



Community Education Network

AONTAS Community Education Network Meeting

Meeting 9: Creating a Vision for Funding Community Education

Wednesday 5th May 2010

9.45am – 2.00pm

The Carmichael Centre, North Brunswick St, Dublin 7



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Summary

The 9th meeting of the Community Education Network (CEN) mainly focused on creating a position paper for a proposed funding mechanism for community education using the discussion document as a basis for consultation. This meeting builds on the outcomes of meeting 8 in that the position paper will also meet the issues of funding and autonomy of community education¹. Further issues identified at the last meeting will be addressed by a new lobbying plan for the Network and further subgroups to include one focussing on integrating traveller education into community education. The subgroup² of the funding mechanism for community education will work with the ideas from meeting 9 and assist in creating a reflective position paper. Following the input by Blathnaid Ni Chinneide from NALA, the CEN will look to ensuring that its members are aware of the concept of integrating literacy into our work and becoming more literacy aware in general.

Introduction

The community education network meeting is the only space that draws together community education groups, from various backgrounds at national level. The action-focused meetings serve AONTAS members in a tailored method in order to address specific needs, to avoid duplication and ensure that meetings are effective and cost efficient. The aim of the 9th meeting of the CEN dedicated to creating a position paper on a proposed funding mechanism for community education. Using a discussion document as a basis participants engaged in dialogue to further develop the paper in order to create a representative, effective and powerful position paper.

The agenda of the meeting was developed by the community education network steering group and the outcomes from the evaluation of meeting eight. It also sought to act upon the learning from previous meetings by drawing on the comments and suggestions of participants; it used a number of processes to develop effective discussion spaces, it facilitated networking and shared learning and balanced the current needs of the sector with the long-term aims of the community education network.

Content of the day

Niamh presented the work of the CEN, the history, achievements and future goals of the Network in order to create a context for the work and to ensure participants could chart the development of their work. A Paper detailing the history and achievements of the CEN is available for download online on the CEN website (see end of report), please read this document and share it with potential members of the network. A trailer from Beyond the Classroom was shown to participants (please see www.aontas.com).

¹ Meeting 8 of the Community Education Network Report, p. 7 and 8.

² Noel Fitzgerald – Community Worker and Independent Consultant, Marie Keegan - Crosscare, Avril Bailey – An Cosan, Joe Murdiff – Main, Camilla Fitzsimons – Respond Housing and Catherine Aylmer - Limerick Community Education Network.

In response to the input on the direction of the CEN, participants engaged in a brainstorming session and the following recommendations were made:

1. Lobbying Focus

In order to increase our lobbying actions the following actions could be undertaken:

Link in with academics from NUI Maynooth and invite to CEN meetings.

Develop a ‘how to’ lobbying pack about the CEN which will outline: what we are, what we do, promote successes and pull together what we have done. This will act as a lobbying toolkit.

2. Beyond the Classroom

Ensure that the impact on the community is included when packaging the material, this is vitally important.

3. Skills exchange and professional development

The community education network will act as a mechanism for skills exchange, sharing ideas, best practice and will be a form of continuous professional development for practitioners in community education.

Discussion Session - What would the proposed funding mechanism look like

This session focused on what a funding mechanism would cover i.e. what costs would be covered. From the 4 tables there were common themes that should be considered when creating an effective funding stream, fig.1 outlines these proposed areas.



Each of the themes is broken down into specific examples. It becomes obvious from the multitude of areas to be funded that if you only receive funding for tutor costs that all other areas must be met from additional funding. This is an ineffective process as numerous funding streams must be accessed in order to create ‘whole funding’ for a community education organisation. This will also explain why the average number of funding mechanisms used by community education groups in the CEN totals 4 (some with as many as 12).³ The inability to sustain a community education organisation with one of the existing funding streams points to the need for an

³ CEN Research Report on Funding Streams Accessed by CEN members

alternative, multi-annual funding mechanism that is cost-effective in the long term. Currently, the time allocated (both staff time and voluntary) to funding applications ranges from 2 – 1000 hours depending on the size of the organisation, number of learners and the kinds of funding streams being used.⁴ Maintaining this system is both ineffective (cost and time) and also creates an uncertain community education service where access, transfer and progression for learners is limited due to the lack of certainty around funding and continuity of courses.

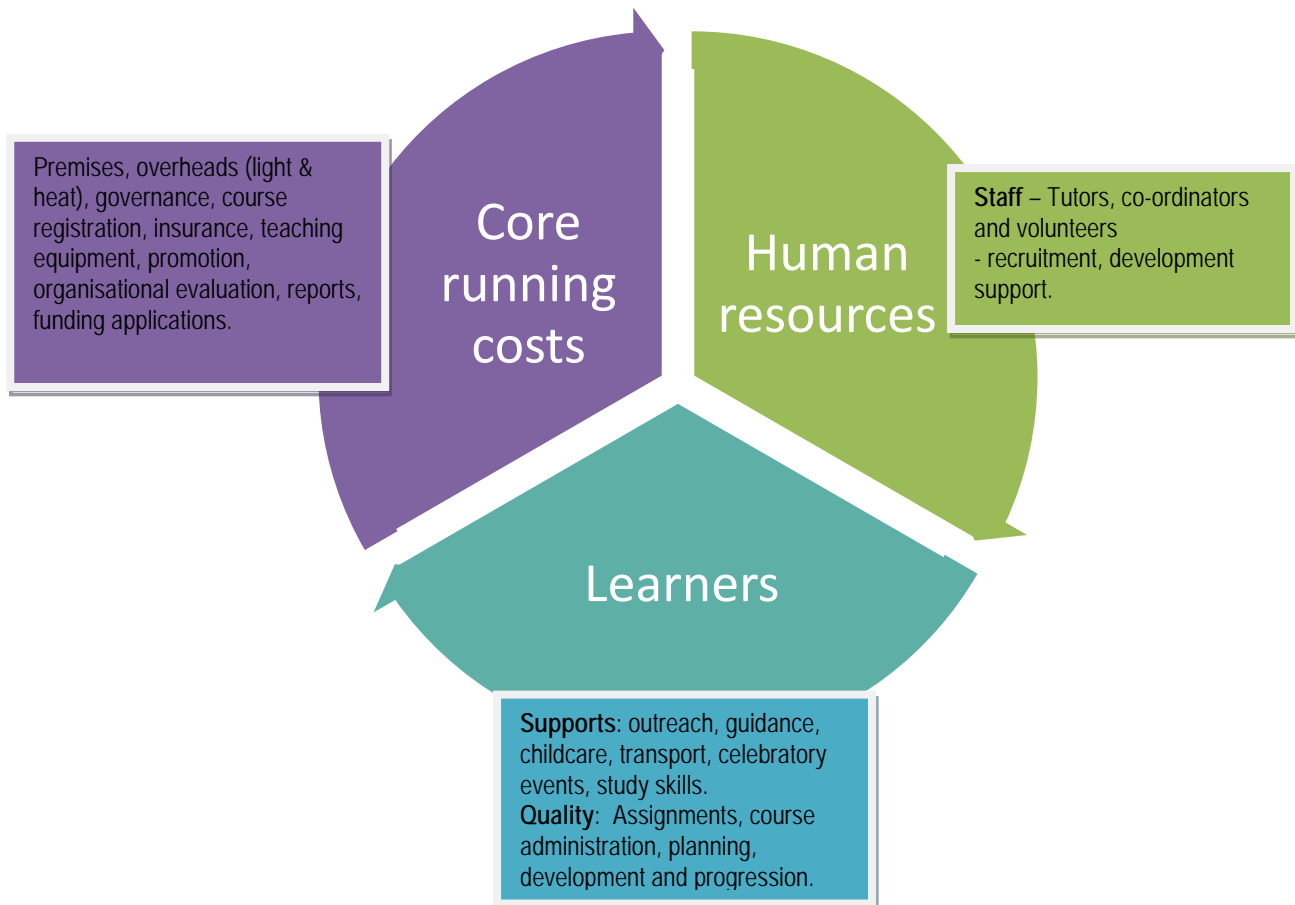


Fig. 1 Three core areas to be met by the funding mechanism and the specific areas to address.

In terms of how the funding for community education organisations will be administered, a number of proposals were made. A summary of the list is outlined below.

1. Capitation grant for each learner
2. Local community education group (with parity of esteem with CDP, VEC and FRCs)
3. Central government
4. Local government body
5. Inter departmental funding stream with a Junior Minister responsible for the fund
6. Independent community education funding body as per the White Paper on Adult Education.
7. Specific government department responsible for specific target groups

⁴ CEN Research Report on Funding Streams Accessed by CEN members



Integrating Literacy

At the end of the meeting the input on integrating literacy was presented by Bláthnaid Ní Chinnéide. Please consult her if you require any further information. Bláthnaid Ní Chinnéide, Integrating Literacy Co-ordinator, NALA, 76 Lr Gardiner St, Dublin 1. Direct line: 01-8509112. Email: bnichinneide@nala.ie or fet@nala.ie. Publications: Integrating Literacy: Guidelines for further education and training centres can be downloaded from www.nala.ie. You can also download recent Irish research reports on integrating literacy and find information on integrated teaching and learning materials.

Professional development courses: NUI Maynooth offer a Certificate Course in Integrating Literacy. This helps teachers in vocational and academic subjects to build literacy support and development into their particular courses. Further information from Josephine.w.finn@nuim.ie and/or bnichinneide@nala.ie. NALA also offer short (half-day, one-day) introductory courses on integrating literacy, designed in consultation with the centre/s concerned. Further information on http://www.nala.ie/training_services.

The Literacy Development Centre in Waterford Institute of Technology provides a module in Extending Literacy. This is intended for tutors who are already trained and experienced in adult and community literacy tuition. It focuses on the skills needed to work as a 'literacy facilitator' in a further education, community education or vocational training centre: working as part of a multi-disciplinary team to assist colleagues in integrating literacy across the programme. <http://www.wit.ie/SchoolsDepartments/SchoolofEducation/literacydevelopmentcentre/>

Way forward for the Community Education Network

The following proposed actions will be carried out based on the outcomes of the meeting:

1. A CEN lobbying plan will be created based on the recommendations for meeting 8 and as per the proposals in this meeting.
2. The thematic subgroup on developing a position paper will be reconvened to work on the proposals from meeting 9 and to draft a position paper accordingly.
3. A revamped community education network leaflet and other materials will be created for a lobbying toolkit for CEN members and potential members.
4. Niamh will undertake a number of visits nationwide to community education organizations that are not involved in the network to highlight our work, achievements and how they can become involved (July)
5. Stay in contact about your lobbying activities through the CEN googlegroup, join now if you haven't done so already, <http://groups.google.ie/group/aontas-community-education-network>
6. Beyond the Classroom will be available on DVD and online for use by all members of the CEN and to raise awareness of community education.



The next community education network meeting will take place in the autumn and when the position paper is created it will be launched at a specific event, further details will be provided. It is vital that we get an excellent turnout for this as it will kick start our lobbying campaign for community education. For further information please view our webpage: <http://www.aontas.com/commed/networkcen.html> or contact Niamh O'Reilly at the AONTAS office.

Stay up to date with the community education network or join today:

To join contact Niamh O'Reilly on noreilly@aontas.com

Join the discussion on the googlegroup: <http://groups.google.ie/group/aontas-community-education-network>

To read about previous meetings and manifestoes go to: <http://www.aontas.com/commed/networkcen.html>

Read the history of the CEN paper on the CEN section of the website.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CEN

the launch of beyond the classroom



AONTAS Community Education Network

What is Community Education?

Community education is a process of **personal and community transformation, empowerment, challenge, social change and collective responsiveness**. It is **community-led** reflecting and valuing the lived experiences of individuals and their community. Through its ethos and **holistic** approach community education builds the capacity of groups to engage in developing a social teaching and learning process that is **creative, participative and needs-based**. Community education is grounded on principles of **justice, equality and inclusiveness**. It differs from general adult education provision due to its **political and radical** methodologies.

AONTAS Community Education Network

Research into the funding streams accessed by members of the Community Education Network

WILL YOU BE A CHAMPION FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION?



Community Education - We're doing it...
Community education is a progressive, inclusive and effective form of education that happens in the community. It empowers adults, has a beneficial effect on their families and community and reaches people who wouldn't otherwise engage in education.



Why invest in community education?
Community education has a proven track record for creating a supportive environment that encourages learners both in education, enables individuals to develop their skills and competencies, and to be brought further learning and employment.



Over the recent economic crisis, finding appropriate forms of learning participation by adults in education and training is essential. Community education grew in an environment of economic difficulties, the 1980s; it developed effective methods for addressing social issues by helping communities tackle unemployment, social problems and low civic participation. Community education assists individuals to reach their potential, to empower the individual and build confidence; it also creates a method for giving back to their communities.



To withdraw or reduce funding for community education would be a regressive step; the detrimental effects of such actions may result in a reduced rate of participation in education, an increase in welfare dependency, and the loss of the current community structure/frameworks which supports so many families, both parents and children. We cannot afford to ignore community education, we must invest in creating sustainable learning communities.



Who delivers community education?
Community education generally takes place outside institutions and responds to the needs of the community. It is education in the community, with the community and by the community. Community education groups are local, self-managed, voluntary organisations and are supported through a range of agencies and government departments for their education and social inclusion work.

