Consultant Brief: East of England Funders Forum – Collaborative Funding Project

Project Summary

The East of England Funders Forum is seeking an East of England based consultant who has experience of working, or volunteering, in the VCSE sector in the East. The Forum's shared ambition is to strengthen the VCSE sector by improving the funding environment—reducing administrative burden, increasing accessibility, and expanding funding opportunities—ultimately benefiting communities across the East of England.

The Forum includes a diverse group of regional and national funders such as Community Foundations across Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Motability Foundation, National Lottery Community Fund, local authorities, and Integrated Care Boards. Recognising the region's historic underfunding, the Forum has established a Collaboration Working Group to drive this piece of work.

This commission represents Phase One of a two-phase programme. Phase One focuses on research, analysis, and recommendations. The ideal candidate should anticipate a mixture of desk-based research, and online and face to face meetings with key stakeholders as part of this consultation. Phase Two will implement the recommendations through Task and Finish Groups, including paid VCSE participation.

Objectives

The consultant will provide robust evidence, insight, and practical options to support greater collaboration between funders. The work should identify opportunities that:

- Improve the funding environment and increase impact
- Strengthen funding decisions through shared learning
- Maximise resources through pooled or coordinated approaches
- Support long-term sustainability of the VCSE sector
- Reduce duplication and increase strategic alignment across funders

Scope of Work

1. Stakeholder Mapping

- Map key stakeholders within the Working Group and wider Forum.
- Analyse each organisation's grant programmes, including:
    - Types and values of grants
    - Application and monitoring processes
    - Governance and decision-making structures

    - Strategic priorities (e.g., deprivation, environment, health and wellbeing)
- Identify overlaps, gaps, and opportunities for collaboration.
- Conduct high-level mapping of additional funders active in the region (past 5 years).

2. Research & Evaluation

- Review existing local, regional, and national reports relevant to funding challenges and collaborative practice.
- Conduct interviews with key stakeholders to understand opportunities, barriers, and governance considerations.
- Identify and document examples of existing collaborative funding models in the East of England, or inspiration from further afield, and produce short case studies to demonstrate what may be possible.

3. Reporting & Recommendations

Provide a written report and presentation covering:

- A "big picture" view of potential collaborative models (e.g., shared learning, joint funding, coordinated functions).
- Analysis of risks, issues, and governance implications.
- Areas of commonality across funders and potential quick wins.
- A clear, accessible diagram summarising grant programmes, values, and key partnerships for each Working Group member.
- And critically, options for next steps, including milestones and timeframes for Phase Two of the project, where recommendations will turn into action.

Deliverables

- Stakeholder mapping outputs
- Case studies of existing collaborative practice
- Comprehensive written report
- Presentation to the Working Group
- Visual summary diagram of grant programmes and partnerships

Timeline

Funding for this project has been kindly provided by the National Lottery Community Fund. A guide of the timeline for Phase One activity is below, however there is some flexibility if needed.

- Appointment of consultant: **February 2026**
- Research and analysis: **March 2026 – August 2026**

- Formal check in milestone (with funder): **July 2026**
- Final report and presentation: **By end August 2026**
- Working Group agrees next steps: **September 2026**
- Phase Two begins: **October 2026**

Budget

A total of **£20,810** is available for a consultant for Phase One, covering all consultant fees and associated costs (including travel expenses). There will be an opportunity for further work as part of Phase Two activities based on the outcome of Phase One.

Governance

Hertfordshire Community Foundation will act as the accountable body for the grant. Project oversight will be provided through a distributed leadership model drawn from the Working Group, ensuring timely decision-making and ongoing engagement from the wider Forum.

It is anticipated that the appointed consultant will provide a short monthly overview progress report to the Working Group to check progress against milestones in delivery.

How to apply

To apply for this commissioned opportunity please send a short, project plan (of no more than 2 pages) to Laura Wigby, co-Chair of East of England Funders Forum, at LauraWigby@NorfolkFoundation.com.

This should cover:

- A short bio of you and your experience relevant to this commissioned piece of work, including any conflicts of interests that may arise (ie. past or existing paid or unpaid role with a VCSE organisation)
- A proposed project plan and methodology, including milestones of delivery across the research and analysis period
- Project budget (including a breakdown of daily consultant fee and anticipated expenses)
- Your contact details, so that we can make contact to invite you to interview, seek clarification, or provide feedback

The deadline for applications is **Friday 13th February**. Successful applicants will be invited to interview on 25th or 26th February with members of the Working Group.

If you have any questions, please do contact Laura Wigby via email in the first instance, at LauraWigby@NorfolkFoundation.com, and your request will be forwarded to the most relevant member of the Working Group to respond.