

Working Together

Annual Report 2008 - 2009



Department for
**Social
Development**
www.dsdni.gov.uk



Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

NICVA's vision is of an effective, vibrant voluntary and community sector which helps build a fair and equal society.

Mission

NICVA's mission is to represent and promote the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland and to provide support and leadership to it.

Values

1. NICVA is committed to equality, justice and promoting diversity and opposes discrimination of any sort.
2. NICVA is committed to positive social change to address poverty and exclusion.
3. NICVA is committed to partnership working and adopts a community development approach.
4. NICVA values its staff and volunteers as the key resource of the organisation.
5. NICVA is committed to pursuing social, environmental and economic sustainability.
6. NICVA is an independent organisation and is non party political.
7. NICVA strives for excellence in all that it does in order to provide high quality services.
8. NICVA conducts its business in an open, honest, transparent and accountable way to its members and stakeholders.

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Chair's Report

I am very pleased to present our annual report to you, in what has been a turbulent year of economic and social change. This year we launched our new strategic plan 2009-2012 in which we have outlined our key strategic objectives. These reflect our desire to support the sector to become more effective in an increasingly difficult environment. One major change which is having a significant impact on how we work is a greater emphasis by government on doing business through contracting. We will need to quickly equip ourselves to take advantage of these opportunities and to develop effective partnerships and collaborative ways of working.

Our policy and influencing work has also been to the fore this year. We have been working in partnership with the DSD to develop a new framework for government and voluntary/community sector relations. We were also successful in establishing an Assembly cross party group on the sector and will use this vehicle to engage in debate with our politicians on issues which affect us. We are grateful to those politicians who supported this development.

Our service delivery to the sector has seen major developments and we will continue to provide a range of services to assist organisations gain best value in their work. I believe our family of websites to be some of the best examples around and they provide the sector with a rich source of services and expertise. Our information, advice and training activities continue to develop in response to the sector's needs which continues to meet increased demand.

All of this work only happens due to the huge commitment of management, staff and volunteers and I want to place on record my thanks to everyone who makes NICVA the great organisation that it is. In particular our Chief Executive Seamus McAleavey makes an enormous contribution not just to 'NICVA' but I think is an exceptional spokesperson and strategist for the wider sector. Thanks also to all our partners, funders and supporters. Finally I would like to pay tribute to Teresa Flanagan who left NICVA this year after 18 years service.

Bob Stronge, Chair



Chief Executive's Report

NICVA strives to put its members at the centre of everything we do. Providing services that are responsive to our members' needs is a key priority and our goal is to help organisations better equip themselves to deliver and achieve their own objectives. NICVA also leads on representing the interests of voluntary and community organisations, combining our collective strength and experience to build a better society in Northern Ireland. Our members are often in the forefront of tackling inequality and disadvantage in the belief that doing so is right and benefits society as a whole.

The biggest issue to emerge during the year was the economy going into recession. NICVA has responded to the threat by engaging members over the last half of the year on this difficult subject. NICVA's analysis identified that the impact of the recession on our sector would lag a year behind the private sector but that income would be reduced during the recession from almost all sources. The message has been to look hard at income and expenditure, think innovatively, seek to work in collaboration with other organisations and, where appropriate to consider merger options. The recession carries real threats. Ironically it will also offer opportunity.

Organisations that innovate and tackle emerging needs will find that there is a lot that needs to be done, but scarcer resources are likely to prioritise themselves in their direction. Remember good voluntary or community organisations are led by the optimists.

Lastly, can I add my appreciation for the effort of all the NICVA staff who this year again have done so much to achieve the positive outcomes referenced in this report. I also wish to pay tribute to the guidance and support of the Chair, Bob Stronge and NICVA's Executive Committee who work tirelessly on behalf of the rest of the sector. The next few years will be difficult for everyone with rising demand and falling resources but good organisations will rise to the challenge.

Seamus McAleavey, Chief Executive



Working together on policy

In 2008 NICVA focused on building positive working relationships with the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive through more robust and structured engagement. NICVA began to lead discussions on a White Paper for the voluntary and community sector. A series of roundtable meetings and a large seminar outlined our ideas to members and gained their support to move forward. A comprehensive briefing paper was produced and NICVA staff met key MLAs to gauge their support. We invited the Social Development Committee to hold a meeting in NICVA and were pleased when they endorsed the call for a White Paper. A debate in the Assembly chamber secured unanimous support. A series of meetings with DSD officials is currently moving this issue forward.

NICVA also facilitated the establishment of the All Party Group on the Voluntary and Community Sector. Chaired by Ulster Unionist MLA Roy Beggs the meetings of the group are well attended and spark interesting debate and discussion on a wide variety of issues important to the sector.

Former Head of 10 Downing Street Policy Unit, Geoff Mulgan speaking at the 'Dialogue on Democracy' event in NICVA.



Improving the nature of the relationship between government and civil society was also the catalyst behind a new series of papers and discussions on democracy and participation. NICVA worked with over 300 of its members through a series of meetings and seminars to discuss how to make devolution really work for the people of Northern Ireland in an inclusive and progressive way.

NICVA continued to work together with eight thematic policy fora, meeting 25 times over the course of the year. One in five NICVA members are involved in a policy forum, and continue to share information and best practice. The fora met for the first time at an end of year policy review which was addressed by speaker William Hay amongst others.

Other highlights include:

- Around 300 voluntary and community organisations attended training sessions relating to policy, lobbying and communications
- 250 people follow the work of the NI Assembly by receiving NICVA's weekly Assembly Monitor briefing.



NICVA hosted the Policy, Lobbying and Advocacy Forum which invited party representatives to speak on the 4 June European Parliament elections. The representatives who attended were: Jim Allister MEP, TUV, Peter McClenaghan, SDLP, Stephen Nicholl, UUP, Phillip Weir, Head of Policy, DUP, Stephen Agnew, Green Party and Sean Oliver, Sinn Fein.

Working together with research

Compiling an economic map of the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland is a complex and daunting task. The diversity of the sector, the labyrinthine nature of funding programmes and the lack of a centrally maintained register of organisations combine to make the task a difficult one, but not impossible. NICVA has for the past 12 years been producing its State of the Sector reports which have sought to articulate the size and role of the voluntary and community sector. The fifth edition was launched on 25 February 2009 by the Minister for Social Development, Margaret Ritchie. At the launch the Minister stated:

“State of the Sector V is an important piece of research. In these extremely challenging times it is important for those of us in Government to clearly understand the significant contribution of the voluntary and community sector, the opportunities and the limitations. However, one of the key factors in successfully tackling deprivation and assisting regeneration is through a partnership approach and I recognise the important role which the voluntary and community sector has to play in this process.”

*Margaret Ritchie,
Minister for Social
Development,
launches State of the
Sector V Report with
Seamus McAleavy,
Chief Executive of
NICVA.*



Central to NICVA's research this year has been a desire to get beneath the policy rhetoric and truly understand the nature of the challenges organisations face. This is perhaps more relevant in NICVA's ongoing working relationship with Supporting People, under the Innovation and Change Programme. Through a rigorous research programme NICVA has continued to give Supporting People service providers practical solutions to help them function more effectively and prepare for an uncertain future. NICVA has also started a year long project with Supporting People to examine the potential for collaborative working among service providers.

Throughout the year NICVA has worked with a wide range of partners in producing relevant and ground breaking research. The Research Unit collaborated with ARK (the Northern Ireland Political Archive) at Queen's University to provide capacity building sessions for voluntary and community organisations wanting to undertake research. A total of 152 participants received training on how to conduct research which represents a 25% increase on the number of participants in the previous year (07/08).



A capacity building session at NICVA.

Working together to improve governance

NICVA continues to work with other key governance practitioners in the sector via the Developing Governance Group. Collectively the group worked to produce an online governance resource to map out the seven principles of the Code of Good Governance. The website www.diycommittee.org was launched in March at a special hands-on seminar in NICVA, where participants were able to navigate their way around the site in order to find solutions to various governance questions and scenarios. Presentations were given by DSD, Big Lottery Fund and the Ulster Cancer Foundation, all of which endorsed the Code and its role in helping organisations work towards good governance.

There have been quite a few changes to company law over the last year with the introduction of the Companies Act 2006. The governance and charity advice team maintain a dedicated company law reform web page on www.nicva.org to keep the sector up to date with all the key provisions that affect the running of a charitable company.

Launch of DIY Committee Guide, online resource to help the voluntary and community sector with their governance.



NICVA's own Governance and Charity Advice team continued its essential work with members and the sector to improve organisational governance. The team completed a programme of governance reviews for small to medium sized organisations under the Modernisation Fund, and began a similar project with those on the International Fund for Ireland Community Leadership Programme. In addition, the team responded to over 5,000 enquiries on governance and charity law, held 43 consultancy sessions with organisations that needed more in-depth information and provided direct training to 35 organisations. The team continues to work with organisations to enable them to update and understand their governing documents.

In working with DSD Charity Branch the governance and charity advice team has been able to provide the most up to date, relevant information on the development of charity legislation and the establishment of the Charity Commission via all NICVA communication channels, including websites and NICVA News.



Governance training session at NICVA.

Working together to improve skills

NICVA was part of a unique collaboration between nine of the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), which culminated in the launch of the Northern Ireland Voluntary and Community Sector Skills Survey 2008 report on 24 June 2008. Further to this, DEL also funded three skills seminars addressing skills gaps in strategic management, legal matters and contract procurement which attracted 47 attendees.

In working with the sector to meet training needs NICVA delivered:

- A calendar of 34 courses ranging from Recruitment and Selection to Winning Contracts.
- Consultancy training to 63 organisations. This bespoke training
 - ranged from Train the Trainer (Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) endorsed award), to Managing Staff and
 - Media Skills. Overall the total number of participants was 1,133.

During the same period NICVA worked with a further 36 organisations that received a grant through the Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities Programme, providing training needs analysis, training courses, one to one support, information and advice.

There were 42 training courses attended by 402 participants. Year one evaluation of this programme was completed, with 78% of participants reporting that their objectives were fully meet and 73% thought the training was very useful.

“The training has resulted in a staff team that is working together and pulling together for the same goal. As a group it has built an overall confidence to deliver its services” Focus on Family.

NICVA was appointed as the delivery agent for the International Fund for Ireland's (IFI) Community Leadership Programme (CLP) in October 2008 to work with organisations to strengthen their leadership capacity. This will assist them in the development of sustainable, social, economic and community relations regeneration in disadvantaged areas. Aurion Leadership and The University of Ulster are programme partners. Over the next three years the Programme will be delivered to 100 groups in areas of weak community infrastructure and disadvantage from Northern Ireland and the six border counties of the Republic of Ireland. A dedicated website www.communityleadershipprogramme.org was developed to host online resources and assist in social networking between groups on the Programme.



*Denis Rooney CBE,
Chairman of the
International Fund
for Ireland (IFI)
celebrating the
launch of the new
£2.1million
Community
Leadership
Programme with
Una McKernan,
Director of
Corporate Services,
NICVA and Seamus
McAleavey, Chief
Executive of NICVA.*

Working together to make fundraising better

Working together has been a key element of the fundraising advice service work in 2008/2009: several charities came together to work on a strategy to promote legacy giving in Northern Ireland; and the Northern Ireland Trusts Group, an informal group of local grant-making organisations, now meets at least three times a year to share best practice and information.

NICVA's work with funders was evidenced by the success of the Meet the Funder Fairs. The first was held in Belfast. One hundred and seventy people over two hours came through the doors, greeted by twenty-four funding organisations. There was an estimated budget of £500 million represented in the room. The event was such a success it was repeated in the North West with numbers exceeding 120 people.

NICVA worked throughout the year on developing strategic partnerships to broaden access to GrantTracker, with the aim of helping voluntary and community organisations access funding opportunities. Our partnership with The Wheel saw the launch of Funding Point - the equivalent of GrantTracker for the south of Ireland.

Closer to home the partnership with UCIT saw 20 GrantTracker bursaries awarded to social economy businesses. Pauline Coghlan, Senior Business Development Executive at Newry and Mourne Enterprise Agency said about GrantTracker:

“The voluntary and community groups I am involved with have found their efforts greatly improved. GrantTracker has identified and assisted successful applications for grant assistance.”

Without the 450 organisations subscribing to the GrantTracker website, NICVA couldn't provide and update information on over 1,000 funding schemes available or write 370 fundraising articles (more than one a day - every day).

GrantTracker welcomed 32,000 visitors to the website during the year, with over a quarter of a million page views.

NICVA has continued to work in support of the local group of the Institute of Fundraising. This contribution has been in-kind support of committee representation and a lunchtime seminar series over the year.



*GrantTracker
'Meet the
Funders' fair
held in NICVA
in January, with
representatives
from
independent
trusts, National
Lottery, the
corporate,
government
and European
Union sectors
all in
attendance.*

Working together to improve communications

NICVA continues to work hard to communicate with its members and the wider voluntary and community sector, to inform but also to encourage discussion, feedback and engagement. The biggest physical evidence of this was the establishment of a dedicated Information and Communication unit within NICVA in April 2008.

It also continues to work with the sector to increase its communication through external contributions to the family of websites, email newsletters (eNews) and NICVA News in addition to communication by phone, email and via seminars, training and events. Over 6,500 such activities were recorded for the year.

The websites continue to go from strength to strength, with annual growth of visitors to the sites up by 17% for NICVA, 32.7% for CommunityNI and 35.16% for CommunityBuyer, the latter unsurprising due to a major re-design at the end of the financial year. Engagement with CommunityNI grew also, with a wide variety of community groups uploading 1,853 articles between April 2008 and March 2009.

In terms of the wider promotion of the work of NICVA and the voluntary and community sector as a whole, over 33 press releases were issued during the course of the year to print, radio and TV press, helping to communicate key messages such as a call for a White Paper, release of new research on the sector (State of the Sector V Report) and a call to the Northern Ireland Executive to support the sector during times of recession.

Working together with members

During the year we have promoted the benefits of NICVA membership, endeavouring always to respond to members' needs. With a great response rate achieved, the feedback from our annual survey and other various membership activities feed directly into our strategic planning process.

NICVA membership continues to steadily increase with 72 new members joining this year, each receiving NICVA News, weekly email briefings, member discounts on conference facilities and training as well as access to numerous advice notes and information via our websites. The twice yearly free membership sessions also saw an increase in participants to 161, indicating the growing need for these practical information and advice sessions. Topics covered in these sessions are in direct response to the requests from members, to complement the advice and training services already provided by NICVA.



Roundtable discussion on the recession.

NICVA has also put considerable effort into searching for ways to work with the private sector, to help ease the financial burden of members when it comes to buying essential goods and services. With the re-launch of CommunityBuyer, NICVA has provided a directory of organisations offering all types of products and services, special discounts and guidance and reviews. CommunityBuyer has created a level playing field for its members, social economy organisations and private sector companies to promote their products and services to a wider audience as well as providing a one-stop-shop to help groups when obtaining quotations, for funding purposes.

Working together with Marsh Ltd, NICVA has strengthened its successful insurance scheme. This year the standard limit of indemnity for Professional Indemnity/Directors and Officers Insurance was increased to £250,000. It is our aim to secure further cost reductions to premiums while continuing to enhance the policy cover available.

NICVA hosts two free information sessions each year for members, covering a wide variety of topics from governance to finance, HR to fundraising.



Working together with staff

In March 2009, NICVA's Investor in People (IiP) status was successfully renewed, three years after the initial accreditation in 2006. An independent assessor carried out a review through one to one interviews with NICVA staff and an analysis of organisational policies, procedures and reports.

In his final report the independent assessor described NICVA as an organisation with a strong element of team working where values are embedded through the organisation and clearly impact on day-to-day operations. The report also recognised NICVA's strong commitment to providing learning and development opportunities for all and the effective use of technology in the delivery of services.

NICVA choose to be assessed beyond the core standard and not only achieved silver in the additional recognition, but overall NICVA was rated as an excellent organisation, a leader in the sector in terms of policies and practices and a worthy IiP Champion.



Working together strategically

As a membership and representative body, NICVA works hard to ensure that what we do reflects the needs and addresses the issues of all our key stakeholders. Between April 2008 and September 2008, NICVA engaged in a process of developing the strategic plan for 2009-2012 through consultation with these stakeholders. This included carrying out a membership survey and conducting roundtable meetings with NICVA staff, Executive Committee, network organisations and large voluntary organisations. In addition NICVA sought the opinions of academics, government officials and key funders on what should be NICVA's priorities over the next three years in light of their own strategies and views for the period. We also conducted an analysis to determine the impact to NICVA of the Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legislative and Environmental (PESTLE) landscape.

The new strategy for 2009-2012 reflects a shared consensus by our stakeholders on the future direction and focus of our work for the next three years. Furthermore, in this planning period NICVA is conscious of the need to build sustainability and measures to combat climate change into all areas of its work.

NICVA staff members at Stormont.



Thank you to supporters

A very big thanks to all those funders and sponsors who have supported NICVA throughout the last year. NICVA appreciates the continued and consistent support for core costs by the Department for Social Development through its Voluntary and Community Unit. Without this support, NICVA's capacity to deliver such a range of services to the sector would be greatly reduced.

NICVA has been contracted by the Big Lottery Fund to provide development and support for groups funded under the Reaching Communities Northern Ireland Programme. This contract is designed to provide a dedicated resource of support to give high quality, locally delivered, specialist advice, support and training to organisations in receipt of grants from the Programme, to enhance their capacity to deliver their projects.

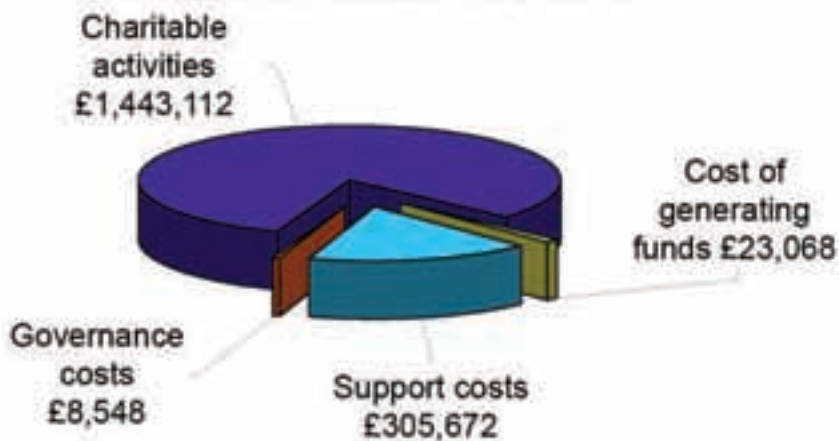
This is the first year that NICVA has received funding from the International Fund for Ireland. NICVA won the contract to deliver the Community Leadership Programme at the end of 2008. The three year Programme is targeted at grassroots community groups working at a local level to develop their communities. During the past year the first twenty-seven groups to partake in the Programme have been recruited.

NICVA appreciates support given by Lloyds TSB Foundation for Northern Ireland to undertake baseline research into the current issues affecting the sector. Also the ongoing support from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for the work with Supporting People.

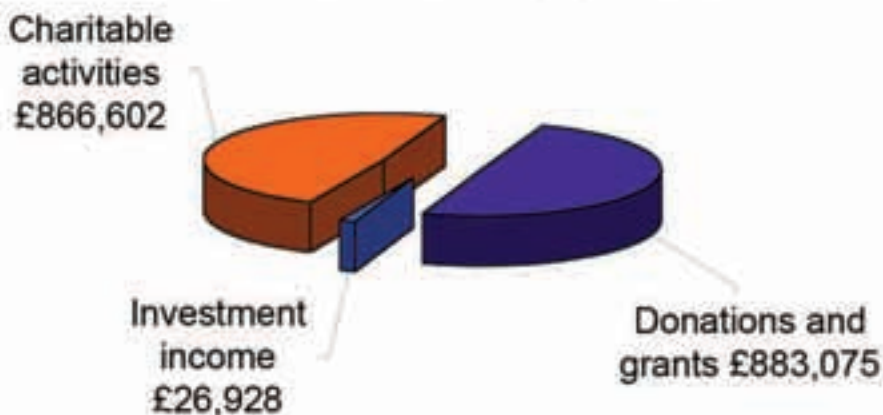
Finally we are very grateful to all who have made a contribution to enable us to deliver our work including Marsh and Allianz, Sector Skills Council, Europe Direct, Atlantic Philanthropies, UCIT, Unity Bank and the EAGA Partnership all of whom have enabled NICVA to enhance/add value to the services we offer to the sector.

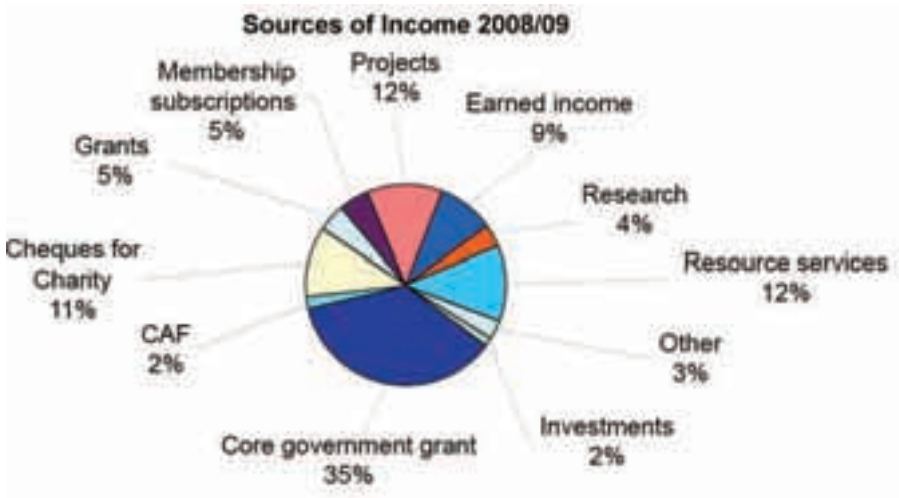
To all our funders and sponsors we say thank you.

NICVA Expenditure 2008/2009 (£1,780,400)



NICVA Income 2008/2009 (£1,776,605)





Financial Highlights

The information above is derived from the full audited financial statements, copies of which can be obtained from Eamonn McKee, Finance Manager, NICVA, 61 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast, BT15 2GB or by email: eamonn.mckee@nicva.org



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www.communityni.org www.grant-tracker.org www.communitybuyer.org

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