

The voice of the Voluntary Arts

Voluntary and community sector jargon

The voluntary and community sector in the UK and Ireland has its fair share of jargon and acronyms unfamiliar in everyday language. This briefing will explain some of the most common ones currently in circulation.

ABCD – see ‘Asset Based Community Development’.

ABI – see ‘Area Based Initiative’.

Accountability – the responsibility you have to the people whom you represent or work with. Being accountable involves listening to their views and continually reporting on what you are doing.

Advocacy – arguing on behalf of a particular community, idea or issue, in order to influence political decisions and policy.

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) – this is about looking for the positive things in a community, and making the most of them.

Area Based Initiative (ABI) – an initiative usually targeted on areas of social or economic disadvantage, which aims to improve the quality of life of residents.

Baseline – a measurement taken at the start of a project or activity. At the end of the initiative, you can judge how effective it has been by comparing the results with the baseline measurement.

Benchmarking – the process of comparing your organisation’s performance with that of other organisations of a similar type, structure or size.

Beneficiary – someone who gets the benefit of an activity or a service, or who receives money from a charity.

BME – Black and Minority Ethnic.

Bottom up – decision-making that comes from the community or ‘grassroots’ rather than an individual or organisation in a position of authority. The opposite of ‘bottom up’ is ‘top down’, when decision-making originates from officials in centralised agencies, ministries or departments.

Capacity building – an often-used phrase that can mean a number of things. It most commonly refers to the process of helping communities take advantage of economic and social opportunities by encouraging and supporting the growth of skills, information, knowledge and confidence at a community level.

CBO – see ‘Community Based Organisation’.

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) – a legal structure for charitable organisations in England and Wales that provides the benefits of incorporation without the organisation having to become a registered company. See VAN Briefing 117: **Social Enterprise**.

Charitable objects – see ‘objects’.

Citizenship – the idea of encouraging individuals to become aware of their duties and rights as citizens, through, for example, volunteering or community service.

CIC – see ‘Community Interest Company’.

CIO – see ‘Charitable Incorporated Organisation’.

Claw back – when grant money is reclaimed by a funder, usually due to a breach of the original funding contract or the project costing less than the original budgeted costs.

Community Action Plan – sets out what a community wants and how it is to be delivered.

Community Based Organisation (CBO) – an organisation formed within a community, where the decisions are made by the community as a whole.

Community-based regeneration – any activity initiated by the community for the community, in order to improve its economic, environmental or social lot.

Community cohesion – the way in which a community creates and maintains internal links, and avoids falling apart. Community cohesion initiatives celebrate diversity between people in local communities, promoting understanding and reducing hostilities.

Community development – the process of increasing the ability of local people to take greater control of their own situations and communities, for the benefit of all. See VAN Briefing 44: **Culture Makes Communities**.



Community of interest – a group of people that comes together because of a common interest (such as art, craft, disabilities, youth etc.) regardless of where they live or come from.

Community Interest Company (CIC) – a legal structure for social enterprises in the UK, where the organisation's assets are 'locked', to be used only for the benefit of the community. CICs can't be charities as well. See *VAN Briefing 106: Community Interest Companies* and *Briefing 117: Social Enterprise*.

Community outreach – the process of engaging with specific groups in the community (usually those that have been previously neglected), and involving these groups in planning, delivering and participating in projects for themselves and for the general public.

Community sector – the collective term for organisations that are active on a local or community level; usually small, modestly funded and largely dependent on voluntary, rather than paid, effort. This can be contrasted with the voluntary sector, a term that is often used to describe larger, professionally-staffed charitable organisations. The phrase 'voluntary and community sector' is used to encompass the full range.

Compact – an agreement between two or more parties setting out how they will work together to achieve common aims, though not usually legally binding like a contract. In the voluntary sector it refers to an understanding between government (national or local) and the sector on how relations between the two should be conducted.

Constitution – the set of rules governing an unincorporated association, or the Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association governing a company.

Core funding – usually on-going funding to cover the day-to-day costs of a voluntary organisation, including administration, property costs and staff salaries. Also known as 'revenue funding'.

Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) – local umbrella body for voluntary organisations, charities and campaign groups in a particular area.

Covenant – a promise made in a formal way, used to describe a tax-effective way of giving to a charitable organisation where the donor promises to pay a certain amount of money (from which tax has already been deducted) over a set period of time.

Cultural diversity – to engage positively with the cultural differences that exist between people and communities.

Cultural entitlement – the concept that people have a basic right to access, and participate in, cultural activities. The UNESCO's Declaration and Convention on Cultural Diversity states that it is our human right to take part in cultural life.

Cultural planning – this takes a holistic approach, looking at the big picture in a community and seeing how culture can help people enjoy safer, more integrated, attractive neighbourhoods.

CVS – see 'Council for Voluntary Service'.

DDA – Disability Discrimination Act.
See *VAN Briefing 44: Disability Discrimination Act Part III*.

Empowerment – increasing the ability of a group or community to take responsibility for its own destiny, by making and implementing decisions that will help it achieve its goals and become more self-reliant.

Enabling environment – a political and social environment that allows a community to achieve its goals. Factors such as the attitudes of politicians and civil servants, and the rules and regulations imposed by local and national governments, all contribute to how enabling an environment is.

EOP – Equal Opportunities Policy.

Evaluation – the process of determining the worth, value or meaning of something. It usually involves gathering data and using that data to reflect on which aspects of a project or initiative have succeeded or failed, and what could have been done better. See *VAN Briefing 80: Monitoring and Evaluation*.

Feasibility study – a process of researching and reporting to assess whether a project or initiative can be done, what it will cost and whether it will be successful.
See *VAN Briefing: Feasibility Studies*.

Focus group – a method of research that involves group discussion about a specific issue, guided by a moderator.

Full cost recovery – the principle that organisations should be paid for the 'full cost' of providing a service, including all the relevant overheads. The term is used especially for the delivery of public services through a government contract or service-level agreement.

Full value – a way of appreciating the total impact of your organisation, including the positive impacts and enjoyment you bring to both intended and unintended beneficiaries of your activities. The full value approach helps you to identify your 'hidden' value. See *VAN Briefing 102: Accounting for Worth*.

Good practice – within the voluntary sector, this usually means operating within full legal compliance, with policies and practices that exceed the minimum standards required, in an inclusive manner.

Governance – the leadership of an organisation by the Board or Management Committee.

IAG – Information, Advice and Guidance.

ICT – Information and Communication Technologies.

IIP – Investors in People.

Infrastructure – the systems that are needed for an organisation to operate properly, but that don't necessarily form part of that organisation's services. For example: administration, finance and computer systems.

Interculturalism – the philosophy of sharing and exchange between cultural groups. Interculturalism promotes dialogue by focusing on the commonalities between cultures.

Joined up thinking/working – when different agencies or departments work together to solve problems and/or provide services.

LA – Local Authority.



LDA – Local Development Agency.

Management Committee – the governing body of an organisation or charity, having general control and management of its administration. The Management Committee may also be known as the ‘Board of Trustees’, ‘Executive Committee’, ‘Board of Directors’ or ‘Council’. Management Committee members are sometimes called Trustees.

See *VAN Briefing 57: Effective Management Committees*.

Match funding – many funders will require you to find another source of funding to match the amount they are prepared to give you. For either grant to be paid there usually needs to be an agreement stating that both grants have been approved.

Mission statement – a simple, clear statement that sets out what an organisation is trying to do.

See *VAN Briefing 60: Statement of Purpose: Your Mission*.

Monitoring – the regular collection and analysis of data relating to a particular project or initiative.

See *VAN Briefing 80: Monitoring and Evaluation*.

Multiculturalism – acknowledging the existence of ethnic diversity and ensuring the rights of individuals to retain their own culture while enjoying full access to a commonly-shared culture.

See *VAN Briefing 94: Cultural Diversity and the Voluntary Arts: an Inspirational Opportunity*.

NDPB – Non-Departmental Public Body (sometimes known as a Quango).

NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training.

Neighbourhood renewal – the concept of local people and groups working with local authorities to improve the condition of neighbourhoods, particularly disadvantaged ones.

NFP – not for profit.

Objects – to become a registered charity, an organisation has to have charitable objectives or aims, known as ‘objects’.

See *VAN Briefing 55: Constitutions Clarified*.

Outcomes – the benefits or changes that happen as a result of your activities.

Outputs – the things you produce or services you provide to achieve the desired outcomes.

Participation – the act of taking part or sharing in something with others.

Performance indicators – markers of how well you are doing or progressing. See ‘*quantitative and qualitative*’.

Pilot scheme – a small-scale trial of a larger proposed project or initiative.

PQASSO – Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations.

Priority/target group – group of people prioritised for government support.

Public Service Agreement (PSA) – what a government promises to deliver.

Quantitative and qualitative – quantitative measures are numerical (sales, participants, income etc.), while qualitative measures are less tangible, such as users’ expressions of appreciation of your work, or critical acclaim of your artistic activity.

RDA – Regional Development Agency.

Regeneration – upgrading an area through social, physical and economic improvements.

Revenue funding – see ‘*core funding*’.

Ring fencing – keeping aside money for a specific purpose, within a larger fund.

Service Level Agreement (SLA) – an agreement negotiated between two organisations identifying the level of service required in return for a payment. SLAs are often used by government departments outsourcing public services to the private or voluntary sector.

Social audit – the process of measuring and reporting on an organisation’s effect on society, and improving on its performance. It assesses the social impact and the ethical behaviour of an organisation in relation to its aims and objectives.

Social capital – the value of social networks. Social capital is based on the theory that good community relations have an economic as well as a social benefit, and that economic models can be used to evaluate social structures.

Social enterprise – an organisation that uses trading activities for social benefit. These are businesses that combine the entrepreneurial skills of the private sector with a strong social mission. See *VAN Briefing 117: Social Enterprise*.

Social economy – the part of the economy that is neither private nor public, but made up of community organisations and social enterprises working for the greater good of local communities and marginalised groups. While social enterprise refers to specific organisations and initiatives, social economy is the landscape within which social enterprises and social entrepreneurship take place.

Social exclusion/isolation – shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low income, bad housing, high crime, poor health or lack of transport or access, or as a result of discrimination based on age, gender, sexuality, background or religion.

Social inclusion – overcoming the problems that lead to exclusion to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to fulfil their potential and participate fully.

SOFA – see ‘*Statement of Financial Activities*’.

SORP – see ‘*Statement of Recommended Practice*’.

Stakeholder – a person or organisation with an interest in an organisation, issue or process, be it financial, political, emotional or in any other way that may impact on the stakeholder. See *VAN Briefing 58: Participatory Planning: Involving your Stakeholders*.

Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) – required if UK charities submit accruals accounts. It is used instead of a statement of income and expenditure.

Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) – sets out standards for accounting by charities, including what information should be included in annual accounts.

Steering group – a group of people with responsibility for directing and ensuring effective completion of a particular project.

Sustainability – when something can be maintained indefinitely without expending an endless amount of resources on it. This term is used in the voluntary sector in a variety of ways. It is often used by funders who want to know how organisations plan to ensure that a project or initiative will continue beyond the term of their funding.

Sustainable development – activity that brings long-term economic, social and environmental benefits without compromising the needs of future generations.

Third sector – another collective name for voluntary and community organisations, as they are not part of the public sector or the private sector.

Top down – see ‘bottom up’.

Transparency – the belief that planning and decision-making processes should be open and visible to all those affected by them, rather than take place in secrecy. This helps reduce mistrust, apathy and marginalisation.

TSO – Third Sector Organisation.

Umbrella body – an organisation set up to support organisations rather than end users. Voluntary Arts Network is an umbrella body that supports voluntary arts and crafts groups, along with artform- and community-specific umbrella bodies.

Upskilling – a jargon word for training or improving people’s skills.

Value added – the difference in value between the cost of materials, salaries etc. of a project or initiative, and what that project or initiative is worth to your end users. Value added is the sum of everything you have brought to the experience.

Vision statement – a short, inspirational phrase used to sum up what an organisation stands for or what it wants to achieve.

VCO – voluntary and community organisation.

VCS – voluntary and community sector.

Voluntary Arts – VAN defines the voluntary arts as those arts and crafts that people undertake for self-improvement, social networking and leisure, but not primarily for payment.

Voluntary sector – the collective term for voluntary organisations, as opposed to the public sector or the private sector. Often used to describe larger, professionally staffed charitable organisations as opposed to ‘community sector’ which is used to describe smaller organisations dependent on voluntary, rather than paid, effort.

Further Resources

The following websites will provide you with additional definitions of the terms featured here, along with many more:

- **VAN glossary** – www.voluntaryarts.org/glossary
- **ladder4learning** – <http://vcsjargonbuster.wikispaces.com>
- **SocietyGuardian** – <http://society.guardian.co.uk/glossary>
- **ChangeUp** – www.changeup.org.uk/overview/jargon.asp
- **Learning and Skills Council** – www.lsc.gov.uk/jargonbuster
- **VCS Engage** – www.vcsengage.org.uk/faqs.aspx

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VOLUNTARY ARTS ENGLAND

The Voluntary Arts Network, Ground floor, 121 Cathedral Road, Pontcanna, Cardiff CF11 9PH
T: 029 20 395 395 E: info@voluntaryarts.org W: www.voluntaryarts.org

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Registered office: 2nd Floor, 54 Manor Place, Edinburgh EH3 7EH.