



Open Tender

Volunteering in Somerset

Spark Somerset is the main infrastructure organisation in the county providing support to the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector. We co-ordinate the voice of, and advocate on behalf of, the VCFSE sector across Somerset. Our support enables individual VCFSE groups and organisations to develop, improve and sustain their services through the provision of training for staff and volunteers, advising on operational and governance policy and procedures, assisting with funding applications and bid writing, and ensuring safeguarding duties are met.

Background

Volunteering Somerset is collaboration between health, community, and governmental organisations across the county. The group is led by Spark Somerset and comprises stakeholders from NHS Somerset, Somerset Foundation Trust, Somerset Council, and VCFSE organisation Somerset Community Foundation and Helpforce.

Funder: Volunteering Somerset has been successful in obtaining funding through the Volunteering for Health programme. This fund is being delivered through a partnership between NHS Charities Together, NHS England, and CW+.

Project: The aim of this three-year program is to unify and enhance volunteering efforts across Somerset's health and social care sectors. There will be focus on creating a more cohesive volunteering system which can improve health outcomes for people in Somerset while alleviating pressure on healthcare services.

Research

We are seeking expressions of interest from an experienced researcher(s) to support with the scoping phase of the project. This will help us to better understand the range of voluntary activities, experiences of volunteering, and diversity of the volunteer community across Somerset. Insight and findings generated by the successful researcher(s) will later be used by Volunteering Somerset to inform the 'integrated volunteering strategy for Somerset'.

Purpose

To explore the views, perceptions and experiences from four key cohorts across Somerset:

- Volunteer-Involving Organisations across Somerset (e.g. VCFSE, NHS Somerset, Somerset Foundation Trust, Somerset Council etc)
 - Potential topics for exploration: Volunteer recruitment; challenges/barriers; number of volunteers; demographics
- People who formally volunteer for organisations in Somerset
 - Potential topics for exploration: characteristics; motivations; challenges/barriers; finding opportunities
- People who informally volunteer in Somerset (e.g. faith communities, sports coaches, helping neighbours etc)
 - Potential topics for exploration: activity type; demographics; motivations; defining volunteering
- People who do not currently volunteer
 - Potential topics for exploration: barriers/challenges to volunteering; motivators/incentives to volunteer

We would like to co-design/develop the exploration topics with the appointed researcher, based on what is identified from the desk-based scoping work.

Methodology

Spark Somerset is committed to innovative and creative approaches to support our communities. The appointed researcher(s) should be experienced in mixed methodologies which will likely include:

- Desk-based research: identify, synthesise and collate existing data/reports about volunteering (national and local sources)
- Primary data collection: surveys, interviews and group conversations (online & in-person)
- Group/workshop facilitation (online & in-person)
- Data analysis and reporting (quantitative and qualitative)

Deliverables

- Comprehensive written report for Volunteering Somerset to inform the Somerset Integrated Volunteering Strategy
- Executive summary and infographic for public dissemination
- Produce a standardised 'question bank' & 'topic guide' for use by Volunteer-Involving Organisations
- Regular meetings with the project team and Spark Somerset.

Timeframe & budget: The scoping phase must be completed by the end of February 2025. The budget is a maximum of £8,000 inclusive of any VAT or expenses. This includes the costs of all research activities (desk-based, data collection, analysis, reporting, travel, expenses).

Application

To be considered for this work, please submit a document of **no more than 2 A4 pages by 5pm on Friday 13 December** which briefly outlines:

- Background of you/your organisation
- Previous experience and/or examples of similar projects
- Proposed methodology
- Proposed timeline including key milestones

Please send proposals to Susi Calder (susi.calder@sparksomerset.org.uk). Additional questions or informal conversations welcome prior to submission. **Interviews are scheduled for Thursday 19 December.**