are the joint lead partners responsible for delivering the work programme. Staff are based at CES, NCVO and the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA).

Performance Hub work is supervised by both a Management Board and a Partners Group. The Management Board develops strategy proposals and has responsibility for employing staff, delivering core hub functions, overseeing day-to-day operations and ensuring adequate resources. The Partners Group has responsibility for contributing to, approving and reviewing the hub's strategy and planning documents. Both bodies have an independent Chair.