

There is a complex network of partnerships in Leeds' third sector, from loosely-defined groups of organisations that work together, to long-standing formalised consortia.

We define a consortium as a formal partnership of organisations that co-delivers contracts and/or is able to bid for contracts.

Success factors for consortia working well in Leeds:

1. BEFORE BIDDING

Third sector organisations

- Be clear about your mission, vision and values as an organisation
- Take part in a less formal network or forum to develop shared aims and interests
- Seek partners based on:
 - ✓ Shared geography or community you are working with
 - ✓ Existing services, and any gaps, overlaps or 'bottlenecks'
 - ✓ Gaps in your organisation's expertise or experience
- Be honest with partners about what you want to achieve
- Get strong commitment from decision makers, e.g. trustees

Commissioners and infrastructure

- Early engagement with forums to understand current support available, share information and test the market
- A trusted, neutral party (e.g. an infrastructure organisation) can be key in developing strong relationships early

2. DURING BIDDING

Third sector organisations

- Agree roles and responsibilities early, as well as the mechanisms to review these e.g. if a partner leaves
- Agree financial arrangements and ensure there is transparency over how funding is split
- Be honest about the level of investment you are able to commit (particularly time) to enable all partners to assess risk (particularly 'lead' partners, who may be investing more)

Commissioners and infrastructure

- Smaller organisations with specialisms are critical partners - ensure reporting requirements are flexible and realistic for them
- Ensure clear service specifications are available early to help consortia plan, be creative and make realistic commitments

3. RUNNING A SERVICE

Third sector organisations

- Spend time (partners in long-term consortia suggest 6-9 months) developing the consortium and establishing a shared culture:
 - ✓ Become familiar with partner organisations' operating processes and organisational culture
 - ✓ Ensure consistency for teams, for example through matrix management, agreed pay scales for similar job roles etc
 - ✓ Share resources such as a physical space, skill sharing and training
 - ✓ Develop a shared identity or recognisable brand

Commissioners and infrastructure

- Enable trusting relationships through frequent open and honest discussions
- All keep a focus on the community benefit of delivering support through a consortium

4. KEY RISKS

Third sector organisations

- Shared processes (e.g. reporting and information sharing) need to work for a wide range of partners with different levels of resource
- Additional costs and risk can often fall to the 'lead partner' to absorb
- Staff and volunteers often need to maintain detailed knowledge about services that partner organisations offer
- Annual due diligence checks are important, and consortia should think about what legal agreements they have in place

Commissioners and infrastructure

- Delays in payment to a 'lead' partner may result in cash flow difficulties for the whole consortium
- There are additional costs to developing a consortium which are not covered by core costs