

# VCS Assembly | VAL proposal

## Background

VAL instigated the VCS Assembly two years ago as a mechanism to bring the VCS together for a number of reasons including influencing policy, providing a chance for the VCS to plan and develop work together and to share learning and resources.

The Assembly Steering Group and later Board have struggled to find a role and to work out its relationship to VAL. There are also various other groups that are operating in parallel, including the representatives' summit, the Compact Groups and various VCS Forums. Forums connected with VAL or the District Voluntary and Community Actions include each of the District Forums, the Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Forums, and other groups for example working around GP commissioning or personalisation. VCS networks run by other organisations include the Racial Minority Assembly and the CEO Network.

At an awayday in June 2011 the VCS Assembly Board identified four main purposes:

1. Being the glue that holds the diversity of the sector, bringing coherence and seeing the bigger picture, being able to zoom out.
2. Holding the space for many diverse voices – facilitating dialogue and listening to each other.
3. Being the relationship weaver/knitter/influencer across the sectors.
4. Developing a culture of experimentation, innovation, doing it differently, bringing about change.

There has also been a need expressed by various parts of the VCS to be able to be more involved in and to advise on VAL's direction of travel, and VAL's Trustee Board and senior management team have expressed a commitment to increased involvement with the wider VCS.

## Proposal

In order to take the development of the Assembly forward and to tie it in with the work of the other groups that are taking place, VAL is proposing that the Assembly is better integrated with other activities that are already taking place.

### Three annual events

It is suggested that day-long Assembly events are held three times a year, October, February and June, which are a mixture of standard items, for example:

- Representatives' summit
- City and County Compact / VCS Strategy meetings
- VAL advisory group to support the direction and work of VAL.

There are also “one off” activities, for example:

- National or local speakers
- Showcasing of projects or organisations
- Mini training sessions
- Task and finish groups
- Think tank sessions.

Anyone in the VCS can propose a session to the Steering Group that they would like to run themselves or a suggestion for someone else to run. VAL could also provide working / networking space so that people can dip in and out of formal sessions as appropriate and can provide Group Support surgeries for people to get individual advice on the day.

### Assembly Steering Group

There should be an Assembly Steering Group to support the development of these events. Membership of the Steering Group should comprise 8-10 people be drawn from:

- The Representatives’ Summit
- City Compact / VCS Strategy Group
- County Compact / VCS Strategy Group
- District Forums
- Racial Minority Assembly
- Plus co-opted members to fill (skills, knowledge and influence gaps).

### Other events

Other events could be held as required, either for the Assembly as a whole or for sub-groups.

## Rationale

The purpose of this proposal is:

1. It removes the duplication of the same people coming to different meetings.
2. It allows more people to come together to develop ideas and relationships.
3. It provides a mix of routine activities that need to be regularly undertaken with an opportunity for new and innovative sessions.
4. It allows links to be made across different geographical and theme areas and different communities.
5. It provides access to VAL Board and senior managers to provide advice and support on VAL’s work.

Becky Nixon, 5 September 2011