

# Scope of Project for Feasibility Study: Establishment of a Third Sector Hub in Aberdeen

## 1. Introduction

The third sector comprises non-profit organisations, community groups, voluntary organisations, faith groups, charities, social enterprises, co-operatives, community interest companies, mutuals, housing associations and self-help groups that work to address social, environmental, and community needs. The purpose of establishing a Third Sector Hub in Aberdeen is the creation of a self-sustaining, centralised, collaborative space that can be a source of support for the sector and a catalyst for innovation and growth.

### 1.2 Background

ACVO (Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations) is the Third Sector Interface (TSI) for Aberdeen. We have over 20 years' experience working in the city as the central resource supporting the local third sector to develop and thrive.

The work we do is reflected in our organisational values which are central to our decision-making processes and are incorporated into everything we do:

- We put the Third Sector first
- We empower communities
- We act on lived experience
- We demand equality
- We stand up for those who need help most

Through our various strands of work, we actively support and promote the work of Aberdeen's Third Sector. This includes enabling volunteering, governance and funding support, representing the voice of Aberdeen's third sector at a local and national level, playing a strategic role in third sector involvement with community planning and health and social care integration, distributing funding, building capacity and providing platforms to celebrate and highlight achievements.

### 1.3 Policy context

A vibrant and resilient Third Sector is at the heart of ambitions for a Just Transition to a low carbon, wellbeing economy and is central to national economic transformation through Community Wealth Building. These ambitions are laid out both in Scottish Government policy and in local strategy.

The feasibility study will look at the requirement for shared resources and support for innovation and growth in the sector. This aligns with the Regional Economic Strategy for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire which seeks to develop an entrepreneurial and innovative region. The strategy also aims for redevelopment of the city centre post-pandemic which is supported by the strategic approach of Our Union Street and Aberdeen Inspired Business Improvement District of revitalising and reimagining the city centre through innovative projects which appeal to a broad range of people and organisations.

ACVO is a key contributor to the Community Planning Partnership and we are fully invested in the success of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan's ambition for Aberdeen to be a place where all people can prosper, to be city of learning, to have a prosperous economy, prosperous people and a prosperous place. We believe that support and development of the Third Sector is central to delivering the social and wellbeing economy that is central to these ambitions.

#### 1.4 Objectives of the third sector hub

In establishing a Third Sector Hub, ACVO would develop a dynamic and supportive ecosystem that empowers organisations in the third sector to work more efficiently, effectively, and collectively for the benefit of the diverse communities (of people and place) in Aberdeen. The key objectives of the Hub are as follows.

- a) Facilitate collaboration and networking among diverse third sector organisations, fostering cooperation and which enhance their collective impact on local communities.
- b) Provide a shared physical space for organisations, enabling the efficient sharing of resources, facilities, and services, thereby reducing operational costs and contributing to the long-term sustainability of the sector.
- c) Offer opportunities for capacity building through bespoke training programmes, workshops, and knowledge-sharing sessions, enhancing the overall effectiveness and efficiency of participating organisations.
- d) Strengthen community engagement by creating a visible and accessible hub where individuals can connect with a variety of services, programmes, opportunities and initiatives offered by third sector organisations.
- e) Serve as a unified platform for advocacy and representation, amplifying the collective voice of the third sector in addressing community challenges and influencing policy decisions.
- f) Improve the coordination and delivery of services by providing a centralised resource through which organisations can easily access a range of business support functions at an affordable cost.
- g) Foster a culture of innovation by providing a space where organisations can exchange ideas, share best practices, and collaborate on innovative solutions to community and societal issues.
- h) Enhance the visibility of the third sector and its contributions to the community, promoting a greater understanding of the sector's importance, influence and impact.

## 2. Scope of Feasibility Study

The goal of the feasibility study is to equip ACVO and other stakeholders with the information needed to make informed decisions about the viability and potential outcomes of establishing a Third Sector Hub in Aberdeen. The study should provide a thorough analysis of the project's feasibility from various perspectives to aid our planning and decision-making processes, and to provide potential funders with the information required to assess the deliverability and likely impact of the proposal.

The scope of the study should cover the following areas but should not exclude any other fundamental matters which come to attention during the course of the work.

### 2.1 Local and national context

Outline the local and national context in which the Third Sector currently operates in relation to the public sector, the private sector and the communities it supports. Identify key measures which highlight the value of the Third Sector to society in Aberdeen (e.g. economy, jobs, social impact etc).

### 2.2 Stakeholder analysis

Identify and engage with Third Sector stakeholders across the city to understand their requirements for support and likely interest in participating in Hub activities. Engage with local government, economic development systems, and other relevant groups in the city to understand their role in supporting the sector and their viewpoint of a Third Sector Hub. Analyse the expectations (and outcomes), concerns, and potential project contributions of different stakeholders. Identify services and support structures required by the sector which could be offered by the Hub to help achieve the outcomes in paragraph 1.4 above.

### 2.3 Operational requirements

Identify and evaluate the infrastructure needed for the Third Sector Hub. Assess the availability and suitability of technology required for the Hub's operations. Define the operational needs and processes for the Third Sector Hub to operate effectively and achieve the objectives described in paragraph 1.4 above. Evaluate the availability of skilled personnel, equipment, and facilities required for the Hub, including third party providers of training and innovation programmes for the third sector.

### 2.4 Economic feasibility

Provide a detailed breakdown of costs associated with establishing and operating the Third Sector Hub including the provision of centralised support services. Identify potential funding sources and mechanisms to support the establishment and sustainable operation of the Hub.

### 2.5 Social and economic impact

Assess the potential social and economic impact of the Third Sector Hub on the local community and economy.

### 2.6 Legal and Regulatory Feasibility

Identify legal and regulatory requirements relevant to the Third Sector Hub. Outline any permissions, licenses, or approvals required for establishing the Hub.

### 2.7 Risk Management

Identify potential operational and financial risks and propose mitigation strategies.

### 2.8 Project Timeline

Develop a realistic and achievable timeline for the establishment of the Third Sector Hub. Identify dependencies that may impact the project schedule.

### 2.9 Public Relations

Outline a plan for communicating the benefits of progressing a Third Sector Hub to the sector and the wider public.

## 3. Reporting

ACVO's funders require an interim report on completion of the stakeholder analysis, and a further update in the third quarter of the process. These should be brief updates which summarise work completed to date, any unexpected issues, concerns about the project, significant achievements, and any matters relevant to the project budget.

The final report should comprise a comprehensive summary of findings and recommendations along with data, research and other information which supports the conclusions of the study.

## 10. Further information

Queries should be directed to ACVO Chief Executive, Maggie Hepburn,  
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