



Ministry  
of Justice

# VCSE Skills and Information Workshops – Victims’ Services

## Guide to Collaboration

This resource complements a series of Skills and Information workshops that Pulse Regeneration has been contracted to deliver by the Ministry of Justice to providers in the VCSE sector that deliver victims’ support services.

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# Guide to Collaboration

## Collaboration

In its broadest sense, collaboration is where two or more VCSE organisations work together and/or pool their resources to achieve a common goal. Often this includes the aim of offering services at a scale which a buyer wants to purchase, and needing to provide high quality services to customers.

The Charity Commission, in its 'Choosing to Collaborate: Helping You Succeed' guidance, states *"Collaborative working describes joint working by two or more organisations in order to better fulfil their purposes, while remaining as separate organisations."*

## Key Questions

There are key questions that you may want to consider when working with other VCSEs to bid for a contract:

**1. What do you hope to achieve?**

- What is the single end goal?
- Can this be quantified?

**2. Is collaboration the best way to achieve this?**

- Do alternative approaches exist?
- Are there any previous experiences to draw on?

**3. Who proposed the idea?**

- What are their interests or agendas?
- Do they have a positive reputation?

**4. Will your organisation be supportive?**

- Can you work with partners(s)?
- What can you offer?

**5. Does it fit within your organisation's objects?**

- Are you able to collaborate?
- Are there any limitations on what you may be able to commit to?

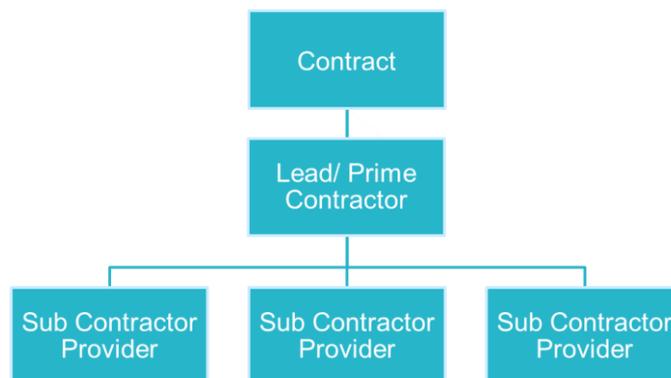
**6. Does it fit your strategic vision or values?**

- Is the collaboration taking your organisation forward?
- Does it align with your values?

## Models of Collaboration

There are a number of points during the procurement process where collaboration may be the most appropriate way forward, such as when the contract notice is published or when writing the PQQ and/or ITT. However, it may be difficult to build relationships with partners at the tender stage, and ideally it is beneficial to have a good relationship already in place. There are two main models of collaborative working in terms of public sector contracting; either as part of a supply chain, or as a member of a consortium. Each is outlined below.

### As Part Of A Supply Chain



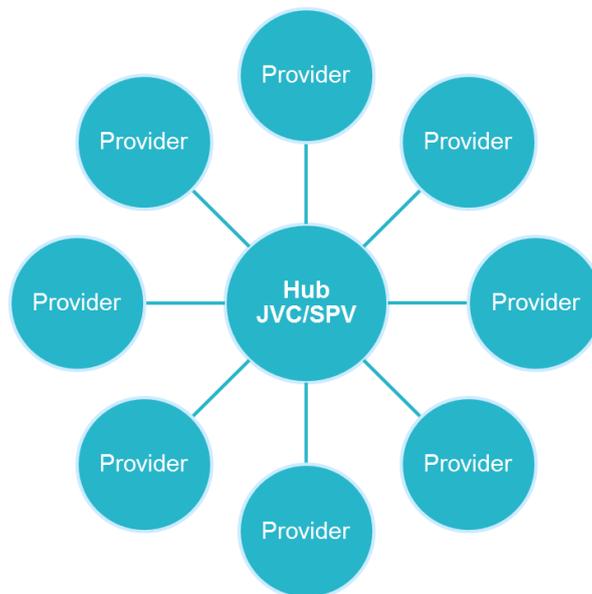
#### Lead Contractor or Prime Contractor

- Is responsible for the whole contract with the public sector body.
- A 'lead contractor' will deliver part of the contract itself but will also sub contract out delivery to one or more providers
- A 'prime contractor' will merely act as an agent responsible for managing the supply chain and may not deliver itself

#### Sub Contractors

- Responsible to the lead/prime contractor for the delivery of their specific element of the contract

## As a Member of a Consortium



### Approach

- This is where a group of providers come together, and in order to bid for contracts a legal status is required, for example a joint venture company or special purpose vehicle
- An important aspect of this model is ensuring effective contract management and performance
- The more partners that are involved, the more rigorous and accountable the management structure will need to be
- The solution is usually a 'hub and spoke' relationship, with a management structure at the centre of a group of providers

### Ownership and Management

- The hub will be jointly owned by the providers, usually by equal share
- The hub will usually provide a range of functions, e.g. bidding, contract management, business development, or financial management
- The consortium needs to be managed by a board, which should be made up from the providers and external independent individuals that may also bring additional skills

## Benefits and Risks

The benefits and risks of collaboration are varied and will relate to the parties involved and the common goal, and may include:

Benefits	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bringing different elements together at a scale that fits with the tender specification</li> <li>• Providing greater efficiencies in the tough economic/ funding climate by joining forces</li> <li>• Responding to commissioners that are looking to increase their buying power i.e. principle of aggregation</li> <li>• Sharing resources and expertise of other VCSEs to complement your own resources</li> <li>• Increasing delivery for service users if specialist requirements are best met by more than one provider</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcomes do not justify the time and resources invested</li> <li>• Loss of flexibility in working practices</li> <li>• Complexity in decision-making and loss of autonomy</li> <li>• Diverting energy and resources away from core aims - mission drift</li> <li>• Damage or dilution of brand or reputation</li> <li>• Damage to organisation and waste of resources if collaboration is unsuccessful</li> <li>• Lack of awareness of legal obligations</li> <li>• Stakeholder confusion</li> </ul>

## Top Tips

- Build relationships early, ideally before the tender process as relationship building takes time
- Look for organisations you feel comfortable working with and who can bring different aspects or elements to the tender
- Don't enter into collaborative delivery lightly
- Acknowledge that successful collaboration requires hard work and patience
- It is important to keep the momentum going once started