

Job Description

Business Connector

Contract term 2 months – 2 years secondment

BACKGROUND

The Business Connectors programme started in September 2010 as a pilot funded by Business in the Community and the Cabinet Office's Office of Civil Society and is now being taken to scale with a network of Connectors across the country. Business Connectors are employees on secondment, recruited from business, trained by BITC, to build local partnerships between business and community organisations in local areas of need across the country.

The Business Connector programme:

- Is needs-led and designed to have a significant positive impact in local communities of greatest need
- Recruits and trains a comprehensive network of talented individuals from a range of organisations to deliver the programme in local areas
- Encourages and supports organisations to work in partnership with local community organisations on the areas of Education, Enterprise and Employment.
- Will increase the capacity of local community groups and charities through facilitating (primarily) business support.

The programme has proven clear and compelling benefits for:

- Seconding organisations making secondments to the programme
- The individuals - in terms of personal and professional development - undertaking the Business Connector role
- The communities in which Business Connectors are working and their businesses trade

PURPOSE OF JOB

The Business Connector will work in a deprived community, at a local level, to establish connections. Their role is to inspire, motivate and encourage action across the community's landscape, enabling communities to lead their own regeneration. Focus is on creating an environment where existing and potential community or business leaders can take the lead in making the most of the connections made. Business Connectors need to be clear from the outset that the provision is for three years, with an emphasis on building capability in communities.

Their connections will lead to actions and relationships between the private and public sectors and voluntary / community organisations with a view to achieving sustainable improvements in

- **Education**, such as mentoring, role-modelling, helping young people improve skills, encouraging healthy lifestyles or reducing isolation;
- **Employment**, such as helping people into training or jobs, coaching and mentoring;
- **Enterprise**, such as encouraging inward investment, matching need with sources of expertise;
- **Community Cohesion**, such as encouraging local networks of business and other organisations to sustain a community as a place to live, work, visit and invest, or supporting local community organisations to survive/increase their provision, with support from the local private and public sectors

A Connector will typically operate at neighbourhood level reflecting the local community boundaries.

To achieve these aims, the Business Connector will understand the local community and engage partners through the following steps:

- Conduct a scoping exercise to determine the needs and existing support infrastructure in a local area
- Meet local organisations to understand their needs and explore how they would like to work in partnership. Provide an introduction between businesses and others and community organisations.
- Engage local businesses, local authorities, government departments, other charities including the Prince of Wales Charities, Chambers of Commerce, and other potential providers to support and commit to invest (time, money, skills, knowledge) in the social regeneration of their local community.
- Be responsible for developing and driving a strategy to co-ordinate a programme of connections that will meet the needs identified, aiming for those connections to be sustainable beyond the involvement of the Business Connector.
- Based on local understanding of needs, be able to articulate possibility and change; influence and inspire others to engage and take action.
- Co-ordinate and facilitate projects, actively working towards helping the community to take on the leadership, delivery and sustainability.
- Be able to take on a variety of roles in establishing relationships and in moving connections forward to becoming sustainable.
- Be prepared to introduce projects or ways of working that have benefited other communities if they meet an identified need, again actively working towards the community assuming the lead for delivering and sustaining the benefits.
- Draw on very varied sources within Business in the Community, the other Prince's Charities, Government and the Business Connector network and beyond, to find and introduce solutions to meeting needs.

What a Business Connector is not expected to do:-

- Business Connectors are not expected to run programmes – they will guide and support businesses to get involved with ready-existing programmes or introduce proven ideas from elsewhere. They will also encourage local businesses and groups to create appropriate programmes and approaches to local issues.
- Business Connectors are not expected to manage volunteers – they will encourage volunteering and organisations and groups to manage this activity.
- Business Connectors should not act on behalf of one business or one community organisation / programme – they will earn trust and become a liaison point for a community.

TRAINING

To enable consistency and quality in delivering local connections, each Business Connector will receive intensive residential training before starting the role and subsequent mentoring support and network opportunities through BITC regional offices and online resources. The training will bring soon to be Business Connectors together to share their existing knowledge and expertise and explore how to apply that to the issues they will be presented with in local communities.

SKILLS & BEHAVIORS

Over the secondment period, each Business Connector will be required to demonstrate or develop their ability in:

- Listening closely to enable the needs of communities and business to be served
- Seeing the big picture, thinking strategically and spotting opportunities
- Motivating and leading others, without positional power
- Facilitating communities to lead and deliver for themselves in a sustainable way
- Being visionary and thinking creatively
- Being flexible in ways of working and staying open-minded
- Being self-aware, understanding what motivates others and building trust
- Communicating confidently with different audiences
- Being tenacious, resilient and driven to reach goals
- Accessing and using current knowledge and experience to help find local solutions

Key findings from NCVO research to evaluate the Business Connector pilot identified ‘personality and character’ as key factors that influence success in the role. This should be considered when identifying appropriate candidates against key skills and behaviours required for a Business Connector. The table below outlines key skills and behaviours supported by anecdotal comments from experienced Brokers and Business Connectors.

Business Connector activity	Characteristics of the individual might be:
<p>Meeting and engaging businesses</p> <p>Attending relevant networking forums and groups</p> <p>One to one meetings to sell the concept</p> <p>Understanding business pressures and needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commercial awareness and sensitivity - Flexibility in communication style for different audiences <p><i>“You must mirror the company you are seeing.”</i></p> <p><i>“This is great for confidence. After doing this you feel you can lead any team. It’s an amazing leadership development opportunity.”</i></p>
<p>Engaging local community organisations</p> <p>Networking and building relationships</p> <p>Understand the issues and needs in the local community</p> <p>Understand the local political and social landscape</p> <p>Walking the streets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to build trust - Sensitivity and tact - Ability to manage expectations <p><i>“You can’t build trust in the community if you are wearing a suit!”</i></p> <p><i>“Don’t raise hopes too high but do raise enthusiasm”</i></p> <p><i>“You must be prepared to take a lead. You are there to make things happen.”</i></p>
<p>Making Connections</p> <p>Understand how to match the needs with the resources you can access</p> <p>Building and leveraging relationships</p> <p>Communications to create & maintain engagement</p> <p>Asking questions and understanding the core of the problem</p> <p>Ensuring delivery without managing it</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gravitas and credibility - Compassion and empathy - Be tough, honest, frank - Flexibility and open-mindedness - Diplomacy - Resilient - Creative - Organised <p><i>“You have to work with CEO’s and local unemployed people. Everyone must trust you.”</i></p> <p><i>“The biggest issue is trust. You have to point out the win wins.”</i></p> <p><i>“A manager manages people and makes them do things. A leader genuinely wants to achieve something because it’s the right thing to do.”</i></p> <p><i>“Every day I do something that I’m not used to doing, such as a radio interview, making a speech in a school, meeting Prince Charles, hosting a boxing event and persuading someone to get out of bed.”</i></p>