



## Response to the Cabinet Office 'Modernising Commissioning' Green Paper

### Media Trust

Media Trust is the UK's leading communications charity. We work with communities, charities and media organisations to harness the power of communications for positive social change.

Our projects include marketing and communications training and support for communities and charities; matching media and communications professionals with charities requiring pro bono volunteer support, media and digital resources; specialist media projects for disadvantaged groups, including young people; national news distribution for charities and communities; and Community Channel – the UK's only charity-owned online and digital TV broadcaster. We believe that everyone should have a voice and the opportunity to be heard.

We have a long history of working across campaigning, capability building, citizen-engagement, media policy and digital engagement to deliver projects which bring communities together, build the capacity, skills and resilience of civil society organisations and create lasting positive social change.

We have long-standing and well-developed partnerships throughout Government, civil society organisations, including many thousands of charities and community groups across England, and major media organisations. Our corporate media partners include BBC, Channel 4, Daily Mail & General Trust, Facebook, Google, Guardian Media Group, IPC Media, ITV, Living TV Group, MTV, News International, OMD, Sky and Warner Bros. BBC director general Mark Thompson, former Channel 4 chief executive Andy Duncan, ITN/ Channel 4 newscaster Jon Snow, Prince's Trust chief executive Martina Milburn and KPMG senior partner Scott McCormack are all included on our board of trustees.

Media Trust's response is focussed on Question 4:

How could civil society organisations support greater citizen and community involvement in all stages of commissioning?

Media Trust believes that inspiration and the power of media and effective communications is the key to unlocking social capital and igniting positive social action in communities and civil society organisations. Our experience is that by enabling the showcasing and telling the stories of communities and organisations doing great things locally, and facing many of the same challenges and opportunities, many more can be energised to get up, get organised and make a difference.

For this to be truly successful, organisations on the ground, the support organisations working with them, commissioners and local authorities, all need the skills and resources to communicate into, within and out of communities to find those success stories, reach out to target audiences and share them in an inspiring way. This one simple intervention can pave the way for sustainable and impactful support in areas that have historically found it more difficult to build social capital, and deliver public services in a targeted, cost-effective and high impact way.

Media Trust has developed great experience and expertise in supporting communities and civil society organisations to create inspiring content for themselves and to use media, both traditional and digital, to campaign about issues, find and have a voice and tell their stories. We find that the inspiring power of media is both a catalyst for change in bringing people together and an effective tool for empowering local people to make a positive difference, access and deliver public services.

We also believe that a robust and broad local news infrastructure is critically important in building social capital locally. Media Trust research, conducted by Goldsmiths Leverhulme Media Research Centre<sup>1</sup>, reveals the explicit relationship between local and community news, local democracy, community cohesion and civic engagement. The research however highlights a crisis in the provision of local news that threatens to undermine the growth and sustainability of social capital and therefore the foundations of the big society policy. We have first hand experience of this via our Community Newswire project, funded by Office for Civil Society, which writes and distributes more than 10,000 civil society and community news stories through Press Association into the mainstream news media each year<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Meeting the new needs of local communities'. Research by Goldsmiths Leverhulme Media Research Centre commissioned by Media Trust, July 2010

<sup>2</sup> Community Newswire end of year report 2009/10

This very tangible manifestation of the importance of communications to civil society and communities must be addressed. Media Trust feels that the Goldsmiths' research recommendation of a network of local media hubs around the country could not only positively contribute to halting the decline in local media but also could actively encourage and support the growth of civil society organisations and the effective engagement of citizens in the delivery of public services, at all stages.

Media Trust's experience as an aggregator and curator of the very best advice and information in marketing and communication skills is that the discoverability and accessibility of content are key issues. We have sought to make content available and easily accessed across all digital devices, such as iPad, PCs, android and iPhones, and, importantly to 5million people via digital TV<sup>3</sup>. In addition to our existing broadcast on Sky, Virgin, Freeview and BT Vision, our Community Channel is going onto to the Samsung IPTV network and we are exploring becoming a partner with YouView.

The power of TV should not be underestimated, even in the digital age. Anna Bateson, marketing director at YouTube, says, "The added value to Media Trust of having a UK-wide digital television platform on Sky, Virgin and Freeview is enormous. Even a niche channel adds unique marketing value to the online and mobile proposition, and greatly incentivises content creators. Google and YouTube look forward to supporting Community Channel across all its platforms."<sup>4</sup>

This aggregation of content can drive awareness and link to a myriad of other sources, but also enable sharing of best practice and inspire social action. The integration with social media is also key. The Daily Mail, for example, is achieving 10% of its traffic from Facebook<sup>5</sup>. Our own experience, in setting up and running our nation-wide Community Champions Awards, which attracted more than 190,000 page views in one month, was that more than 50% of the traffic came from Facebook<sup>6</sup>.

There is however also a need for clearly identifiable, trusted online resources which are discipline specific and which mix this aggregated content with authoritative editorial. Media Trust's BPRI research revealed that experience in the sector was the top priority for organisations looking for support, with 68% agreeing that support providers should share their ethical viewpoints and 59% agreeing that support providers should have sector-specific experience<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Forecasted reach based on BARB statistics for Community Channel 2010

<sup>4</sup> Anna Bateson, marketing director, YouTube, November 2010

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2010/nov/15/mail-online-uk-traffic-facebook>

<sup>6</sup> Google analytics [www.communitychampions.org](http://www.communitychampions.org)

<sup>7</sup> 'The marketing and communications needs of charities' Research by BPRI commissioned by Media Trust, Sept 2009

Media Trust's experience is that this skills transfer online can be simply linked with 121 skills transfer and leverage of pro bono support. Our own sites allow people to view inspiring content, access capability building information, book training-courses, find volunteer expert support and source pro bono resources.

There is also a need to ensure that all civil society organisations are equipped to make full use of the opportunities that digital presents. Media Trust, for example, is working with Google to ensure that all civil society organisations can have free and easy access to tools to create their own websites. We are also working with our media and digital partners to recruit and deploy digital mentors into civil society organisations and communities throughout England, including via partnerships with UK Online Centres and Martha Lane Fox's Race Online programme.

There is tremendous potential in skills transfer between small civil society organisations and businesses and larger charities. In 2009/10, for example, Media Trust matched more than 900 volunteer media, marketing and communications professionals – from across the private sector, public sector and charities – with civil society organisations requiring their pro bono support<sup>8</sup>. We estimate that in 2010/11 this will generate up to £3m pro bono support and skills transfer.

Government needs to invest in tried and tested mechanisms to connect businesses and larger charities – and the organisations working in them – with the smaller civil society organisations that need their support. We believe that a discipline specific focus is important as it enables smaller organisations to tap into the key skills and competencies so much needed but so rarely affordable in their core-staff teams. In marketing and communications, for example, only 20% of small charities have a specific marketing team and only 13% have a marketing director on their board of trustees; 71% of small charities don't even have a marketing budget.<sup>9</sup>

It is important that there is cross-Government support for employee volunteers, and we'd urge the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills to extend its remit to ensuring that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a core agenda in British Industry. Media Trust's experience is that employee volunteering to provide specific professional skills is a win:win and corporately as well as personally rewarding activity but it does require industry specific knowledge and well-formed relationships with the private sector to be truly effective.

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<sup>8</sup> Media Matching end of year report 2009/10

<sup>9</sup> 'The marketing and communications needs of charities' Research by BPRI commissioned by Media Trust, Sept 2009

If properly set up, the service can be easily cascaded. For example, Media Trust deploys professional volunteers into front line civil society organisations both directly and via a range of partnerships with infrastructure organisations who 'white-label' the service or simply link to it.

As with skills transfer between small civil society organisations and businesses and larger charities, there is tremendous potential in pro bono support. For example, in the two years that Media Trust delivered the Volunteering for All campaign, we generated more than £2.2m pro bono support from the media industry<sup>10</sup>. However, as with skills transfer, Government needs to invest in the mechanisms to connect businesses willing to make a pro bono investment with those smaller civil society organisations needing their support and to find a cause-related interest.

We believe that discipline specific experience is important here too. Leveraging pro bono support requires a detailed knowledge and exceptionally strong relationships with the industry donating the time, assets or resources. Media Trust's experience is that pro bono can only be effectively harnessed when clear links are made between corporate and social benefits, and this requires more than a passing knowledge of the subject in hand.

In both skills transfer and pro bono, Government needs to ensure that support is in place for smaller civil society organisations to be able to effectively identify the support they require. Media Trust's BPRI research revealed, for example, that only 23% of charities are satisfied with their ability to organise their marketing and communications activity<sup>11</sup>.

Government must invest in discipline-specific specialist brokers who are able to harness pro bono support in a way that meets corporate objectives and creates sustainable win:win partnerships. It should also consider tax-advantages to companies providing pro bono support to civil society organisations. Civil society organisations also need training, resources and toolkits to enable them to effectively secure pro bono support locally.

Media Trust's BPRI research<sup>12</sup> revealed that charities of all sizes required specific support in four areas to maximise their resilience:

1. Core investment into marketing
2. Realising the full benefits of digital media
3. Support in strategic planning
4. Better access to support from within the sector

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<sup>10</sup> 'Stories' Media Trust Annual Review 2008/2009

<sup>11</sup> 'The marketing and communications needs of charities' Research by BPRI commissioned by Media Trust, Sept 2009

<sup>12</sup> 'The marketing and communications needs of charities' Research by BPRI commissioned by Media Trust, Sept 2009

We believe that investment in marketing and communications support has a long-term and exponential impact on the resilience of small civil society organisations as it uniquely has direct and immediate impact on their ability to secure funds, to recruit and retain staff and volunteers, to access pro bono support, to campaign and influence, to be efficient, to reach beneficiaries and to empower communities.

We also believe that larger charities require support in adjusting to a more mixed funding model and in accessing local funding. In Media Trust's own case, we have an amazing ability to deliver value, to harness pro bono support and to reach millions of UK communities through our digital partnerships and platforms. Key to our ability to increase our reach and impact and that of grass-roots communities and small civil society organisations is funding for staff resources to harness increased pro bono from the media, marketing, communications and digital industries and a contribution to the costs of maintaining our unique UK-wide digital platform on TV, online and on mobile.

We believe that whilst the Capacitybuilders Improving Support programme<sup>13</sup> missed many opportunities in delivering resources to civil society organisations, the nine core areas of support it sought to address (campaigning, change, collaboration, communications, equality, governance, income, performance and volunteering) remain robust and relevant areas to focus on and therefore ought to become the priorities for a bursary fund.

We believe that communications (which should include marketing, media and digital) has a critical and over-arching impact across all areas of civil society organisation operations and that the proliferation of these skills should be firmly at the centre of any bursary funding.

Media Trust trains more than 3,500 people working in civil society organisations in media, marketing and communications related disciplines each year<sup>14</sup>. We believe that a bursary fund should be available to organisations with a turnover of less than £1m in 2010/11 and less than £500k/annum in 2011/12 and beyond (to recognise the expected relatively high number of organisations likely to experience a significant fall in income between these periods).

This fund ought to be structured by the nine priority areas of campaigning, change, collaboration, communications, equality, governance, income, performance and volunteering and should allow civil society organisations to 'match-fund' purchase of support in these areas from suppliers of their choice. This should be based on a simple online 'needs analysis' which should be carried

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<sup>13</sup> [www.improvingsupport.org](http://www.improvingsupport.org)

<sup>14</sup> 'Stories' Media Trust Annual Review 2008/2009

out by a lead-organisation in each of the priority areas. This would allow quick and easy sign-posting to other areas of available support and free resources. Administration costs for priority area lead organisations ought to be kept to a maximum of 5% of the bursary fund.

Organisations not yet online should be supported with information on bursaries via newsletters, local media and local support organisations.

We believe that consolidation ought to be focused around discipline specific areas of activity with an aim of creating centres of excellence, ideally around the nine priority areas of campaigning, change, collaboration, communications, equality, governance, income, performance and volunteering, which the sector can easily understand and identify with.

The Government should invest in tried and tested services and networks that can be enhanced rather than creating new networks and should resist the temptation to invest in significant new online presence, instead adding value to networks – digital and otherwise – that already exist.

Government must continue to provide a mechanism for support to be delivered and should core fund a small number of specialist organisations able to lead resource development, aggregation and distribution throughout the sector, and across the country.

We believe that the focus on positive social action creates significant opportunities for civil society organisations of all sizes. Our experience is that, when inspired and properly supported, people in communities and the organisations that work with them can achieve the great social change that the state craves but has been unable to bring about. They cannot however do it alone.

We believe that inspiration and the power of media and communications is the key to unlocking potential and building social capital and that the Cabinet Office must invest in finding and sharing stories of success that will inspire others. Media Trust has invested significantly in digital platforms that can demonstrate inspiration in local face-to-face activity across communities and the country, and in corporate relationships with major media organisations and digital heavyweights such as Google and Facebook that can add significant value to this agenda.

We strongly recommend a focus on communications and believe wholeheartedly in the tremendous power of traditional and digital media to change lives, strengthen local networks and share best practice at a national level. Our experience in our CLG-funded Community Voices project<sup>15</sup>, for example, is that communities and projects as diverse as older people running their

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.mediatrust.org/community-voices/>

own radio station to rurally isolated farmers broadcasting their own online TV channel and disadvantaged young people challenging perceptions that stop them getting into employment can all achieve the unachievable when digital media is embraced.

We also believe that communities and small civil society organisations cannot do it alone. There needs to remain carefully thought out, high quality and easily available support. The sector has suffered from lower levels of skills in key areas than would be acceptable in private sector business and this cannot be addressed by leaving the lowest common denominators to fill a vacuum of support.

If we skill up and empower civil society organisations, alongside citizens and communities, with the necessary communications ability and resources, this above all will enable them to play a leading, active and potentially groundbreaking role in public service delivery, and to showcase the best success stories across the country and wider.

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