

VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR GROUP (VCG)

**Terms of Reference
2017- 2020**

INTRODUCTION

- 1 The **Voluntary and Community Group** (known as the VCG) was set up to support the implementation and delivery of the “Concordat between the Voluntary and Community Sector and Government” by enabling engagement and collaboration within the sector to develop the relationship between government and the sector.
- 2 The Concordat is the framework for developing effective partnership working between government and the VCS. The current document was agreed and signed off by both the NI Executive and the VCS Panel of the Joint Forum in March 2011. The Concordat includes a list of priority actions referred to as Commitments which need to be addressed jointly by both Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in order to improve relationships and deliver improved services. The Concordat is currently being reviewed by a subgroup of the Joint Forum to be brought more into line with the Programme for Government’s outcome focus.
- 3 Secretariat and overall responsibility for the VCG lies with NICVA.

PURPOSE

- 4 The purpose of VCG is:

“To facilitate increased engagement and collaboration across the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to build effective partnership working between government and the VCS”.

5 The key responsibilities for the VCG are to:

- a. promote dialogue and engagement across the VCS to support implementation of the Concordat Commitments;
- b. promote a joined up approach across the public sector and to share best practice in order to improve the way government works together with the VCS to deliver more effective outcomes;
- c. discuss VCS strategy and policy issues on a co-operative basis and develop a coherent approach to issues so far as it is possible;
- d. identify key issues, agree a common approach where possible and articulate same through the Joint Forum;
- e. play a key role in the Joint Forum;
- f. participate or identify suitable participation for Concordat Commitment action Teams (CATS)

MEMBERSHIP

- 6 The VCG comprises representatives from across the wider voluntary and community sector. It is chaired by a VCG member nominated by the group.
 - a. 15 people from the voluntary and community sector are selected to make up the voluntary and community sector side of the Forum.
 - b. NICVA's Executive Committee will implement a VCG selection process. This will involve a sub-committee of the Executive Committee selecting fifteen people from available nominations. Established criteria will ensure the panel achieves a cross-section of representation from the sector with due care being taken to balance the selection in terms of gender, geography, sectoral groupings, size of organisation (based on income) community background, etc.
 - c. Each representative will be appointed for a period of three years and will be entitled to seek re-nomination for a further three-year period. No person shall be appointed for a period of more than six consecutive years.
 - d. A member can resign at any time. If a resignation takes place NICVA's Executive Committee will appoint a replacement from its existing pool of nominations
 - e. NICVA's Executive Committee will ensure continuity of the panel by seeking to retain up to 50% of existing members to get a balance between experienced and new members.
 - f. The Chair of the VCG, who will also act as Joint Chair of the Forum and will be elected every three years by the VCS group members.

g. A Vice Chair of the VCG will also be elected to provide support to the Chair as required. The Vice Chair will also be elected every three years.

7 The responsibilities of individual VCG members include:

h. Compliance with the principles of the Concordat;

i. Keeping the voluntary and community sector informed of key issues, which will impact directly on the sector;

j. Actively engage in VCG and Joint Forum business informing discussion and decision-making through expert opinion and organisational awareness;

k. Acting as the conduit between their organisational group and VCG/Joint Forum canvassing views/opinion, disseminating information and representing the broader interests/views of their group.

l. Taking personal responsibility for representing the views of their area of expertise or sub-sector.

m. Following through on agreed action points, etc.

GOVERNANCE

8 The overall framework for improving relationships between the VCS and government is set out in the Concordat and its commitments provide the road map for delivery.

- 9 The VCG plays an important and integral part in the overall structural and governance arrangements underpinning the implementation of the Concordat.

- 10 The **Joint Forum** comprising a delegation of representatives from the VCG and the PSG has over-arching responsibility for implementation of the Concordat. The Joint Forum, jointly-chaired by the Chairs of the PSG and the VCG, decide on key issues that need to be taken forward and commissions this work through Concordat Action Teams.

MEETINGS

- 11 The VCG will meet at least three times each year with meetings normally scheduled to take place at least two weeks in advance of a Joint Forum meeting.

- 12 Extraordinary meetings may be arranged by agreement to take forward matters of interest.

AGENDA

- 13 Once the meeting notification has been circulated, all proposed agenda items can be forwarded by VCG members to the secretariat for discussion.

- 15 Agenda items submitted should, as far as is possible, be substantive issues that relate to the remit, strategic objectives, and/or work programme of the VCG.
- 16 Specific problems or issues between individual organisations will not normally be considered suitable as an agenda item. However, where such an issue could have a broader impact then it may be considered appropriate and should be submitted.
- 17 Secretariat will brief the VCG Chair on items that have been submitted and the agenda will be finalised and agreed by the Chair. Secretariat will deal with any items that have been submitted but do not make it on to the agenda.
- 18 An agenda will be agreed and issued (with relevant papers) to members before the VCG meeting.

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

- 19 VCG Members will be expected to attend all Joint Forum and VCG Meetings. If members cannot attend, they are expected to provide adequate notice. If a member fails to attend three consecutive meetings, they will be contacted by the Chairperson of the VCG and offered the opportunity to resign or improve attendance.
- 20 In exceptional circumstances where non-attendance is unavoidable the member should advise secretariat and nominate a delegate to attend in his/her place.

CONDUCTING MEETINGS

- 20 Secretariat will have briefed the Chair on issues including apologies and delegates attending.
- 21 Meetings will follow the agenda. Any presentations will be delivered at an appropriate point as agreed with the Chair.
- 22 Contributions from all representatives are welcome. While there is an informal environment to encourage debate, it is important that speakers go through the Chair to ensure their point is heard and order is maintained.

MINUTES

- 23 Secretariat will prepare the minutes of the meeting.
Representatives who have made contributions or presentations may be asked for comments on the draft minutes or for copies of presentations.
- 24 Secretariat will normally issue the draft minutes as soon as possible after the meeting. Representatives should distribute the minutes within their organisation/s as appropriate.
- 25 Minutes of a meeting will be formally agreed at the next meeting.