

Insight

Are you being served?

The provision of training and support needs of voluntary management committees

Background to the research

Voluntary management committees are in many ways the backbones of the voluntary and community sector and an important building block of its infrastructure. This research focuses on training and support needs of voluntary management committees and aims to identify gaps in the provision of training and support and explores some key issues facing voluntary management committees.

Research approach

- In-depth interviews were conducted with 25 organisations using a snowballing sampling technique to explore the key issues faced by voluntary management committees attempting to access training and support.
- The research was carried out between July and the end of September 2002 at a time when the sector was being badly effected by a period of minimal gap funding.
- 70 organisations within the voluntary and community sector were identified as being providers of training targeted at voluntary management committees.
- Training focused on five main themes including committee skills, people management, finance, project management/planning, and other areas.

Main findings

- Due to difficulties in terms of funding, interviewees identified a more flexible support and development approach as more useful than a formal or structured training course.
- Findings show a lot of unnecessary duplication of training materials and resources and little knowledge of their availability to groups.

- Availability of training and support services to an individual organisation depend on whether they are part of a larger umbrella/membership or network organisation (affiliated) or independent (unaffiliated). Voluntary management committees within affiliated organisations benefit from a complete package of training and support. Unaffiliated organisations are dependent on fragmented, poorly resourced, and short-term funding driven training and support service.
- Other gaps in training provision appear within sub-sections of the community, in particular women, people with disabilities and people within ethnic minorities. Mapping of training provision also highlighted a gap particularly in rural areas outside of network or umbrella and membership organisations.
- There is a case for the establishment of a single organisation with responsibility for providing flexible training and support to unaffiliated groups in the sector.
- The report concludes that given the key place that voluntary management committees hold within the sector a strategic view needs to be taken in terms of funding of training and support services to ensure long-term sustainability and growth.

How to get further information

The full report, *Are you being served? The provision of training and support needs for voluntary management committees*, March 2003, can be obtained by contacting Lynn Anderson at:

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