



# **Good to Go: Good Governance Mark Applicants Guide 2023**



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## Foreword

The Voluntary and Community Social Enterprises (hereinafter known as VCSE) organisations across Cambridgeshire play a significant role in the health & wellbeing of our communities.

This Good to Go: Good Governance Mark, has been developed as a minimum standard for Hunts Forum members. It can also be used as a diagnostic and development tool by members keen to identify gaps in their own performance.

By implementing this mark, we help members provide service users with the excellent standard of service they require and deserve.

It is a mark of confidence and recognition for dedicated staff and volunteers.

It will enable members to meet the needs of service users better by increasing capacity.

### Julie Farrow

Julie

Chief Executive  
Hunts Forum and Lead CEO of Support Cambridgeshire.

## Introduction

The Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) is increasingly expected to demonstrate to funders and commissioners their approach to quality assurance and good governance.

Good Governance helps organisations to achieve safe quality services to meet the needs of their customers or service users.

Services must be consistently excellent or of good quality to meet procurement agencies aspirations for the best value in delivering public services.

**The Hunts Forum Good to Go: Good Governance Mark** (herein referred to as **Good Governance Mark**) is a straightforward system that helps identify minimum standards for all its members. Taking a methodical look at organisational governance and identifying areas where improvements are needed, it helps members to plan, budget and allocate the necessary resources for making organisational or procedural improvements.

The benefits of the Good to Go: Good Governance Mark are:

- *Build Confidence:* Working to a defined standard can build trust across sectors, build confidence in the third sector and bring both external and internal benefits for staff, stakeholders, funders or commissioners and beneficiaries.
- *Raise the Profile:* of the wide range of community activities and services available in the county for signposting and referrals.

- *Support Organisations:* to strengthen policies and practices to ensure they can continue to meet the needs of their communities, clients and customers.
- *Stronger Position:* to respond to tenders and reassure stakeholders and potential funders that they are fit for purpose with good governance practices.
- *Improve and Reflect:* It will provide a tool for continuous improvement and reflection for each organisation.
- *Consistency:* It will provide a framework for consistency and internal audit.

## What's involved in Hunts Forum Good to Go: Good Governance Mark?

The Good Governance Mark ensures that organisations are well run with a good level of internal governance, financial control, management and data protection.

There is a staged process, we will follow.

The first is a meeting with one of the Development team who will talk through the process with you, learn more about your organisation and answer any questions you may have. If they feel you are in a good place to be able to complete the process, then they will put you through to the next stage and highlight the panel date we would like to work towards.

The second stage is completing an online application, this is a two part process. The first asks questions around what we call Core policies, such as safeguarding, health and safety, data protection and others. These must be uploaded with your application. Hunts Forum can help you develop these if you do not have them already in place or if they are out-of-date.

All the submitted evidence will be reviewed by Hunts Forum and you will receive detailed feedback. If there are any issues with any of the documentation, we will provide any additional support that may be required will be given before you proceed to the next level.

The third part of the online process involves delving deeper into areas such as governance, HR and finance. You will not be asked to upload any documents, but once the section is complete, we may request additional documents and ask clarifying questions, typically, this is likely to be no more than 3 documents or questions.

Once the documentation stage is complete, we will arrange to meet with representatives of your organisation, ideally, but not necessarily, with a trustee, a member of the senior leadership and a volunteer. The meeting can be held with everyone at the same time or individually. They can also be online or in-person. We will work with you to ensure that this is most appropriate for your organisation.

A final report is then compiled by our development team that then goes before an awarding panel for consideration along with your completed application.

## Help to get you through

Don't worry if you don't have everything to hand. Our development team is available throughout the process to help you through. This could be help writing or updating policies that are required, providing template policies and procedures, answer any questions you may have or help you through any technical issues with completing the online process.

Only documents requested in the core policies section are required to submit your application. We will contact you for any additional documentation we may require once your application is submitted.

## How long will the accreditation stand?

The Hunts Forum Good Governance Mark will remain **valid for three years** from the month of issue.

However, Hunts Forum maintains the right to remove the Good Governance Mark from any organisation where concerns regarding maintaining standards to the required level are found to be valid, or if the organisation is no longer a Hunts Forum member.

Hunts Forum will work with all such organisations in the first instance to help them re-establish compliance with the standards of this mark. Hunts Forum's decision in such an instance is final.

## Why would our organisation apply for this accreditation?

Having accreditation that your local CVS endorses will allow you to showcase the viability of your organisation to funders, volunteers, other VCSE groups and the public.

- It can be displayed on your website and documentation, marketing and communications that prove you have the Good to Go: Good Governance Mark.

# The Application Process

## Are we in the right place to do this?

So the first stage, before we send you anything to fill in, will be a meeting with one of our Development Team. Where we will talk through the process, make sure you're ready to complete the process and answer any questions.

## How long will the process take?

The awarding panel will meet twice a year. Once in April and another in October, we will support you in getting the panel meeting which links with the organisation's needs.

We ask that you can amend policies and work on suggested changes promptly so that we can put you through the process in the quickest time possible.

If circumstances change within your organisation and this is not possible, please let us know as soon as possible so we can pause your application and open a space up to another organisation.

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# APPLICATION PROCESS

## STAGE 1. SELF ASSESSMENT

Complete online self assessment and application form. Upload Core Policy documents  
Submit application form

## STAGE 2. HF REVIEWS APPLICATION

HF Requests further evidence based upon application form review  
Further evidence is submitted  
Evidence reviewed by HF

## STAGE 3. CLARIFICATION MEETINGS

Informal meetings arranged to discuss key areas highlighted during application process  
Meetings take place with key individuals

## STAGE 4. PROGRESS TO PANEL

HF agrees sufficient evidence for application to progress  
Development Officers write report for Panel  
Note: it is the applicant that makes final decision to submit to next panel or defer to future panel.

## STAGE 5 PANEL

- Panel reviews evidence and Development Officer reports
- Panel Decision

## Process

The application process is on-line and will cover the main areas needed to run an organisation well and achieve good results for service users. NOTE: a separate application form for CIC's is in development.

1. You are required to answer Yes, No or Not Applicable to all the questions; some questions showcase a higher level of best practice than others, so please note that you are not required to state 'Yes' to everything. Where 'Not Applicable' applies, please give the reason in the notes. You may also want to explain how you carry out specific procedures – e.g. How are volunteers recruited

A set of Core Polices act as the baseline criteria ([Core Policies and Procedures](#)) you must submit these with your application.

2. Additional verification will entail taking a further sample of documentation from other sections based on our research, knowledge and understanding of your organisation, and direct follow-up from previous communications. These will be benchmarked against current best practices. We require this evidence to prove that your organisation works at a sufficient Good Governance level.

All the submitted evidence will be collected and reviewed by Hunts Forum. Any additional support that may be required will be given before you proceed to the next level.

3. Once the documentation phase is complete, you will receive written feedback on the core polices and any other polcies you have submitted. We will then arrange an informal clarification meeting with your organisation to clarify these and other areas of your application. This will happen either in person or via video call. You will be updated as to which areas of the application we will want to talk about and, therefore, ask that the suitable person/s attend the conversation. Ideally these will be a member of senior leadership, a volunteer and a trustee. This meeting shouldn't take any longer than an hour and will be an informal discussion.

Hunts Forum's meeting facilitator will write up notes from the meeting which will be shared with the organsiation.

4. Finally, although Hunts Forum will recommend if the application now moves onto the Panel stage or suggest if any additional work needs to happen beforehand, the final decision to move to the Panel stage will sit with the organisation.

The panel will review the evidence submitted, the development officers notes and recommendations, the interview notes and the application to decide if the organisation reaches the minimum criteria. Then, they will state if the application has Passed/Failed or Requires Further Clarification. NOTE: not all 'further clarification' requests will require going back to panel, but this may be requested by the awarding panel.

## The Panel Process

The panel will review applications three times a year and will comprise of three representatives from external organisations. These could include other community groups, District Council, County Council or Health.

Where needed, a member of Hunts Forum Staff or Trustee will sit on the panel. When this is the case, the individual will have had no connection to the group before the application is made or have been involved in the application process.

## Renewal

An application form for re-accreditation will be sent to the organisation 6 months before your Good Governance Mark expiry date. This will ask if any significant changes have been made and invite you to submit any relevant documentary evidence. It will also highlight areas of development that were highlighted in the original application – if, as part the original application process, areas to strengthen policies and/or procedures were identified you will be required to show your development as part of the renewal process.

We may require additional documentation and/or invite your organisation to take part in a discussion. This will be agreed between your organisation and the Development Officer. The application will then go to panel.

A small administration charge may apply to renewal applications.

## Core Policies and Procedure (submitted with application)

Every organisation is different – therefore, some of the questions may not apply. However, this list gives you the core policies a formal community group must-have.

You will also be required to showcase that your organisation does more than the basic level through further evidence, answers on the application and informal discussion.

The following **must** be submitted with your application.

- A formal written constitution/ governing document (For Timebanks, we would accept Terms of Reference, not required for registered Charities, CIOs, CBS, CICs, etc. Please ensure you have included your registration number in the application)

- Financial procedures – Evidence of financial controls such as financial reports to trustees, processes for controls over banking procedures, processes for authorisation of expenditure. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/internal-financial-controls-for-charities-cc8/internal-financial-controls-for-charities>
- Insurance – Appropriate for your organisation structure and service
- Safeguarding procedures/policy – Appropriate to the organisation. (Addressing requirements of relevant legislation: Safeguarding Adults at Risk- Care Act 2014, Mental Capacity Act 2005, Safeguarding children- Children Act 1989 and 2004)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (Addressing relevant legislation: Equality Act 2010)
- Health and Safety Policy - (Addressing relevant legislation: Health & Safety at Work Act 1974)
- Data Protection Policy (Addressing relevant legislation: UK Data Protection Act 2018, GDPR 2018)

**All policies must include**

- Date of adoption,
- Date of review(s)
- Signed by Chair or similar role

## Uploading and Sending Supporting Evidence

### Redacting Information

The award aims to identify that you have the proper mechanisms to carry out an influential, safe community group. Therefore we do ask that any personal or sensitive data is redacted.

We will deal with all your information in line with GDPR, and due to the make-up of the panel, these documents will be shared with a third party.

### Application

Contact [GoodGovernance@huntsforum.org.uk](mailto:GoodGovernance@huntsforum.org.uk) to express an interest in completing the Good to Go: Good Governance Mark. You will be sent login details and information to complete an online application form. The form will automatically save your information and can be completed over time.

Once you have submitted your application a member of the Development Team will be in touch to confirm receipt of your application and close your online form. The team will then review the application and documentation. Henceforth, all communication will be direct with the development team.

### Questions and Clarifications

Should you have any questions or would like to discuss anything further before starting the process, please contact [GoodGovernance@huntsforum.org.uk](mailto:GoodGovernance@huntsforum.org.uk)