



VASLAN
SOUTH LANARKSHIRE

Chief Officers Group

Third Sector Chief Officers Group (TSCOG)

Terms of Reference (TOR)

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1.0 Purpose of this Pack

The purpose of this Terms of Reference (TOR) document is to provide TSCOG Members and supporting VASLan staff with an underpinning operating framework which is inclusive, fair and well-structured. Guided by the values of the group, members are encouraged to feedback openly and constructively on what's working and what needs work in relation to the group, to further strengthen interactions and to ultimately enhance outcomes for both the organisations involved and for the sector as a whole.

2.0 Introduction to the Third Sector Interface (TSI)

The Scottish Government funds 32 TSI's across Scotland. Their aim is for TSIs to be forces for change within Scotland's communities, supporting and enabling a dynamic, flourishing third sector that has a vital role to play in progressing national outcomes and realising Ministers' ambitions for people and communities across Scotland. Therefore, TSIs play an important role in the third sector landscape as a key point of intelligence about local third sector organisations and volunteering; providing an understanding of the local landscape and how it effects the third sector's ability to contribute to local outcomes and national strategies (such as health and social care, community empowerment). TSI's are well positioned to identify support needs for local community groups, voluntary organisations, social enterprises and around volunteering and can identify third sector issues and perspectives that can feed into both local and national policy, making the TSI role complex in providing support across all policy areas and client groups.

South Lanarkshire's local sector itself is very diverse with different needs and different perspectives. Whilst this is challenging it does mean that VASLan, as a TSI, occupies a unique and important place. As the Third Sector Interface (TSI), VASLan's objectives are to support and develop a strong Third Sector through representing and advocating for the sector whilst contributing, informing and adding value to our Community Planning Partners. To achieve these objectives VASLan operates across a range of thematic areas including, Children's Services, Health and Social Care, Volunteering and Social Enterprise. VASLan are clear that as the TSI it needs to operate in a collaborative environment and build sector confidence to ensure the views of the sector are reflected across Community Planning Partners to strengthen the relationship between the Public and Third Sector.

In order to support and promote increased collaboration, the Third Sector Chief Officers' Group (TSCOG) was established in late 2016. The group brings together a wealth of combined knowledge, skill, experience and passion for local, community-led solutions. This leadership network is complimented by four locality-based Third Sector Forums. Working in parallel, they support:

- An effective, collective voice for the sector, supporting engagement in policy development at a strategic level and
- The building of stronger strategic relationships through mutual support, sharing of knowledge and expertise.

3.0 The Third Sector Chief Officers Group (TSCOG)

The specific interests and focus of the TSCOG are aligned to the key guiding principles of 'Partnership' and 'Accountability':

Accountability: We accept accountability both as a sector body and as individuals, we confidently and transparently assess our performance and manage our resources responsibly in pursuit of a united and results-driven culture.

Partnership: The success of the group is largely dependent upon the partnerships we forge; the intellectual capital and passion of the members are the key drivers in achieving this partnership.

3.1 Purpose and Aims

As a grouping of community-led Third Sector organisations:

- We will aim to provide an accountable forum supporting VASLan's role as the conduit for the Third Sector to engage in strategic planning.
- Act as a conduit in co-production of services.

The COG mission is to **Inform, Inspire and Influence** through the following key priorities:

- **Strategic Engagement** – building relationships across the sectors, keeping abreast with changes in the context in which the Third Sector operate and being involved in processes and planning where appropriate.
- **Income and Strategic Commissioning** – working together and sharing appropriate information for the good of the sector.
- **Being collaborative** /drawing together consortia / being open to partnership.

The group advises and supports the identification of strategic topics which are impacting on the Third Sector and our communities, producing proposals that address issues and propose developments to enhance the position of the Third Sector to influence decision making, policy development and service delivery.

3.2 Values

Values are the way we do things and the behaviours that we can expect as we work together. These values are as follows:

Respect: Recognising and valuing individual and organisational differences, being non-judgmental and listening to the opinion of others.

Integrity: To uphold honesty, trust, truthfulness and sincerity, while remaining fair and ethical.

Inclusiveness: Accept the diversity of the sector and ensure equality of opportunity.

Commitment: As individuals and as a sector body be committed to contributing positively toward building a resilient Third Sector and strengthening the relationship between the Public and the Third Sector.

These are underpinned by the guiding principles of **accountability** and **partnership**.

3.3 Priority Work

The priority work of the group aligns to the mission and key priorities outlined above. Progress is reviewed regularly. Guided by an appointed Steering Group and supported and line managed by VASLan's CEO, the Development Lead works alongside the COG to deliver on an agreed Work Plan, which mirrors these priorities with key deliverables and an associated timeline.

3.4 Membership of the TSCOG

3.4.1 Membership - Criteria

Membership of the group is open to chief officers of Third Sector organisations based and /or working within South Lanarkshire who are also members of VASLan. The applicant should be the main decision-maker and lead officer for the charity, social enterprise or voluntary sector group which they represent. Their title may or may not be that of 'Chief Officer'. Consideration will also be given to membership requests from organisations which do not follow a traditional organisational structure (e.g. co-leadership), however core TSCOG meetings should be attended consistently by the nominated and agreed lead decision-maker for the organisation. Although not eligible to attend the monthly TSCOG meetings, other senior leaders from member organisations are invited to attend TSCOG working groups to progress specific pieces of work (See section on *Working Groups* below).

As the group exists to support and empower leaders of South Lanarkshire-based third sector organisations, membership is not open to leaders of National Voluntary Organisations, South Lanarkshire Council ALEOs (Arm's Length External Organisations), statutory or private sector groups. However, the TSCOG is committed to working collaboratively across all sectors and members engage with public, private and third sector leaders, both locally and nationally, through a range of methods (see sections on *Representation*, *Guests*, and *Locality Networks* below).

It is important to note that there are many ways in which third sector organisations can connect across South Lanarkshire, including the sector-led and VASLan-supported Locality Networks. Applicants to the TSCOG are supported to consider a range of thematic and locality-based supports to identify the best fit for their organisation (see guidance around *Membership Benefits & Responsibilities* below).

3.4.2 Membership – How to Join

Details about the TSCOG are shared on the VASLan website and with member organisations. Details of TSCOG monthly meetings are shared publicly on the VASLan What's On page and via the monthly newsletter. Existing TSCOG members also encourage new members to join. To apply for membership, applicants should complete the online application form which can be found on the TSCOG page on the VASLan Website. Subject to satisfactory eligibility, the individual is then invited to a TSCOG Welcome event, where they can meet and connect with existing COG members. This enables them to make an informed decision about joining, and for existing members to share the TSCOG's vision, mission and values to establish a firm foundation for collaboration.

3.4.3 Membership - Benefits

Membership benefits highlighted by existing members include:

- ✓ **Community of Peers** – a unique space where 3rd sector leaders can listen, share & support
- ✓ **Informal Mentoring** – experienced chief officers facilitating the growth of those newer in post by providing guidance, support, and knowledge
- ✓ **Partnerships** – many members collaborate on joint projects and funding bids
- ✓ **Consortia opportunities** – joint tender bids & proactive project pitches (new)
- ✓ **Representing & influencing** – opportunities to work alongside public and voluntary sector partners, ensuring communities have a voice in decision-making & needs-led service delivery
- ✓ **Campaigning** – Advocating for the sector to be heard, valued, included & well-funded.

3.4.4 Membership - Responsibilities

To foster strong working relationships, maximise effectiveness, and ensure progress, members are encouraged to actively engage in the life and work of the group. Meetings are held monthly, and members are expected to attend at least 50% of planned meetings across the year. Membership is reviewed every 6 months and, if engagement is poor, may be suspended. However, where mitigating circumstances arise, alternative solutions will be devised.

There is an expectation of commitment to the purposes and principles of the group and clarity that the focus is strategic in nature. The chair and vice-chair are responsible for keeping this the focus of the meetings.

For the purposes of focused, time-bound projects, working groups are established. A clear 'Call to Participate' process will guide engagement in these consortia opportunities. This will include how to express interest, time and capacity requirements, support offered and expectations.

3.5 Facilitation & Capacity Support

The chair and vice-chair will be appointed at the Annual Business meeting and will be responsible for guiding the direction of the meetings, with administrative support provided by a member of VASLan.

The Development Lead (DL) provides capacity support to the TSCOG, following the priorities and deliverables laid out in the Work Plan (agreed August 2024).

3.6 Steering Group

The Development Lead is line managed by the Chief Executive Officer of VASLan, and their work is overseen and directed by a Steering Group on behalf of the TSCOG. This Steering Group should consist of between 4 and 5 TSCOG members, including the VASLan CEO, a maximum of 1 TSCOG member who is also on the VASLan Board, and up to 3 other TSCOG members. The TSCOG chair will not serve on the Steering group in order to ensure impartiality and objectivity. The Steering Group will meet monthly, usually online.

3.7 Annual Business Meeting

The first meeting of the new calendar year will be to:

- Appoint the Chairperson & Vice Chairperson
- Review membership
- Review TSCOG values, priorities and Terms of Reference
- Review TSCOG progress

3.8 Meetings Frequency

Meeting frequency will be agreed with the group and planned at least 6 months in advance.

It is envisaged that meetings will be of a frequency of no less than bi-monthly.

3.9 Meeting Plans

Where practical, items for the meeting plan should be offered at least 6 working days in advance, and papers sent out 5 working days prior to the meeting.

Standing items will include:

- Reports from TSCOG working groups
- Feedback from strategic groups and locality networks
- Update on the Work Plan
- Updates from VASLan
- Any declarations / conflicts of interest
- Any further support that the TSCOG can provide in representing the Third Sector.

3.10 Information and Communication

- A note of attendance and apologies will be recorded for each meeting.
- To ensure any agreed actions are monitored and completed, the TSCOG will utilise an action log.
- Any associated information or papers should be provided for distribution to TSCOG members.
- Any papers produced by a working group will be submitted to the wider TSCOG with the understanding that any paper is not simply for information but to support the TSI and the TSCOG in representing the sector.

3.11 Code of Conduct

In order to build and maintain a strong, trusting team, all members should adhere to the principles and values of the TSCOG and to the membership requirements:

- ✓ All members should be treated with respect and consideration.
- ✓ Diverse perspectives should be acknowledged, and discussions engaged in constructively.
- ✓ Any sensitive information shared should be kept confidential and not disclosed outside of the group without permission.
- ✓ Members should conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times.
- ✓ All should act with honesty and integrity, disclosing any potential conflicts of interest to the Chair.
- ✓ All should work hard to foster an inclusive environment where all members feel welcome and valued.
- ✓ All members should actively participate, contributing to the TSCOG's priorities and following through on agreed tasks and deliverables.
- ✓ Any form of harassment or discrimination will be addressed promptly.

3.12 Decision-Making

Decisions within the TSCOG will be made through consensus wherever possible. If consensus cannot be reached, a vote will be held, and a majority decision will be implemented.

3.13 Resolving Conflict

In the event of conflict arising within the TSCOG, the following dispute resolution process is in place:

- Members resolve any areas of misunderstanding or conflict through discussion & mutual agreement.
- Where a resolution is not possible, a formal discussion will be enacted between appropriate members facilitated by the Chairperson.
- For any issues or disputes between members that cannot then be resolved, the Chairperson may seek involvement from alternative representatives (e.g. respective organisations' Trustees).
- If required, consideration will be given to the appointment of an independent arbiter, agreeable to the organisations in dispute. This could include both local and national bodies/organisations. Any costs, where mediation support is required and agreed, should be split equally between the organisations in dispute. The members shall be bound by the outcome of the arbiter's decision/recommendation(s).

3.14 Events & Guests

To enable the group to take forward the key priorities of strategic engagement and income generation for the sector, there will be the opportunity to invite guests to TSCOG meetings or to convene additional events, as appropriate. e.g., heads of service, national voluntary sector representatives, strategic funding partners etc. Clear reasoning, and the desired outcomes for any visit will be agreed by the group in advance.

3.15 Working Groups

As required short-term working groups (task and finish) may be convened for the completion of specific targeted pieces of work (such as campaign tasks, the preparation of position statements, and other reasons where agreed). These working groups will draft papers to be agreed by the wider TSCOG and VASLan as the TSI. These task and finish groups will be made up from the members of the TSCOG, consisting of those who express an interest or have some specific area of expertise to offer. Where applicable, support will be provided by the Development Lead and the VASLan admin team.

3.16 Representation

It is recognised that the Third Sector Interface is the conduit between the Third Sector and Community Planning Partners, with the TSCOG playing an important role in the flow of information between the Interface, Community Planning Partners and the wider Third Sector thereby enhancing the sector's voice in South Lanarkshire.

In supporting the role of the TSI opportunities may arise whereby a representative of the TSCOG may be required to provide support. Such representatives will be expected to:

1. Identify and highlight any potential conflicts of interest.
2. Represent the wider sector and not individual organisational interests.
3. Attend meetings regularly.
4. Agree and pre-nominate a deputy.
5. Share papers as required.
6. Feedback to the TSI & TSCOG in a timely manner to facilitate appropriate discussion and action.

4.0 Review of TOR

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually (at the Annual Business Meeting) and amended as required to ensure they remain relevant and effective in achieving the group's objectives and mission.

This version was approved at the TSCOG meeting on 11/9/2024