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Good to Go: Good Governance Mark Applicants Guide 2024



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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 to showcase their commitment to quality assurance and good governance.

The Hunts Forum Good to Go: Good Governance Mark, referred to as the Good Governance Mark, is a straightforward system designed to identify minimum standards for all its members. By systematically examining organisational governance and pinpointing areas for improvement, it assists members in planning, budgeting, and allocating resources for organisational or procedural enhancements.

Good Governance is essential for organisations aiming to deliver safe, high quality services that meets the needs of service users and community.

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 proactive, cost effective self-assessment process that helps identify predetermined standards for all its members. The self-assessment process enables organisations to work methodically through their core policies and procedures to identify and mitigate potential risk, compliance issues and identify strengths, weaknesses and any area requiring corrective action.

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Implementing a self-assessment quality assurance scheme can be a strategic decision for organisations seeking to enhance their internal processes, ensure quality, and drive continuous improvement as well as demonstrating compliance to stakeholders and regulatory bodies. The self assessment approach fosters a sense of ownership and a learning culture within the organisation.

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. Organisations can tailor the self assessment process to align with their specific goals and service.
- **Stronger Position:** to enhance your readiness to respond to tenders, reassuring stakeholders and potential funders that you are fit for purpose with good governance practices. Showcasing a proactive approach to quality management. *Improve and Reflect:* It will provide a tool for continuous improvement and reflection for each organisation. Through self-assessment organisations can identify and document best practise within their own operations.
- **Consistency:** It will provide a framework for consistency and internal audit.

Help to get you through

Don't worry if you don't have everything to hand. Our development team is available at any point throughout the whole process to offer guidance and support. This could be help writing or updating policies that are the best practice for your organisation or , answering any questions you may have or help you through any technical issues with the online process.

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, responsible safeguarding practices, and a sound understanding of data protection, health and safety and equality, diversity and inclusion. .

There is a staged process, we will follow.

The first stage is the Good to Go conversation 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. Following the conversation if you wish to go ahead and the development officer agrees you are in a good place to be able to complete the process, then they will share the self assessment checklists and guidance, verify documents that are to be uploaded and agree an anticipated timeline.

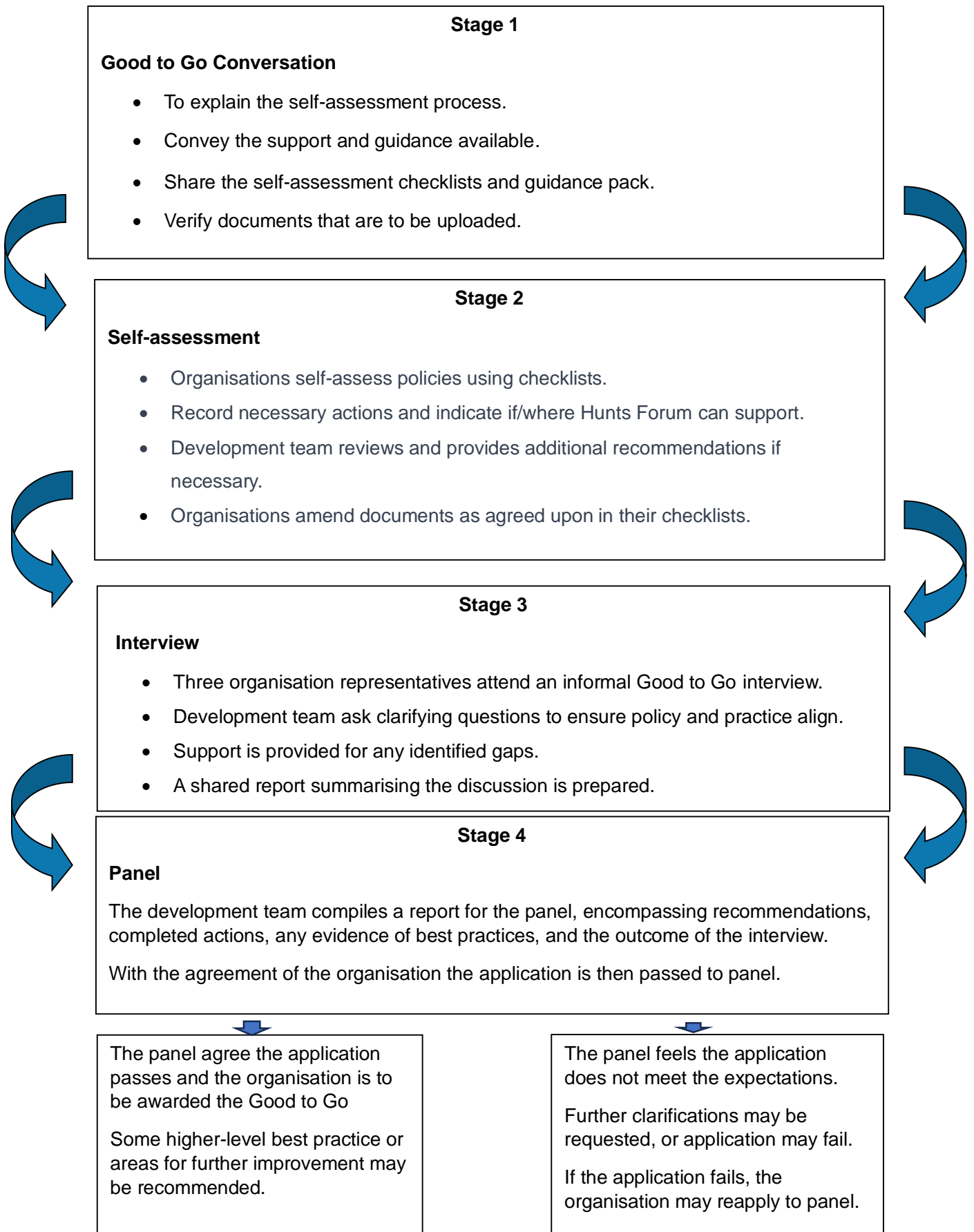
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The second stage is the self assessment process for the organisation to complete, with support where needed. The core policies are safeguarding, health and safety, data protection, finance and equality, diversity and inclusion. Others may be suggested that are specific to your organisation. The development officer will review the governing document and insurance to ensure there are no compliance issues or risks identified. When the organisation and the development officer are in agreement that this stage has been completed satisfactorily you will proceed to the third stage.

The third stage of the process involves an internal interview 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.

Application Process



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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, accountability, and transparency 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.

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 March, July and November and we will work with you to present your application to the panel meeting which links with the organisation's needs.

We will work with you to make any amendments promptly if required so so that we can put you through the process in the quickest time if needed.

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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The Panel Process

The panel will review applications 3 times a year and the panel 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 recorded within 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 able to showcase that your organisation does more than the basic level through further evidence, responses on your checklist 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

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<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)

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 to express an interest in completing the Good to Go: Good Governance Mark. Once received a member of the development team will be in touch to confirm receipt of your expression of interest and invite you to a Good to Go Conversation. 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