

NICVA Strategic Plan

2009-2012



Background to NICVA

As an umbrella and membership organisation, NICVA seeks to represent the general interests of voluntary organisations and community groups in Northern Ireland. In its role as a voluntary sector development agency committed to social change and community development, NICVA acts as a catalyst to promote innovation and new approaches to targeting social need. NICVA works for justice, equality and dignity throughout society by promoting opportunities for community participation in the essential decisions that affect the lives of people in Northern Ireland.

There are approximately 4,500 groups in the sector of which approximately 1,000 are NICVA members and an additional 100 subscribe to NICVA Services (Associate Members). NICVA offers its members and the voluntary and community sector services ranging from advice and information (including charity law, fundraising and human resources), management training to lobbying and campaigning. In addition NICVA runs a conference facility and a reference library.

NICVA is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. NICVA is governed by its Executive Committee, which is directly elected by member organisations at the Annual General Meeting. Membership of the Executive Committee is broadly representative of different interests within the sector as a whole. The Executive Committee is responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of NICVA, developing the mission, vision and values and the organisation's strategic objectives in accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association and other legal and regulatory guidelines. The Chief Executive assists the Executive Committee in providing strategic leadership to the formulation and achievement of these and to ensure that services provided meet the needs and aspirations of NICVA members and other stakeholders.

NICVA employs on average 40 members of staff to deliver services to its membership and other organisations within the voluntary and community sector across Northern Ireland.

Introduction and background to the strategic planning process

As a membership and representative body, NICVA works hard to ensure that what it does 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 round table 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. NICVA also conducted an analysis to determine the impact to NICVA of the Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legislative and Environmental (PESTLE) landscape. An overview of the results of the membership survey and the PESTLE analysis are in the appendices.

This strategy 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.

Vision, Mission, 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.

Strategic Themes and Objectives

To achieve our vision, we have set three strategic themes and in support of these, ten strategic objectives. The outworking of the strategic objectives will be through an annual organisation wide operational plan which will describe the activities we will undertake to achieve these objectives and the expected outcomes if we are successful in doing so. We will use a number of indicators to measure our success including the annual membership survey, regular conferences, training courses and project evaluations and ongoing analysis of our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

Our strategic themes and objectives are:

Strategic Theme 1

To support voluntary and community organisations to work effectively to meet the needs of their users.

Strategic objectives

1. To explore and develop support services to assist voluntary and community organisations in a changing funding and political environment.
2. To support organisations to adjust to the implementation of relevant legislation and regulation including the Charities Act.
3. To encourage consideration of collaboration and mergers to increase organisational effectiveness.
4. To provide advice, information and training to assist organisations to operate more effectively.

Strategic Theme 2

To support voluntary and community organisations in using their experience to influence policy to affect social change.

Strategic objectives

5. To assist voluntary and community organisations to develop skills and capacity to effectively engage in policy work.
6. To strengthen the legitimacy of the voluntary and community sector to increase its influence in policy decisions.
7. To work to ensure the inclusion of the voluntary and community sector in governance structures to contribute the sector's experience to decision making.

Strategic Theme 3

To develop NICVA staff, systems and resources to ensure continuous improvement and development of NICVA services.

Strategic objectives

8. To ensure the appropriate people, resources and systems are in place to support the internal and external demands of the organisation.
9. To generate a diverse income base for NICVA to ensure the delivery of appropriate services to stakeholders.
10. To promote the work of NICVA.

Governance and Resources

Governance

The Executive Committee is responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of NICVA, developing the mission, vision and values, and the organisation's strategic objectives in accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association and other legal and regulatory guidelines.

There are 12 elected members on the Executive Committee who serve a minimum of three years. One third of the committee are nominated and elected by the membership on an annual basis. The Chief Executive assists the Executive Committee in providing strategic leadership to the formulation and achievement of these objectives and to ensure that services provided meet the needs and aspirations of NICVA members and other stakeholders.

Human Resources

NICVA has a core team of circa 40 staff members. To facilitate effective operations, the Chief Executive, appointed by the Executive Committee, has delegated authority for operational matters which include the application and monitoring of the agreed strategic objectives. The organisation has three core functional areas of Corporate Services, Member Services and Policy led by three Directors who in turn support the delivery of the core NICVA services as outlined below.

NICVA staff members are supported to deliver the vision through clear policies and procedures defined within the organisation's human resources strategy. Learning and development remain a foundation for NICVA's ability to meet its vision. NICVA is committed to a process of continuous improvement and in 2006 gained recognition as an Investor in People organisation. In March 2009, the organisation retained this status for a further three years. NICVA will continue to self-assess against the EFQM excellence model to drive and structure continuous improvement within the organisation.

Financial Resources

NICVA operates on an annual budget in the region of £1.6 million a third of which comes from the Department for Social Development under the Regional Infrastructure programme, a third which is earned income associated with delivery of NICVA services and the remainder is a mix of funding from other sources. NICVA is committed to continuing to diversify its income source. This will include identifying where possible new services and proactively sourcing external contracts.

NICVA Services

NICVA will continue to deliver a range of services to the voluntary and community sector, the nature of which will be continually monitored and reviewed to ensure that the needs of stakeholders are met in line with strategic objectives. Current services include:

Information, Advice and Training

NICVA's family of websites:

www.nicva.org	a site which hosts a vast amount of good practice information for the sector.
www.communityni.org	a site which hosts news, events, jobs and promotional opportunities for the wider sector and the general public.
www.communitybuyer.org	a web-based directory of companies that provide products and services aimed at the voluntary and community sector.
www.grant-tracker.org	a unique fundraising resource for Northern Ireland.

NICVA News - a magazine that provides information on policy events, funding, NICVA resources and services.

ENews - a weekly electronic round up of news, events, jobs and training for the voluntary and community sector.

NI Assembly Monitor - a weekly email bulletin which summarises key developments in the NI Assembly and highlights upcoming issues of importance to the sector.

Fundraising Advice - advice and training on fundraising and how to maximise income from grant-makers, general public and social economy.

Governance and Charity Advice - governance review training, advice and information with practical help in drafting and amending governing documents, obtaining charitable status and advice on best practice.

Finance - advice and information on pensions, payroll and financial matters.

Human Resources - advice, information and sample policies on all human resources procedures.

NICVA delivers its information and advice through its training calendar, consultations, events, seminars, conferences, advice notes and websites.

Representation

Policy Manifesto - produced by NICVA every three years to influence the priorities and budget of local political parties and the NI Assembly.

Policy Fora - opportunities to share information, learn from others and increase influence on a range of policy areas.

Research - provides a wide range of statistics and information on the size, scale and scope of the voluntary and community sector. Capacity building sessions for organisations wishing to undertake research are delivered in partnership with ARK.

Building skills to influence - training and information sessions on how to influence key decision makers, eg Making Policy Work for You, Effective Lobbying and Understanding the Budget Process. The 'impact and influence' tailored service will identify the key people and decision makers in the NI Assembly, Westminster and European institutions.

Consultation - opportunities to feed into debate and voice concerns about government policy and strategies which affect the sector.

Events, seminars and fora - opportunities to learn more about policy issues and discuss with colleagues and experts.

Resources

Conference facilities - extensive conference and meeting facilities with free car parking.

Library service - a facility available for reference on subjects pertinent to the sector.

NICVA database - the most comprehensive listing of voluntary and community organisations in Northern Ireland.

Insurance - in partnership with Marsh and Allianz, NICVA has designed a bespoke insurance package designed to cover the insurance requirements of voluntary and community organisations.

Advertising and Promotion

Recruitment - free online advertising of your voluntary and community sector job vacancy.

Appendix 1

NICVA Environmental Scan

August 2008

Political

There was a significant change in leadership in both Britain and Ireland as Gordon Brown and Brian Cowen took over the top two jobs. The Cowen relationship with Brown or Cameron over Northern Ireland is likely to be different to the Blair/Ahern relationship. Willingness to resolve (or indulge) future problems may not be quite the same though Gordon Brown did meet with both Gerry Adams and Peter Robinson amid speculation over a crisis in the re-nomination process for First and deputy First Ministers.

There may be further questions over the stability of the Northern Ireland Executive as there is clearly no consensus up to this point on major issues such as victims, policing and justice, The Maze, Irish language and education. Media speculation suggests that these are the issues that Sinn Féin felt that the DUP is determined to block them on. Added to this is the different relationship that will develop in OFMdFM as Peter Robinson takes over leadership of the DUP.

Devolution of Policing and Justice, if it happens, will present challenges and opportunities. The sector as a service provider in the criminal justice system has a role to play. There will also be the obvious political ramifications. However beyond this is the potential for a broad debate around citizenship, the state and justice in a devolved context, which has not yet been had here.

The next elections for the Assembly and local councils are in 2011 - at this stage there will be a changeover to the new 11 council model proposed by the Review of Public Administration (RPA).

The introduction of community planning brings major challenges and opportunities to see voluntary and community organisations playing a key role in shaping policies for their local area. The model also presents challenges for the sector's infrastructure to cope with selection, representation and feedback, and to thematic regional organisations which may find themselves marginalised as some functions are removed from central departments.

At the same time, the shake-up of RPA implementation up to 2011 and beyond in health, education and local government will bring disruption to relationships and working practices.

Assembly committees are now starting to bed down and are providing a new point of contact for voluntary and community groups. Written and oral questions are being regularly used by the sector. Initiatives like the OFMdFM Committee's Child Poverty Inquiry, at the sector's instigation, bode well for this relationship.

There is likely to be a programme of outreach put in place by the Assembly over the next three years. Following the recent review, a Director of Outreach is about to be appointed.

The current political dispensation is not well disposed to tackling issues of sectarianism and segregation. The new Civil Society Index (CSI) policy is unlikely to go as far as A Shared Future in scope and ambition. Contentious issues like policing and justice, victims and new arrangements for parades will feed into this mix. The Cost of Division study, commissioned under direct rule, estimated costs at anything up to £1.5 billion.

No Civic Forum as yet - the voluntary and community sector is structurally absent from the devolved institutions. There may be the possibility to secure a new and better structure based on social partnership, as in the Republic of Ireland, and discussions continue on a North/South Consultative Forum.

Relationships with the EU will no longer be about funding and will be about developing closer links, policy participation and working more within mainstream EU partnerships and structures, eg networks of cities, regions.

Economic

There is a global economic slowdown, exacerbated recently by a crisis in the banking system, which is affecting the UK and thus the Northern Ireland economy. The inward investment upon which Northern Ireland's jobs grow (6,500 per year) is predicated may not be there. Even if it is, Northern Ireland is facing a major employment gap - aiming for a 75% rate of economic inactivity by the next decade means that, taking into account the number of young people in Northern Ireland who will be of working age in the next 10-15 years, the number of jobs needed at that stage to achieve 75% employment will be close to 100,000.

All Northern Ireland departments have had reductions in their budget increases - a marked difference from recent years. Based on an inflation assumption of 2.7% per annum, only six out of the eleven main departments can look forward to a real terms increase in current spending in 2008-09 and 2009-10, while seven enjoy a real terms increase in 2010-11. They

are finding 3% efficiency savings on top of savings on administration and some departments are passing on cuts to the sector. A Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit has been established.

The next UK government may be Tory - they would be likely to cut taxes and thus decrease spending in some of the areas we prioritise. However, they are well disposed towards the sector as a service provider, as part of rolling back the state. David Cameron has said that a new Conservative Government will pay voluntary organisations the "market rate" for delivering public services. He has gone on to say a new Conservative Government would "remove the interference and bureaucracy of state funding by agreeing on goals and outcomes, not dictating methods of delivery." This comment particularly resonates with what NICVA has been trying to achieve in the funding relationship since the Taskforce on Resourcing the Voluntary and Community Sector. The UK framework will probably still set the policy context for Northern Ireland.

Impacts of the Varney report, commissioned as a response to requests to lowering of corporation tax in Northern Ireland, could include privatisation of public assets, in addition to the asset sales already proposed and further cost cutting. The Northern Ireland Executive also recognises its dilemma that offloading land assets over the next few years is not likely to be productive and that they would be selling into a depressed market. On matters like corporation tax rates the Treasury has made it clear that the requests for fiscal autonomy will not be granted.

It is conceivable within the next three years that the Scottish National Party (SNP) or Scottish Labour will attempt to force a review of the Barnett formula. That would not necessarily be a good thing for Northern Ireland particularly if objective need became a key criterion. Northern Ireland's need is not greater than many other UK areas like the Northwest and Northeast of England.

The Northern Ireland Executive has placed a firm emphasis on the economy but has shown an unwillingness to raise necessary resources. Freezing of rates benefits the better off most and shows little appetite for equality. There is no recognition of the limits to growth dictated by sustainability or of the policies necessary to redistribute. The ten year Investment Strategy offers opportunities for change and development, but is unfunded beyond the first three years.

Around a quarter of our 20% productivity gap with the UK average is due to the actual structure of the economy. We agree with the need to focus on increasing high productivity, high value-added sectors in our economy, eg less productive sectors like agriculture, hospitality, and construction.

Social

Households will still be hit hard by new rates and water charges, increasing costs of energy and food. Political commitments, taken from the UK, to halve child poverty by 2010 and end it by 2020, are unlikely to be met and there is no evident will within government for a robust anti-poverty strategy with a coherent central

action plan and budget. In the current climate we could see worsening poverty and the return to problems of unemployment. Some in government do recognise that the economic and social agenda go hand in hand.

12.8% of Northern Ireland employees receive the lowest levels of workforce training in the UK (18.3%). 21% of working age people have no qualifications - this is 10% more than the UK average. Levels of illiteracy and innumeracy in Northern Ireland are also scandalously high with almost a quarter of the adult population at Literacy level one. Northern Ireland remains at 89% of the UK earnings average. Women in Northern Ireland earn only two-thirds of men's salaries. Within Northern Ireland the inequality between top and bottom earners is stark and getting worse. In 1990 there was a big gap of £306 per week in the earnings of the top 10% and bottom 10% of employees. By 2003 it had jumped to £503 and now it has soared again to a difference of £566 in 2005 (£679 versus £113). 26.9% of working age people in Northern Ireland are economically inactive, ie not in work or available for work.

The issue of division and sectarianism is still the biggest underlying problem in Northern Ireland which affects and influences the political stances that parties in government take. Northern Ireland is still prone to the notion of 'zero sum game'. Public opinion influences the direction that political parties take and the policies they develop; but that opinion is adversely affected itself by the divisions, particularly spatial, that exist in our society. Where society remains divided it is more difficult to achieve the political coherence desirable in an effective Programme for Government.

Technological

Digital natives in our society (particularly young people who know no different) expect to engage with organisations and companies using online tools. Recent years have seen the rise in popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook, You Tube, flickr, bebo, etc, and although there has been a spate of negative stories in the media, the opportunities for organisations to connect with their beneficiaries or other stakeholders is becoming increasingly easy and less expensive. Non-profit organisations need to occupy these virtual communities to ensure that positive messages and offers of support to the most vulnerable are available. Failure to provide services in these new spheres will make it increasingly difficult to connect with their target beneficiaries. Production of video and audio is now in the hands of any creative individual(s) with access to relatively affordable equipment. Encouraging organisations to adopt new and innovative ways of communicating should be included in any media literacy developments.

Organisations need to be able to manage their information efficiently. However, many are struggling with information silos, inefficient

processes and poor software tools. Demands from funders and other organisations for quantitative data, make having efficient information management strategies essential. In addition, appropriate security and privacy of information is paramount.

Significant savings in terms of energy use can be made using the right technology. Home working needs to be underpinned with suitable technology. Virtualisation of key infrastructure in organisations could reduce energy consumption.

The delivery and innovation division formerly eGovernment continues to develop communication channels and resources to deliver more effective services to the citizen.

Their key areas of focus are:

- NI Direct - single point of contact for government services.
- Recognition of social networking opportunities.
- Media literacy and digital inclusion.

Legislative

The Charities Act became legislation in September 2008. The Charity Commission should be established by mid 2009 and the first registrations should be taken mid 2010. The main implications that will arise from the Charities Act are:

Registration - all charities regardless of size will be required to register with the Charity Commission.

Regulation - for the first time charities in Northern Ireland will be answerable to a regulator. As such, they will have to submit annual returns and may be subject to investigation.

Accounting requirements - all charities will have to either be audited or independently examined (depending on turnover).

Public Charitable Collections - the current system of going to the police for a permit to carry out a collection in a public place will change to the Charity Commission which will issue a certificate of fitness to collect and then a permit for the date.

Control of fundraising - charities will be required to draw up official agreements with professional fundraisers and commercial participators and will be required to communicate any remuneration to the donor.

Charitable Incorporated Organisation - a new legal entity specifically for charities, the main benefit being limited liability for the trustees. Probably will be a couple of years before it is available.

Meaning of Charitable Purpose - the current four heads of charity will be replaced by 12 charitable purposes:

1. The prevention or relief of poverty.
2. The advancement of education.
3. The advancement of religion.
4. The advancement of health or the saving of lives.
5. The advancement of citizenship or community development.
6. The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science.
7. The advancement of amateur sport.
8. The advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality and diversity.
9. The advancement of environmental protection or improvement.
10. The relief of those in need by reason of youth, age, ill health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage.
11. The advancement of animal welfare.
12. Any other purposes.

There are also many changes and amendments to existing employment legislation which will impact on the voluntary and community sector as employers as follows:

Sex Discrimination Order 1976 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 came into force. The purpose of the Regulations is to fully implement the Equal Treatment Directive into domestic law and as a result of successful judicial review proceedings brought by the Equality Commission in *Equal Opportunities Commission -v- Secretary of State for Trade and Industry 2007 ICR 1234*. The Regulations amend the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (SDO) with regard to:

- (1) The definition of sexual harassment.
- (2) The definition of discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity leave.
- (3) The exception applicable to claims of discrimination on grounds of maternity leave.

Harassment - Third Party and Employer's Conduct. As a result of these Regulations, employers in areas where contact with third parties is part of daily life, such as the retail, hotel and restaurant industries, should take stock of whether their employees are potentially at risk of being subject to sexual harassment from third parties.

Pregnancy and Maternity Leave. Employers will also need to review their practices and policies in relation to pregnancy and maternity leave. The Regulations remove the requirement for a woman claiming less favourable treatment on the grounds of pregnancy or exercising the right to maternity leave to compare her treatment to that of a woman who is not pregnant or not exercising a right to maternity leave.

Working Time Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007. From 1 October 2007, the entitlement increased from four weeks to 4.8 weeks (24 days if you work a five day week). A further increase to 5.6 weeks (28 days if you work a five day week) will take place from 1 April 2009.

Future changes to work and family rights. It is intended to extend paid maternity leave further, from nine months to a year, by the end of this Parliament. There are also plans to introduce paid Additional Paternity Leave, enabling fathers to benefit from leave and statutory pay if the mother returns to work after six months but before the end of her maternity leave.

Dispute Resolution Procedures 2005. Public consultation took place during 2008 and changes are due to take effect some time in the future, though it isn't clear yet what these will be.

Fire Regulations. Fire safety law changed in England in October 2006. Northern Ireland is still waiting for changes to be implemented. The new law is expected to have an emphasis on preventing fires and reducing risk, making it your responsibility to ensure the safety of everyone who uses your premises and in the immediate vicinity and does away with the need for fire certificates.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order requires that all premises must have a Responsible Person - this is either the employer, occupier or owner of the building who must carry out a fire risk assessment, provide adequate 'general fire precautions', consider the safety of all relevant persons,

record both the significant findings and the control measures taken and provide adequate training for staff.

Corporate Manslaughter. A person who kills someone through a grossly negligent act or omission (failing to do something), without intending to kill them, can be charged with manslaughter. Where the person is acting on behalf of an incorporated body, the organisation can also be charged, but until recently could be found guilty of corporate manslaughter only if it could be shown that a single manager or member of the governing body was the 'controlling' or 'directing mind' of both the organisation and the immediate cause of death.

Environmental

On the energy front there is a debate on when the world will reach peak production and for how long it will plateau before going into decline and reduce at the same rate it increased. Estimates vary between 2011 and 2030. It is clear though that demand is increasing and particularly with China and India requiring much more supply to sustain their economic development. Northern Ireland is almost totally reliant on energy supplies from fossil fuels - this has implications for energy prices and supply and thus for poverty, fuel poverty, housing, debt and transport.

Now is an exciting time for sustainable development in Northern Ireland with the development of the Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy, the creation of an Implementation Plan and the new Duty for local authorities to integrate sustainable development into their operations.

A Statutory Duty to ensure that public authorities act in a manner that best contributes to the objectives of sustainable development came into effect on 31 March 2007. On 9 May 2006 the Secretary of State Peter Hain launched the Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy. This document established a framework and focus for tackling the challenges that lie ahead if Northern Ireland is going to embrace sustainable development effectively. It sends a strong message to public bodies about the need to encourage sustainable development in order to tackle the six priority areas and to make the strategy's objectives a reality throughout Northern Ireland:

1. Sustainable consumption and production.
2. Natural resource protection and environment enhancement.
3. Sustainable communities.
4. Climate change and energy.
5. Learning and communication for sustainable development.
6. Governance for sustainable development.

Elected members and council officers have an obligation to ensure the new Duty for Sustainable Development is implemented and that it is a major consideration in all decisions made. Sustainable communities can be achieved by local and central government working in partnership to deliver the Strategy through mainstreaming social, economic and environmental matters. In this time of change for district councils, with increasing powers and responsibilities, sustainable development offers a unifying and co-ordinated framework which will ensure effective and efficient delivery of council services to the benefits of all citizens.

Appendix 2

Membership Survey 2008 overview

Surveys were circulated to a total of 911 NICVA full members during May 2008 and a response rate of 25% was achieved.

Most respondents in this survey have been members of NICVA for five years or more (63.6%). One third (32.1%) of respondents stated that the main motivation for becoming a NICVA member was gaining access to important information and advice. Specific areas which were mentioned included human resources, policy, funding and governance.

Respondents were asked to indicate how valuable they found NICVA services. Over 40% of respondents indicated that they found Grant Tracker and governance, charity advice and training to be very valuable.

Slightly more than half (51.8%) of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that NICVA provide all the support and guidance their organisation requires in order to help it function efficiently.

Respondents were asked if their organisation has had any difficulty in receiving a response to an enquiry or request for information and support. A large majority (82.2%) either strongly agreed or agreed that their organisation has never had any difficulty with NICVA in this respect.

Nearly three quarters (72.8%) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the range of services NICVA provides generally meets the needs of their organisation.

Respondents were also asked to comment on the service they receive from NICVA staff; 82.6% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they always receive a highly professional response from NICVA.

With regard to the NICVA family of websites, over 70% of respondents find the NICVA, Community NI and Grant Tracker websites to be useful or very useful to their organisation.

Four fifths (79%) of respondents indicated that services have either improved or vastly improved since they became members and 19.3% said that services have remained the same.

Respondents were asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being very satisfied and 1 being very unsatisfied) how they would rate their overall level of satisfaction with NICVA. In total 84.1% of respondents ranked NICVA seven or above (the average score was eight).

One third (31.3%) of respondents indicated that their minimum expectation of NICVA is to effectively communicate information that is important to the sector. A quarter (23.1%) indicated that provision of support, guidance and advice is the minimum expectation they have.

Respondents were also asked to comment on what services NICVA provide above and beyond their minimum expectations. Training (22.9%), professional and efficient staff (17.6%) and expert advice and support (12.2%) were the three main areas that members felt NICVA excelled in.

When asked what services respondents would most miss if NICVA closed, just over 20% of respondents indicated that they would miss NICVA training most; 10.6% indicated that they would most miss policy information and advice; and 9.1% said that they find the funding information and advice invaluable and would most miss that.

One of NICVA's strategic themes is to develop and support new and existing voluntary and community groups and 70% of respondents believe that NICVA either successfully or very successfully fulfils this objective.

NICVA's second strategic theme focuses on exploring and articulating the sector's experience to policy makers, with a view to challenging and influencing change and increasing social cohesion. Of those who responded, 70.4% believe that NICVA either very successfully or successfully represents the sector at every level.

NICVA's third strategic theme is to develop itself as an organisation to continue to provide high quality services to the sector and 79% of respondents believe that NICVA is either successful or very successful at this.

Other areas of strategic importance that were suggested include general support for organisations and additional support in terms of funding, campaigning, promotion and lobbying.

Respondents were asked to specify the top three challenges facing their organisation in the current changing environment. Funding was the top response with nearly 40% of respondents indicating that this was a challenge for their organisation. This was followed by sustainability and the impact of new legislation and regulation.

Finally respondents were asked to put forward suggestions for any new services or support NICVA could provide to help them with the challenges their organisation faces. One fifth of respondents mentioned training, especially in relation to sustainability. 16.9% of respondents also mentioned a strong lobbying and campaigning role. Several respondents mentioned this specifically in relation to lobbying government for additional funding for the sector.

Notes



NICVA
61 Duncairn Gardens
Belfast BT15 2GB

Tel: 028 9087 7777
Email: info@nicva.org

Web: www.nicva.org

Charity registered with Inland Revenue No XN 47024
Company limited by guarantee (No 1792)