

Dear Sir/Madam,

I should like to offer the following reflections on the questions posed in the Green Paper.

1. Creating new opportunities for civil society organisations to deliver public services

The vast range of existing civil society organisations operate across most sectors of public service. They have grown up around the margins of core public services in response to the failure of public sector to meet the specific needs of their beneficiaries. If they are now to effectively bid for the delivery of the core service offer then there are huge questions around the scale and capacity of those organisations to effectively deliver core services. There would indeed be considerable danger of mission-drift for organisations to take on the central role of the state in the delivery of public services. Where organisations do wish to engage with this agenda, they will require access to both investment capital and to appropriate support to assist them to build new business models.

2. Making public sector markets more accessible to civil society organisations

I welcome the creation of the new 'Contracts finder' portal as a free portal replacing Supply2Gov and the intention for it to inter-operate with other public sector portals which do seem to be proliferating.

The scale of contracts and PQQ requirements is the key to the accessibility of markets. Requirement for £5million turnover or for levels of insurance cover that are outside the financial range for smaller civil society organisations will always be a barrier and will self-select the larger regional or national organisations as potential providers.

3. Using assessments of full social, environmental and economic value

We have used SROI as a tool with clients and have found it to be highly time consuming and unwieldy for small and medium sized civil society organisations. The lack of a definitive bank of financial proxies also makes this a difficult tool to use. We recognise that this is very much work in progress and are concerned that whatever tool is used is appropriate in scale to the organisation and to the level of contracts.

We believe it would be useful to look at the social criteria in terms of distributive profits that are used in the assessment criteria for the Social Enterprise Mark. We are concerned that hybrid organisations may emerge wrongly self-defining as social enterprises who are in fact thinly disguised private sector organisations and feel that a test in relation to distributive profits would be useful in this regard.

I hope that these comments are useful.

Regards,

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