

Evaluation of the Regional Networks Fund
Baseline report
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Janice Needham
Jean Ellis
Charities Evaluation Services
for Capacitybuilders



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Glossary

OEM (generic)	One East Midlands: East Midlands generic regional network
OEM (BME)	One East Midlands: East Midlands BME network
COVER	Community and Voluntary Forum Eastern Region: East of England generic network
MENTER	East of England Black and minority ethnic network
LVSC/ TSA	London Voluntary Service Council: Third Sector Alliance - London generic regional network
ROTA/MiNET	Race on the Agenda – Minority Ethnic Network: London BME network
VONNE	Voluntary Organisations’ Network North East: North East generic network
BECON	Black Minority Ethnic Community Organisations Network - North East BME network
VSNW	Voluntary Sector North West: North West generic network
1 NW	North West BME network
RAISE	Regional Action and Involvement South East: South East generic network
UNI	South East BME network
SWF	South West Forum: South West generic network
BSWN	Black South West Network: South West BME network
RAWM	Regional Action West Midlands: West Midlands generic network
Brap	West Midlands BME network
YHRF	Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Forum: Yorks/Humber generic network
Abbreviations	
BLF	Big Lottery Fund
CES	Charities Evaluation Services

ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
GO	Government Office
LA	Local authority
LAA	Local Area Agreement
OTS	Office of the Third Sector
PCT	Primary Care Trust
RA	Regional Assembly
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RES	Regional Economic Strategy
RIEP	Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership
RIP	Regional Infrastructure Programme
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
SHA	Strategic Health Authority
SNR	Sub-National Review
VCS	Voluntary and community sector

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In December 2009, Capacitybuilders commissioned Charities Evaluation Services (CES) to conduct an evaluation of the Regional Networks Fund.
- 1.2 The primary stated objective of the evaluation is to assess the achievements of the programme against two specific outcomes. These relate to:
 - a) regional and policy influence (demonstrated in relation to specified policy areas and targeted organisations)
 - b) improved capacity of regional networks (leadership, income diversity and efficiency).
- 1.3 The evaluation will:
 - provide information, including a baseline, on the performance and impact of the funded networks
 - assess progress that has been made towards achievement of the overall programme outcomes
 - apply key findings to the likely future development and funding of the networks.
- 1.4 The evaluation will also throw light on the links and complementarity of the programme with broader Capacitybuilders' investment and on how policy influence can be measured. It will look at the lessons to be learnt about the common or different experiences of the generic and the BME networks.
- 1.5 The purpose of this baseline report is to:
 - set out the context of the programme
 - present baseline information against which the evaluation will assess the impact of the programme.
- 1.6 The report focuses on the baseline at the start of the programme and as a result does not draw on monitoring information from 2009/10. This will be analysed and presented in an interim report in autumn 2010.

2. Background and context

2.1 History of funding and networks

2.1.1 The Regional Network Fund is a succession programme to the Regional Infrastructure Programme (RIP). Over the previous 10 years, the Office for the third sector (OTS) and its predecessors had provided strategic funding for up to 18 sector networks. For the last four years, the Regional Infrastructure Programme funding was agreed and awarded through government offices in the nine English regions. In most cases, both a generic network and a BME network have previously received strategic funding. However, there have been regional variations in network configurations and funding. In some regions networks have merged, or the funding has moved to commissioning specific pieces of work.

2.1.2 The management of previous funding also differed across the country. For example, some networks were subject to detailed monitoring and reports, while for others there was a more 'hands off' approach. The RIP funded arrangements in place to increase BME voice in influencing policy and decision making were also very different. They included the following:

- BME-led networks (with a representation function and aiming to represent views of communities)
- BME strand as part of a generic network
- BME network as part of a wider equalities network
- BME Panel (predominantly a group of individuals providing expertise to statutory bodies)

2.1.3 The Regional Infrastructure Programme funding finished in March 2009. Prior to this Capacitybuilders was approached by the Office of the Third sector to administer a two year legacy fund (2009-11). The Regional Networks programme aimed to fund a generic network and BME network (or other mechanism for BME sector representation) in each of the English regions.

2.1.4 The Regional Networks Fund programme was developed in consultation with the funded regional networks. A well attended stakeholder meeting in January 2009 helped to shape the final programme.

2.1.5 Capacitybuilders acknowledged that networks were well-established and already operating in most regions and that different arrangements were in place in different regions. They aimed to implement a targeted approach to investments under this programme as opposed to a traditional application and assessment process. They adopted a

‘dialogue’ or negotiation process to offer the opportunity to:

- test ways to maximise the outcomes and change that the funding could achieve
- ensure the full engagement of existing grant-holders
- involve and engage other funders in the process.

2.1.6 Capacitybuilders negotiated individual funding contracts with each of the eligible networks based on:

- the needs of and demands on the third sector within each region
- the agreements in place with other funders in the region
- the existing arrangements for regional working
- clearly agreed outcomes.

2.1.7 Further details on the programme are given in Section 3.

2.2 Other sources of funding for infrastructure

2.2.1 The Regional Infrastructure Programme funding aimed to support strategic engagement and the coordination of a voluntary and community sector (VCS) ‘voice’ at a regional level. In addition, further funding for regional infrastructure has been made available through the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) BASIS programme and through Capacitybuilders, to enable the development of frontline organisations.

2.2.2 There is a mixture of funding, streams and amounts from RDAs to regional infrastructure regional networks¹. At one extreme, in 2008/9 the London Development Agency provided funding of £620,000 to LVSC, who host the regional network Third Sector Alliance (TSA). Several other networks (or their hosts) received significantly lower amounts (including for specifically commissioned projects such as running consultations) or no RDA funding.

2.2.3 Other funding from regional agencies included Regional Assemblies (RAWM), Strategic Health Authorities (COVER) and Regional Learning and Skills Councils (RAWM).

2.3 Changes in external environment - the Sub-National Review

2.3.1 The Review of the Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR), announced in the 2006 Budget, considered the measures which Government had put in place since 1997 to improve sub-national economic development and tackle pockets of deprivation. The SNR, which was published in July 2007, recommended that local authorities be given new powers and incentives to drive local prosperity,

¹ Consistent information on other sources is not readily available. This could be accessed from accounts submitted.

economic growth and regeneration, and tackle social deprivation and inequality.

2.3.2 The implementation of the Review has brought about the following changes in regional structures:

- A wider range of strategic responsibilities to be taken on by the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), including Housing, Transport, Spatial Planning and additional controls over Work and Skills as well as Regeneration. An Integrated Regional Strategy has replaced the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and a Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) has been developed.
- A shift of focus and responsibility for the delivery of economic development activity from the RDA to local authorities. This has reconfigured the regional relationships from a balance between the RDA, the Government Office and the Regional Assembly to a bi-lateral arrangement between the RDA (with strengthened representation from local authorities on their boards) and the regional local association of local authorities.
- There is no longer a formal regional role for the VCS in regional decision making, as there used to be through the Regional Assembly Social Environment and Economic partners group.

3. Regional Network Programme

3.1 The Fund has two specific outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** By 2011, regional third sector networks are able to demonstrate influence over regional and national policy affecting the third sector.
- **Outcome 2:** By 2011, regional third sector networks are able to demonstrate improvements in their leadership, income diversity, and efficiency.

3.2 Following a negotiation process, funding was agreed for 13 networks until March 2011 (Phase 1 decisions in June 2009). A further three networks were funded following Phase 2 decisions in December 2009, together with development support for two networks (through Voice4Change England). Following this support, one further network was funded in Phase 3 in March 2010. All regions therefore have funding agreed for regional generic and BME networks, with the exception of Yorkshire and Humberside.

Region	Regional Network/ Organisation	Type of network	2009/10	2010/2011	TOTAL
Phase 1 decisions					
East Midlands	One East Midlands (OEM – generic sector influence)	Single platform	40,000	27,500	67,500
East of England	COVER	Generic	42,500	25,000	67,500
East of England	MENTER	BME	42,500	25,000	67,500
London	London Voluntary Service Council (Third Sector Alliance)	Generic	42,500	25,000	67,500
London	Race on the Agenda (MiNET)	BME	42,500	25,000	67,500
North East	VONNE	Generic	42,500	25,000	67,500
North East	BECON	BME	42,500	25,000	67,500
North West	Voluntary Sector North West	Generic	42,500	25,000	67,500
South East	RAISE	Generic	42,500	25,000	67,500
South West	South West Forum	Generic	42,500	25,000	67,500
South West	Black South West Network	BME	42,500	25,000	67,500
West Midlands	Regional Action West Midlands	Generic	42,500	25,000	67,500

Region	Regional Network/ Organisation	Type of network	2009/10	2010/2011	TOTAL
Yorkshire & Humber	Yorkshire Humber Regional Forum (YHRF)	Generic	42,500	25,000	67,500
Phase 2 decisions					
East Midlands	One East Midlands (BME)	Single platform	17,500	50,000	67,500
North West	1 North West*	BME	42,500	25,000	67,500
West Midlands	brap**	BME	15,000	40,000	55,000
National (focus on SE and Y/H)	Voice4ChangeEngland via accountable body MENTER for development support with YH Panel and SE UNI	BME	16,000		16,000
Phase 3 decisions					
South East	UNI***	BME		42,500	42,500
Total awards recommended					
			641,000	485,000	1,126,000

*One North West - a further award for 2010/11 will be available subject to a workplan being submitted by 14 May.

**brap funding awarded at the end of a tender process.

***UNI funding subject to workplan being agreed by 14 May.

- 3.3 The terms and conditions of grants, including monitoring requirements, vary across the awards and are based principally on the degree of risk identified during the negotiation process.
- 3.4 On outcome 1, networks were asked to identify three policy areas where they wanted to bring about change (project outcomes) and three organisations that they wished to influence. Workplans documented the outcomes (or changes) they wished to bring about, indicators that would enable them to tell whether the change has happened and milestones that would indicate progress towards the project outcome.
- 3.5 On outcome 2, networks were asked to identify the change that they wished to bring about in relation to leadership, income diversity and efficiency, together with indicators and milestones for each.

4. Approach and evaluation framework

4.1 An evaluation framework has been developed, presenting the outcomes, outcome indicators, activities and milestones derived from workplans by funded networks for both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2. The framework is given at Appendix 4.

4.2 Individual network outcomes related to Outcome 1 (influencing policy) have been grouped in the following themes:

- Theme 1: Economy, regeneration and employment
- Theme 2: Health and social care
- Theme 3: Third sector, service delivery and civic renewal
- Theme 4: Regional policy and equalities issues
- Theme 5: Regional structures and planning
- Theme 6: Development of influence
- Theme 7: Other issues.

4.3 Some themes cover a wide range of activity and have sub-themes, as outlined below:

Theme	Sub-themes
Economy, regeneration and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic strategy and planning • Economic inclusion and skills development • Recession
Health and social care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCS contribution to the health agenda and delivery • Individual budgets/personalisation agenda
Third sector, service delivery and civic renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of a thriving third sector in planning, economic activity and service delivery • Engagement of BME third sector in civic engagement and renewal • Commissioning
Regional policy and equalities issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of and response to needs of BME third sector • Equality and diversity policy and strategy

4.4 Most networks have targeted organisations to influence that relate closely to the policy areas of influence, so outcomes have been integrated into the themes (for example, Strategic Health Authority linked

to influence on health and social care). For a smaller number of networks, organisations to influence have been selected with a broader influence remit, and these are included in the framework within theme 6 – Development of influence.

- 4.5 The framework for Outcome 2 has been structured around the three key areas of capacity:
- Leadership
 - Income diversity/sustainability
 - Efficiency/performance
- 4.6 Various evaluation approaches will be used to gather data against the different components of the framework. This will include:
- Review of secondary data, for example, evaluations and reviews carried out by the networks on aspects of their work
 - Analysis of Capacitybuilders' quarterly and face-to-face monitoring data
 - Peer review
 - Workshops
 - Interviews, phone and email contact with networks, Capacitybuilders regional managers and regional agencies.
- 4.7 In addition, a 'level of influence' tool has been adopted to allow a broad overview of the extent of influence by region, policy theme or target agency. This is drawn from *The Axis of Influence: a tool for community groups and networks who want to improve their influence*, published by CDX and Changes with support from the National Empowerment Partnership and now known as 'Voice'. The following levels have been used:
- Below Level 5: Not yet fully organised to influence
 - Level 5: Organised to influence
 - Level 6: Knows the political landscape
 - Level 7: Knows who to influence
 - Level 8: Links with others to influence
 - Level 9: Knows how to influence
 - Level 10: Does influence
- 4.8 The axis of influence self assessment should relate to the levels of standards around leadership, efficiency and financial sustainability, as well as the previous status of strategic relationships and a networks' capacity to influence. Further details on the self assessment levels are available in Appendix 1.

5. Policy themes and agencies to influence (Outcome 1)

5.1 The three policy areas and three regional agencies to influence chosen by each regional network are summarised below in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Policy areas to be influenced

Policy area	Number of networks
Economy, regeneration and employment*	11
Third sector, service delivery and civic renewal*	10
Regional structures and planning	7
Development of influence	7
Health and social care	4
Regional policy and equalities issues	4
Other issues	1

*Two agencies had two policy areas within this theme

Table 2: Agencies to be influenced

Type of agency	Number of networks
Government Office (GO)	11
Regional Development Agency (RDA)	10
Strategic Health Agency (SHA)	6
Regional Improvement and Efficiency partnership (RIEP)	4
Regional Association of Councils/Greater London Authority/Mayor/Strategic Leaders Boards*	6
Other regional employment/skills bodies	4
Regional third sector, eg, infrastructure network*	3
Regional equalities bodies	2
Other	2

* One network had two agencies to be influenced in this category

- 5.2 Tables 3 and 4 overleaf show the policy themes and agencies to influence chosen by region.
- 5.3 Every region, apart from East Midlands and the South West, identified the economy, regeneration and employment as a policy area to influence. In general both generic and BME networks in each region identified this as a policy focus.
- 5.4 Only BME networks identified regional policy and equalities issues as a key policy area. No BME network identified health and social care as a key policy issue (although one identified the SHA as an agency to influence).
- 5.5 The extent to which BME and generic networks are working together on policy themes and agencies to influence varies. The range of activity includes:
- Networks working jointly to influence same agency/policy area (for example South West Forum and Black South West Network are both working on the Regional Compact)
 - Networks working on joint projects/events (for example LVSC/TSA and Minet are both working on a project related to the recession)
 - BME networks aiming to influence generic networks (for example brap aims to achieve a more equitable environment of third sector infrastructure support, including influencing generic support providers and networks)

This will be further explored when reviewing progress during the period of funding, informed by monitoring returns and other information collected.

Table 3: Policy themes chosen by region

Region	Policy area	Economy, regeneration and employment	Third sector, service delivery and civic renewal	Regional structures and planning	Development of influence	Health and social care	Regional policy and equalities issues	Other issues
East Mids	OEM (generic)		x	x	x			
	OEM (BME)		x	x	x			
East	COVER	xx				x		
	MENTER	x			x		x	
London	LVSC/ TSA	x	x			x		
	ROTA/MiNET	x			x		x	
North East	VONNE	x		x		x		
	BECON	x	x				x	
North West	VSNW	xx	x					
	1 NW	x	x		x			
South East	RAISE	x		x		x		
South West	SWF		x	x	x			
	BSWN		xx				x	
West Mids	RAWM	x	x	x				
	brap		xx		x			

Region	Policy area	Economy, regeneration and employment	Third sector, service delivery and civic renewal	Regional structures and planning	Development of influence	Health and social care	Regional policy and equalities issues	Other issues
Yorks/Humber	YHRF	x		x				x
Total		11	10	7	7	4	4	1

Table 4: Agencies to influence chosen by region

Region	Agency to influence	RDA	GO	SHA	RIEP	Reg Ass Councils/G LA/Mayor/S strategic Leaders Boards	Other regional employment/skills bodies	Regional third sector	Regional equalities bodies	Other
East Mids	OEM (generic)	X	x		x					
	OEM (BME)	X	x							x
East	COVER	X		x			x			
	MENTER	X						x	x	
London	LVSC/ TSA		x			xx				
	ROTA/MiNET		x			x			x	
NE	VONNE	X	x			x				
	BECON		x		x		x			

Region	Agency to influence	RDA	GO	SHA	RIEP	Reg Ass Councils/G LA/Mayor/S strategic Leaders Boards	Other regional employment/skills bodies	Regional third sector	Regional equalities bodies	Other
NW	VSNW	X		x			x			
	1 NW	X	x			x				
SE	RAISE	X	x	x						
SW	SWF	X	x	x						
	BSWN			x		x	x			
West Mid	RAWM	X	x	x						
	brap				x			xx		
Y/H	YHRF		x		x					x
Total		10	11	6	4	6	4	3	2	2

6. Baseline information

6.1 Existing evaluation reports

6.1.1 A number of reports have been identified as providing relevant baseline information, both in terms of the value of networks and their activity in particular policy themes. A list of the material identified is given at Appendix 2.

6.1.2 Limited information is available on networks across regions, with the majority of studies being region specific. However there are at least two reports that have a wider scope than a specific region, published by IPPR North² and Voice4Change England³.

6.1.3 Key points from the IPPR report include:

- Over 60 per cent of respondents thought the sector was either not very well established or not at all well established in policymaking at regional and sub-regional levels.
- There was considerable consensus that collectively the sector offers decision makers 'a greater understanding of community circumstances'. This implies a distinct perspective from which the sector can claim that its engagement will enrich the decision-making process. The challenge is to develop this into an evidence-based case for involvement.

6.1.4 The report identifies three principal issues to address in order to improve engagement between the third sector and policymaking at the regional and sub-regional level:

- The governance of partnerships at these tiers is sometimes opaque and frequently difficult to navigate.
- The public sector wants to hear a more coherent voice from the third sector, which will require greater coordination and collaboration within the sector.
- Skills and capabilities for effective engagement need to be developed both by public sector officials and third sector leaders.

6.1.5 It states that the third sector should use the emerging examples of good

² Michael Johnson and Katie Schmuecker (2009) *All inclusive? Third sector involvement in regional and sub-regional policymaking*, IPPR

³ Voice4Change England (2007) *'Bridge the Gap: What is known about the BME third sector in England'*

Voice4Change (2008) *The Continuing Need for Government Support for the Black and Minority Ethnic Regional Voluntary and Community Sector Networks in England*, position paper on need for Government support for BME networks

practice as the basis for a dialogue about structures for engagement at the regional and sub-regional levels.

- Large individual third sector organisations should collaborate more with infrastructure organisations and feed in their expertise to thematic networks.
- Generic infrastructure organisations should audit and seek to streamline and coordinate thematic networks, focusing on the policy functions most pertinent at the regional and sub-regional level. Removing duplication would also result in better use of third sector organisations' limited time resources.
- Where it is of value to their work, third sector organisations should collectively buy the time of policy officers based in infrastructure organisations.

6.1.6 The Voice4Change report presents findings on the role of the BME third sector in shaping policy as follows:

- There is a vast amount of diverse and uncoordinated information but the information is primarily qualitative and there is little quantitative data on the degree to which BME third sector organisations are engaged in public policy development. There is currently no means of assessing progress against measurable indicators.
- Regional information is much the same. The research identified gaps in quantitative information in seven out of the nine regions. It is difficult to compare with and between regions. There is an absence of readily accessible information about the development of BME engagement mechanisms in each region.

6.1.7 Much of the region-specific material highlights the value or potential value of regional networks and identifies areas for development. Examples are given in the table below:

Table 5: Analysis of evaluation reports on specific regional networks

Region	Findings
Eastern region	Results of 2009 research ⁴ show that the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) support for the networks has had a positive and beneficial impact overall. Main strategic added value impacts were that networks demonstrated leadership, had a catalytic effect to some degree, levered in finance and resources (including resources in kind through the participation of stakeholders and members),

⁴ PACEC (2009) *Evaluation of Third sector Networks*, EEDA

	<p>and forged synergies in terms of policies and activities.</p> <p>The study concluded that links should be developed between the regional economic strategy, the rationale for EEDA investment, explicit aims and objectives of the networks and issues networks were seeking to address. It was also proposed that clear targets be identified for the networks.</p>
North East	<p>A 2008 study⁵ found that ethnic minority networks were still not fully developed and their representation was not entirely prevalent in key strategic decision making processes; these structures and functions needed to be strengthened.</p>
North West	<p>An NWDA report⁶ described:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited resources and capacity of the third sector to engage in policymaking at a regional level • lack of clear and effective representation of the third sector at a regional level,
East Midlands	<p>A number of research respondents⁷ suggested that One East Midlands could provide a stronger sector voice with GO-EM and, through this relationship, influence and raise third sector concerns with local authorities. More generally, OEM could give the sector a louder voice on policy issues, consult with the sector at subregional level on policy issues and represent those views.</p>

6.1.8 Various other reports are also available covering regional context and baseline information related to some of the policy themes and these are also listed in Appendix 2.

⁵ Lalith Welamedage, Amy O'Donnell, Helen Newcomb, Elaine Lambie (2008) *Closing the Employability for BME Groups*, Centre for Public Policy, Northumbria University.

⁶ SQW consulting (2009) *Developing the partnership between third sector organisations and regional bodies*, NWDA

⁷ Kerrie Fletcher (2009) *Regional Responses To National Indicator 7*, One East Midlands

6.2 Baseline information related to outcomes

6.2.1 Baseline information was not presented consistently in the workplans submitted by networks. Information has been collected as part of this study on baseline activity and the perceived level of influence in the 12 months before funding. This was requested from nine regional generic networks and six regional BME networks^{8 9}.

6.3 Baselines by policy theme

6.3.1 Some examples of outcomes and relevant baselines are given in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Examples of outcomes and baselines by policy theme

	Outcome	Baseline
Theme 1: Economy, regeneration and employment.	Greater representation of quality of life issues in regional economic strategy. (VSNW)	VSNW held a seat on RES Advisory group and were given a position on the Regional Strategy Advisory group in the new system.
	Improved BME access to skills/employment/enterprise services and increased support during the recession. (MENTER)	MENTER had conducted research to assess BME participation and satisfaction rates and begun the development of partnerships with service providers and national BME skills/training/enterprise provider – the Black Training Enterprise Group (BTEG).
	Greater evidence of impact of recession on the sector and greater evidence of need. (VONNE)	VONNE surveyed sector on impact of recession and drafted a report on results.
Theme 2: Health and social care.	VCS contribution, actual and potential, to Health development in the East of England is recognised and supported in the delivery of the Towards the Best Together Strategy, the NHS Health	COVER runs a regional VCS Health and Social Care Cluster of VCS networks and organisations and had a VCS database of over 500 Health & Social Care contacts interested in

⁸ UNI (SE) and Y/H BME networks were not funded at the time of collection of baseline information. 1NW (NW BME) was not contacted for baseline information pending decision on future level of funding.

⁹ It should be noted that both Minet and BSWN had difficulty in providing baseline information; in MiNET's case this was due to staff changes. Minet provided a workplan for the period prior to funding and this has been used as appropriate. Both networks assessed their level of influence but it appears this is the current situation and not the baseline, so may be an over-estimate.

	Outcome	Baseline
	Plan, for the East of England 2009/11, including through the work programmes of the Regional Health Boards. (COVER)	regional Health and Social Care. Provides VCS representatives on SHA delivery boards. Held conference on new regional Health Plan; funnelled VCS responses into consultation; promoted community and preventative services and the role of VCS in providing community based Health and Social Care services.
Theme 3: Third sector, service delivery and civic renewal	All partner signatory organisations to the Regional Compact fully embedding Regional Compact principles and practice throughout their organisation and providing evidence of this. (SWF)	SWF has been taking active leadership role in Regional Compact but has lacked dedicated resources for Regional Compact work. Need for assessment of partners' implementation and commitment to Compact working recognised. Some organisations active in Regional Compact group not yet signed up formally. 14 Regional Compact partners at March 2009.
	Better reflection of the needs of London voluntary and community sector in the LDA emerging commissioning strategy. (LVSC)	LVSC had completed some information work on commissioning which had been incorporated onto the website and had held a conference bringing together the network members interested in this area. Opportunities to influence the London Development Agency's commissioning framework had been identified, although these had not been fully developed at this point. No work had been done on how personalisation might affect the future of commissioning in the capital.
Theme 4: Regional policy and equalities issues.	Race equality is embedded in regional policy in respect of Children and Young People (CYP). Increased engagement of BME third sector in interventions to meet the needs of BME CYP, their parents and families. (BECON)	Initial discussions begun with GONE Children and Young People's team. November 2008 BECON held a themed event on Children & Young People.
Theme 5: Regional structures and planning	Development of a third sector Leaders Board as part of regional governance arrangements, to address the pending deficit in the third sector being able to influence and deliver voice and	No regional third sector strategic / policy forum in existence – only a non statutory forum called 'Other Stakeholders Group' (OSG). OSG lacking in capacity and depth of

	Outcome	Baseline
	<p>engagement in influencing, developing and delivering regional governance as outlined in the SIRS (Single Integrated Regional Strategy).</p> <p>RAWM and the third sector Leaders Board will have an agreed protocol for delivering regional voice.</p> <p>Membership of all regional groups arising from the new regional arrangements will include representation from the third sector and where this is not possible clear arrangements for securing sector participation. (RAWM)</p>	<p>engagement with the West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA), the latter under threat of closure. Closure of WMRA will result in no strategic third sector VOICE or engagement at regional level beyond RAWM.</p>
Theme 6: Development of influence	<p>Implementation of a new network landscape model in the East Midlands to ensure overall effective policy influence in key areas.</p> <p>Stronger linkages and influence between regional and sub-regional infrastructure (and consortia) and regional policy work.</p> <p>A better understanding of gaps in policy debate in the region.</p> <p>Better understanding between VCS and wider third sector colleagues on when and how to develop shared voice.</p> <p>An improved understanding over issues and priorities between statutory organisations, funders and third sector organisations in the region. (One East Midlands)</p>	<p>Network landscape development – leadership on the way forward was launched at the March 2009 conference; buy in from stakeholder sought.</p>
	<p>Improved approaches to engaging and consulting with BME third sector organisations at a regional and sub-regional level. (brap)</p>	<p>Approaches to engagement discussed within the brap membership. Agreed in principal to create a lobbying plan, and discussed preferred content, but the plan was not developed until the funding was received.</p>
Theme 7: Other issues	<p>Sector better able to take up opportunities through ERDF and make links with new ERDF projects in their areas (YHRF)</p>	<p>Active representation to the PMC (project management committee); sometime during this period RF invited to chair the Cross Cutting Themes Sub Committee; information to the sector where relevant.</p>

	Outcome	Baseline

6.3.2 Overall, networks are starting from a higher baseline on theme 1 (economy, regeneration and employment) and theme 5 (regional structures and planning) than other themes. On the economy theme all networks assessed baseline influence at level 6, 7 or 8. On regional structures and planning there is greater variability, with baseline influence across the range of 5 to 10 and no dominant level.

6.3.3 The lowest baseline levels are for theme 3 (third sector, service delivery and civic renewal) and theme 6 (development of influence). This may be a reflection of the fact that service delivery and civic renewal activities are much more closely linked to local authorities rather than regional bodies and so the perceived level of influence is less for a regional network.

6.5 Baselines by agency to influence

6.5.1 In general, relationships with Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and Government Office (GOs) are slightly more developed, presumably as most networks have received funding from these agencies. However there is a wide range of perceived influence (from 5 to 10) for RDAs, with a narrower range for GOs (7 and 8). Levels of influence were assessed as lowest with Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEP) and other regional employment/skills bodies.

6.6 Baselines by region and type of network

6.6.1 Overall, generic networks started from a higher baseline (based on activity, relationships, perceived level of influence) than BME networks. For example, RAISE, in the South East region, reported the highest baseline activity at level 10 for regional structures and planning. They had provided secretariat support to the 17 Social and Economic Partners who had a seat on the South East England Regional Assembly, enabling the third sector to have a 'voice' in regional structure. YHRF has two places on the main management committee for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programme (PMC) and chairs the Cross Cutting Themes sub committee. In contrast, brap had only begun the process of influencing, for example identifying a list of areas to influence and agreed in principle to create a lobbying plan.

6.6.2 The key policy themes for BME networks were third sector, service delivery and civic renewal together with the development of influence, with five of the seven networks identifying outcomes within these themes. Four networks identified outcomes within the regional policy and equalities issues theme. Only one BME network identified regional

structures as a policy theme and this network was One East Midlands who have a 'single platform'. No BME networks had policy outcomes related to on health and social care, although one identified the SHA as an agency to influence.

- 6.6.3 Two BME networks assessed themselves as level 5 on influence across all policy themes (OEM BME and brap). MiNET (ROTA) and MENTER had the most consistently high ratings, with BECON and BSWN assessing high levels of influence in some areas, lower in others.
- 6.6.4 Of all those networks contacted and placing themselves against the levels of influence scale, RAISE (South East generic) and YHRF have the highest perceived level of influence overall with brap (BME West Midlands) and OEM (BME) the lowest.

7. Improvements in leadership, income diversity, and efficiency (Outcome 2)

7.1 Application process

- 7.1.1 As part of the application process, networks were asked to provide evidence of fitness for purpose, specifically that they were:
- financially viable, and have appropriate systems in place to manage the grant funding
 - accountable
 - inclusive and committed to equality and the diversity of the third sector
 - effective in achieving influence.

Examples of evidence provided are given below:

Financial viability and management	Audited annual accounts
	Details of other grant funding, income and future plans
Accountable	Membership scheme
	Constitution or terms of reference
Inclusive	Membership criteria and details
	Equalities policy
	Example of specific work or priorities
Effective	Evaluation reports
	Overview of monitoring or performance management systems

- 7.1.2 This evidence was not reviewed by the evaluators; however it was reviewed by Regional Managers, who assessed evidence of fitness for purpose in line with prospectus. All networks funded had to meet minimum standards; there was a range of standards across networks and varying monitoring arrangements were set up to reflect these differences.

7.2 Outcomes and baselines

7.2.1 Regional Networks were asked to propose project outcomes to support the programme outcome of demonstrating improvements in their leadership, income diversity, and efficiency. These outcomes are summarised below and presented in full in Appendix 4, with indicators for outcomes and outputs.

Theme	Outcomes
Leadership	Enhanced leadership skills to enable more effective strategic engagement
	Increased quality of participation in networks
	Better collaboration between regional network to develop joint strategic priorities
	Positioning for undertaking third sector workforce and skills work maintained.
Income diversity/sustainability	Increased sustainability for regional networks
	Greater sustainability of network members; more BME third sector delivery organisations demonstrating their ability to meet quality standards and to demonstrate value added
Efficiency and performance	More effective use of resources
	Impact demonstrated
	Quality demonstrated
	Increased partnership and collaborative working to improve performance, impact and efficiency

7.2.2 On leadership, six networks aimed to develop enhanced leadership skills to enable more effective strategic engagement and seven aimed to develop increased quality of participation in networks.

7.2.3 All networks identified a specific outcome related to income

diversity/sustainability, with indicators including:

- diversity of income sources
- increased self-generated income
- match funding secured
- new funding sources identified
- resources secured beyond 2011
- successful bids and secured income by March 2011 demonstrating a diverse and strong platform for continuing network activities in the future

7.2.4 In addition brap identified outcomes related to network members, such as:

- Greater sustainability of network members
- More BME third sector delivery organisations demonstrating their ability to meet quality standards and to demonstrate value added

7.2.5 Six networks aimed to improve performance and efficiency through increased partnership and collaborative working.

7.2.6 As information had been collected from networks on fitness for purpose, specific information on baselines for Outcome 2 was not collected as part of this study. However it is clear from the fitness for purpose information supplied and Regional Managers' assessments that some networks had stronger leadership, more robust finances and performed more effectively than others. In general, BME networks appeared to be weaker in some of these areas, in part due to lower levels of historic funding and capacity; however this was not universally the case.

8. Conclusions and next steps

8.1 Conclusions

8.1.1 The Regional Network Fund replaces the Regional Infrastructure Programme. The evaluators reviewed the programme prospectus, networks' proposals and workplans, as well as Regional Managers' review documents (such as review of workplans, notes of negotiation meetings). These provided evidence of a more consistent approach to funding networks than previously as well as a focus on specific outcomes, while recognising the differing needs of the third sector within each region and varying strengths and weaknesses of the networks.

8.1.2 Following the Sub-National Review, the Regional Networks are operating in a changing and potentially challenging environment, with a shift in power from regional bodies to local authorities. For example, there is no longer a formal regional role for the voluntary and community sector in regional decision making.

8.1.3 All nine regions have regional generic networks funded by the Regional Networks Fund and funding has been provided to eight regional BME networks.

8.1.4 From an analysis of policy outcomes presented in the workplans, these can be grouped into themes:

- Economy, regeneration and employment
- Health and social care
- Third sector, service delivery and civic renewal
- Regional policy and equalities issues
- Regional structures and planning
- Development of influence
- Other issues

8.1.5 . The majority of networks have focused on two policy areas:

- economy, regeneration and employment (11)
- third sector, service delivery and civic renewal (10)

Seven have focused on regional structures and planning and eight on the development of influence of the third sector more generally. Several BME networks identified regional policy and equalities issues.

8.1.6 Similarly, workplans presented outcomes related to three agencies to influence and these agencies can be summarised as:

- Government Office (GO)
- Regional Development Agency (RDA)

- Strategic Health Agency (SHA)
- Regional Improvement and Efficiency partnership (RIEP)
- Regional Association of Councils/Greater London Authority/Mayor/Strategic Leaders Boards
- Other regional employment/skills bodies
- Regional third sector, eg, infrastructure network
- Regional equalities bodies
- Other

An evaluation framework has been developed based on these themes, summarising outcomes and indicators across regions

- 8.1.7 Adopting the *Axis of Influence* or *Voice* tool, networks were asked to self-assess their level of influence prior to the period of RNP funding and these individual scores were collated. The average perceived level of influence across all themes was at 7 on the scale ('knows who to influence'). Networks are starting from a higher baseline on theme 1 (economy, regeneration and employment) and theme 5 (regional structures and planning) than other themes. The lowest baseline levels are for theme 3 (third sector, service delivery and civic renewal) as theme 6 (development of influence).
- 8.1.8 From an analysis of the agencies to influence presented in the workplans, the majority of networks identified the RDA and GO as key agencies to influence. Based on the levels of influence scores, in general, relationships with RDAs and GOs are slightly more developed, presumably as a result of funding that most networks have received from these agencies. Baseline levels of influence were assessed as lowest with Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEP) and other regional employment/skills bodies.
- 8.1.9 Overall, generic networks started from a higher baseline (based on activity, relationships, perceived level of influence) than BME networks. Generic networks had a greater focus on influencing regional structures and planning and health and social care than BME networks.
- 8.1.8 All networks were required to demonstrate 'fitness for purpose' before being awarded funding. This evidence was not reviewed by the evaluators; however it was reviewed by Regional Managers who assessed evidence of fitness for purpose in line with prospectus. All networks funded had to meet minimum standards; there was a range of standards across networks and varying monitoring arrangements were set up to reflect these differences. Networks were required to identify project outcomes on improvements in leadership, sustainability, and performance and efficiency. Many BME networks appeared to be starting from a lower baseline in these areas.

8.2 Next steps

8.2.1 Following the assessment of baseline information, the next stage in the evaluation is to collect and assess information on progress during period of funding drawing on:

- 2009/10 monitoring returns
- sample visits/interviews
- data from face-to-face monitoring meetings with Regional Managers
- peer reviews

8.2.2 The evaluation will also be developing learning materials for use by the networks and others.

Appendix 1: Levels of influence tool

Source

Drawn from *The Axis of Influence: a tool for community groups and networks who want to improve their influence*, published by CDX and Changes with support from the National Empowerment Partnership and now known as 'Voice'.

Approach

As part of establishing baselines, Regional Networks will be asked to assess where on the influencing scale they felt they were before the network funding was available. They will be asked to revisit this towards the end of the programme, perhaps in conjunction with Regional Managers as part of the face-to-face monitoring meetings. It is proposed that a level is given for each of the three policy areas and each of the three agencies that the network is aiming to influence.

Scale

We propose that only the top half of the scale is used as follows:

Below Level 5: Not yet fully organised to influence

Level 5: organised to influence

The network:

- has a clear plan which is reviewed and evaluated
- communicates effectively with members
- composition reflects agreed priorities
- has active and engaged members who feel they belong

Level 6: know the political landscape

The network:

- understands that different aspects of the external environment will affect what it is trying to do
- is clear about what works for and against it in the external environment
- maps the external environment and knows the potential for influence

Level 7: know who to influence

The network:

- knows how it is viewed by those it wants to influence
- has a plan for dealing with people who may have a negative influence or negative attitude
- has effective and useful contact with key people in useful positions in specific organisations
- approaches people at appropriate times to maximise positive outcomes
- knows where the authority lies for making decisions

Level 8: link with others to influence

The network:

- makes contact and builds strategic relationships with organisations working around similar issues from different perspectives
- promotes good relationships between groups and networks
- brings own specific voice to an alliance
- links with other networks – identifies common concerns, agrees common strategies and knows the issues they are working with
- develops and maintains links to national bodies

Level 9: know how to influence*The network:*

- understands different ways to influence
- has a promotional and communication strategy
- has position statements on issues relevant to aims
- has up-to-date information on local, regional, national and global policy contexts
- communicates effectively to a diverse range of people and organisations
- understands competing perspectives of the issue has realistic expectations
- knows the degree to which it is willing to compromise
- understands where, by whom and how decisions are made
- advocates on behalf of its members
- challenges – in a constructive way
- has plans which recognise the priorities of statutory agencies
- operates independently of the statutory sector

Level 10: influence*The network:*

- is consulted and asked opinions
- takes part in joint decision making
- has a formal place on relevant boards, partnerships etc.
- is involved in the process of shaping priorities
- can identify its contribution
- is invited to chair or facilitate partnership meetings
- is encouraged and supported to take part (by other partners)
- instigates joint discussions about power, boundaries, roles and function of the partnership etc.
- provides feedback which is sought and valued
- sees desired changes arising from its challenges

Appendix 2. Reports providing baseline information

NE	BECON (2007) <i>Strengthening BME Leadership: Evaluation report One North East</i>
	BECON (2009) <i>BME Mental Health and Well Report</i> , BECON
	Lalith Welamedage, Amy O'Donnell, Helen Newcomb, Elaine Lambie (2008) <i>Closing the Employability for BME Groups</i> , Centre for Public Policy, Northumbria University.
	VONNE (2009) <i>Surviving not Thriving</i> , VONNE
	VONNE (2009) <i>Still Surviving</i> , VONNE
	Tony Chapman, Fred Robinson, Judith Brown, Sue Shaw, Chris Ford, Emma Bailey and Robert Crow, Teesside University (2009): <i>Mosaic, Jigsaw or Abstract?: Getting a big picture perspective on the Third Sector in North East England and Cumbria</i> , Northern Rock Foundation
NW	SQW consulting (2009) <i>Developing the partnership between third sector organisations and regional bodies</i> , NWDA
WM	Suryiah Evans, Tim Sims (2009) <i>Evaluation of the R2O (Routes to Opportunity) programme</i> , brap
	brap (2008) <i>Two Sides of the Same Coin: A guide with to working with Black, Asian and Ethnic minority third sector organisations for commissioning organisations</i> , brap
	brap (2009) <i>Opportunities for improving the integrity of 'race' representation and influence in public sector services in the West Midlands Region</i> GOWM
	brap (2009) <i>Inequality and Social Exclusion: Third Sector Engagement in Regional Policy-making and Strategy</i> , GOWM
	RDA report on role/futures of Regional Networks around 2008/9 (not published)
EM	Kerrie Fletcher (2009) <i>Regional Responses To National Indicator 7</i> , One East Midlands
EE	Peter Ramsden, Lora Forsythe and Kiki Maurey Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion (2007) <i>Research report: BME access to employment, skills and enterprise services</i> , MENTER supported by EEDA.
	PACEC (2009) <i>Evaluation of Third sector Networks</i> , EEDA
SE	Ecotec (2009) – <i>RAISE Social Accounts and Audit</i> ; RAISE
	York Consulting (2009) <i>Hidden Asset 2009: A report to demonstrate the value of the Voluntary/Community Sector in the South East</i> , RAISE
	RAISE (2008) <i>Report on Research into the level of Third Sector Engagement in Local Area Agreements</i> , RAISE
	RAISE/Justin Bateman Associates (2009) <i>Report on Research into the Delivery of National Indicator 4 in the South East of England</i> , RAISE

SW	South West Forum (2009) Survey of members (unpublished)
London	LVSC Evaluation of members 2008 (unpublished).
	LVSC (2009) <i>The Big Squeeze: The recession, Londoners and the Voluntary and Community groups who serve them</i> (LVSC)
	MiNet (2009) <i>The Economic Downturn and the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Third Sector</i> : London: ROTA.
General	Michael Johnson and Katie Schmuecker (2009) <i>All inclusive? Third sector involvement in regional and sub-regional policymaking</i> , IPPR
	Voice4Change England (2007) <i>'Bridge the Gap: What is known about the BME third sector in England'</i>
	Voice4Change (2008) <i>The Continuing Need for Government Support for the Black and Minority Ethnic Regional Voluntary and Community Sector Networks in England'</i> , position paper on need for Government support for BME networks

Appendix 4: Evaluation framework

The evaluation framework for the Regional Network Fund is appended as a separate file, *Regional Networks Fund Evaluation Framework 22 April 10*.