

Northern Gas Networks – Services Beyond The Meter Technical Network Leads

Funding GDN(s)	Northern Gas Networks
For Collaborative VCMA Projects:	Role of GDN(s) N/A
Date of PEA submission:	March 2024
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Total cost (£k)	*detailed separately
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	*detailed separately

1. Problem(s)

This should outline the problem(s) which is/are being addressed by the VCMA Project

2 dedicated roles are required to support the delivery of Services Beyond The Meter (SBTM) VCMA project within NGN's geographical footprint. The aim of these roles will be to support the delivery of NGN's Customers in Vulnerable Situations Strategy, VCMA Strategy and associated commitments for GD2.

The roles will embed new processes relating to our GD2 commitments of never leaving a customer vulnerable, following an NGN visit. They will primarily deliver on projects where NGN upskill and utilise our direct labour employees, to undertake work on appliances and downstream installations. The roles will also include responsibility for reporting in line with the VCMA governance document and associated requirements.

2. Scope and Objectives

The scope and objectives of the VCMA Project should be clearly defined including the benefits which would directly impact customers on the participating GDNs' network(s), and where the benefits of the VCMA Projects lie.

The roles will be supporting the delivery of the SBTM project as well as being the main point of contact for technical enquiries for NGN engineers and external partners. The roles will require an understanding of the development of partnership working with Local Authorities, housing providers, energy sector partners, community sector and charities, across NGN's footprint as well as closely working with other GDN's.

The role as the SBTM Technical Network Leads will report directly into the Head of Emergency Operations. Close liaison with the Social Strategy Programme Manager will also be required, in relation to VCMA activities and the identification of new SBTM opportunities. Our Customers in Vulnerable Situations Strategy has been established with the aim to keep all our customers warm, independent and safe in their homes. The roles will play a key part in supporting this aim, through coaching, supporting and leading a team of upskilled engineers in the field, to complete downstream work activities.

The roles will also involve supporting an annual stakeholder showcase event and promote the work of NGN as widely as possible, in accordance with procedures agreed with partners. This may involve representing NGN at appropriate forums and events to support customers in vulnerable situations.

2.1 The objectives of this initiative are:

Supervising an effective and highly motivated regional workforce when flexed over to projects, driving performance excellence, delivering year-on-year cost efficiencies and improvements in productivity and resource utilisation, whilst maintaining world-class operational excellence, safety, and customer satisfaction

- Support the Head of Emergency Operations in embedding new processes relating to our SBTM strategy, throughout GD2 across the NGN network
- Work with the Head of Emergency Operations to manage and co-ordinate within the network to deliver on vulnerability projects
- Be the operational interface across NGN for the process of referring our customers to charitable organisations
- Carrying out workplace inspections (AQAD) on downstream work activities to demonstrate compliance with the required standards/company procedures
- Support the Head of Emergency Operations to complete on-site incident supervision and investigations, in line with company procedures and field trials for new policies
- Supporting and coaching our upskilled engineers.
- Sharing, promoting and facilitating technical and procedural best practice

2.2 Scope

- Covers all of NGN's geographical area
- All projects link into vulnerability and raising awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide (CO) and PSR
- Project alignment with NGN's Vulnerability Strategy

3. Why the Project is being funded through the VCMA

This should include an explanation of why the VCMA Project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria. This is a requirement

This project qualifies under the criteria for VCMA funding, as the dedicated roles will be the first point of contact for SBTM queries and aligns to NGNs Customers in Vulnerable Situations Strategy, VCMA Strategy and associated commitments for GD2, by managing projects funded through the VCMA.

There will be no collaboration from other GDN's nor other funded sources for this specific role.

3.1 Eligibility criteria

- This project will have a positive SROI
- This project will support NGN's Vulnerability Strategy by supporting projects with partners that align with all of the themes, namely: financial hardship, rural isolation, physical disabilities, mental health and temporary vulnerabilities
- Has defined outcomes as required
- Goes beyond NGN's licence obligations and price control funded mechanisms

4. Evidence of stakeholder/customer support

This should provide information of the customer engagement that has taken place in the development of VCMA Projects where appropriate. If there is no evidence of stakeholder

engagement or customer support, this should justify why it was not appropriate to engage with stakeholders and customers.

Within the Northern Gas Networks' region, we serve 2.7 million gas-using households. The socio-economic characteristics of our region mean that we operate in many communities that are amongst the most economically deprived in the whole country. There is clearly a need to support these communities, through projects that can be overseen by a dedicated resource. The socio-economic characteristics have been a key factor in our prioritising engagement with vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups of customers, often through our partners, telling them about our services, about what we do and how we could improve.

Each year, we undertake analysis of all the insight we've heard in the previous year to prioritise those issues our stakeholders most want to engage on. Over the past 12-18 months, we've done this in a number of ways.

4.1 Customers in Vulnerable Situations (CIVS) Workshops

Asking our stakeholders what's important – using our wide range of engagement mechanisms from strategic workshops to customer perceptions, we asked stakeholders to prioritise what is most important to them. Since 2019 we've held regular workshops with our stakeholders, on the subject of Customers In Vulnerable Situations (CIVS). This ensures that we are well informed to address the needs of customers across our network and through collaborative projects.

During our January 2021 workshop, our stakeholders said we need more streamlined ways of working together. This role addresses that needs as the Vulnerability Economic Evaluation Analyst will ensure that the projects have a positive SROI and can therefore progress to become live projects. The role also ensures projects are meeting the VCMA criteria.

Very recent (Autumn 2023) Bespoke Vulnerability Stakeholder Mapping research identified categories of stakeholders that are hard to reach, this included:

- People living with a disability
- Senior citizens with long term conditions
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Mental health

Health conditions which are prevalent in the NGN region are:

- Cancer and chronic kidney disease
- Musculoskeletal conditions
- Respiratory
- Mental health

Through the research carried out, the findings show that the 5 original NGN vulnerability categories have now evolved to 10 categories. These are:

1. Physical challenges, inclusive of communication issues, physical space
2. Mental wellbeing
3. Financial hardship
4. Temporary vulnerability – including post hospital recovery and pregnancy / maternity
5. Socio Demographic
6. Household composition

7. Rural Vulnerability
8. Accessibility Including language
9. Medical Dependant on Energy
10. Cultural

4.2 The Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG)

This group provides an independent oversight into the actions we take to support our customers in vulnerable situations (CIVS). Checking we've got it right – using a range of engagement mechanisms to assess and challenge our response to stakeholder feedback, ensuring we are responding in the right way. This has offered us robust challenges into how we deal with CIVS, which meets the needs of our stakeholders. The introduction of a dedicated role to support VCMA projects has been welcomed by the ISG.

4.3 Vulnerability Strategy AAA Framework

Within our Vulnerability Strategy we have developed, with the help of our stakeholders, the 'AAA' framework. This helps us support our customers in vulnerable situations. Awareness, Accessibility and Action. By adapting this principles-based approach into our AAA framework, we will ensure that all customers are treated fairly and consistently. All of the themes within the strategy will be covered by projects being coordinated by this dedicated role.

5. Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria

Details of the VCMA Project outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these, interim milestones and how the Funding Licensee will evaluate whether the project has been successful. Each action should have a proportion of the funding allocated.

5.1 Outcomes

- Support the Head of Emergency Operations in embedding new processes relating to our SBTM strategy, throughout GD2 across the NGN network
- Work with the Head of Emergency Operations to manage and co-ordinate within the network to deliver on vulnerability projects
- Be the operational interface across NGN for the process of referring our customers to charitable organisations
- Carrying out workplace inspections (AQAD) on downstream work activities to demonstrate compliance with the required standards/company procedures
- Support the Head of Emergency Operations to complete on-site incident supervision and investigations, in line with company procedures and field trials for new policies
- Supporting and coaching our upskilled engineers
- Sharing, promoting and facilitating technical and procedural best practice
- Ensuring a wide range of jobs are completed and progressed across all areas within NGN's geographical footprint by working with partners

5.2 Success criteria

- Demonstration of actions taken to minimise risk and the sharing of any lessons learnt from SBTM jobs
- Creation of SBTM policies & procedures
- Good understanding of Safe Control of Operations procedures
- Updating relevant codes of practice, engineering instructions safety and statutory regulation.
- An understanding of NGN Engineering and Safety policies and procedures
- An understanding of external good practice, e.g. HSE documents
- Demonstration of supporting customers in vulnerable situations
- Comprehensive reporting– this will be measured for each eligible SBTM job

6. Project Partners and third parties involved

Details of Project Partners or third-party involvement

NGN will be working with multiple social partners to develop new VCMA projects. The role will also involve close liaison with other Gas Distribution Networks for collaborative VCMA projects

7. Potential for new learning

Details of what the GDN(s) expect to learn and how the learning will be disseminated.

As they are new roles, they will evolve over time. Any learning will be shared internally, with all GDN's and other partners. The roles will be reviewed at 6/12 monthly intervals with NGN internal stakeholders. Learning will be captured on a Lessons Learnt log.

8. Scale of VCMA Project and SROI calculations

The Funding Licensee(s) should justify the scale of the VCMA Project – including the scale of the investment relative to its potential benefits. As part of this, it should provide the SROI calculation.

This project has a positive SROI.

VCMA Project start and end date

Detail start and end date of the VCMA Project and, where relevant, the VCMA Project that preceded this initiative.

December 2023 – 31st March 2026

Geographic area

Details of where the VCMA Project will take place. If the VCMA Project is collaborative, the Funding Licensee area(s) in which the project will take place should be identified.

All of NGN's geographical area

Approved by

Eileen Brown

Customer Experience Director