EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Group: ERG
	Directorate / Unit: OCS

PRELIMINARY SCREENING

Date of Screening	18th January 2011
Name of Screener	L Bromwell
Director	J Mountford

OCS Strategic Partners Transition programme		This is **new**
	X	This is a **change** to an existing policy
		This is an **existing** policy, not previously assessed

Aims, Objectives & Projected Outcomes

Aims

The new Strategic Partners Transition programme has three objectives:

- to ensure key national representative organisations can efficiently and effectively act as a conduit between government and the wider frontline VCSE sector, communicating, and helping to support and deliver strategic policy of OCS, including the three priorities outlined by the Minister for Civil Society;
  - making it easier to run a voluntary or community organisation
  - getting more resources into the sector
  - making it easier to engage with the state
- to support the VCSE sector to contribute to the development of the Big Society; and
- to help ensure the independence and sustainability of national representative organisations, providing a route to them becoming independent of government funding by 2014.

The programme will establish formalised relationships with up to 15 national representative organisations within the VCSE sector. They will provide coherence for the sector and will represent the sector's ideas and concerns to government, and help government communicate with the sector.

The refreshed group of Strategic Partners will need to act as a conduit to a broad range of organisations across the country and at all levels. In particular, applicants will need to demonstrate how they can effectively and accurately represent the voice of small, localised organisations and those representing people with protected characteristics. The value of activities undertaken by Strategic Partners over recent years will be taken into account.

To give confidence that they can sustain their work independently of public funding once the programme ends, applicants will need clear plans for diversifying income streams over this period.

As part of the move to independence from government, Strategic Partner

grants will not constitute more than a maximum of 25% of any organisation's total income. Funding for Strategic Partners will be unrestricted, but there will be a strong expectation for partners to work closely with Government to deliver key agreed outcomes. These outcomes will be detailed in a Memorandum of Understanding as part of the Grants Agreement.

Will the policy have an impact on national or local people/staff?	YES
Are particular communities or groups likely to have different needs, experiences and/or attitudes in relation to the policy	YES
Are there any aspects of the policy that could contribute to equality or inequality?	YES
Could the aims of the policy be in conflict with equal opportunity, elimination of discrimination, promotion of good relations?	NO

FULL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Date of Assessment	21st January 2011
Name of Assessor	Liz Liston-Jones

STATISTICS & RESEARCH

What relevant quantitative & qualitative data do you have in relation to this policy?
Please site any quantitative (e.g. statistical research) and qualitative evidence (monitoring data, complaints, satisfaction surveys, focus groups, questionnaires, meetings, research interviews etc) of communities or groups having different needs, experiences or attitudes in relation to this item of work.

Equality Target Areas	How does the data identify potential or known <u>positive</u> impacts? How does the data identify any potential or known <u>adverse</u> impacts?
Race (consider e.g. nationalities, languages)	The National Survey for Third Sector Organisations (NSTSO) suggests that third sector (referred to hereafter as civil society organisations) whose main beneficiaries are BME groups have the following characteristics: • the majority report having insufficient financial reserves to meet main objectives over the past 12 months (55%). • Only 30% of organisations get any support from other civil society organisations in their area, and of those only 24% are satisfied with this support. • 64% report that income from all sources over the past 12 months has been insufficient to meet main objectives (much higher than average) • 34% report that they have insufficient ICT (twice the average level) • 40% report having insufficient space to operate (twice the average level) • 40% report having insufficient paid staff (compared to16% on average) • 35% report having insufficient volunteers (compared to 30% on average) • 28% report having insufficient management and leadership staff (compared to 17% on average) • 31% report having insufficient advice and

	support (nearly twice the average level) • 28% report having insufficient networking opportunities (twice the average level)
Disability (consider social access and physical access)	Organisations that support people with physical disabilities responded to the NSTSO in the following way: • Only 28% get any support from other civil society organisations in their local area and of those only 23% are satisfied with that support. • 47% report having insufficient income (49% on average) • 35% report having insufficient volunteers • Report average levels of satisfaction with paid staff, advice and support, ICT, space to operate, networking opportunities, trustees, management and leadership staff. Organisations working with people with mental health needs responded to the NSTSO in the following way:- • 41% stated that they did receive support from other civil society organisations in their local area and of those 32% were satisfied with the support they got. • 55% stated that their income was insufficient (compared with 39% on average)
Gender	In the NSTSO, 21% of organisations identified women as their main beneficiaries, so the following data may indicate some of the issues, but cannot be taken as a proxy for organisations specifically focused on women. Civil society organisations identifying women as their main beneficiaries responded to say: • Results on confidence in organisational success, staff, management, access to advice, reserves and income were in line with overall responses (e.g. 48% report sufficient income overall; 38% insufficient). • Only 16% report getting support from

	other civil society organisations in their area and of those only 13% are satisfied with the support they receive
Gender Reassignment	We do not have specific data relating to civil society organisations working with gender reassignment however transgender is included in the LGBT data below.
Religion or Belief	The NSTSO shows that civil society organisations from faith communities have a distinct experience in terms of being: • More likely to respond that questions from the survey do not apply to them, for example feeling that accessing local advice and support is not applicable to them, and nor is the range of grants available and the involvement of local authorities on a range of issues. • Only 12% reported getting any support from other civil society organisations in their area and of those only 11% were satisfied with this support About average in terms of satisfaction with resource levels, and heavily reliant on donations and fundraising, with greater than average income from investments
Sexual Orientation	The NSTSO shows that civil society organisations focused on support to LGBT communities have a distinct experience in terms of being: • 61% report having insufficient income to meet objectives (compared to 39% on average) • Much more likely to report insufficient levels of management and leadership (31%), paid staff (36%), trustees (27%), financial services, ICT (27%), advice and support (26%), volunteers (36%) space to operate (28%). • Only 29% of organisations reported getting any support from other civil society organisations in their local area and of those only 20% are satisfied with this support.

Age	In the NSTSO, 18% of organisations identified older people as their main beneficiaries, so the following data may indicate some of the issues, but cannot be taken as a proxy for organisations specifically focused on older people. Civil society organisations identifying older people as their main beneficiaries responded to say: • 52% report having sufficient income over past 12 months to meet main objectives (compared with 49% on average) • Report average levels of satisfaction with paid staff, volunteers, advice and support, ICT, space to operate, networking opportunities, trustees, management and leadership. • Only 19% report getting any support from other civil society organisations in their area and of those only 16% are satisfied with this support.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	We do not have data relating to marriage and civil partnership however we do not believe that this fund is relevant to this area.
Pregnancy and Maternity	We do not have data relating to this however we do not believe that this programme will have an impact on this area.

What research have you considered commissioning to fill any data gaps?

We published a consultation document 'Supporting a Stronger Civil Society' in October 2011 to gather views on the future of the Strategic Partners programme from a wide range of organisations.

Who are the stakeholders, community groups, staff or customers for this policy area?

- Civil society organisations
- Strategic Partners of OCS
- Other Government Departments

What are the overall trends and patterns in this qualitative & quantitative data?
Disproportionality; regional variations; different levels of access, experiences or needs; combined impacts.

We can see that there are significant resource issues within frontline organisations that work with people with protected characteristics. This may impact negatively on their capacity to influence policy and have a voice. Most of these organisations do not seem to be accessing support from other civil society organisations in their area and those that do are generally dissatisfied with the support they receive. This suggests that the links between frontline organisations and other civil society organisations that provide support, information and guidance could be improved. However, it should be noted that only 18% of all civil society organisations say they receive any support from other sector organisation in their area.

Please list the specific equality issues that may need to be addressed through consultation (and further research)?
There are number of current Strategic Partners that represent organisations that work with people with protected characteristics. We need to consider how the new, rationalised fund will still enable policy makers to hear views from a diverse range of front-line organisations.

GATHERING EVIDENCE THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: Consulting & involving Other
Government Departments, Staff, Agencies & NDPBs

Does this policy affect the experiences of staff? How? What are their concerns?	
Staff	NA
Staff Networks & Associations	NA
Trade Unions	NA

How have you consulted, engaged and involved internal stakeholders in considering the impact of this proposal on other policies and services?
We have consulted with the policy leads for the Strategic Partners to gather their views on how to ensure that the new programme can promote equality.

What positive and adverse impacts were identified by your internal consultees? Did they provide any examples?
In terms of positive impacts it was highlighted that the current Strategic Partners have been useful in responding to consultations, conducting research and contributing to Equality Impact Assessments. The Equalities Act 2010 extends the duty to pay due regard to equalities to a number of new protected characteristics some of which are not represented in the current Strategic Partners programme.

EXTERNAL CONSULTATION & INVOLVEMENT

How did your engagement exercise highlight positive and negative impacts on different groups / communities?	
Race	The responses to our consultation 'Supporting a Stronger Civil Society' highlighted a number of issues regarding support for BME organisations. BME organisations were concerned that reducing the number of strategic partners may restrict the ability of the programme to be informed by a diverse group of civil society organisations. There were concerns about excluding organisations that would be receiving over 25% of their turnover from the programme as this may be a barrier to BME organisations. The response highlighted the need for frontline BME organisations to be heard by Government especially at a time when resources are scarce and organisations have little capacity to engage directly with Government.
Religion or Belief	One organisation recommended reducing the funding to London based agencies that take considerable resource away from the front line without any benefit. Concern that some agencies have lost their way and are merely trying to retain portfolios of projects or large staff teams which are seen as a measure of success. Recommend that local faith groups need to access mainstream support from generic providers but there needs to be more brokerage to achieve this as local faith groups are not always aware of the large umbrella organisations.
Disability	It is important to gain both a national and local perspective and so any working group should include both levels and a range of interests e.g. rural, older, younger, disability etc.
Gender	Responses from organisations working to protect women against violence saw little impact from large infrastructure organisations that didn't understand their area of work. There was also a suggestion to select at least one ethnic minority women's group as a strategic partner as this sector is poorly represented.
Gender Reassignment	No response on gender reassignment
Sexual Orientation	Concern that Big Society focuses on geographic communities rather than 'community of identity' such as LGBT.

Age	Concern that there are too many strategic partners and that the existing partners should be encouraged to work in partnership or merge. Concern that funding should be given to those partners that are providing the best support to their members.
Other comments	Concern that there is too much duplication of effort between Strategic Partners with specialist organisations carrying out the same work as mainstream providers. There was a suggestion that mainstream providers should be encouraged to improve their reach into disadvantaged communities rather than leaving this to specialist providers. Concern that large infrastructure bodies use funding to perpetuate their existence rather than support their members. Suggestion for a new kind of Strategic Partner programme consisting of networks of activists working in communities rather than umbrella bodies. Suggestion that Strategic Partners should have good links to public and private sector so they can foster good relations.

ASSESSMENT & ANALYSIS

Does the EIA show a potential for differential impact on any group(s) if this proposal is introduced? If Yes, state briefly whether impact is adverse or positive and in what equality areas.

The Strategic Partners programme is one way in which Government gathers views from the sector about future policy and programmes therefore it is important that Strategic Partners have a broad membership and reach into diverse communities so that they can represent the whole of the sector. There was a concern that the 25% threshold would exclude BME organisations from applying.

What were the main findings of the engagement exercise and what weight should they carry?

The main findings were:-
- That it is important for the Strategic Partners programme to be truly representative of the sector, including reach to diverse communities
- Strategic Partners should have good links to frontline organisations and be actively supporting their membership
- Concern that at present there are too many Strategic Partners with considerable duplication of effort between them

Respondents agreed that whilst it is important for the Strategic Partners programme to be representative of a broad cross-section of the sector, it also needs to be able to have access into 'hard to reach' communities. There were mixed responses about the best way to achieve this, with some respondents advocating supporting 'specialist' Strategic Partners that represented minority interests and others suggesting that 'mainstream' Strategic Partners should be encouraged to better serve diverse communities.

Does this policy have the potential to cause unlawful direct or indirect discrimination? Does this policy have the potential to exclude certain group of people from obtaining services, or limit their participation in any aspect of public life?

We do not believe that the fund will cause unlawful direct or indirect discrimination. It will not exclude people from obtaining services or limit their participation in public life. There was a concern that BME organisations would be excluded from applying for funding due to the 25% rule. We have considered the impact of this. One of the aims of this policy is to ensure that Strategic Partners become independent from Government funding and sustainable in the long-term. It would therefore not be appropriate to fund organisations more than 25% of their total income as this would be perpetuating a reliance on Government Funding. The 25% rule would be applied to all applicants and there is no intrinsic reason why BME organisations would be less likely to meet this rule than other organisations therefore we do not believe that it is unlawful discrimination.

How does the policy promote equality of opportunity?

It can promote equality through enabling a stronger voice for a diverse range of organisations and this will in turn inform and improve policy making.

How does your policy promote good relations? How does this policy make it possible for different groups to work together, build bridges between parallel communities, or remove barriers that isolate groups and individuals from engaging in civic society more generally?

The programme will help civil society organisations work better with Government. It could potentially improve partnerships between civil society organisations, the public sector and private sector. The programme will support the vision of a Big Society where communities and individuals feel more empowered and have a stronger voice.

How can the policy be revised, or additional measures taken, in order for the policy to achieve its aims without risking any adverse impact?

The criteria for the fund need to ensure that we achieve a broad representation of the sector while maintaining good reach to frontline organisations working with people with protected characteristics. This will be tested through the application and interview process for selecting Strategic Partners.

Are there any concerns from data gathering, consultation and analysis that have not been taken on board?

No

ENSURING ACCESS TO INFORMATION

How can you ensure that information used for this EIA is readily available in the future?
• We will publish the EIA on the Cabinet Office website. • Information from the National Survey of Third Sector Organisations is available on the website www.nstso.com

How will you ensure your stakeholders continue to be involved/ engaged in shaping the development/ delivery of this policy?
• We will ask Strategic Partners to fully engage with their members to inform the development of the programme.

How will you monitor this policy to ensure that the policy delivers the equality commitments required?
• The monitoring process will be done through regular performance management reviews of Strategic Partners against key objectives.