



Community Relations Council

Evaluation of the Core Funding Scheme for Victims and Survivors

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Introduction

In May 2004, the Community Relations Council (CRC) commissioned Capita to undertake an Evaluation of the Core Funding Scheme for Victims and Survivors. The terms of reference for the evaluation were:

- *To provide a comprehensive assessment of the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of the Scheme for individual victims/survivors;*
- *To provide a comprehensive assessment of CRC's arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of organisations and groups in their use of core funds provided under the Scheme;*
- *To assess the impact the Scheme has had on the development of the target groups and organisations;*
- *To assess the particular added value which the Scheme has provided in the context of other sources of funding;*
- *To measure the contribution the Scheme has made to CRC's aims and objectives; and*
- *To assess the effectiveness of CRC's management of the Scheme including financial management, the promotion of the Scheme, application and assessment procedures, monitoring of expenditure by organisations and groups and the level and type of support required to those in receipt of core funds.*

The project was organised into six stages as follows:

- Stage One** Project Initiation;
- Stage Two** Project Preparation;
- Stage Three** Programme of Consultation and Information Gathering;
- Stage Four** Assessment of Use of Funds and Added Value;
- Stage Five** Development of Findings and Recommendations; and
- Stage Six** Draft and Final Reports.

The executive summary focuses on the recommendations which have resulted from the evaluation. Full analysis of the findings from the assignment is contained within the full evaluation report.

II. Recommendations

This section presents the recommendations emerging from the evaluation:

Recommendation 1: IFB Support Pre-application

The support from CRC to groups during the pre-application stage of the application process for Core Funding was regarded as being valuable and useful. The IFB should:

- Continue to provide this support to groups in the future.

- Communicate to groups the areas of pre-application support which are available, particularly to new and/or less well-established groups.

Recommendation 2: Extended Application Timescale

Due to the time constraints in respect of the quick turnaround of completed applications and the capacity issues faced by some groups, we recommend that the time which groups have to complete their application for Core Funding is extended to a minimum of five weeks.

Recommendation 3: Rationale for Group Classification

We recommend that the IFB continues to build on the development of categories for groups as a step towards sustainability. However, there remains confusion amongst groups regarding classification of groups as ‘self-help’, ‘volunteer’, or ‘parallel provider’. We recommend that the IFB undertakes a communication exercise with groups to clearly reflect the rationale for the three categories.

Recommendation 4: Application Form: Pre-population of Known Group Information

Completing application forms for funding is viewed as a time-consuming exercise by groups, particularly when groups often apply for funding from a variety of sources for various activities. The IFB now holds a considerable amount of information regarding the groups. We therefore recommend that where on-line application forms are used by groups (as referred to in Recommendation 11), that previous application recorded information is made available on-line to groups when making new funding applications. Groups should then be able to amend previous application form information if necessary, without re-entering unchanged information.

Recommendation 5: Receipt of Applications

We recommend that CRC provide the opportunity for groups to hand-deliver application forms to the CRC office in Dungannon (in addition to the Belfast office). In addition, the ability to make applications on-line as referred to under Recommendation 11 will provide an additional channel via which application forms can be submitted.

Recommendation 6: Establish Funding Categories

We recommend that any future funding scheme should consider allocation of funding across the following four categories:

- Partnership building;
- Staff development/training;
- Strategy/planning; and
- Sustainability/planning activities.

These categories are viewed as core needs of the groups. The IFB should work with the Victims Unit to identify where funding for these areas should come from, i.e. Core Funding or Small Grants. The above areas should then be embedded into the appropriate funding scheme.

Recommendation 7: Movement of Budget Headings and Funding Sub-Committee

A 10% movement of funding across budget headings should be provided to groups. Such movement should be authorised by IFB Officers and be based on the Officer's full understanding of a group's activities. Should the IFB receive requests for funding movement above 10%, these requests should be directed to a Funding Sub-Committee. Membership of this Committee should be constituted from IFB Officers and one IFB financial representative. The Sub-Committee should meet monthly to review applications for funding movements and make decisions. It is our view that the sub-committee monthly meetings should be relatively short and focussed so that they do not represent a significant demand on the human resources of the IFB. In the instance of a substantial funding change request (in excess of 50%), the Sub-Committee should refer the application onwards to the IFB Core Funding Committee for assessment.

Recommendation 8: Funding Committee Selection

In order to diffuse concerns regarding the make-up of the Funding Committee, we recommend that the IFB publicises the Committee's membership to groups and includes in this communication, the criteria used to select members. This information should be provided to groups for information purposes only. Whilst taking this communication forward, the IFB should consider a view to alternative appropriate means of 'recruiting' Committee members and making this as public and participative as possible.

Recommendation 9: Synchronising Monitoring Information

We acknowledge that CRC are currently working with other funders in an attempt to synchronise the monitoring forms used by various funders. We endorse this approach and recommend that this work continue. This should be supported by the inclusion in monitoring forms of standard key questions, where possible, in order to reduce the monitoring burden for groups in receipt of funding from numerous sources.

Recommendation 10: Six Monthly Progress Monitoring Reports

We recommend that the IFB continues financial monitoring through site visits. Progress monitoring reports should be required to be completed on a six-monthly basis in order to support groups to more clearly articulate the developments and progress they have made since the completion of their previous report. We understand that for audit purposes, a certain amount of financial information is required on a quarterly basis, and we recommend that the minimum requirement of financial information should be reported with this regularity. Any additional financial information should be incorporated into the six monthly progress reporting cycle.

Recommendation 11: On-line Application and Monitoring Forms

In order to further facilitate the application and monitoring process, we recommend that the IFB develops on-line application and monitoring forms in addition to the paper methods currently in use.

Recommendation 12: Recognising Qualitative Impacts

We recommend that the IFB increases the transparency of linkages between the Core Funding Scheme's objectives and monitoring processes. The IFB should promote the idea that detailed qualitative explanations of what is being done are welcomed and valued. We also believe that this recommendation should be applied to future applications for Core Funding. This should be supported by the IFB's effort to improve its understanding of the work undertaken by groups which is of a more qualitative nature, and should improve the IFB's understanding of the 'softer' outcomes achieved by groups.

Recommendation 13: Broader Use of Monitoring Information

We recommend that the IFB implements mechanisms to the monitoring process which enables them to provide feedback from progress reporting to groups. This should include, for example, an annual document summarising the highlights of work which is ongoing in the sector. We also believe that, as the monitoring information provides the IFB with a general overview of the sector, the IFB is in a position to facilitate the active engagement of groups in networking activities with other groups in the sector.

The IFB should also use the monitoring information to facilitate and encourage linkages between groups working on common issues. This should support the development of groups by providing a means of sharing information and lessons learned. Any partnership developments between groups should be measured on an outcome basis i.e. on the quality of partnerships.

We also recommend that, where appropriate, the IFB uses monitoring information to develop seminars on topics of common interest to groups.

Recommendation 14: Using Technology to Support Groups Activities

We recommend that the IFB for Core Funding increases the use of technology to support the activities of groups. This could include, for example, the provision of facilities for on-line discussions (and application and monitoring processes as mentioned above). We also recommend that in line with the IFB's general ICT developments; the IFB considers developments such as website use as a means of publishing outputs from the monitoring process; as an on-line access point, sign-posting to new research; and to provide access to application and monitoring forms.

Recommendation 15: Development of Vision, Strategy and Support for Sustainability of the Victims/Survivors Sector

We recommend that the IFB undertakes a review of sustainability of the victims/survivors sector. This should take into account the key messages from the OFMDFM's Victims Unit's strategy for the sector. The review should be supported by a plan for the future which is disseminated and discussed amongst groups. The IFB should also support groups to access sustainability resources and implement a Sustainability and Strategic Committee with representation drawn from groups.

The future sustainability strategy should include the Victim's Unit's vision for the victims/survivors sector, and should reflect how each of the three categories of groups (parallel providers, self help, and volunteer groups) can contribute to

sustainability and achievement of the strategy. The vision should also reflect where victims and survivors work sits within the wider community relations context. It is our view that reflecting the relationship between the victims/survivors sector and the developments in the wider community relations sector represents an important step towards mainstreaming victims/survivor issues. It also provides recognition that victim/survivor issues touch the entire population and enhances a wider sense of ownership to address the legacy of conflict. The development of the future vision for the victim/survivor sector should explore appropriate approaches to support mainstreaming victims/survivor issues into wider community relations approaches. The Committee should also consider some of the difficulties present throughout the scheme such as: how to deal with larger and regional organisations; the strengths and weaknesses of ‘capping’ certain funding categories; the best and strategic use of limited funds; and how to balance equality with developing a targeted focus. These considerations also link with the need for the IFB to engage in an ongoing internal (and, with time, external) debate about how best to strategically approach funding in this sector, especially in a context where there is not sufficient funds to support all groups. This may require hard decisions in the long-term (e.g. choosing to support one group fairly substantially and not supporting another because the former may be more sustainable and offer a better service to more individuals). In order to make a more comprehensive assessment as to the effectiveness of groups’ activities we recommend the development of a set of independent outcome indicators. We recommend that the Sustainability and Strategy Committee begin to explore these complex issues over time.

Recommendation 16: Reassess Criteria for Core Funding Scheme in line with Strategies for the Sector and that of the IFB

Following the completion of the sustainability strategy, criteria for the future Core Funding Scheme should be reviewed in light of the strategic direction of the IFB and linked to overall IFB vision. The IFB should take the lead in this activity with support and guidance from the Victim’s Unit in OFMDFM.

The IFB should work in conjunction with the Victim’s Unit in order to communicate the strategy to groups and ensure their active participation. The funding criteria applied to the next round of the Core Funding Scheme should reflect and complement the strategy for the victims/survivors sector, and provide some direction on how sustainability will be achieved.

Recommendation 17: Extension of Core Funding Period

Capita fully appreciate that central government funding streams generally operate on a maximum of a 3-year cycle. However, it is our view that in order to provide victims/survivors groups with the ability to plan ahead with some certainty, future Core Funding should be provided for a minimum of a three-year period – with consideration of a further two-year extension of funding, subject to monitoring outputs. This approach would create the potential for a maximum 5-year funding period. This extension of core funding should be aimed at providing groups with longer-term stability upon which to enhance the sustainability of groups. Groups should be informed of the extension and reasons for it, and appropriate sustainability monitoring processes should be developed.

Recommendation 18: Review of Administration Costs

We recommend that the Victim’s Unit conducts a review of the administration costs associated with the Scheme. The results of the review should be utilised to influence budget setting for future Scheme administration costs.

III. Next Steps

The following table is a summarised action plan and indicative timetable for the implementation of the recommendations outlined above. The following timescales for implementation are proposed:

- **Immediate** – To be implemented immediately;
- **Medium Term** – To be implemented prior to next round of Core Funding; and
- **Long Term** – To be implemented after 12 to 18 months.

In addition, the responsibility for implementation of each recommendation is also indicated.

	Immediate	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
Recommendation 10: Six Monthly Monitoring Reports	✓			IFB
Recommendation 12: Recognising Qualitative Impacts	✓			IFB
Recommendation 1: CRC Support Pre-application		✓		IFB
Recommendation 2: Extended Application Timescales		✓		IFB
Recommendation 3: Rationale for Group Classification		✓		IFB
Recommendation 4: Application Form: Pre-population of Known Group Information		✓		IFB
Recommendation 5: Receipt of Applications		✓		IFB
Recommendation 6: Establish Funding Categories		✓		IFB and Victims Unit
Recommendation 7: Movement of Budget Headings and Funding Sub-Committee		✓		IFB
Recommendation 8: Funding Committee Selection		✓		IFB
Recommendation 9: Synchronising Monitoring Information		✓		IFB

	Immediate	Medium Term	Long Term	Responsibility
Recommendation 11: On-line Application and Monitoring Forms		✓		IFB
Recommendation 13: Broader Use of Monitoring Information		✓		IFB
Recommendation 15: Development of Vision, Strategy and Support for Sustainability of the Victim/Survivor Sector		✓	✓	IFB, Sustainability and Strategic Committee and Victim's Unit
Recommendation 16: Reassess Criteria for Core Funding Scheme in line with Strategies for the Sector and that of the IFB		✓	✓	IFB, Sustainability and Strategic Committee and Victim's Unit
Recommendation 17: Extension of Core Funding Period		✓		Victim's Unit
Recommendation 18: Review of Administration Costs		✓		IFB and Victim's Unit
Recommendation 14: Using Technology to Support Groups Activities			✓	IFB

In order to take the recommendations forward, we believe that a Steering Group, with membership from the IFB and OFMDFM's Victim's Unit will be required.

Responsibility for undertaking the activities contained within the various recommendations predominantly lies with the IFB. The Steering Group should be responsible for the following activities:

- Appointing responsibility for each recommendation;
- Identifying others required to implement each recommendation;
- Identifying timescales for implementation;
- Holding meetings with other people involved in implementing recommendations;
- Including the active participation and consultation with groups in the implementation of new recommendations; and
- Sharing learning regarding recommendation implementation between Group members.

We believe that this approach will support effective and efficient implementation of recommendations and ensure that the Core Funding Scheme progresses in the most appropriate direction.