

Criteria for Anchor Organisations in Community Action Areas

Community anchor organisations can be very different- some have assets, some contract for statutory services, some cover a wide area and some concentrate on giving a voice to a small neighbourhood. Many of them see themselves on a “journey” where they develop organisationally and take on more responsibilities, building their enterprise activities and their asset base.

Under the Community Action Neighbourhoods programme we will be looking for Anchor Organisations that meet the criteria below or can show they are on a clear development path to meet these criteria:

An organisation that has trust

- First and foremost we are looking for an organisation that is trusted, by the residents in the area it serves, to act as an independent and credible voice.
- The organisation should be able to provide evidence on which sections of the community and partners (statutory partners, the voluntary and community sector and the business community) are aware of its work and already trust it and where further work is required to build trust and how this will be done.
- We want an accountable organisation that reports back to the community on its performance in an open and accessible way to build trust and strengthen community involvement.
- The organisation should have strong relationships with the public, private and third sector. It should be able to report on collaboration and mechanisms to develop stakeholder engagement.

The organisation has a clear purpose

- The organisation should be multi-purpose in its approach and should aim to work with the whole community in its area. We will be looking for evidence that the organisation aims to address inequality and discrimination and has strong and diverse relationships. It should seek out, listen and respond to the needs and views of local people - championing them and advocating on their behalf.
- It should seek to be a facilitator of community-led action that builds the community capacity in an area to provide local solutions to unmet needs. It should support small grassroots groups and social entrepreneurs to acquire funds.
- It should aim to bring long-term resilience and sustainability and to reinvest income into the local area.

- We need a community-led organisation with a clear plan developed through an outreach approach: a plan which develops community owned and managed models of delivery, providing services and activities that are by the community, for the community.

An organisation with capability

- The organisation should have good leadership and the ability to manage and deliver programmes, assets and projects. By 'good' leadership, we mean generous leadership that looks to develop leadership in the community and smaller voluntary and community organisations rather than drawing power to itself.
- The organisation also needs to show it has good governance and a board that is recruited through public advert and trustees that are trained in their role and bring strengths to achieving the purpose.
- The organisation needs to prove it is a learning organisation that looks for external evaluation, continual improvement and learning through networks.
- An accountable body will need to be a financially well-run organisation with evidence that it has built stable finances and reserves and is open and transparent. For relatively new organisations it may be necessary to have the support of a more established entity that can act as the accountable body until the anchor organisations builds its financial record and reserves.

A creative and learning organisation

- We are looking for an anchor organisation that has an outreach approach that ensures that unmet needs can be assessed and that there are feedback loops to monitor the impact and responsiveness of services. Evidence of effective use of social media should be part of this approach.
- The anchor organisation should be responsive in tackling local needs and finding creative solutions to problems.
- The organisation should be prepared to take risks and be entrepreneurial and learn from failure if necessary.
- The organisation should adopt a community asset based approach, analysing the strengths of the local community, identifying opportunities and looking to build on these in new ways.

We would expect the organisation to have mechanisms to self-assess against these criteria. There are tools that are available to assist in this process such as:

Fit for Purpose: a healthcheck for community organisations <http://locality.org.uk/resources/fit-purpose-healthcheck-community-organisations/>

Reviewing your Big Local plan

<http://localtrust.org.uk/library/programme-guidance/reviewing-your-big-local-plan/>