



**VASLAN**  
SOUTH LANARKSHIRE

*Chief Officers Group*

Third Sector Chief Officers Group (TSCOG)

## **Terms of Reference (TOR)**

Author: TSCOG

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## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS PACK**

The purpose of this Terms of Reference (TOR) document is to provide TSCOG Members and supporting VASLan staff with an underpinning operating framework which is inclusive, fair and well-structured. Guided by the values of the group, members are encouraged to feedback openly and constructively on what's working and what needs work in relation to the group, to further strengthen interactions and to ultimately enhance outcomes for the organisations involved and for the sector as a whole.

## **2.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD SECTOR INTERFACE (TSI)**

The Scottish Government funds 32 TSIs across Scotland. Their aim is for TSIs to be forces for change within Scotland's communities, supporting and enabling a dynamic, flourishing third sector that has a vital role to play in progressing national outcomes and realising Ministers' ambitions for people and communities across Scotland. Therefore, TSIs play an important role in the third sector landscape as a key point of intelligence about local third sector organisations and volunteering; providing an understanding of the local landscape and how it effects the third sector's ability to contribute to local outcomes and national strategies (such as health and social care, community empowerment). TSIs are well positioned to identify support needs for local community groups, voluntary organisations, social enterprises and around volunteering and can identify third sector issues and perspectives that can feed into both local and national policy, making the TSI role complex in providing support across all policy areas and client groups.

South Lanarkshire's local sector itself is very diverse with different needs and different perspectives. Whilst this is challenging it does mean that VASLan, as a TSI, occupies a unique and important place. As the Third Sector Interface (TSI), VASLan's objectives are to support and develop a strong Third Sector through representing and advocating for the sector whilst contributing, informing and adding value to our Community Planning Partners. To achieve these objectives VASLan operates across a range of thematic areas including, Children's Services, Health and Social Care, Volunteering and Social Enterprise. VASLan are clear that as the TSI it needs to operate in a collaborative environment and build sector confidence to ensure the views of the sector are reflected across Community Planning Partners to strengthen the relationship between the Public and Third Sector.

In order to support and promote increased collaboration, the Third Sector Chief Officers' Group (TSCOG) was established in late 2016. The group brings together a wealth of combined knowledge, skill, experience and passion for local, community-led solutions. This leadership network is complimented by four locality-based Third Sector Forums. Working in parallel, they support:

- An effective, collective voice for the sector, supporting engagement in policy development at a strategic level and
- The building of stronger strategic relationships through mutual support, sharing of knowledge and expertise.

### 3.0 **THE THIRD SECTOR CHIEF OFFICERS GROUP (TSCOG)**

The specific interests and focus of the TSCOG are aligned to the key guiding principles of 'Partnership' and 'Accountability':

- Accountability:** We accept accountability both as a sector body and as individuals, we confidently and transparently assess our performance and manage our resources responsibly in pursuit of a united and results-driven culture.
- Partnership:** The success of the group is largely dependent upon the partnerships we forge; the intellectual capital and passion of the members are the key drivers in achieving this partnership.

#### 3.1 **PURPOSE & AIMS**

As a grouping of community-led Third Sector organisations:

- We will aim to provide an accountable forum supporting VASLan's role as the conduit for the Third Sector to engage in strategic planning.
- Act as a conduit in co-production of services.

The COG mission is to **Inform, Inspire and Influence** through the following key priorities:

- **Strategic Engagement** – building relationships across the sectors, keeping abreast with changes in the context in which the Third Sector operate and being involved in processes and planning where appropriate.
- **Income and Strategic Commissioning** – working together and sharing appropriate information for the good of the sector.
- **Being collaborative** /drawing together consortia / being open to partnership.

The group advises and supports the identification of strategic topics which are impacting on the Third Sector (TS) and our communities, producing proposals that address issues and propose developments to enhance the position of the Third Sector to influence decision making, policy development and service delivery.

#### 3.2 **VALUES**

Values are the way we do things and the behaviours that we can expect as we work together. These values are as follows:

- Respect:** Recognising and valuing individual and organisational differences, being non-judgmental and listening to the opinion of others.
- Integrity:** To uphold honesty, trust, truthfulness and sincerity, while remaining fair and ethical.
- Inclusiveness:** Accept the diversity of the sector and ensure equality of opportunity.
- Commitment:** As individuals and as a sector body be committed to contributing positively toward building a resilient Third Sector and strengthening the relationship between the Public and the Third Sector.

These are underpinned by the guiding principles of **accountability** and **partnership**.

### **3.3 CODE OF CONDUCT**

In order to build and maintain a strong, trusting team, all members should adhere to the principles and values of the TSCOG, striving to...

- ✓ Foster an inclusive environment where all members feel welcome & valued.
- ✓ Treat others with respect and consideration.
- ✓ Acknowledge diverse perspectives and engage in discussions constructively.
- ✓ Keep any sensitive information confidential and not disclosed it outside of the group without permission.
- ✓ Conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times.
- ✓ Act with honesty and integrity.
- ✓ Actively participate, contributing to the TSCOG's priorities and following through on agreed tasks and deliverables.
- ✓ Address any form of harassment or discrimination promptly.

All TSCOG members and in particular those undertaking representative positions (TSCOG Office Bearers, Steering Group or Representative roles – see 3.6 – 3.8 below), should routinely:

- ✓ Identify and disclose any potential conflicts of interest.
- ✓ Represent the wider sector and not individual organisational interests.
- ✓ Attend meetings regularly, advising any apologies in advance.
- ✓ Report back consistently and clearly to the group.

### **3.4 PRIORITY WORK**

The priority work of the group aligns to the mission & key priorities outlined above. Progress is reviewed regularly. Guided by an appointed Steering Group and supported and line managed by VASLan's CEO, the Development Lead works alongside the COG & the VASLan Leadership Team to deliver on an agreed Work Plan, which mirrors these priorities with key deliverables & an associated timeline.

### **3.5 MEMBERSHIP OF THE TSCOG**

#### **3.5.1 Membership - Criteria**

Membership of the group is open to chief officers of Third Sector organisations based in and /or predominantly working within S Lan. The applicant should be the main decision-maker and lead officer for the charity, social enterprise or voluntary sector group which they represent. Their title may or may not be that of 'Chief Officer'. Consideration will also be given to membership requests from organisations which do not follow a traditional organisational structure (e.g. co-leadership), however core TSCOG meetings should be attended consistently by the nominated and agreed lead decision-maker for the organisation. Although not eligible to attend the monthly TSCOG meetings, other senior leaders from member organisations are invited to attend TSCOG working groups to progress specific pieces of work (See section on *Working Groups & Consortia* below). As the group exists to support and empower leaders of South Lanarkshire-based third sector organisations, membership is not open

to leaders of National Voluntary Organisations, South Lanarkshire Council ALEOs (Arm's Length External Organisations), statutory or private sector groups. However, the TSCOG is committed to working collaboratively across all sectors and members engage with public, private and third sector leaders, both locally and nationally, through a range of methods (see section 3.8 on *Representation*, and section 3.9.4 on *Events & Guests* below). It is important to note that there are many ways in which third sector organisations can connect across SLa, including the sector-led and VASLa-supported Locality Networks. Applicants to the TSCOG are supported to consider a range of thematic and locality-based supports to identify the best fit for their organisation (see guidance around *Membership Benefits & Responsibilities* below).

### **3.5.2 Membership – How to Join**

Details about the TSCOG are shared on the VASLa website and with member organisations. Details of TSCOG monthly meetings are shared publicly on the VASLa What's On page and via the monthly newsletter. Existing TSCOG members also encourage new members to join. To apply for membership, applicants should complete the online application form which can be found on the TSCOG page on the VASLa Website. Subject to satisfactory eligibility, the individual is then invited to a TSCOG Welcome event, where they can meet and connect with existing COG members. This enables them to make an informed decision about joining, and for existing members to share the TSCOG's vision, mission and values to establish a firm foundation for collaboration.

### **3.5.3 Membership - Benefits**

Membership benefits highlighted by existing members include:

- ✓ **Community of Peers** – a unique space where Third Sector leaders can listen, share & support
- ✓ **Informal Mentoring** – experienced chief officers facilitating the growth of those newer in post by providing guidance, support, and knowledge
- ✓ **Partnerships** – many members collaborate on joint projects and funding bids
- ✓ **Consortia opportunities** – joint tender bids & proactive project pitches
- ✓ **Representing & influencing** – opportunities to work alongside public and voluntary sector partners, ensuring communities have a voice in decision-making & needs-led service delivery
- ✓ **Campaigning** – Advocating for the sector to be heard, valued, included & well-funded.

### **3.5.4 Membership - Responsibilities**

To foster strong working relationships, maximise effectiveness, and ensure progress, members are encouraged to actively engage in the life and work of the group. Meetings are held monthly, and members are expected to attend at least 50% of planned meetings across the year. Membership is reviewed every 6 months and, if engagement is poor, may be suspended. However, where mitigating circumstances arise, alternative solutions will be devised. There is an expectation of commitment to the purposes and principles of the group and clarity that the focus is strategic in nature. The chair and vice-chair are responsible for keeping this the focus of the meetings.

### **3.6 OFFICE-BEARERS & CAPACITY SUPPORT**

The TSCOG chair and vice-chair are appointed at the Annual Meeting at the start of each year and are responsible for guiding the direction of the meetings. The position descriptions of these Office Bearers are detailed in Appendix 1 below. Recruitment is via an open process, comprising an Expression of Interest (EOI), followed by appointment by approval or, where there are multiple applicants, by a secret ballot. The recommended maximum term of service is 5 years.

The VASLan Development Lead (DL) provides capacity support to the TSCOG, following the priorities and deliverables laid out in the Work Plan, which is reviewed annually.

Administrative support for the TSCOG is also provided by VASLan.

### **3.7 STEERING GROUP**

The Development Lead is line managed by the Chief Executive Officer of VASLan, and their work is guided by a Steering Group, comprising the CEO, and up to 4 COG members, the majority of whom are *not* current VASLan board members. The SG members are recruited by an annual Expression of Interest process, and the recommended maximum term of service is 3 years. The TSCOG Chair and Vice Chair do not serve on the Steering group in order to ensure impartiality and objectivity. The Steering Group meets monthly, usually online.

### **3.8 REPRESENTATION**

VASLan is the main conduit between South Lanarkshire's Third Sector and Community Planning Partners, with the TSCOG playing an important role in the flow of information between the Interface, Community Planning Partners and the wider Third Sector thereby enhancing the sector's voice across the local authority area and beyond. Opportunities also arise for TSCOG members to be nominated by the group to provide expert representation in decision-making places and spaces on behalf of the sector.

Such representatives are expected to:

1. Identify and highlight any potential conflicts of interest.
2. Represent the wider sector rather than individual organisational interests.
3. Attend meetings regularly.
4. Agree and pre-nominate a deputy.
5. Share papers as required.
6. Feedback to the TSI & TSCOG in a timely manner to facilitate appropriate discussion and action.

### **3.9 MEETINGS**

#### **3.9.1 Annual Business Meeting**

The first meeting of the new calendar year will be to:

- Appoint the Chairperson & Vice Chairperson
- Review membership
- Review TSCOG values, priorities and Terms of Reference
- Review TSCOG progress

### **3.9.2 Meetings Frequency**

Meeting frequency will be agreed with the group and planned at least 6 months in advance. It is envisaged that meetings will be of a frequency of no less than bi-monthly.

### **3.9.3 Meeting Plans**

Where practical, items for the meeting plan should be offered at least 6 working days in advance, and papers sent out 5 working days prior to the meeting.

Standing items will include:

- Declaration of Interests
- VASLan Strategic Update
- Work Plan and Consortia Updates from the DL
- Member, Representative and Locality Updates

### **3.9.4 Events & Guests**

To enable the group to take forward the key priorities of strategic engagement & income generation for the sector, opportunities arise to invite guests to TSCOG meetings or to convene additional events, as appropriate. e.g., heads of service, national voluntary sector representatives, strategic funding partners etc. Prior to any visit a clear purpose & desired outcomes for each are agreed by the group in advance.

## **3.10 WORKING GROUPS**

As required short-term working groups (task and finish) are convened for the completion of specific targeted pieces of work (such as campaign tasks, the preparation of position statements, and other reasons where agreed). These working groups may draft papers to be agreed by the wider TSCOG and VASLan as the TSI. These task and finish groups are made up from the members of the TSCOG, consisting of those who express an interest or have some specific area of expertise to offer. Where applicable, support is provided by the Development Lead and the VASLan admin team.

## **3.11 CONSORTIA**

TSCOG members have the opportunity to join consortia groups in response to or in anticipation of collaborative initiatives. A clear 'Call to Participate' process guides engagement in consortia opportunities. This includes how to express interest, time and capacity requirements, support offered and expectations to be fulfilled. Once a new consortium is established, further governance & guidelines may be put in place to protect and support members.

## **3.12 INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION**

A note of attendance and apologies is recorded for each meeting, alongside a detailed action note and /or minutes (as required). To ensure any agreed actions are monitored and completed, the TSCOG utilises an action log. Any associated information or papers are provided for distribution to TSCOG members. Working group and consortia papers are also shared as appropriate. Additional information is shared routinely via the online platform Community Lab.



### **3.13 DECISION-MAKING**

Decisions within the TSCOG are made through consensus wherever possible. If consensus cannot be reached, voting takes place, with majority decisions being implemented.

### **3.14 RESOLVING CONFLICT**

In the event of conflict arising within the TSCOG, the following dispute resolution process is in place:

- Members resolve any areas of misunderstanding or conflict through discussion & mutual agreement.
- Where a resolution is not possible, a formal discussion will be enacted between appropriate members facilitated by the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson.
- For any issues or disputes between members that cannot then be resolved, the Chairperson may seek involvement from alternative representatives (e.g. VASLAN staff or Board member, the respective organisations' Trustees etc.).
- If required, consideration will be given to the appointment of an independent arbiter, agreeable to the organisations in dispute. This could include both local and national bodies/organisations. Any costs, where mediation support is required and agreed, should be split equally between the organisations in dispute. The members shall be bound by the outcome of the arbiter's decision/recommendation(s).

## **4.0 REVIEW OF TOR**

The Terms of Reference is reviewed annually (at the Annual Meeting) and amended as required to ensure it remains relevant and effective in achieving the group's objectives and mission.

This version was approved at the TSCOG meeting on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2026.

## **APPENDIX 1 – POSITION DESCRIPTORS FOR TSCOG OFFICE BEARERS**

The Third Sector Chief Officers' Group (TSCOG) holds an annual review meeting in January of each year, at which the Office Bearers for the TSCOG are elected. The responsibilities for the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair are outlined below:

### **TSCOG Chair**

#### **Responsibilities:**

The TSCOG Chair is responsible for planning and chairing TSCOG meetings, for liaising with the VASLan CEO and Development Lead (TSCOG) and for engaging in other representative opportunities as they arise (e.g. recent Third Sector Review). The Chair ensures that new members are welcomed, that all members feel included, and that all voices are heard.

#### **Requirements:**

- Member of the TSCOG
- You will have experience chairing meetings

#### **What you can gain from this role:**

This role will help you to strengthen your leadership and interpersonal skills.

#### **Commitment:**

- Chairing monthly TSCOG meetings (face-to-face).
- Pre TSCOG monthly planning meetings (online).
- Reviewing and commenting on papers (as required).
- Representing the TSCOG in strategic forums (as required).
- Occasional other meetings and phone calls (as required).

### **TSCOG Vice Chair**

- *Role Description, requirements and commitments are as per that of the Chair above.*
- Working closely with the Chair and VASLan staff to co-produce meeting plans & papers.
- Chairing the meetings in the absence of the Chair.
- Working collaboratively to support the TSCOG.
- Occasional other meetings and phone calls as required.