



Barking Owl – July: Talking about what we do

The meeting focused on addressing challenges local infrastructure organisations face in communicating their work and missions to stakeholders. We discussed strategies for improving communication, while exploring challenges around terminology and explaining our roles to various audiences. The group agreed on the importance of creating resources like a jargon buster.

Meeting summary

We talked through the main challenges we face when it comes to communicating what local infrastructure organisations do. These challenges included: communicating the breadth of work an LIO does; what the voluntary sector actually is; how to rebrand effectively; how we describe the people and groups we support; striking a balance between professional/friendly/inclusive comms; messaging for different projects whilst maintaining brand identity; how to translate jargon – and more!

What do we call our sector?

The group discussed challenges in defining and explaining the role of our sector. We highlighted confusion around terms like charities, non-profits, third sector, voluntary and community, VCS/VCSE/VCSFE. See the Padlet for more information:

<https://padlet.com/navca/talking-about-what-we-do-xdsa3cpq5sn0hjbo>

The group discussed the use and meaning of the acronym "VCSE" (voluntary, community, social enterprise) and its variations, particularly the inclusion of "faith" in some versions. We suggested that the inclusion of "faith" might be a recent development due to changes in charity regulations. One attendee explained that their board members wanted to include "faith" to be more inclusive, aligning with other regions. The group agreed that while the inclusion of "faith" makes the acronym longer, it is helpful for clarity when explained.

We agreed on the importance of using plain language when explaining our work. We also emphasised the need to balance professional language with an inclusive tone in our digital presence.

Communication strategies

The group discussed challenges in communicating their organisation's purpose and identity, particularly when explaining their role as a charity that supports other charities and volunteers. We agreed on the need for multiple levels of description – a brief version for social media, an expanded version for profiles, and a detailed version for



their website. We also suggested that improving internal communication within the organisation would help ensure consistency in messaging.

Sector jargon!

The group discussed challenges around sector terminology and jargon, with participants sharing difficulties in explaining concepts like co-production and social prescribing. We agreed to explore creating a jargon buster resource for the VCSE sector.

Other useful resources

NAVCA Four Functions of Infrastructure (feel free to use these categories and descriptions in your comms): <https://www.navca.org.uk/what-our-members-do>

Download other Four Functions resources via the NAVCA website:
<https://www.navca.org.uk/members-area-resources> (just search Four Functions)

Network with other members via the NAVCA website:
<https://www.navca.org.uk/members-network-forum>

Follow us on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/navca>