

**Response by the Social Enterprise Coalition to the
Capacitybuilders Draft Framework for National Support Services
2008/11 – 2nd July 2007**

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Capacitybuilders Draft Framework for National Support Services 2008/11 Response

1. The Social Enterprise Coalition would like to record an expression of interest in being involved in the future development of the ChangeUp programme. The Coalition would like to work with Capacitybuilders in achieving the objectives as set out in '*Destination 2014*'.
2. The Coalition was established in 2002 as the national voice of social enterprise. The Coalition represents a wide range of social enterprises, umbrella bodies and networks, with a combined membership reaching of over 10,500 social enterprises. In preparing this response the Coalition has consulted with this group.

Expression of Interest

3. The Coalition would like to express an interest in either leading on or working with Capacitybuilders' preferred bidder(s) to integrate social enterprise into the respective themes of activity pursued by the national hubs. As articulated in our response below, we believe that social enterprise is a cross-current theme and should be integrated into the activity of all national hubs, rather than being confined to the finance theme as currently proposed by Capacitybuilders.
4. The Coalition has recently been contracted by Capacitybuilders to co-ordinate a report on the national and regional infrastructure support priorities of social enterprise for 2008-11. The report, with recommendations from the Coalition, will be submitted to Capacitybuilders by September 10, 2007. In the meantime, we would ask the Capacitybuilders board to ensure that social enterprise continues to be integrated into the (increasingly proactive) work of existing national support services.

Support for Draft Framework

5. The Coalition strongly supports the decision to review the national support services which do not currently meet the needs of the wider third sector, particularly social enterprises. The Coalition also strongly advocates for a more coordinated approach to support services.
6. The Coalition also considers it appropriate that Capacitybuilders takes a greater strategic leadership role in the delivery of the national support services, to ensure the effective use of resources.
7. The Coalition supports the goal of building connections between the consortia and national support services. It is important that a greater effort is made to share expertise, between consortia and networks. The 'one web portal' that provides cross-framework support, is also a positive idea. Connections should not however, be limited to consortia at the local level, for instance social enterprise infrastructure are in many cases not represented on consortia and do not find existing Capacity Builders consortia meet their needs or those of their clients. It is important that connections are made with these groups.

Criticism of Framework

8. The Coalition has provided significant input to the Infrastructure National Partnership (INP) response, and is supportive of its findings. This submission focuses more specifically on factors affecting social enterprise.
9. The Coalition has reservations that the current plans, as put forward in the draft framework for national support services may not benefit social enterprise and others in the third sector.
10. The framework does not appear to build sufficiently on the knowledge and information produced in the ChangeUp programme to date. We would have liked greater learning and evidence to have been taken from the existing hubs. There is also scope to integrate learning from activity outside of the hubs to inform best practice at the national, regional and local level.
11. Further clarity is needed regarding the roles and resources of the proposed leads and the rationale behind how the four themes have been reached. More definition on how these services will operate is required and what resources are available to them.
12. The Coalition is concerned that the timescale of implementation, lacks flexibility to make necessary adjustments to the framework. The Coalition welcomes the opportunity to submit a research piece on social enterprise support needs however, the current timescale of implementation would prevent the findings of this research from feeding into the national support services framework.
13. The Coalition advises Capacitybuilders to consider whether the hubs might be retained for a further year to allow time for in-depth evaluation to be carried out.
14. The Coalition would also restate its position that social enterprise support is inadequate within the current framework, and that this new draft does not go far enough to address this. As Destination 2014 stated Capacitybuilders would “Ensure that the infrastructure support needs of social enterprises and non-profit social companies are fully integrated in our general objectives and activities.”¹ The Coalition feels this has yet to be achieved.

Social Enterprise

15. Social enterprise should be a key component of the finance and performance strategic themes. Access to finance is a very important issue for social enterprises, and one in which they can differ significantly to the rest of the third sector, as a result of their emphasis on sustainable income. Many social enterprises also deliver public services and as this has been included within the finance theme, it is a key theme for social enterprise. Measuring social impact, and carrying out triple-bottom line assessment, is very important to social enterprises, and arguably currently underemployed.

¹ Capacitybuilders (2006) *Destination 2014: investing in change*

16. However the Coalition would like to raise its concern that Capacitybuilders misunderstands the distinct nature of the social enterprise model, as a different way of doing business. The Coalition would like to ensure that it is not seen as a mechanism for raising finance.
17. Social enterprise is also an important aspect of voice and workforce, The Coalition suggests that Capacitybuilders considers creating a social enterprise cross-cutting theme. This would ensure representation across the national support service and that the work across the themes is joined-up.
18. The Coalition would like to have more confidence that the framework will lead to an inclusive approach for social enterprises as their support needs can differ considerably from voluntary and community organisations.
19. The Coalition is pleased that social enterprise has been recognised as a key area for the scrutiny function. It is vital that the national support service recognises the differing needs of the social enterprise sector.

Specific Points from the Report

20. Whilst the Coalition supports the proposal to streamline the national support services, and provide clearer roles and accountability, it feels that the plans laid out in the framework will not achieve the stated goal. There is a need for greater clarity on what the role of the services will be, how they will interact with the consortia and other networks, and how they will differ from the existing hubs.
21. The Coalition would support moves for Capacitybuilders itself to undertake the 'communication centre' function. This is likely to be the most effective use of resources to bring the programme together in a more coordinated strategic approach.
22. The Coalition would also look to Capacitybuilders to prioritise the key leads, within these themes. We consider the range of leads is too wide to merit equal status.
23. The high priority of support for involvement and working with the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Local Authority Agreements (LAAs) as suggested in Annex A, is an area that has been recognised by the Coalition, as one which will be increasingly important to third sector organisations. However this seems to have been understated within the framework. The Coalition believes this should be given greater priority.

Recommendations

- The Coalition would like to express an interest in either leading on or working with Capacitybuilders' preferred bidder(s) to integrate social enterprise into the respective themes of activity pursued by the national hubs
- The Coalition believes that further clarity is required to determine how the themes were decided and what the role and resources for the lead organisations will be.

SEC Policy Team
July 2007