

## Big Society opportunities for small organisations

The impact of the cuts is being felt by many of us, especially those already involved in service delivery, or who depend on local authority grants to keep going. But for many smaller organisations there have also been a few interesting developments in the Big Society agenda and the recent budget announcement that are worth looking into for funding opportunities.

The Big Society Agenda covers three areas:

### 1. “Devolving power to communities and local government”

- The Big Society puts a strong emphasis on community participation, so collecting [evidence of beneficiary involvement](#) in planning your services may strengthen grant applications.
- Resources aren’t just about hard cash – how can you make the most of the government’s interest in getting people to volunteer? NCVO has just published an online almanac on [Participation: Trends, Facts and Figures](#) to help you understand what motivates people to get involved.
- If you are a small charity with a national focus, you could start thinking about collaborating with more regional organisations to boost your local credentials – take a look at NCVO Foresight’s thoughts on [collaborative working](#).

### 2. “A greater role in public services for VCOs and civil society organisations”

New opportunities to deliver public services should be opening up, but smaller organisations aren’t necessarily ready to bid for and manage big contracts. If you are thinking about getting into public service delivery, some options you should consider are:

- **Skilling up** – either by training existing staff or employing specialists. Why not [join NCVO’s free Public Service Delivery Network](#) to get more support for this?

- **Pairing up** – could you form a consortium to run joint bids for public service contracts? NCVO has [a great range of case studies](#) on this issue.
- **Building relationships** – if you need support to understand how to build strong relationships with local authorities and other public sector bodies, we have great, proven tactics in our latest case study. [This case study from PSDN](#) is a great account of how one fostering agency built positive relationships.

### 3. “Supporting the voluntary and community sector”

With so many organisations facing severe cuts to their funding, current support measures can look like a fairly poor compensation, but there are some opportunities out there – including:

- The Government’s plan to allow charities to claim Gift Aid on up to £5,000 of small donations without the need for Gift Aid declarations. Read more about this, as well as plans to increase payments to volunteer drivers in our [online budget summary](#).
- The release of more loan finance from organisations like Charity Bank, acting as intermediaries for the [Big Society Bank](#). If you are in a position to apply for loan finance, then this could represent a handy alternative source of funding – read more about this on our [loan finance web pages](#).
- The launch of [The Big Society Awards](#) – okay so this isn’t actually a cash prize, but getting this kind of recognition could help boost your grant applications.
- If you are a regionally based organisation, there could be community assets under threat in your neighbourhood - could you raise funds to take them over? Or support others to? [Listen to Martin Booth from Hudswell Community Pub](#) to find out how this organisation was funded.