

The future of SCVO: consulting on a new strategic approach

After a time of change and reflection, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is looking for your help to create our new strategic approach. We have come up with a proposed way forward and we would very much appreciate the views of our members, the wider third sector and other stakeholders on our ideas.

What struck us most was the need for clarity around our purpose, our role as a membership organisation and our offer to the sector. Over the years, SCVO has taken on lots of different functions and played a variety of roles. While that makes life interesting, it can be confusing.

Your relationship with SCVO

If you are already aware of SCVO, it could be for a variety of different reasons. You may be a member, you may contribute to our policy and influencing networks, you may subscribe to Third Force News or advertise with Goodmoves. You might participate in our wide range of digital developments. You may buy your payroll or IT service from us, participate in Community Jobs Scotland or share space in one of our five offices. You might receive funding from one of the grants we disburse or access information from Funding Scotland or our information service. Or you might just follow us on social media.

Whatever your relationship and engagement with SCVO, your views matter and will help shape how we move forward.

Defining SCVO's purpose

We considered various purpose statements to define what SCVO's role is. Our proposed purpose statement is:

- SCVO's purpose is to support, promote and develop a confident third sector in Scotland

We decided that it would be helpful for the purpose to be underpinned by a belief statement and a set of underlying principles.

The proposed belief statement is to give context to our purpose:

- At SCVO, we believe the third sector is vital to Scotland's economy and society, and that the third sector should be supported to achieve its ambitions.

And the proposed principles describe how we will achieve our purpose:

- The approach we take to developing our positions is transparent and understood
- Our audience understands what we offer, to whom and at what cost
- We have a clear rationale for how SCVO's activities deliver our purpose and belief statement
- We are respected for how we do things as well as what we do

- We can demonstrate how we listen to the sector/our members, and the actions we take as a result
- We are clear when and why we choose to co-produce/collaborate/negotiate/consult /listen/act independently
- We are clear about the problems we are trying to solve, for whom, and can show we are effective
- We are clear as to our role, versus that of other organisations in the sector
- We model the behaviour internally that we promote to the sector
- We challenge on behalf of the sector when we can demonstrate a good reason for doing so.

What do you think of this approach and of how we have described our purpose, beliefs and principles?

Defining SCVO's strategic objectives

SCVO's overall aim is to help the third sector achieve its ambitions and our strategic objectives need to reflect how we will do that. The objectives should set out what we will do to deliver SCVO's ambitions for the sector, the organisation itself and our staff.

The objectives will have clear measures associated with them, and define the expected impact, as well as how that impact will be measured.

This consultation will inform what our strategic objectives will be for 2019-22 and we will launch our new strategic plan at the Gathering in the new year.

Other key areas of discussion

There are two particular issues that keep recurring that we would also like to explore in this consultation.

1. Membership

We are conscious that our role as a membership organisation has been subject to a great deal of debate over the years. And we need to tackle head on the challenge of being a membership organisation that is truly representative when Scotland's third sector is incredibly diverse in terms of size, areas of interest, location and charitable status (or not).

We know our current membership offer is not particularly attractive for medium to large organisations, meaning its value is sometimes questioned. We do, however, believe there is a need for a strong, authentic national voice for the third sector and that SCVO is best placed to offer that.

We recently compared the membership offers of our sister organisations in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland and while they do vary slightly, they are all pretty similar. We also recognise that we are often expected to represent the wider sector, not just our members. Indeed Scottish Government specifically fund us to do that.

We are therefore proposing to reframe our membership offer where people and organisations will join because they support our belief statement and believe in our work, not

just because they value the member benefits we offer. Many third sector organisations use this model, and we believe it is more authentic than simply being about delivering benefits.

However, we do also recognise that many members, particularly smaller organisations, value the benefits they currently receive and there are new areas where we could add value. We will therefore also put together a revised package which reflects what the sector needs, and that it is possible and appropriate for SCVO to deliver.

Membership will shift from what we deliver to how we do business. That will also allow individuals to be members as well as organisations.

2. Describing the sector

There is an ongoing debate about the best way to describe the sector, with some strong feelings around most of the options. The most common terms are:

- Third sector
- Voluntary sector (included in SCVO's name)
- Community sector
- Charities
- NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations)

Each of these terms embraces a different catchment and it is unlikely we will come up with an option that suits everyone. We welcome views on what works best for the sector, for our wider stakeholders and for the public.

Consultation

We are taking a wide-reaching and inclusive approach to consulting, with the aim of:

- sense-checking SCVO's new purpose and strategic approach with our stakeholders
- exploring our new approach to membership
- exploring the language we use and our strategic approach to stakeholder engagement.

This will take the form of discussions, from large open fora to targeted one-to-ones. We will engage face-to-face, online and on paper, focusing on the three topics above. And we will feedback on those discussions and how they have informed where we get to.

We look forward to working with you over the next few months and beyond.