

Workshop Report Summary

Chairperson and Managers Forum

23rd November 2011, CRC Offices, Dungannon

Introduction

The Consortium facilitated the first meeting of this Forum to connect and network the Chairs and managers across all Peace 3 Partnerships. This Forum emerged from the Support and Development needs analysis conducted by the Consortium in Summer 2011.

Purpose of the event

- To provide an opportunity for Chairpersons and Managers from across all 14 Peace III Partnerships to share their experiences of their challenging and important role.
- A networking opportunity to see how other Partnerships manage the delivery of Peace III and run effective Partnership meetings

Nineteen people attended with all Partnerships represented except Belfast.

Description of the process

Participants heard from four Partnership Chairs who described their experience of chairing a Peace Partnership and the challenges they encountered. Speakers were

- Jack Keyes, Chair, Cavan Peace 3 Partnership
- James McCammick, Co-Chair, Southern Peace 3 Partnership
- Dessie Larkin, Chair, Donegal Peace 3 Partnership
- Mark Glover, Chair, Carrickfergus, Antrim and Newtownabbey Peace 3 Partnership

Using the input from speakers and their own experience participants were facilitated in three small groups in discussion around the following questions

What are the challenges of your role? Are there challenges due to the specific nature of the delivery of a Peace Plan?

What support do you receive in your role? What additional support is required if any?

Is the Forum a good idea? Do you see the benefit in meeting with other chairpersons and managers on a regular basis?

What topics would you want to discuss

Discussion on the Draft Terms of Reference

Key comments emerging from the from the 3 table discussions are below :

1. Key challenge for Peace Partnerships involves the bureaucracy of implementing an EU funded programme. Meeting these requirements has a detrimental effect on other key peace building functions Partnerships should be focusing on. There is a perception that the primacy is on financial compliance with limited interest and focus on what is actually happening with the funds on the ground. There is a risk that this has / will trickle down to projects operating on the ground.
2. Another challenge for some Partnerships is the reduced delivery timeframe for Phase II; the challenge not just being on ability to spend but also on the quality of peace interventions to be rolled out.
3. Partnerships require swift response to clarifications and delays in responding to these clarifications causes real problems on the ground to the detriment of Peace focused work.
4. To address these challenges, it was suggested that SEUPB Case Officers would attend some Partnership meetings as well as provision of additional resources to meet programme requirements.
5. Additionally, this proposed Chair and Manager's Forum could act as the "recognized structure" to address some common issues arising across Peace Partnerships. This structure is unique in make up to the Lead partner meetings and the southern border counties structure and would have additional status with Partnership Chairpersons in attendance. SEUPB should be invited to attend these forum meetings but should be informed of issues to be addressed in advance of these meetings in order to have a view formulated for the meeting. (issue for terms of reference for the forum)
6. There was no universal agreement on how many times the forum should meet with some expressing the view that it should meet every quarter and others stating a maximum of 2 times per year.
7. There was also some suggestion that the forum should be broadened out to include regional theme 1.1 projects whilst others felt this would not be appropriate and this type of networking and interaction could be addressed through Consortium workshops.
8. A view was expressed that a Memorandum of Understanding should be devised and signed by all forum members to formalize the structure and ensure continued buy in. This view was not shared by all.
9. As well as providing an opportunity to deal with key priority issues arising, the Forum potentially provides an opportunity to network and engage strategically at the level of Chairperson and Manager and this should be exploited to its maximum potential. Once again the terms of reference should reflect this.

10. The maximum notice in terms of dates and venues should be given to Chairs and Managers.

Conclusions and final comments

- There was a strong agreement as to the need for the Forum.
- Involvement of SEUPB at the Forum was noted at all tables and the potential to collectively challenge them on common issues through this structure.
- If the forums role is advocacy group only – this could be difficult for the Consortium as they are contracted by SEUPB. And this is not within their current remit
- Partnerships did feel in relation to SEUPB that it is us and them, and the Forum should be used to change this so we progressed to doing it together
- One member also felt that there is a need for an independent review of SEUPB
- At time it feels that SEUPB - divide and conquer
- Advocacy may not be correct word, more provision of an opportunity to talk, more open dialogue.
- There is a need to have a channel for communication
- Forum should be less about challenging SEUPB but more about engaging effectively
- From the discussion groups it can be seen that there are many issues in common that could be effectively resolved through a unified voice and the voice of the chairs
- This grouping would carry more weight, than a Partnership would not its own
- Strength of the 14 Partnerships / This is at the highest level
- Partnerships are talking to each other but the SEUPB not talking to them
- If the Consortium are the eyes and ears of the SEUPB, the Forum is very much part of this process
- The Terms of Reference will be revised to include the facilitation of discussion between Partnerships and SEUPB

Format of Forum

- Half thematic / half operational
- Support network
- More about dialogue discussion not only answers to technical questions
- If the Forum focused on thematic based learning there is a risk dislodges the Consortium Workshops
- Not about hard questions only needs to have a positive view
- Subgroup established to agree terms of reference, nominees / volunteers were
 - Patricia McCallion / Bill Adamson
 - Alison Keenan / Mark Glover
 - Ann Marie Conlon
- A list of possible dates will be circulated

Evaluation

Attendees were asked to rate the event in terms of:

- The overall event.
- What was learnt.
- The venue.
- The relevance of the event.
- Value received for time given.

A total of 16 evaluation responses were received and collated from an attendance of 19 participants.

Rating of the event was high – with the majority of attendees scoring the event at 3 or 4.

