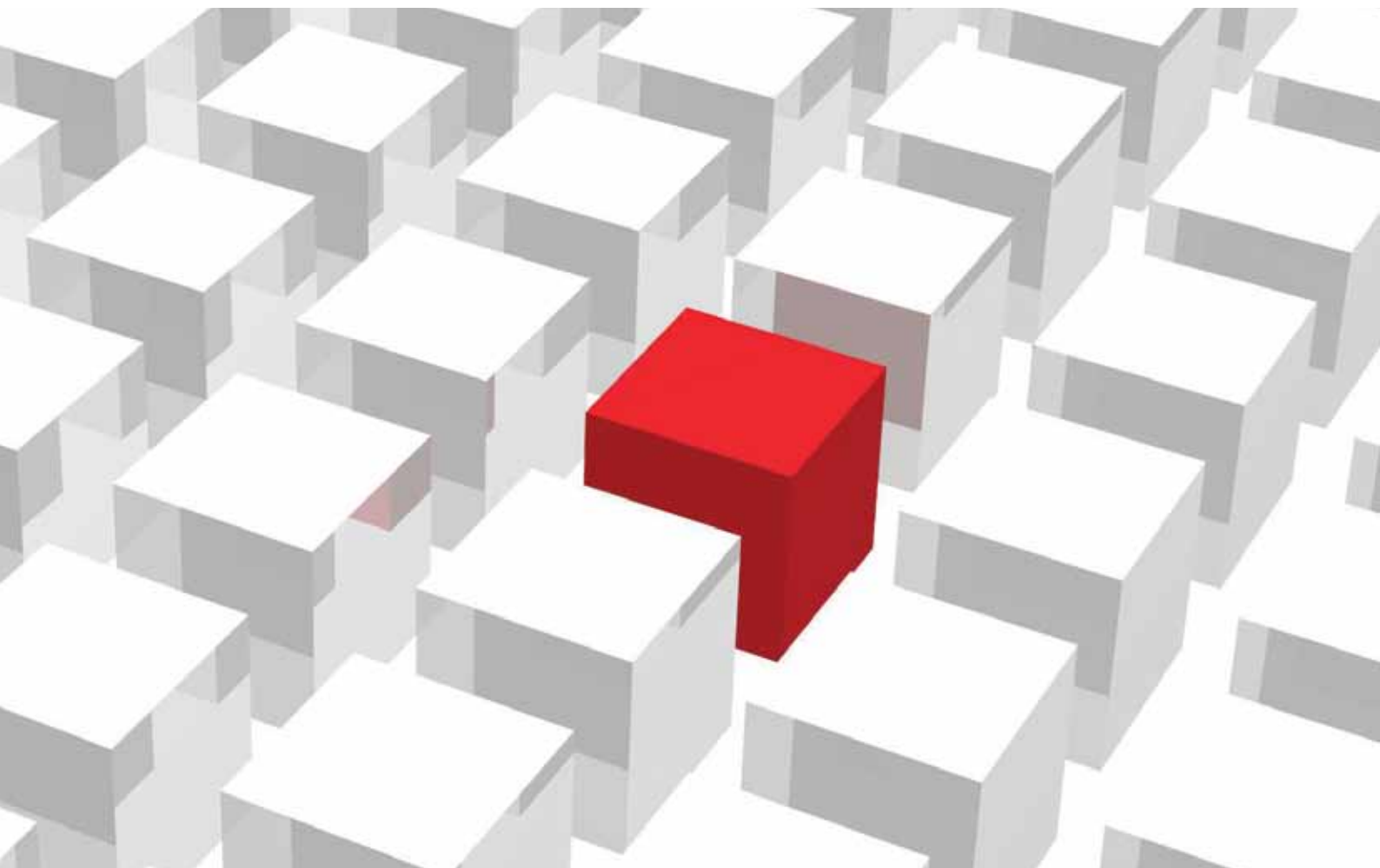


2009-2010 Annual Report



Community Evaluation Northern Ireland



Strengthening the voluntary and community sector
through a better understanding and use of evaluation

Community Evaluation Northern Ireland (CENI) is a unique support organisation providing a range of specialist evaluation and training services to the voluntary and community sector, statutory sector and funders.

SERVICES

- Training and Support
- External Evaluation
- Information and Advice
- Research and Development

MISSION

To enhance the effectiveness of the voluntary and community sector through a better understanding and use of evaluation.

AIMS

- Promote a broader awareness and understanding of evaluation
- Develop knowledge and skills in evaluation
- Assess performance and contribute to organisational learning
- Inform policy and good practice in the conduct of evaluation

WELCOME

State of the Sector 5 (NICVA 2009) shows investment in the voluntary and community sector has been declining since 2001 and, with the onset of recession, this is set to accelerate further as other demands on public resources take precedent. With the anticipated cuts in public spending, voluntary and community organisations will increasingly be expected to deliver more with less. More than ever, the sector is under pressure to demonstrate its value.

In the current economic climate, we believe that government policy makers and funders will need to become more strategic in targeting and allocating resources where they are most needed. They will have to be more specific about the outcomes and impact expected from their investment. In turn, organisations will have to specify the needs they intend to address, and provide evidence of the measurable outcomes or changes produced for their communities. This poses real challenges in terms of the capacity of the sector and its funders to be able to understand and use monitoring and evaluation to best demonstrate the value of their activities and show the difference they are making.

CENI's current strategy focuses on meeting the challenges of providing monitoring and evaluation support in the new environment. Our priorities over the past year have been influencing policy and practice in evaluation and developing support provision. This has involved:

- Identifying needs: how well equipped are funded organisations and their funders to understand and use outcomes approaches?
- Developing solutions: how to shift the focus from counting activities (outputs) to measuring results (outcomes).

- Implementing solutions: refocusing and targeting support in monitoring and evaluation at different levels, both project and programme.

Core funding from the Department for Social Development's Voluntary and Community Unit, together with funding from other sources such as the Big Lottery Fund, through the Building Change Trust, has enabled us to deliver on our strategic priorities. This has provided us with a resource to research, develop and provide programmes of evaluation support to meet the sector's needs through changing times.

This annual report outlines our key achievements during 2009/10 and provides some examples of the difference we have made. We look forward to building on these achievements and continuing to move forward by adapting our focus in line with emerging demands.



Brendan McDonnell
CENI Director



Maurice Meehan
CENI Chair

WHAT WE DID IN 2009/10

Policy Contribution

- We carried out a comprehensive review of evaluation practice within the sector, and published the 'Measuring Up' report in February 2010 which was widely disseminated.
- In the course of the research we engaged with a wide range of Government and independent funders to assess evaluation challenges and training and support needs at project and programme level.
- Arising from the research we plan to host a series of seminars on the theme of 'Evidencing the Impact of the Voluntary and Community Sector'. Topics will include 'making reporting more effective' and 'outcomes and measuring change'.
- The social assets data sets and methodology (developed in conjunction with CFNI) continue to inform new approaches to investment and measuring change in communities:
 - We integrated social assets data and other socio-economic data to profile 21 City Places as part of Belfast City Council's SNAP initiative;
 - We developed a tool to profile relationships between community, statutory and private

sector stakeholders as part of the Catalyst for Change project under the Building Change Trust;

- We are currently refining the social assets methodology for application to programme evaluations, including the evaluation of DSD Areas at Risk Programme.

Supporting the Sector

- We continued to work on a number of strategic evaluations commissioned by statutory bodies including the Public Health Agency, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Department of Regional Development, Department for Social Development and Northern Health and Social Services Trust, as well as assignments undertaken on behalf of voluntary and community organisations including Age NI and FPA.
- We provided ongoing evaluation support to the Building Change Trust Catalyst for Change project. We continued to develop approaches to monitoring, reporting and communicating the work of the project, and produced a Year One Review Report to document its progress and highlight key achievements over the year.

“ With the anticipated cuts in public spending, voluntary and community organisations will increasingly be expected to deliver more with less. ”

Improving Our Service Delivery

- We continued to provide formative evaluation support to DSD's Modernisation Fund Capital Programme and its funded projects.
 - We delivered 8 open training courses under the themes of identifying and evidencing outcomes; implementing self-evaluation; and approaches to quality for voluntary and community organisations.
 - We delivered 15 customised training and support sessions with a particular emphasis on the outcomes and quality themes (including PQASSO) and on working with children and young people's service providers.
 - We continued to keep the sector up-to-date with developments within the field of evaluation through our newsletter, CENI News, regular e-updates, our website and press releases issued to sector wide publications and websites.
 - We produced a new information leaflet designed to provide an overview of our role within the sector.
 - We received and responded to over 100 requests for information on evaluation and our services from voluntary and community organisations, statutory agencies and funders.
- A new bespoke ICT-based information system was rolled out across the organisation, improving how we record, track and report on service delivery activities, and supporting our financial monitoring. The system has also ensured better targeting and greater efficiency in dissemination of information to our stakeholders.
 - We developed new organisational policies including an Environmental Policy and a Bullying and Harassment Policy. We also updated our Data Protection Policy and developed guidelines on Child Protection.
 - We used the ISO quality framework to inform service management and delivery including the production of a detailed quality assurance statement.

HOW WE MADE A DIFFERENCE

Research and Development

'Measuring Up': A Review of Monitoring and Evaluation Practice in the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland

In February 2010, CENI launched a major research report 'Measuring Up' reviewing the state of evaluation practice in Northern Ireland. Based on consultations with over 150 organisations and 20 funders, the research provides an evidence base of the issues and problems currently faced by funders and organisations which will help to inform CENI's future strategy to address the support needs of the sector.

This report concludes that despite the rhetoric and language of outcomes, evaluation as currently practiced is still primarily focussed on outputs. We are very good at counting the numbers of things we do for people i.e. activities and services provided etc, but not as good at showing outcomes or what difference these services actually make or how they could be improved to make them better.

In welcoming the report Bill Osborne, Chair of the Building Change Trust, commented that *"this offers a challenge to the sector and its funders to develop a more effective whole system approach to evaluation based on measuring outcomes rather than monitoring outputs. A difficult re-engineering of processes and behaviours must take place by both parties if we are to move in this direction. Such movement is required not just because of the prevailing economic climate but to ensure that we deliver better and sustainable public services."*



Launching 'Measuring Up' at Belfast Castle are (from L-R), Brendan McDonnell, CENI Director; Roy McGivern, Head of Policy & Innovation, VCU and Bill Osborne, Chair, Building Change Trust.

HOW WE MADE A DIFFERENCE

Evaluation

Evaluation of Ageing Well Reach Project

CENI has been working with Age Concern NI (now Age NI) to provide evaluation support to Ageing Well Reach.

This project, which was funded through the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities Programme, aimed to increase opportunities for 'hard to reach' groups of older people to take part in community development and health improvement programmes. In commissioning the evaluation, project managers and staff placed a strong emphasis on self-monitoring and evaluation and, supported by CENI, they developed and implemented a number of approaches to data-collection over the duration of the initiative, including feedback sheets, a postal survey and case studies.

The project team also worked with researchers from Stranmillis College to trial a tool for measuring change in perceived health and well-being of project participants. CENI then undertook additional consultation with a range of stakeholders to supplement the data which had been collected internally within the project and the research findings. The final evaluation report produced by CENI draws together the findings from these various sources and makes recommendations for taking the work forward, both strategically and operationally.

Training and Support

Implementing PQASSO in Childcare Settings

The Western Area Childcare Partnership commissioned CENI to provide a series of introductory one-day training sessions on the PQASSO quality system for early years service providers which included childcare, day nurseries, playgroups and pre-school settings. A total of five sessions were delivered in local venues throughout the Western Board region.

Service providers, whether private or funded, are subject to a number of quality and regulatory requirements and the Western Childcare Partnership had identified a need to support groups to meet these challenges. PQASSO, (designed by Charities Evaluation Services), which is particularly suited to the needs of voluntary and community groups, was used by the participants to self-assess their practice against quality indicators in a number of areas including planning, leadership and management and user-centred services.

“ In the current economic climate, we believe that government policy makers and funders will need to become more strategic in targeting and allocating resources where they are most needed. ”

Western Childcare Partnership commented that the system fitted well with the needs of groups:

“This programme of support built upon previous PQASSO quality training delivered by CENI which targeted Sure Start Programmes in the Western area. Because of the holistic nature of PQASSO it picks up on some areas of practice that other standards may miss out on, so it can be complementary to other approaches. The training enabled groups to think more about their practice and how it might be improved.”

Participants were very appreciative of the opportunity to access the PQASSO materials and the training to kick-start the implementation of the quality system within their practice and commented:

“I enjoyed the programme, it made us look at what we have in place and what we need to look at.”

“Very informative, excellent discussion, good participation and good opportunities for networking.”

FINANCIAL ACTIVITY

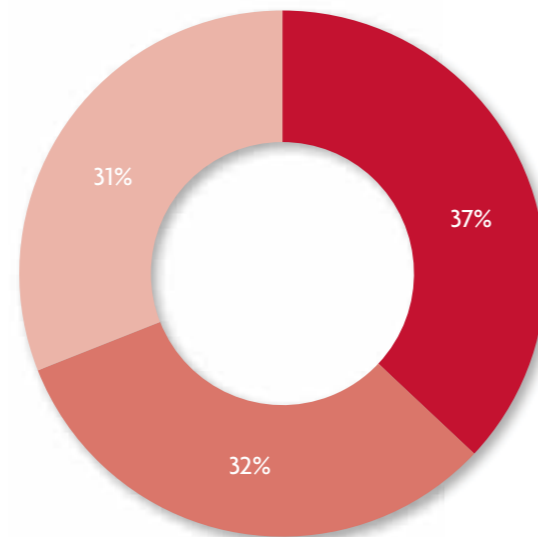
We received £287,974 in income and we spent £310,490. This represents a deficit of £22,516 for the current financial year which compares with a £24,451 surplus in the previous financial year.

We received core grant funding from the Department for Social Development's Voluntary and Community Unit (DSD VCU) and funding from the Big Lottery Fund through the Building Change Trust. We also generated income from a range of other sources through provision of charitable activities.

Please contact us if you would like a copy of our full Annual Report and financial statements for 2009/2010. Our auditors are Jackson Andrews, Belfast.

Breakdown of Income Sources 2009/10
(% of income)

- Earned Income
- DSD, VCU Core Grant
- Building Change Trust (Big Lottery Fund)



CENI Board of Directors 2009/2010

Maurice Meehan (Chairperson)
 Caroline Bloomfield (Vice Chairperson)
 Kieran Harding (Treasurer)
 James Magowan
 Catherine Taggart
 Paddy Sloan
 Maggie Andrews
 Nick Mack
 Gordon McCullough

Public Health Agency
 Public Health Agency
 Business in the Community
 Community Foundation NI
 Belfast City Council
 BBC Children in Need
 East Belfast Partnership
 Associate Consultant (Observer Status)
 NICVA (resigned Sept 09)

CENI Staff

Brendan McDonnell
 Nicola McIlldoon
 Norman Gillespie
 Gladys Swanton
 Kerry McCarroll
 Pamela Walker
 Siobhan McKinley
 Gregory Cunningham

Director
 Deputy Director
 Evaluation Manager
 Training Manager
 Information Officer
 Finance and Administration Officer
 Administrative Assistant
 Seconded from DRD



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