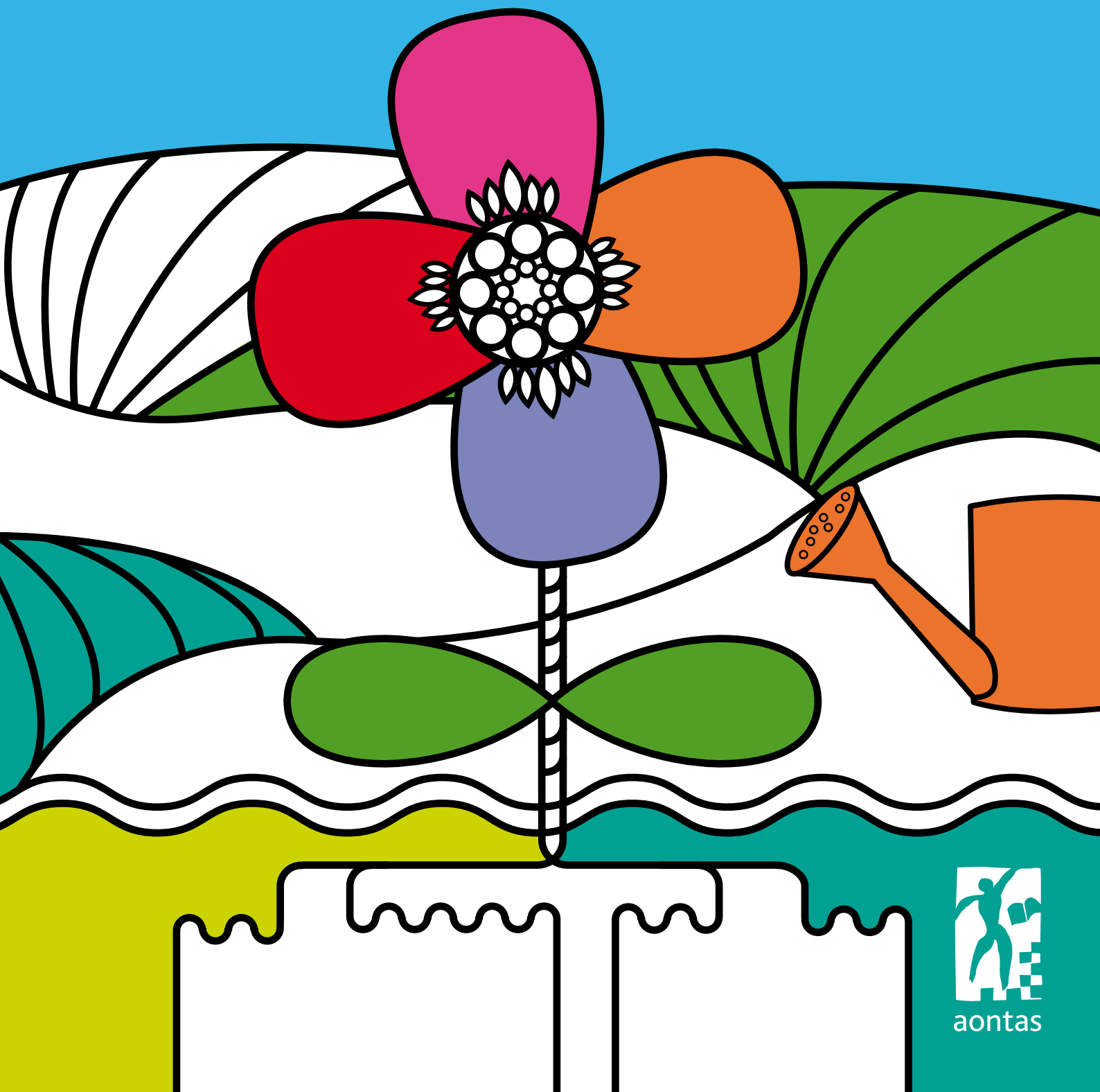


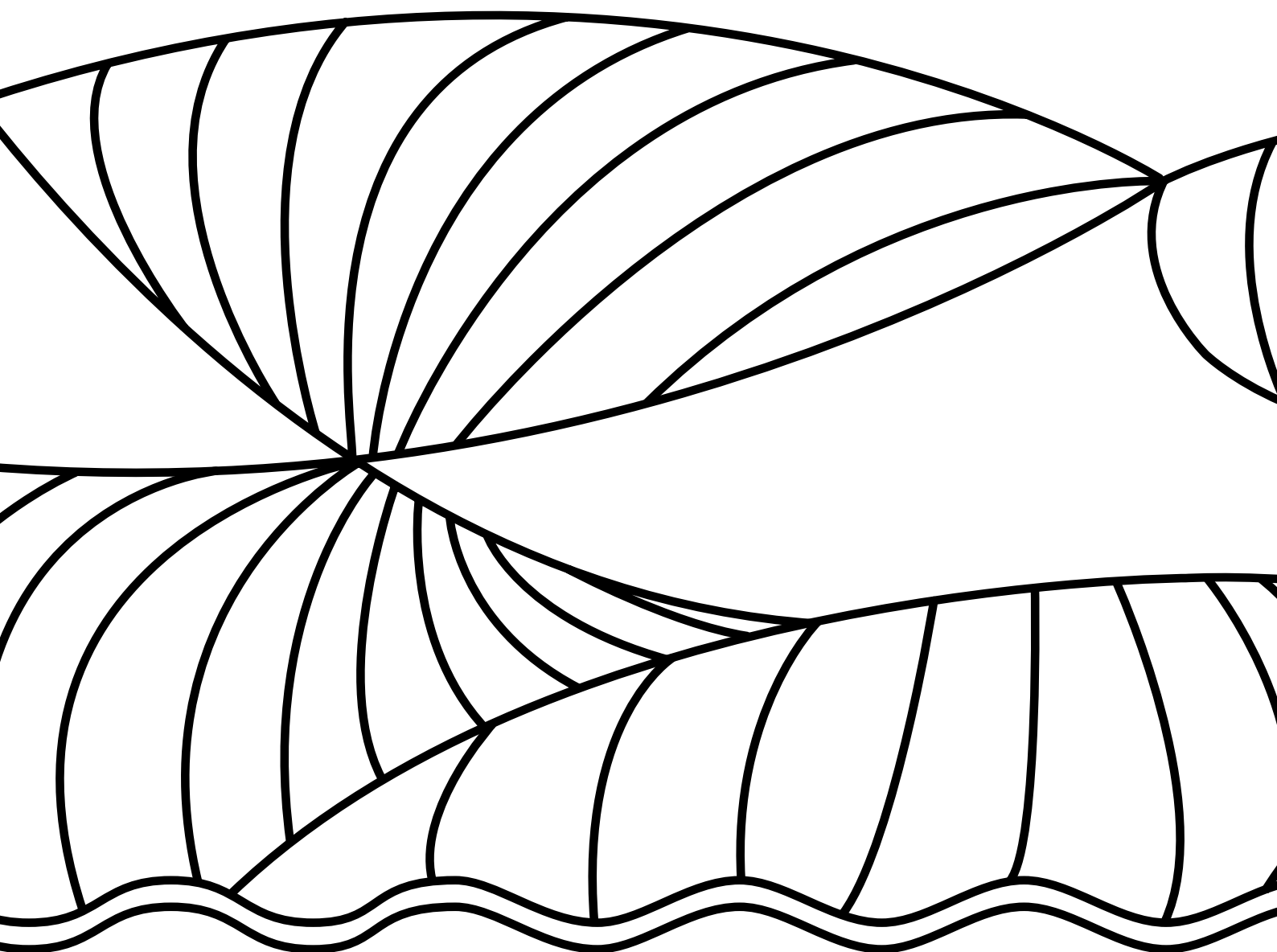
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WOMEN'S COMMUNITY EDUCATION**



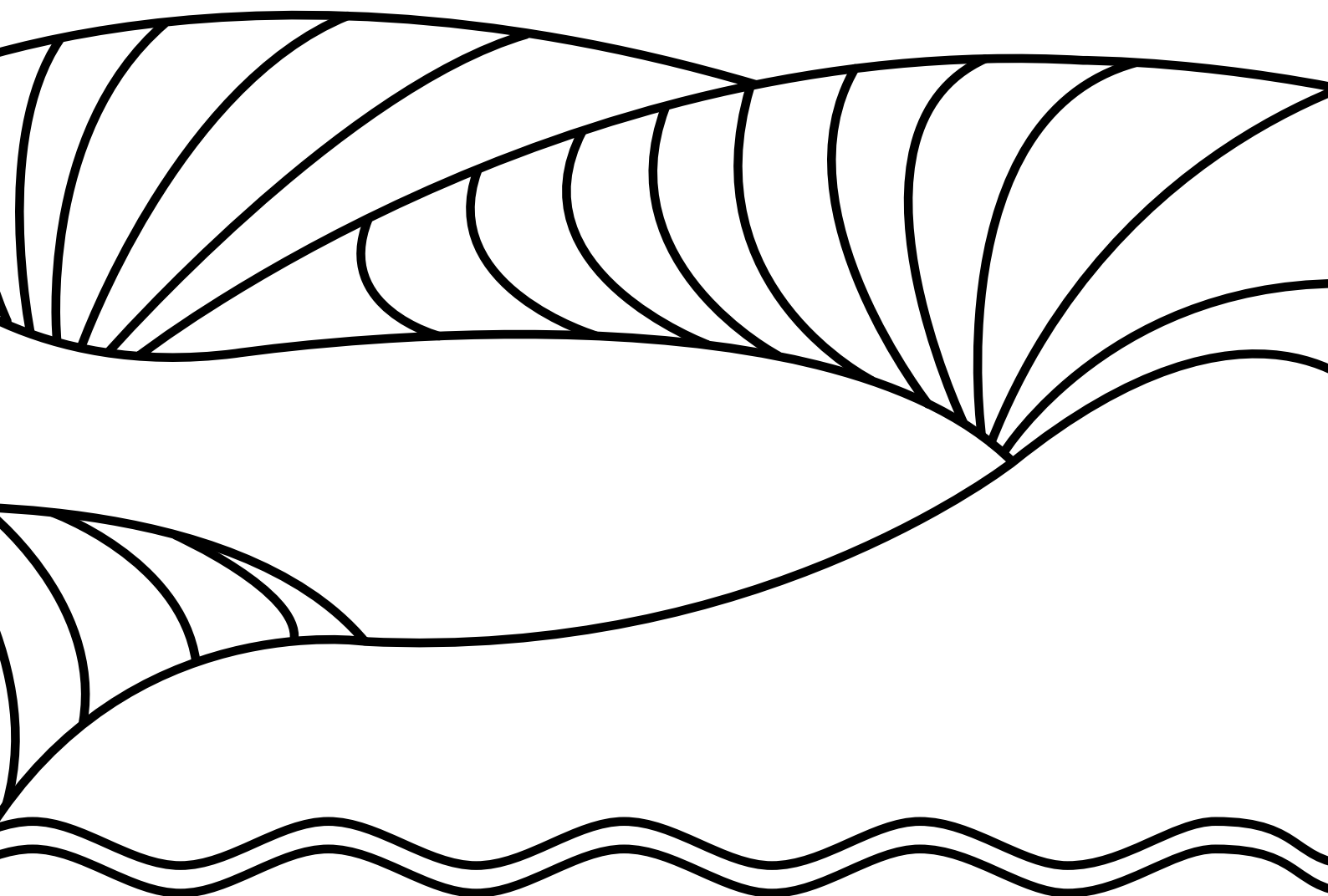
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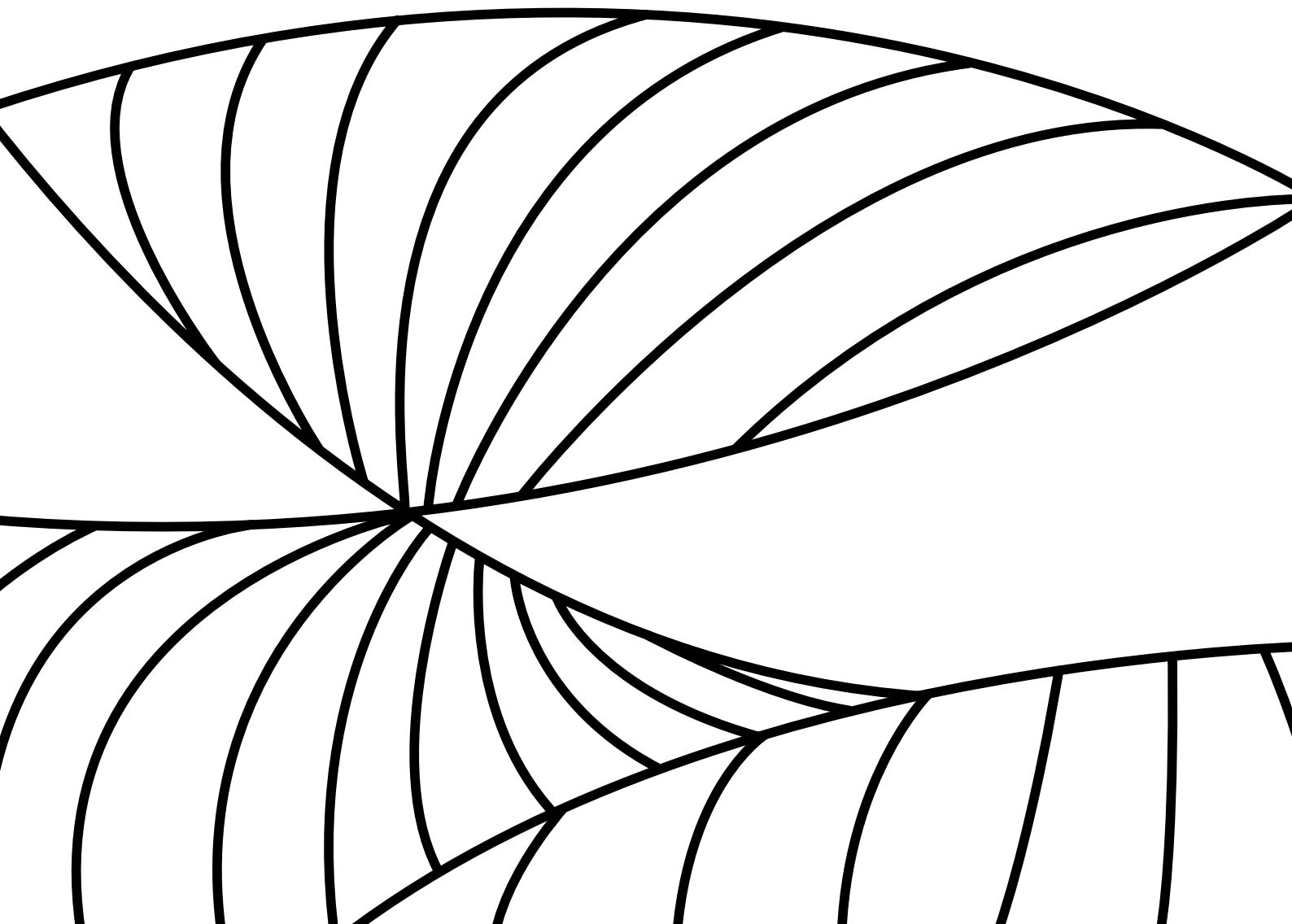


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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Glossary	11
<b>1. Acknowledgements</b>	<b>15</b>
1.1. Groups and individuals who participated in the pilot and mainstreaming phase	15
<b>2. Introduction</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1. What is the Framework?	18
2.2. What does the QAF assist groups to do?	18
2.3. What is women's community education all about?	21
2.4. What kind of organisations or groups is the process for?	22
2.5. Is my group or organisation involved in education?	23
2.6. Who is this guidebook for?	23
2.7. What is the difference between the QAF and other quality assurance frameworks?	24
2.7.1. <i>We have already done FETAC, why go through this process?</i>	24
2.8. What are the benefits to going through the process that is described in this guidebook?	25
2.9. A note on how this guide was developed	26
2.10. An evolving QAF	26
<b>3. Getting Started – How to go about the Process</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1. The Women's Community Education Quality Assurance Framework (the flower)	27
3.1.1. <i>The Story of the QAF Flower</i>	29
3.1.2. <i>Case Study - St. Munchin's Women's Group</i>	30

3.2.	Getting ready to go through the process	31
3.2.1.	<i>Creating a best practice working group</i>	31
3.2.2.	<i>Selecting Leaders for the process</i>	32
3.2.3.	<i>Committing to the process</i>	33
3.2.4.	<i>Collecting evidence</i>	33
3.2.5.	<i>Evaluating the process</i>	34
3.3.	Steps and timing of the process	35
3.4.	Are we a core practice group or an extended practice group?	37
3.4.1.	<i>What if we have already gone through the process at core and extended level?</i>	37
3.4.2.	<i>Checklist to figure out the level of practice of your group</i>	38
3.5.	Different purposes, different processes – using the QAF in different ways to develop your organisation and plan for improvements	39
3.6.	Structure of the guidebook	39
<b>4.</b>	<b>(Step One) Committing to the Vision, Aspirations and Goals of Women's Community Education</b>	<b>41</b>
4.1.	The Vision	41
4.2.	The Aspirations	41
4.3.	The Goals	42
4.3.1.	<i>Recognition:</i>	42
4.3.2.	<i>Empowerment:</i>	42
4.3.3.	<i>Leadership:</i>	43
4.3.4.	<i>Equality:</i>	43
4.4.	(Step One) Committing to the Vision, Aspiration and Goals of Women's Community Education and Exploring Key Words	43
4.4.1.	<i>Process for completing Step One</i>	44
4.4.2.	<i>Information Sheet 1</i>	47
4.4.3.	<i>Example of notes taken during this process</i>	49
4.4.4.	<i>Worksheets to be filled out at end of Step One</i>	51

<b>5.</b>	<b>(Step Two) Checking how Rooted our Work is in The Principles of Women's Community Education</b>	<b>53</b>
5.1.	A note on Principles	53
5.2.	The Women-Centred Principle	54
5.3.	The Equality Principle	56
5.4.	The Justice Principle	58
5.5.	The Quality Principle	60
5.6.	Process for Step Two	62
	5.6.1. <i>Process for completing Step Two</i>	63
	5.6.2. <i>Information Sheet 2 - Goals Descriptions</i>	66
	5.6.3. <i>Information Sheet 3 - Principles Descriptions</i>	67
	5.6.4. <i>Information Sheet 4 - The Principle Map</i>	68
	5.6.5. <i>Information Sheet 5 - Example of a Root Chart</i>	69
	5.6.6. <i>Sample of completed Principle Map</i>	70
	5.6.7. <i>Worksheets to be filled out at the end of Step Two</i>	71
5.7.	Case Study - The Southside Women's Group	73
<b>6.</b>	<b>The Dimensions of Women's Community Education</b>	<b>75</b>
6.1.	A note on Dimensions	75
	6.1.1. <i>Reviewing your work in relation to the Dimensions</i>	75
	6.1.2. <i>Process for completing Steps Three to Six</i>	77
6.2.	Step Three - The Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives Dimension	81
	6.2.1. <i>Element 1 - Outreach Practice</i>	83
	6.2.2. <i>Element 2 - Inclusion Practice</i>	85
	6.2.3. <i>Element 3 - Course Development and Delivery</i>	88
	6.2.4. <i>Element 4 - Ongoing Participation</i>	92
	6.2.5. <i>Element 5 - Access, Transfer and Progression</i>	95
	6.2.6. <i>Element 6 - Celebration</i>	97
	6.2.7. <i>Case Study - SOLAS</i>	99

6.3.	Step Four – The Women-Led Dimension	102
6.3.1.	<i>Element 1 – Leadership</i>	104
6.3.2.	<i>Element 2 – Voice</i>	106
6.3.3.	<i>Element 3 – Consciousness-Raising Education</i>	108
6.3.4.	<i>Element 4 – The Learning Organisation</i>	110
6.3.5.	<i>Element 5 – Empowerment</i>	114
6.3.6.	<i>Element 6 – Organisation as a Collective</i>	116
6.3.7.	<i>Case Study – South West Kerry Women’s Association</i>	118
6.4.	Step Five – The Political Dimension	121
6.4.1.	<i>Element 1 – Visibility</i>	124
6.4.2.	<i>Element 2 – Activism</i>	127
6.4.3.	<i>Element 3 – Resources</i>	130
6.4.4.	<i>Element 4 – Commitment to Equality</i>	132
6.4.5.	<i>Element 5 – Commitment to Diversity</i>	134
6.4.6.	<i>Element 6 – Representation</i>	136
6.4.7.	<i>Case Study – Waterford Women’s Centre</i>	138
6.5.	Step Six – The Strategic Dimension	139
6.5.1.	<i>Element 1 – Capacity-Building</i>	141
6.5.2.	<i>Element 2 – Creativity</i>	144
6.5.3.	<i>Element 3 – Networking</i>	146
6.5.4.	<i>Element 4 – Tactical Work</i>	148
6.5.5.	<i>Element 5 – Partnership</i>	151
6.5.6.	<i>Element 6 – Systemic Change</i>	154
6.5.7.	<i>Process for completing Step Six</i>	157
6.5.8.	<i>Case Study – Southside Women’s Action Network</i>	158
6.5.9.	<i>Information Sheet 6 – Example of an Element Chart</i>	160
6.6.	Worksheets to be filled out at the end of the Dimension Review	161

<b>7.</b>	<b>Creating an Action Plan</b>	<b>163</b>
7.1.	The Matrix	164
7.2.	The Action Plan	164
7.3.	Step Seven – Planning to make Improvements	164
	7.3.1. <i>Process to follow for completing Step Seven</i>	165
	7.3.2. <i>Information Sheet 7 – Important questions to keep in mind when you are planning</i>	170
	7.3.3. <i>Information Sheet 8 – Doing a matrix</i>	171
	7.3.4. <i>Example of a completed action planning matrix</i>	172
	7.3.5. <i>Worksheets to be completed at the end of Step Seven</i>	173
	7.3.6. <i>Case Study – Completed Action Plan from LINK The Limerick Women’s Network</i>	175
<b>8.</b>	<b>Making Benchmarking Continuous</b>	<b>183</b>
8.1.	Making sure the Plan gets carried out	183
8.2.	Doing the Dimension Review	184
	8.2.1. <i>Core Level – Dimension Review</i>	185
	8.2.2. <i>Extended Level – Dimension Review</i>	186
8.3.	Doing the entire Best Practice Review a Second Time	187
	8.3.1. <i>Information Sheet 9 – Improvements Chart – Dimension Review</i>	188
8.4.	Ideas for Integrating the Structure and Language of the Framework into our Work	189
8.5.	Case Study – Amerge	191

<b>9.</b>	<b>Other Ways to Use the QAF</b>	<b>193</b>
9.1.	Using the QAF to Evaluate Different Activities	193
	9.1.1. <i>Case Study - Using the QAF to Evaluate</i>	194
9.2.	Using the QAF to Develop a Role Description for a Staff Member	195
	9.2.1. <i>Case Study - Drafting a Role Description using the QAF</i>	197
9.3.	Using the QAF to help you Develop your Strategic Plan	198
	9.3.1. <i>Information Sheet 10 - SWOT Analysis</i>	200
	9.3.2. <i>Case Study - the Second Chance Education Project</i>	201
9.4.	Using the QAF for Board Induction	201
	9.4.1. <i>Case Study - Longford Women's Link</i>	203
 <b>APPENDICES</b>		
<b>10.</b>	<b>Appendix A – Checklist</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Appendix B – Templates for QAF Flower</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>12.</b>	<b>Appendix C – Evaluating the Process</b>	<b>217</b>
	12.1. How to do the Participant Evaluation	219
<b>13.</b>	<b>Appendix D – Women's Community Education Card Sort</b>	<b>220</b>

# GLOSSARY

**Abstract** *In this document involves the discussion of ideas rather than ‘things.’*

**Accountable** *Making sure that a group takes responsibility for the ways in which something has been done and for the success or failure of those actions.*

**Benchmarking** *A process that can help groups evaluate the standard or quality of their work by comparing what they do against the ideal or ‘best practice.’ In this guidebook the benchmark is the QAF. ‘Best practice’ and ‘benchmarking’ are used interchangeably in this guidebook.*

**Accreditation** *A standard of education that is publicly recognised, is set and reached.*

**Collective** *A group of people who act together, but in order to do so they have a shared identity and set of goals they want to reach.*

**Consciousness-raising** *Is about women discussing their experiences, becoming aware of the common issues they face and understanding the causes of their inequality.*

**Critical awareness/reflection** *Is defined by NALA as investigating, interpreting, presenting and reflecting on issues; going beyond simple explanations and exploring issues in a more complex way.*

**Empathy** *Involves imagining what it would be like to be in someone else’s shoes and treating them in the way you might like to be treated if you were in the same situation.*

**Empower** *To give someone the skills, knowledge and resources they need to do something for themselves.*

**Equality** *Having and holding with others the same rights, opportunities, status and respect and conditions; equality of worth and importance, concern and respect; prohibitions against inhuman and degrading treatment, protection against violence; commitment to equality in the key areas that affect people’s conditions and quality of life – respect and recognition, resources, love, care and solidarity, power, working and learning.*

**Equality Spheres** *Are the Affective, Cultural, Political, Economic Spheres: equality in the key areas of love, care, relationship, solidarity (affective sphere); in the social institutions and systems of education, religion, arts and culture, the mass media (cultural sphere) in the making and enforcing of collectively binding decisions – government, the public service and the legal system (political sphere); in the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services – including businesses and companies, the state, the banking system and money markets, trade unions (economic sphere).*<sup>i</sup>

**Ethos** *An organisation's ethos is its guiding beliefs, principals and mission.*

**Hierarchical** *Describes a situation where people are put in rank order in terms of status or importance. Therefore, some people are higher up in the hierarchy and others are lower down.*

**Holistic** *A way of doing things that takes into account the whole person – body, mind and spirit.*

**Injustice** *describes those actions that negatively affect a woman's human rights, dignity and right to freedom and safety.*

**Interculturalism** *Valuing exchanges between cultural groups within society and seeing these exchanges as mutually enriching (NALA, 2005).*

**Marginalised** *Being kept out of meaningful participation in society or not having the same amount of power as people who are not being marginalised.*

**Motivation** *A reason that moves us to do something.*

**Outcomes** *End results or things that groups can show have happened as a result of the work they do or the programmes they run. For an individual woman participating in a programme an outcome could be 'improved confidence'.*

**Radical** *A way of doing things that is different to the traditional way of working and that can contribute to completely changing or 'making new' women's lives as well as Irish society generally. It is about getting to the root of something and creating social change.*

**Role description** *Or specification sets out a description of the job someone is applying for as well as the skills and experience a potential candidate would need to have to get the job.*

**Social Inclusion** *Ensuring the marginalised and those living in poverty have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives, allowing them to improve their living standards and their overall well-being.*

*See [www.cpa.ie/povertyinireland/glossary.htm](http://www.cpa.ie/povertyinireland/glossary.htm)*

**Solidarity** *A feeling of togetherness based on having shared goals and interests and taking action towards those goals.*

**Structural inequalities** *Inequality that exists in structures such as the church, government, family, the media, education and so on.*

## GLOSSARY

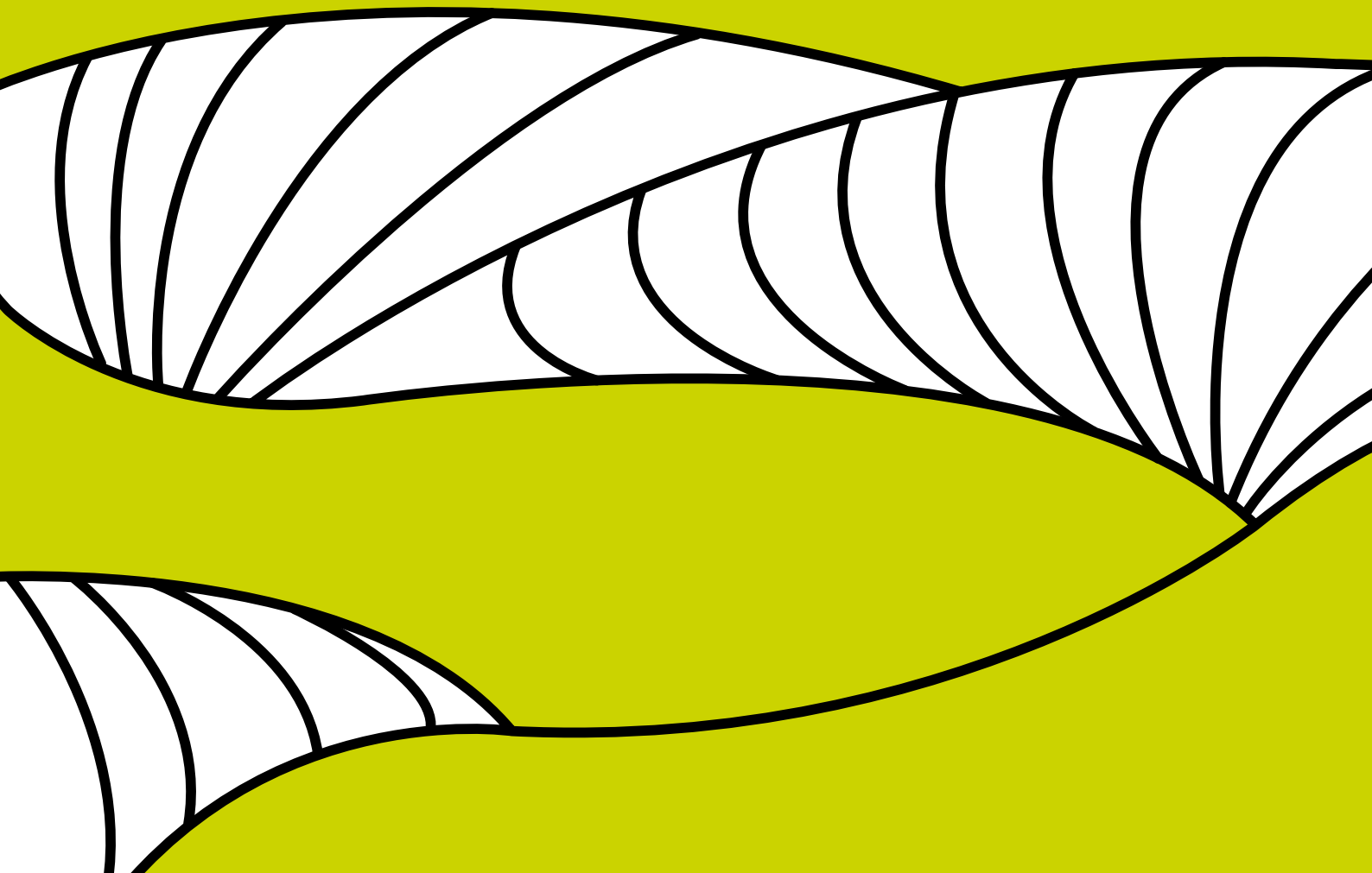
**Subordination** *To subordinate is the act of making someone 'less than' or keeping them in a lower status to someone else.*

**Sustainable** *A way of working, or a group being around for the long haul. In other words, that a group is so sturdy and strong that it will not be swept away by the different challenges it might face. Lots of things contribute to sustainability or being sustainable such as having a good level of funding, committed staff or volunteers, and/or a constant amount of participants who attend really well.*

**Theory** *A set of statements that are made to explain something. It is usually a set of rules, ideas or principles that apply to a particular subject.*

**Transformation** *Something or someone changing completely such that you might not recognise them from before.*

**Transparency** *in groups or organisations refers to making sure that it is easy to know and understand how things work in a group, how decisions are made and how a group operates.*



## SECTION 1.

## Acknowledgements

### 1.1 Groups and individuals who participated in the pilot and mainstreaming phase

Access 2000

Amerge

Clare Women's Network

Clondalkin Women's Network

Crosscare

Get Ahead Club

Limerick Women's Network - LINK

Longford Women's Link

Ronanstown Community Development Project

Second Chance Education Project

SOLAS Women's Group

South West Kerry Women's Association

Southside Women's Action Network

Southside Women's Group

St. Munchin's Women's Group

Waterford Women's Centre

Women of the North West

AONTAS would like to thank the Department of Education and Science for providing the funding and support to make the whole Quality Assurance Project possible. We would also like to recognise and acknowledge the work of Eleanor McClorey who led and delivered the pilot project and Natasha Bailey who led and delivered the mainstreaming project, and who compiled this Guide. We would also like to thank the members of the Steering Group who supported, inspired and guided us through the entire process. We hope the guide will continue to support, inspire and guide the Women's Community Education Sector for many years to come.



## SECTION 2.

## Introduction

Welcome to the guidebook for best practice of Women's Community Education (WCE). This guidebook tells you step-by-step how to use a framework for WCE, called the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) to review all of the work and activities of your organisation or group as you work together to provide education for women and struggle for women's equality. It is a tool that helps you to figure out if you are carrying out 'best practice' WCE. This guidebook can help you develop and improve your whole organisation, not just the programmes or courses that you might run. Therefore, it offers a process for benchmarking or quality assuring your work. According to the women who developed it the QAF is:

*A system which supports the provision of a distinctive education process that is confident and assured in its education provision and is true to the defining features of women's community education.*

The QAF contained in this guidebook was developed by, for and with all kinds of women's community education organisations and groups around Ireland. It expresses the vision, aspirations, goals, principles and dimensions of women's community education, which is a unique type of education. WCE is different because staff, volunteers, learners and management members work together not only to educate each other, but also to make the changes in our society that are necessary for women to become equal to men regardless of their backgrounds.

Access to education for women is a human right. By using the QAF groups can ensure that the goals of equality and justice for women, enshrined in the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Beijing Declaration (1995), are embedded in their work through community participation, empowerment, leadership, quality practice and celebration.





vision

**VISION:** Refers to what the world would look like, if and when WCE organisations are successful in their work.

aspirations\*

\* **ASPIRATIONS:** These are the hopes or ambitions that WCE groups have for their work and how they would like women to feel when they are involved in WCE.

recognition

empowerment

women-led

political

**4 Dimensions:** Are the categories of the day to day work or practice of WCE organisations.

reality

strategic

**6 Elements:** Refer to the sub-categories of the practices in a dimension. There are six elements in each dimension. The elements are lists of practices or actions that groups are carrying out or should be striving to carry out.

equality

leadership

**PRINCIPLES:** Refers to ideas that guide thought and action in WCE. Principles are beliefs that fuel the work and motivate us to keep going.

women-centred

quality

equality

justice

### 2.1. What is the Framework?

The QAF is the expression of what women's community education groups do and believe in at its best. A framework is merely a lot of information organised into a structure that makes sense and accurately describes a process. So, for instance, there are actions that women's community education groups do everyday. There are a lot of them. This framework organises those actions that seem to fit together into groups or categories that seem to make sense.

A framework is also good at showing how all the different features of women's community education fit together. Like a machine where one part cannot work without the other a framework is a system, or set of interconnected elements, where one part cannot be efficient without the other and where each part is supportive of another. You can also think of a framework like a recipe, where each ingredient plays a part in creating the whole dish. In women's community education it is the sum of all of the aspects of the provision that make it effective and different.

Organisations can use the QAF like a checklist. They can look at different practices contained in it and ask themselves:

- Do we do it?
- How do we do it?
- How can we prove to others that we are doing it?

When they check off what they do against the QAF, groups will easily see where they might be able to improve their work or where they are doing really well in the work. When groups get to the point where they know that they are really rooted in the principles of WCE, and are carrying out all of the practices of WCE as described in the QAF, then they will know that they are carrying out excellent WCE.

### 2.2. What does the QAF assist groups to do?

The QAF and the guidebook can be used together for lots of different purposes that are important to WCE. The most valuable thing that the QAF can do is to help organisations to quality assure or benchmark their work. In essence, quality assurance is just another way of describing evaluation with the added feature of setting out a minimum and maximum standard for the work. Going through a benchmarking process or 'best practice review' using the QAF can help your group to:

**Learn about and name what you do**

The QAF can help groups revisit or learn for the first time underlying reasons and theories that set out why they do work and how they do the work. At other times, it might be useful for new staff, members and so on to learn about what WCE is, the principles it is founded on and what the day to day work is all about. Still again, it is also important for groups to explore if they have a shared understanding of what they are doing and the goals they want to achieve, because it helps them to work better as a team. The guidebook is a like a textbook for WCE.

**Make visible the excellent work and achievements done by the group**

By evaluating the standard of their work using the QAF presented in this guidebook, WCE organisations will make visible to themselves and to others outside the group the scale, complexity and importance of all of the activities that WCE groups engage in. As more groups go through the process using the WCE QAF and share the same way of describing and structuring the work, solidarity is encouraged amongst organisations in the sector and a shared identity is communicated at national level.

**Help you identify where improvements could be made**

Since the QAF presents the best practice way of doing the work then this process helps groups to see where there might be gaps or weaknesses in their own work. This identification of gaps shows organisations what they need to do in order to become models of best practice. The guidebook also gives step-by-step instructions on how to create a workplan to address gaps or weaknesses in a group's work.

**Help you to be strategic**

Reviewing their work using the WCE QAF can help organisations to see if what they are doing is working, or getting them towards the goals of WCE. If they discover that they are not working as effectively as they would like, the QAF can point to different aspects of the work that could be focused on in a strategic plan for the group.

**Give you a structured way of reviewing your work on a regular basis**

Review and evaluation needs to happen in groups regularly and continuously so that organisations can learn from their mistakes and let the development of the group be directed by stakeholders. The WCE QAF and this guidebook will set out a variety of structured or step-by-step ways to review the work of WCE organisations.

**Help you take time out for reflection and analysis**

Individuals working or volunteering in groups know that sometimes the work gets so busy that there is little time for reflection. When reflection on the work does not happen there is a tendency to be pulled away from an original vision or plan of work. Doing the review set out in this guidebook gives organisations time and space to 'get back to basics' and reflect on whether or not what they are doing is still about the essential features and goals of WCE. The QAF creates a safe space for this challenging because these questions derive from the QAF itself rather than relying on individuals in organisations to bring them up.

**Help show that the work you do is different to other types of education**

Much research and the practice of organisations have shown that WCE is a qualitatively different kind of education to other forms of adult education. Groups that benchmark their work using the QAF are showing how their work fits back into this different type of education, thus showing how their work and its outcomes are different to the work of other education providers in Ireland.

**Demonstrate your contribution to three national policy agendas**

The policy agendas are as follows :

*Lifelong learning*

WCE makes quality second chance education accessible to women in their local areas across the country.

*Social inclusion*

WCE organisations ensure that individual women's access to education and progression is facilitated by providing childcare and other supports to enable them to participate. At the group level WCE groups fight for those barriers to education be addressed for all women across Ireland by engaging in policy work and action for social change.

*Gender equality*

Women's self esteem and confidence are broken down by inequality. Therefore, WCE works to achieve gender equality by fostering women's self-esteem. This education and training raises awareness and provides women with the information and the analysis essential in understanding their lives and in progressing the issue of gender equality. WCE contributes to increasing women's economic independence by assisting them to progress to education and training for employment if they so choose, which in turn fosters gender equality.

### 2.3. What is Women's Community Education (WCE) all about?

WCE grew out of small, informal, women's groups that first came together during the 1970s in Ireland in order to provide opportunities for women whose communities had been ravaged by poverty, unemployment and emigration. Many of these groups were in the un-resourced new towns of Ireland which had been built without adequate infrastructure and supports for women who were confined to their houses, isolated and looking after their children. These groups were spaces not just for women to engage in personal and educational development, but were also opportunities for women to learn together how to act to change their communities and make them better places to live in. The WCE organisations in existence in Ireland today reflect those roots and those roots are also reflected in the QAF in this guidebook. The following statements help to introduce the theory and practice of WCE.

#### **WCE is participant-centred and is driven by the needs and wants of the participants**

In WCE, the organisation does not pick the programmes that are run, but looks to members and participants to define what they want. The WCE group is located in the same community that its participants live in.

#### **In the learning, WCE groups do not just seek to foster the self-esteem and confidence of individual women, but develop the skills needed for women to become aware of their inequality and to be critical of an unequal society**

WCE is about providing women with the space to see the world in a different way and to offer women opportunities to understand the reasons underlying their experiences of the world that have been shaped by an unequal society where women come second to men.

#### **WCE organisations engage in and prepare and invite participants into collective action for social change**

In other words, groups get involved in political action, lobbying, campaigning and other sorts of activities that aim to change the way in which Irish society works so that it becomes a more equal society.

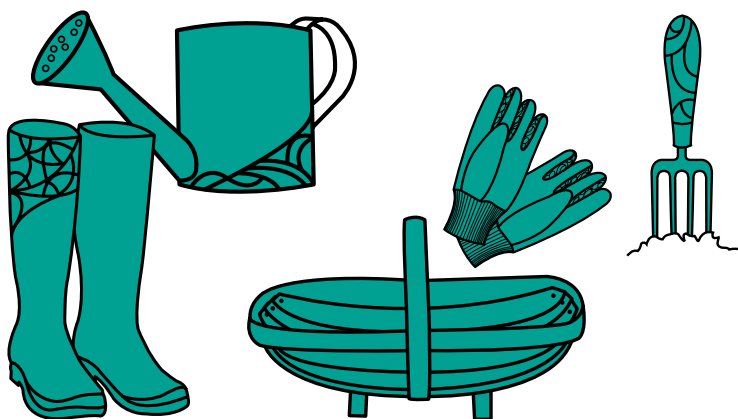
#### **All the activities a WCE organisation carries out are shaped by a feminist/gender analysis**

This work is undertaken to help create equal conditions for women to realise their full potential and, where there are blocks to that occurring, those blocks are analysed as to how they prevent women's equality.

## 2.4. What kind of organisations or groups is the process for?

This QAF has been tried and tested by a range of groups around the country, large and small. Those groups are listed at the front of this guidebook. The kinds of organisations that have used this QAF to review their work are:

- **Community women's groups who are self-managing** in other words, they may not have a separate management committee and work together to define their learning interests and their collective action. Groups like this tend to be small, tightly knit groups. They might get tutors in from the VEC to facilitate their learning, or sometimes act as a support group or social group without a defined set of outcomes over a period of time.
- **Community-based women's networks** who have groups or organisations affiliated to them. They may or may not be running educational programmes but provide capacity-building activities for their members, such as how to engage in lobbying, or how to set up a management committee.
- **Women's community education centres**  
These centres are community-based and provide a variety of education and training programmes for women in their communities as well as engaging in community development and collective action.
- **Women's centres**  
These centres can offer a range of supports to women in their communities, such as information and support or counselling. As long as they are offering women any kind of opportunity to come together to analyse their experiences and act together for social change they could go through the processes described in this guidebook.
- **Community education providers** that are non-gender specific, but do run some programmes and courses solely focused on women.



## **2.5. Is my group or organisation involved in education?**

In the context of WCE, education is not just about providing structured formal learning programmes. Any group that is offering women a chance to come together in groups, discuss their experiences, listen to and learn from each other and then act together in some way to address women's inequality is involved in education.

The word education is, in part, informed by the latin word educere which means 'to draw out.' From this root, any process that involves drawing out the knowledge of participants and allowing them to learn from each other can be considered education. A women's support group is a group involved in education, because participants tell their stories and those stories can teach others about ways to understand their own lives and cope with difficulties. Likewise, a group that brings women from a community together to engage in community development is also engaged in education.

Within this understanding of education almost any women's group, large or small, long-established or brand new, could use the QAF to review their work. Since this framework is evolving, it is of interest to AONTAS to hear from any organisations that use the QAF as to whether or not it adequately describes their principles and practice.

## **2.6. Who is this guidebook for?**

This guidebook is for individuals who are interested and committed to guiding their group through a best practice review of their work using the WCE QAF. Generally, two people from an organisation can volunteer to facilitate the process for their group. Section 3.2.2 gives more detail about selecting facilitators of the process.

When the process has been fully completed once, then individual members or staff might wish to use this guidebook in order to assist them to facilitate the special processes set out in Section 9 of this resource.

This guidebook may also be a useful resource for new staff, volunteers, members or management who wish to learn about or revisit the principles and practice of WCE.

## 2.7. What is the difference between the QAF and other quality assurance frameworks?

There are many excellent quality frameworks that are available to education and training providers. However, the WCE QAF is different because it allows groups to quality assure the entirety of the work they do and not just programme development and delivery. Moreover, many groups may not be offering learning that can be assured by other frameworks, like FETAC, but may be involved in capacity-building or non-accredited training and might want a framework that can assist them to show the quality of their practice.

In other words, this framework allows groups to do a best practice review of the whole organisation in relation to:

- Education activity development and delivery whether it is FETAC accredited or not
- The management of the group
- The political or lobbying activities they engage in as a group to create social change and a more equal society for women
- The different ways in which they support women to become leaders, and
- Their ways of planning all the work they do.

The WCE QAF is an excellent tool for thinking about the growth and development of an organisation.

### 2.7.1. *We have already done FETAC, why go through this process?*

Hopefully, this introduction has answered this question. The FETAC system is an excellent quality assurance tool, but will not assure all of the work that WCE organisations do. For those groups who have already done FETAC or who will eventually be going through FETAC, any practice in the WCE QAF that links to FETAC requirements is indicated with an 'F' underneath the practice reference number in this guidebook. Readers will quickly see that this framework goes beyond the FETAC framework into a variety of other activities.

## 2.8. What are the benefits to going through the process that is described in this guidebook?

Staff, volunteers and/or members that have participated in the process described in this guidebook have reported that it:

- Assisted them to develop a strategic plan
- Gave them an opportunity to reflect on their own negative experiences of education in school and to analyse those experience, thus raising the self-esteem and confidence of group members
- Gave networks a tool for assisting member groups to review and evaluate their work
- Helped organisations with the language needed to fill out funding applications and speak publicly about their work
- Assisted groups to create a scrapbook or visual record of the work they do
- Gave organisations direction for their political lobbying and the work they do to help develop women leaders
- Helped groups to target specific groups of women more effectively so that their activities became more accessible to all the women in their community.
- Assisted groups to develop evaluation questions or tools for different sets of activities
- Helped them to determine programme content.



## 2.9. A note on how this guide was developed

This guide evolved out of a national pilot project and a mainstreaming project focusing on quality assurance for WCE groups. In the context of the QAF mainstreaming means:

- Making sure that the QAF is available to a broad range of groups to help them sustain quality practice
- Monitoring and awarding of benchmarking to groups who go through the process using the QAF
- The WCE sector continuing to work on and improve the QAF, and
- Making sure that the QAF and WCE is valued by decision-makers.

In the pilot project, five WCE groups from around Ireland worked with a facilitator to name all of the parts and practices of the framework and then go through the benchmarking process using the QAF.

In the mainstreaming project 22 leaders from 14 WCE organisations around the country were trained to facilitate 12 of those groups through the process that had been devised and tested in the pilot. This process further refined the content of the QAF and also allowed the groups to test a written, standard set of instructions for going through the process. The refined QAF and the standard process for going through a best practice review using it are presented in this guidebook.

## 2.10. An evolving QAF

The vision of the WCE QAF is to:

- Faithfully reflect the work of women's community education
- Contribute to sustaining and enhancing quality practice
- Resource the practice of radical and women-centred education.

In order to achieve this vision the framework needs to evolve with the WCE sector and be continuously revisited and revised.

## **SECTION 3.**

### Getting Started – How to go about the Process

#### **3.1. The Women’s Community Education Quality Assurance Framework**

The QAF names the vision, aspirations and goals of WCE, the four principles that are its foundation and the four dimensions that make up the practice of women’s community education.

Each of the four dimensions is divided into six elements. Each element has descriptions of core practice and descriptions of extended practice.

- Core practice describes the distinctive practice of quality women’s community education. Any group can review their work at the core practice level whether they are long established or just getting started.
- Extended practice describes aspects of quality practice that are dependent on a secure resource base and often on experience that is built up over time. These practices are generally for organisations that are long established.

The framework structure should be able to reflect the variety and individuality of women’s community education. In other words, it should allow for the uniqueness of each group who uses it to shine through.

The table below gives a brief description of each part of the QAF.

<b>PART</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Vision</b>	Refers to what the world would look like, if and when WCE organisations are successful in their work.
<b>Aspirations</b>	These are the hopes or ambitions that WCE groups have for their work and how they would like women to feel when they are involved in WCE.
<b>Goals</b>	These are the objectives for WCE or what it wants to achieve for women through WCE.
<b>Principles</b>	Refers to ideas that guide thought and action in WCE. Principles are beliefs that fuel the work and motivate us to keep going.
<b>Dimensions</b>	Are the categories of the day to day work or practice of WCE organisations.
<b>Elements</b>	Refer to the sub-categories of the practices in a dimension. There are six elements in each dimension. The elements are lists of practices or actions that groups are carrying out or should be striving to carry out.
<b>Core Practices</b>	Are the basic practices for WCE in each element.
<b>Extended Practices</b>	Are practices that ask groups to extend and build on the core practices.

### 3.1.1. *The Story of the QAF Flower*

The consultant who facilitated the pilot QAF project needed to find a way to explain the framework to groups in an easy-to-understand way. She came up with the visual of a tree or flower, like the one you have seen at the beginning of this section. Here is her way of explaining the framework. It may assist you to begin to understand it a bit better.

*Women's Community Education grew organically out of women's particular experiences, needs and situation in Ireland. If we are to think of the Framework as a whole we need to draw on images from nature – from the elements, from the way things naturally are. One image I use to help me relate to the Framework as a whole is that of a tree – a large oak tree that supports a multitude of different life forms within and around it – birds, insects, little mammals, large mammals and humans as well as all kinds of fungi, microbes and life forms that I don't even know about and haven't even heard of!*

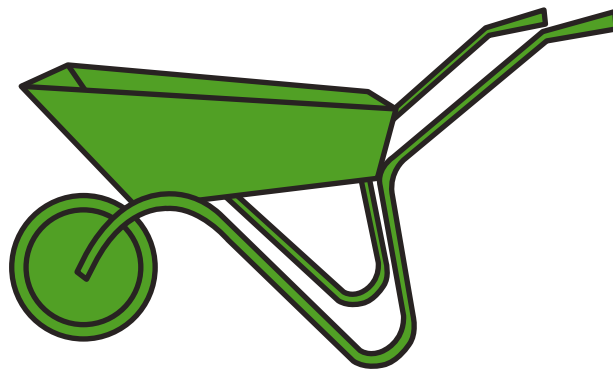
*Let's step back from the tree. The tree needs light and air to live. Light comes ultimately from the sun – whether it is shining or not, whether it is day or night – the sun is there. A constant. In terms of the framework our vision, aspirations and goals are to WCE what the sun, the wind, the rain is to life on earth and to the oak tree. Without it we wither up and die and are gone forever.*

*Move more closely to the tree. We know that it has deep roots going down into the ground, keeping it steady through the storms, taking up and storing nutrients from the earth. These roots are the principles of WCE. Unless rooted in a set of principles that nourish the work and keep it upright we also fall over and disappear. Without the strength and the nourishment coming through those roots the tree would die.*

*If we look again at the tree we can see its many branches, leaves and fruits. These parts of the tree equate with the four dimensions of women's community education. Coming really close to the tree then we see that the oak tree is both one organism and many, depending where we stand or sit or what catches our attention. The shape of the leaves might engross me, you might see the acorns, and someone else might see the outline of the branches and twigs or the way the lights and shadows play on the tree trunk. Someone else might be absorbed by the bark – yet it is always the same tree we are absorbed with.*

*There are certain constants that support the life of an oak tree – light, moisture, warmth, and a certain environment. In Framework terms the constants are the vision, aspirations and goals. Every oak tree has to have strong roots. In Framework terms the roots equate with the Principles. However, every individual tree is unique – a particular shape, size, it leans in one direction slightly or another and it is different in different seasons, it changes all the time – yet it is always definably an oak tree. Every women’s community education group is definably that and yet it is different from all other women’s community education groups.*

*That is what the Framework seeks to reflect and to respect – the constant essential features of WCE and the variables that change from one women’s community education group to the next, respecting the infinite variety of environmental factors that shape each oak tree.*



### **3.1.2. Case Study – St. Munchin’s Women’s Group**

The St. Munchin’s Women’s Group is a women’s group working out of their local family resource centre in Limerick City. They are a self-managing group who do not have a separate management committee. They have been together for many years. Every year they decide what programmes they would like to do and link with their local VEC who provides them with tutors for the courses they would like to do.

A long-standing member of the group and a worker from the Mid-West Community Development Support Agency worked together to lead the group through the best practice review process. The group went through the process at the core level of practice. The group discovered that they were doing all but six of the practices in the QAF at the core level. Their gaps in practice revolved around providing support for their participants (such as childcare), researching women’s lives to inform the direction of their work, networking and building their own ability to manage the group.

As a result of going through the process they made the decision to put in place some actions in order to strengthen their practice. They decided to:

- Identify forms of support available to help women participate and establish links with their local childcare working group
- Organise an annual education workshop to inform women in the community of their health and welfare entitlements
- Establish links with local development organisations, such as the Limerick Regeneration Agencies, the Paul Partnership and the Education Forum
- Establish links with local public and statutory agencies
- Hold a health workshop for local women
- Develop a welcome pack for new members, and
- Participate in consultation processes and inform them on issues that affect women's lives.

The group felt that the process, 'enhanced the group'. In order to keep continuous best practice review going in the group they decided that they would discuss the action plan twice a year. They also hoped to go through the full best practice review process once every five years.

### **3.2. Getting ready to go through the process**

The QAF assists groups to go through the best practice process. Each part of the QAF and the process that organisations can use to review their work in relation to it is set out in great detail throughout this guidebook. This section describes what organisations need to do in order to prepare to take on the process in their group.

#### **3.2.1. Creating a best practice working group**

This process is participatory. In other words, it involves a group of individuals connected to the organisation operating together to review and benchmark the work. Participatory also means that everyone has an equal say and each member of a group learns from the others.

In order to carry out a participatory review process in your organisation a best practice working group of six to ten members needs to be created. This group will be facilitated by two Leaders and will stay with the review process from beginning to end. Members of the working group can be drawn from:



- Staff
- Participants/learners
- Management committee
- Stakeholder groups, for instance funders or other agencies or groups that the organisation works with closely<sup>1</sup>
- Representatives from affiliates to the group (if you are a network).

If you are a small group, just starting out or are self-managing your whole group can go through this process. The only condition for becoming part of the group is an interest in and commitment to staying with the whole process.

### 3.2.2. *Selecting Leaders for the process*

As already indicated, two people who are in some way connected to the organisation need to be chosen, or volunteer to facilitate this process. It is their job to prepare for and facilitate meetings and to fill out any necessary documents as well as to keep all the evidence collected in one place. It will also be their job to read this guidebook from start to finish.

While some facilitation experience would be of value to people who choose to become Leaders, none is required, as all of the outlines for different parts of the process should be foolproof. Any questions that need to be asked in a meeting are set out and tips for facilitation are provided.

Basically what Leaders need is the confidence to lead the process, be able to work together as a team and be able to commit to the time needed to do the job.

If you are a manager or co-ordinator and are reading this guidebook and will be handing facilitation of the process over to two Leaders, it is extremely important that you understand that the Leaders will need to be supported to do their work. Support might mean readjusting staff workplans so that staff who are going to lead have enough room to take that responsibility on, or it might mean reimbursing management for costs incurred in leading the process.

Most importantly, it is essential for those who are responsible for the operations of the group to remember that Leaders are providing a service for the organisation. Ensuring that the process happens, that the appropriate people participate and the implementation of an action plan at the end of this process happens are a manager's or co-ordinator's responsibility.

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<sup>1</sup>*It would be important that representatives from these groups are from friendly groups who are already open to and positive about the work of the organisation. It would be helpful too, if they had a feminist or gender analysis.*

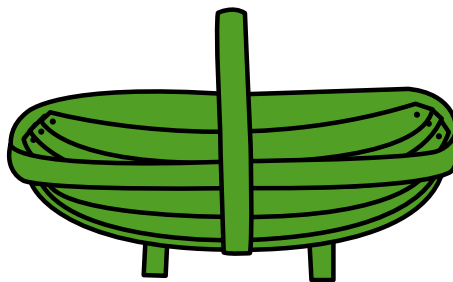
If your group is voluntary and does not have a management committee it means that your Leaders will need to facilitate you to divide up the responsibility for accomplishing the tasks in your action plan developed at the end of the review process.

### 3.2.3. *Committing to the process*

Organisations that want to go through the process using the QAF could usefully ask themselves these questions to check their commitment to the process:

1. Are we willing to set up a best practice working group of six to ten members (board and staff) who will be facilitated by two leaders from our organisation to review and benchmark the work we do?
2. Are we willing to commit to the steps and timing of the process set out in Section 3.3?
3. Are we willing to support the two Leaders from our group in this process by collectively owning the process, participating meaningfully at meetings and resourcing them to do their work?
4. Are we willing to demonstrate ownership of the process in our group by committing to gathering evidence of the quality work we do, creating an action plan and carrying out that plan?

If you can answer ‘yes’ to these questions then commitment is high enough for the group to go through the process.



### 3.2.4. *Collecting evidence*

Part of the requirement of most benchmarking processes is that organisations collect pieces of evidence to prove that they are doing what they say they are doing. Pieces of evidence are things that can be touched, seen or felt. The table below sets out some things that groups produce that can be evidence during the process. However, this list is not complete so organisations can be creative with the evidence they collect throughout the process.

- Photos
- Pamphlets
- Emails
- Web page
- Links on web page
- Meeting notes
- Meeting agendas
- Attendance lists
- Course outlines
- Pieces of craft work
- Evaluation forms
- Annual reports
- Budgets
- Accounts
- Staff descriptions
- Curriculum vitae (with identifying details taken out)
- Participant certificates of achievement
- Postal correspondence.

Groups will name a piece of evidence that can be collected for every practice in each dimension of the QAF. Each piece of evidence will need to be clearly labelled to show what practice it is evidence for. There are more instructions on collecting evidence in Section 6.

Any documentation or flipcharts recording the best practice review process and pieces of evidence are inserted into a portfolio of evidence. This portfolio could be a box, an art portfolio or a drawer in a filing cabinet.

It is the group's choice as to whether or not the worksheets and notes on flipchart sheets resulting from the process are typed up. It is not necessary to type up anything. However, some organisations have found that typing up the results of the process has formed the basis of a manual for the group, or a resource that tells other people 'how we do things around here'.

### **3.2.5. *Evaluating the process***

In order to evolve the framework and to ensure that the process has been of value to the group it will be important to take down reflections on the process and what it was like to go through it. For each step of the process that organisations go through there is an evaluation worksheet included so that groups can keep track and evaluate as they go along.

### 3.3. Steps and timing of the process

The table below sets out the steps and timing for the process. If an organisation has not been through the process, they must start at the beginning and go through the whole process at either the core or extended level (see the section below which allows groups to figure out what level of practice they are at). The organisation should set aside two days to do a complete review. When an organisation has done this exercise they review each dimension again once in between complete reviews of their work using the QAF.<sup>2</sup>

A group could go through the complete process of benchmarking once every five years if they want to do a complete review of their work. By running the process in this way – one complete review every five years and dimension reviews in between, the process becomes cyclical and continuous for an organisation.

When a group is doing a dimension review in between complete reviews, they need to decide if they will review the dimension at the core or extended level. The following guidelines are important to this exercise:

- If, when you first reviewed your work in relation to the dimension you did so at the core level of practice and had a lot of gaps in practice, you need to check if all the core gaps in practice are being addressed. If not, then the review should focus around recommitting to addressing those gaps
- If the core level gaps identified in your first review of the dimension have been or are being addressed, then it is time to look at the extended practices in the dimension to see if the group is doing them or would like to make plans to begin to do them
- If an organisation has reviewed its work at both levels of practice in a dimension then it should begin to look at how it can improve what it does in relation to the dimension.



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<sup>2</sup>So, depending on the time they have a group could work through one dimension a year, or every six months, or every three months. It is up to them at what interval they do a dimension review.

Here is an example of a cyclical best practice review process for a group:

<b>STEP</b>	<b>TIMING</b>	<b>WHAT SECTION OF GUIDEBOOK THIS STEP IS DESCRIBED IN</b>
Check organisational level of commitment to process	Up to group	Section 3.2.3
Create a Best Practice Working Group	One month	Section 3.2.1
Choose Leaders for the process	Up to group	Section 3.2.2
Put in place supports for Leaders and working group	Up to group	Section 3.2.2
Assess if organisation is going through process at core or extended level	One hour in a meeting between operations management and Leaders	Section 3.4
STEP 1 – Review Vision, Goals and Aspirations of WCE (Introductory session)	2 and ½ hours	Section 4
STEP 2 – Principle Review	½ day (4 hours)	Section 5
STEPS 3 to 6 – Dimension (Practice) Review	1 day (8 hours)	Section 6
STEP 7 – Preparation of Action Plan (including selection of next dimension to review)	½ day (4 hours)	Section 7
Dimension 1 – Review and preparation of Plan	½ day	Section 8.3
Dimension 2 – Review and preparation of Plan	½ day	As above
Dimension 3 – Review and preparation of Plan	½ day	As above
Dimension 4 – Review and preparation of Plan	½ day	As above
Review process starts again	Go to top of table	

### **3.4. Are we a core practice group or an extended practice group?**

This section contains a checklist to see if you are ready to go through the process at the core or both core and extended level. Remember, the core practices are the basics and the extended practices involve groups further developing or improving their practice dependant on a secure resource base.

#### ***3.4.1. What if we have already gone through the process at core and extended level?***

If an organisation has gone through the process at both the core and extended level then they can pick one of two options at this stage:

- 1) They can go through the whole process again and look at how they can improve on what they are doing, or
- 2) They can do dimension reviews, one at a time and when that is finished do a complete review. In this case, the dimension review can involve uncovering gaps at both core and extended level and/or finding practices that the group can improve upon.

See Section 8.2 for guidance on making this decision.

### 3.4.2. Checklist to figure out the level of practice of your group

Take a look at the following questions below and see whether you can answer 'yes' or 'no' to them.

QUESTION	Y (yes) or N (no)
1. Do we have a management committee?	
2. Do we have paid staff?	
3. Have we been around for more than five years?	
4. Do we run a number of programmes or activities at the same time?	
5. Have we ever produced and published research about women in our community or reports about our work?	
6. Are we a network or affiliate organisation?	
7. Do we run policy lobbying campaigns?	
8. Are we well known by politicians and/or local decision-makers?	
9. Do we sit on any of these structures? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The County Development Board</li> <li>• The Social Inclusion Committee</li> <li>• Our Area-based Partnership Board</li> </ul>	
10. Do we have core, multi-annual funding?	

If you can answer 'yes' to five or more of these then you should probably review your work both at the core and extended level. If you answered 'no' to five or more of the questions, you should probably review at the core level and then move into looking at the extended practices when you review the dimensions at regular intervals after going through the whole process once.

### **3.5. Different purposes, different processes – using the QAF in different ways to develop your organisation and plan for improvements**

You will probably have noticed that there is a section in this guidebook called *Other Ways to Use the QAF*. These are examples of different ways that groups who have gone through the process in this guidebook have used the QAF to guide them in other important activities that WCE organisations engage in. These processes do not have to be done as part of the best practice review process and are purely there as a resource for groups if they would like to try them out.

### **3.6. Structure of the guidebook**

The guidebook is laid out in the steps that organisations will follow as they go through the process. The part of the framework and the process to be used to review work in relation to it is presented together.

Participants in the Working Group do not need to know about the QAF in-depth to participate in the review. They can participate in a ‘learn as you go’ approach, learning and understanding different parts of the QAF as they review the group’s work in relation to it. At the beginning they can be shown the flower, given a very brief introduction to the different components of it and reassured that they do not need to grasp it all at the beginning but just be willing to be facilitated through the process.

Leaders and the operational manager/co-ordinator do need to have a grasp on the whole QAF and will need to have read Sections 1 through 8 of the book.

For each step there is a standard checklist of materials and/or resources Leaders need to prepare before and after each step of the process (see Appendix A), as well as specific worksheets that need to be filled out as you go along. Much of the work with the working group will be recorded on flipcharts and then transferred to the worksheets.

The description of each step in the process includes:

- A description of the part or parts of the QAF that groups will use to review their work during that step
- The aim and objectives of that step in the process
- A detailed facilitation guide to the step process - **anything written in italics** in the process outline should be written onto a flipchart sheet prior to the facilitator commencing their facilitation
- Tips or ideas for facilitating the step
- Information sheets with extra information necessary for the step but not included in the process outline
- Concrete examples of how groups can complete the parts of the process based on the work of other groups that have benchmarked their work using the QAF
- Documentation that can be filled out at the end of the step.

## SECTION 4.

### Step One

## Committing to the Vision, Aspirations and Goals of Women's Community Education

### 4.1. The Vision

The vision of women's community education is the achievement of equality for women across the social, cultural, economic and political spheres of life as well as the changes necessary to the structures and systems of society that are essential for this vision to be fulfilled.

Women's community education is guided and directed by this vision for women. Women's community education works to achieve this vision for all women, regardless of their backgrounds, geographic location, country of birth, income, sexual identity, religious beliefs, citizenship status, abilities and interests, age, disabilities, race or ethnicity.

### 4.2. The Aspirations

Women's community education aspires to being:

- **Accessible and enjoyable**

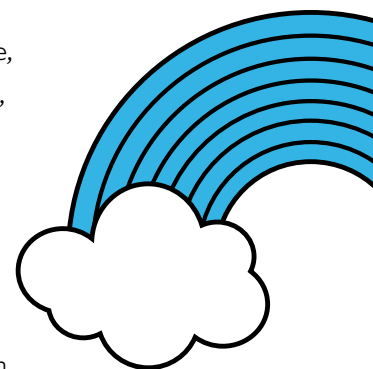
Women's community education organisations recognise that many women have experienced criticism, shaming, fear and control in their lives. In their work they aspire to making sure that women experience affirmation, recognition, dignity and leadership through their involvement with women's community education. Likewise, where women may have been restricted and isolated in other area of their lives, women's community education aspires to providing enabling and empowering experiences for women.

- **Intercultural, holistic and diverse**

Women's community education organisations make every effort to create an environment where women have a voice and a sense of belonging, where life experience and critical awareness matter and where hope, self-worth, and courage are supported.

- **Supportive of women fulfilling their sense of purpose in life**

Women's community education organisations struggle to make sure that women are fully supported to explore the different possible ways that each individual woman can fulfill her sense of purpose in life, can create her own



vision for equality and plan her own unique contribution to the world. They meet this hope by ensuring that women can bring their life knowledge and experiences into the activities in the organisation unrestricted. They also support women to fulfill their sense of purpose in life by creating opportunities for and recognising the collective contributions made by women involved with the organisation, whether they are staff, volunteers or learners.

### 4.3. The Goals

Women's Community Education is committed to achieving four goals - Recognition, Empowerment, Leadership and Equality.

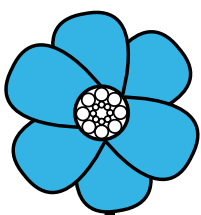
Women's community education commits to maintaining the cycle of recognition, empowerment, leadership and equality in its work and practice.

#### 4.3.1. *Recognition:*

Women's community education organisations work to achieve recognition for women and the work of women's community education groups. This goal means making women's achievements visible in the world, both for individual women and groups of women. Recognition is one of the four goals for women's community education because it develops pride, confidence and ambition and makes sure that achievements are acknowledged. When all groups of women are recognised, the result is that diversity is reflected and valued. Oftentimes, this goal is reached through celebration of women's achievements such as a graduation event.

#### 4.3.2. *Empowerment:*

This goal means making sure that individual women and groups of women get to choose and reach their own goals and ask for the assistance they might need to get there rather than someone else doing that for them. Empowerment cannot be achieved without recognition, because women need the confidence, self-worth and visibility created by recognition to become empowered. The empowerment of women is supported by getting them to share their ideas and knowledge, by valuing their life experience, and by promoting their participation and their collective voice.



**4.3.3. Leadership:**

Women’s community education organisations work to achieve leadership of women in a number of ways:

- They consult widely with women about their needs and respond to those stated needs so that barriers to women’s leadership are removed
- They work to create a world where women can take leadership by challenging the injustices, exclusion and discrimination that prevent women from becoming leaders
- They build the ability of women to become leaders by developing their skills, strength and confidence.

**4.3.4. Equality:**

Women’s community education works for equality by building an awareness of women’s inequality through consultation and dialogue. This consultation and dialogue happens within and outside the organisation. Women learners engage in consciousness-raising. The staff, volunteers and management of organisations raise women’s issues in the community, on representative groups and in activities with like-minded affiliate groups at regional and national level. Women’s community education challenges the injustices, inequalities and barriers that exclude women from equal participation in the structures and systems of society.

#### **4.4. (Step One) Committing to the Vision, Aspiration and Goals of Women’s Community Education and exploring key words**

In this step of the process you will facilitate your organisational working group to meet the following aim:

*To ensure that every member of our working group is dedicated to and understands what is involved in the best practice review process and has agreed that the organisation is committed to the vision, aspirations and goals of women’s community education.*

In this step your working group will:

- *Create a Best Practice Review Statement of Commitment*
- *Be presented with the QAF*
- *Learn about what is involved in reviewing and benchmarking the practice of the group/organisation*
- *Discuss the vision, aspirations and goals of women’s community education in relation to the work of the group/organisation*
- *Set dates for the rest of the workshops.*

## 4.4.1. Process for completing Step One

TASK	TIME ALLOTTED
1. Welcome the group and present the aim and objectives of the workshop to the group.	5 minutes
2. Create a best practice review process statement of commitment by asking the members of the group to complete this sentence and noting their responses on the flipchart:  <i>In order to ensure the success of this process in our group we commit to...</i>  Ask the group if they can agree to the statement as is or if changes need to be made. Once the statement is agreed, ask everyone in the group to sign it.	10 minutes
3. Taking the flower diagram of the QAF in this guidebook, present the QAF and the review process very briefly to your working group using the notes from Information Sheet 1. Point out to the group that they will learn about the QAF in more detail as they go along.	20 minutes
4. Read out the vision for women’s community education to the group as it is presented in the QAF and ask the group to finish this statement noting their responses underneath it with bullet points:  <i>Our group contributes to the vision for women’s community education by...</i>	20 minutes
5. Tell the group:  <i>This is our vision statement and will be inserted into our portfolio of evidence. Can we agree this or does it need to be revised?</i>  Revise the statement in accordance with the group’s discussion being careful to ensure consensus and then ask the group to sign the statement.	15 minutes
6. Read out the aspirations for women’s community education (these should be written out onto a flipchart sheet).	5 minutes

TASK	TIME ALLOTTED
<p>7. Taking your pre-prepared flipchart sheet with the aspirations table on it (as it is represented in the worksheet to be filled out for this process), take each aspiration in turn asking the group these questions:</p> <p><i>Is this one of our hopes for women who participate in our group/organisation?</i></p> <p><i>How do women and individuals who come into contact with our group know that this is a hope for the work that we do?</i></p> <p>Fill in the aspiration table as people call out their responses.</p>	30 minutes
<p>8. Break your group up into four small groups. Give each group a goal for women’s community education and ask each group to answer these questions in relation to each of the goals with up to four reflections:</p> <p>These are the goals of women’s community education:</p> <p><i>Why is it an important goal for women’s community education/your group?</i></p> <p><i>What are the some of the things we do to show our participants and the public that we are committed to reaching this goal?</i></p> <p>Ask each group to present the results of the exercise. Then ask the group to summarise the results of the last exercise by finishing this statement once or bullet pointing their reflections:</p> <p><i>We are committed to the vision and aspirations of women’s community education. We have discussed and are committed to maintaining the cycle of recognition, empowerment, leadership and equality in our work and practice. We demonstrate commitment to the goals by...<sup>3</sup></i></p> <p>When the group is finished, ask each participant to sign the flipchart sheet.</p>	30 minutes

<sup>3</sup>The object of this exercise is to create an inspirational statement in whatever fashion the group chooses, not to restate all of the responses to the reflection on the goals.

TASK	TIME ALLOTTED
<p>9. Ask each participant to take a look at all the work the group has completed today. Say <i>Today, we have looked at how our group realises the vision, aspirations and goals of women’s community education. This step is the first one in the process. Are we happy with the work we have done?</i> Note responses and thank participants for their commitment. Give each participant two sets of post-its (each set of a different colour) and ask them to write their responses to the following questions in relation to the workshop (one response per post-it).</p> <p><i>What worked?</i></p> <p><i>What didn’t work?</i></p>	10 minutes

### Tips

- This guidebook includes templates for creating a life size QAF flower. You can use this flower to present the QAF to the group, or you could build the flower as you go through each step of the process and post it on a wall in the room that you and your group will be working in. Other groups who have done the process also drew a blank flower and coloured in each bit of the flower as they started their review of it.
- When you are facilitating the part of the process about the goals of WCE you can do a rotating flipchart exercise to create energy. Each group works on one of the goal sheets for 5-7 minutes and then the sheets get passed clockwise from one group to the next until each group has had an opportunity to respond to the questions in relation to each goal.
- When your group is completing the commitment to the goals statement you could ask them to select one of the reflections from each goal flipchart sheet that they would most like highlighted in the statement and bullet point them on the commitment to the goals statement flipchart sheet.
- If your group is discovering what WCE is for the first time you can start this workshop with an exercise, which allows groups to do a simple exploration of the difference between WCE and other types of education. See Appendix D for a description of this exercise.
- Don’t forget – anything written in italics is supposed to be written on a flipchart sheet for the group to see.
- Also, there may be things that participants say that are interesting or that you need to note for later. Do not forget to choose which one of you will take those notes.

#### 4.4.2. *Information Sheet 1*

This sheet gives you the points that you can use to present the QAF and the best practice review process to your working group. You will need to lay out a picture or model of the QAF somewhere your group can see it and you will need to transfer the flow chart describing the process below onto a flipchart for your group.

#### **Introducing the QAF**

The women’s community education quality assurance framework (QAF) is a tool that groups can use to:

- Routinely review and evaluate all of the work that they do – including running programmes and the political work of struggling for equality for women
- Learn about and name the work of women’s community education groups
- Make visible the excellent work we do and help us to celebrate it
- Help us identify where and how we could improve the work we do
- Help us plan to make those improvements.

It was developed by AONTAS in consultation with WCE groups all around Ireland who both named the parts of it and tested a quality assurance or benchmarking process using it. We are going to use the QAF to review our own work. We are going to introduce the different parts of the QAF and the review process to you now. Please do not feel you have to understand it all in detail since you will learn more detail about every part of the QAF as we go along.

#### **Talking about the QAF**

- (Point to the QAF flower) Here is a visual representation of the framework. It is a flower which shows how the plant cannot survive without each part of it working together, just as all the aspects of WCE need to be present and working together for it to be quality WCE. We will point out each part of it and talk about it.

<b>PART</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Vision</b>	Refers to what the world would look like, if and when WCE organisations are successful in their work.
<b>Aspirations</b>	These are the hopes or ambitions for what WCE groups want women to experience of the opportunities that they provide for women.
<b>Goals</b>	These are the objectives for WCE or what it wants to achieve for women through WCE.
<b>Principles</b>	Refers to ideas that guide thought and action in WCE. Principles are beliefs that fuel the work and motivate us to keep going.
<b>Dimensions</b>	Are the categories of the day to day work or practice of WCE organisations
<b>Elements</b>	Refer to the sub-categories of the practices in a dimension. The elements are lists of practices or actions that groups are carrying out or should be striving to carry out.
<b>Core Practices</b>	Are the basic practices for WCE in each element.
<b>Extended Practices</b>	Are practices that ask groups to extend and build on the core practices.

- Basically we will look at each part of the QAF and see if our work matches it or not. We have a clear process for facilitating you to do that.

### The Whole Process

- Now we are going to tell you a little bit about what you are committing to.
- Here is a description of the best practice review process.

<b>STEP 1: Review Vision, Goals and Aspirations of WCE (Introductory session)</b>	2 and ½ hours
<b>STEP 2: Principle Review</b>	½ day (4 hours)
<b>STEPS 3 to 6: Dimension (Practice) Review</b>	1 day (8 hours)
<b>STEP 7: Preparation of Action Plan (including selection of next dimension to review)</b>	½ day
<b>Dimension 1: Review and preparation of Plan</b>	½ day
<b>Dimension 2: Review and preparation of Plan</b>	½ day
<b>Dimension 3: Review and preparation of Plan</b>	½ day
<b>Dimension 4: Review and preparation of Plan</b>	½ day
<b>Review process starts again</b>	

- We are doing our practice review at the (name what level core or extended) level.
- We can do the dimension review at whatever interval we want – 3 months, 6 months or one year.
- We can decide to do the whole process again in five years time if we want, or sooner.
- You can choose to opt out of the working group at the end of this process if you like or you can stay on.
- Are you ready to give it a go? Let’s get started.

#### 4.4.3. *Example of notes taken during this process*

Here is an example of a complete set of notes and documentation done for this part of the process.

#### **Statement of Commitment to the Process**

In order to ensure the success of the Best Practice Review process in our group we commit to:

- Mutual respect
- To listen to each other
- Actively participate
- Punctuality/time keeping
- Sending apologies in good time if we cannot attend
- Commit to the process
- Encourage each other
- Be open and honest
- Constructive criticism/no negative criticism
- Be non-judgemental<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup>This statement of commitment was developed by the Clare Women’s Network.

**Exploring how the Organisation Contributes to the Vision of WCE<sup>5</sup>**

Our Group contributes to the vision for women’s community education by:

- Facilitating a process for women to come together for interaction
- Celebration of difference
- Local, regional and national representation
- Offering a space for groups to meet, La Leche League, Singing Group and by offering tangible support for mother/toddler group, Birth Choice Clare
- Volunteers/Board of Management – Ensuring no penalty is involved for women by providing childcare and travel
- International Women’s Day celebrations are free of charge
- Supporting International Women’s Group to hold public talks free of charge
- Offering voter awareness training/community education events
- Raising awareness of 16 days of action against violence against women
- Media coverage, TV programmes, radio interviews, newspaper advertisements and articles
- Providing support to Birth Choice Clare and International Women’s Group
- Development of pension’s policy group in conjunction with other groups throughout Clare and the National Women’s Council of Ireland, participation in formal training and the outcome has been the development of the Clare Women’s Action Group
- Building the capacity of members of the Board and staff
- Library/computer access, information, advice and referral
- Lobbying politicians, writing letters
- Recognised by other groups, organisations and agencies as representing women
- Condemn injustices against women
- Hold courses; intercultural events, healing and cookery
- Networking among women.

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<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

4.4.4. Worksheets to be filled out at end of Step One

**Vision, Aspirations and Goals Recording Form**

In the table below please fill in the responses of your group for each item named in the right column directly across from it.

Our group contributes to the vision of WCE by...

**Aspirations of WCE (to also be copied onto flipchart for the session)**

ASPIRATION	IS IT OUR HOPE? (yes or no)	HOW DO THEY KNOW?
Accessible and enjoyable		
Intercultural, holistic and diverse		
Supportive of women fulfilling their sense of purpose		

**Did your group indicate any issues/challenges with the organisation showing it is committed to the aspirations?**

If so, please note them here.

**Commitment to the goals of WCE**

**We are committed to the vision and aspirations of women's community education. We have discussed and are committed to maintaining the cycle of celebration, empowerment, leadership and equality in our work and practice. We demonstrate commitment to the goals by...**

## SECTION 5.

### Step Two

## Checking how Rooted our Work is in the Principles of Women's Community Education

### 5.1. A note on Principles

This step of the process allows organisations to explore the principles underpinning WCE and to:

- Learn about or revisit each principle
- Develop a shared understanding of each principle
- See how 'rooted' their group's work is in each principle.

Before this step in the process is introduced it may be useful to define what a principle is again. In this framework, a principle is:

*The basis and motivation for action and/or the ethics and values that are given expression in the dimensions.<sup>6</sup>*

In other words, principles fuel the work that WCE groups do and help groups to determine the right course of action in WCE. The principles are given a concrete form in the practices of WCE which organisations will review their own work in relation to later in the process. The session outline presented in this section involves groups discussing and debating the principles.

Leaders facilitating the process need to remember this aim and remind their groups just to 'have a go' at these discussions. Since some of the discussions around principles may be abstract, some individuals may wonder if there is a right or wrong to what they say. Encourage participants to speak up and contribute. It is the discussion that is as important here as the outcome which is the working group's commitment to rooting the work of the organisation in the principles.

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<sup>6</sup>Developed by Eleanor McClorey, consultant who facilitated the pilot project for the QAF.

Women’s community education is rooted in four principles:

- Women-Centred
- Quality
- Equality
- Justice.

Women’s Community Education is grounded by its commitment to these principles. The four principles are the foundations on which the practice of women’s community education is built.

Through commitment to these principles women’s community education groups contribute to the achievement of the goals of WCE. Let’s turn to an in-depth explanation of each of the principles. Each explanation gives an overall description of the principle and then a breakdown of how the principle fuels the work towards each goal of WCE.

## **5.2. The Women-Centred Principle**

Women-centred education means commitment to education that is built on recognition of women’s contributions to family and community, recognition of the reality of women’s experiences, and recognition of the barriers that prevent women from participating fully and equally in society. The principle fuels the provision of educational opportunities that are relevant to women’s stated needs and that they are able to balance with the competing demands in their lives.

Women’s community education works from the principle of women-centred education and training through:

- Holistic and creative education that grows out of women’s lives, experiences and values and that is provided in a supportive, welcoming and non-threatening environment
- Education that is open to all women
- Education that is ambitious for women
- Education that encourages social and political awareness
- Education that enables women to challenge social structures that have a negative effect on their lives.

**The women-centred principle in women’s community education****A. RECOGNISES WOMEN’S LIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Welcomes all women, concerns itself with all aspects of women’s lives and empathises with the reality of women’s experiences.
- Believes that education is a shared process developed together through connection, communication and dialogue.
- Understands and seeks to accommodate the demands and pressures that go with women’s responsibilities as carers and nurturers as well as workers and learners.
- Is aware of, marks and celebrates women’s achievements and the process of transformation in women’s lives.
- Is ambitious for women and supports women to be ambitious for themselves and for each other.

**B. EMPOWERS WOMEN**

- Acknowledges women’s life skills, knowledge and learning and women’s contributions to family, community and society.
- Offers women a place to bring out their talents and skills, reclaim self-worth and value, gain confidence and build self-esteem.
- Supports reflection on women’s journeys through life and builds pride and confidence in abilities and achievements.
- Acknowledges and seeks to address the struggles women encounter in their everyday lives.
- Creates opportunities for women to exercise choice and to bring about desired changes in their lives.

**C. PROMOTES WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP**

- Develops women’s capacity for leadership and creates opportunities for women to exercise leadership.
- Develops women’s confidence and the ability to take a stand on issues that impact on women’s lives.
- Makes links between personal experiences, collective social experiences and structures of power.
- Encourages women to build political awareness and to take action together on issues that impact on their lives .

**D. PROMOTES EQUALITY**

- Works to support women’s access to education and addresses barriers to access and progression in education.
- Understands education as a process where members, staff and management committees are on a journey together as equals.
- Challenges exclusion and marginalisation across the nine equality grounds specified in the Equal Status Act, 2000.<sup>7</sup>
- Brings a gender perspective to analysis of experience and of society.
- Facilitates the development of critical awareness of the structural inequalities which underpin many of the life challenges women encounter.
- Creates opportunities to bring about social change.
- Creates opportunities for understanding and analysis of political and social development, of history and current issues.
- Sees women’s community education as part of a local, regional, national and international movement of women that is addressing barriers to women’s full participation in society.

**5.3. The Equality Principle**

The principle of equality means a commitment to the need to address the conditions that limit women’s freedoms and choices and the attitudes and behaviours that create fear in women’s lives, such as barriers to education and income, racism, domestic violence, rape, pornography and all practices that deny women’s rights in their homes, communities and wider society.

**Women’s community education works from the principle of equality through:**

- Seeking to be inclusive of all women.
- Building and maintaining equal relationships between all involved in women’s community education as members, staff and management committees.
- Celebration of difference including differences in life experiences, in culture and language, and in skills, talents and abilities.
- Identifying barriers to women’s participation in education and addressing these barriers.
- Seeking adequate resources to address barriers to equality.

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<sup>7</sup>Go to [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie) for an explanation of the Equal Status Act, 2000.

**The equality principle in women’s community education****A. RECOGNISES WOMEN’S LIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

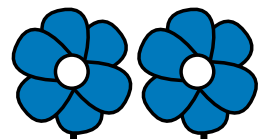
- Values all the roles that women take up in their lives including the roles of learner, worker (paid and unpaid) and carer.
- Creates an inclusive and non-judgemental environment that recognises and values women’s different experiences and circumstances and the diversity of women’s lives.
- Promotes the value and worth of women’s lives and experiences in a society where women have not achieved equality.
- Welcomes diversity – diverse communities of women and women who do not feel part of any community.

**B. EMPOWERS WOMEN**

- Relates to each woman as an individual, as well as part of a group and encourages sharing with each woman having an opportunity to be heard.
- Believes that the experiences of belonging and being heard make a difference in women’s lives and in work for equality.
- Creates an environment that supports acceptance of self and others, that supports respect, feeling included and challenges judgmental attitudes towards others.
- Seeks to address the resource needs that women have so they can have equal opportunities in and access to education by providing disability access, childcare, elder care, transport, and appropriate educational resources.
- Challenges the barriers to women’s equality.
- Works for freedom and safety for women.

**C. PROMOTES WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP**

- Promotes a model of women’s leadership that involves placing an importance on inclusion, consultation, and the development of responses to what women identify they want and need from education.
- Offers women the opportunity to exercise leadership.
- Recognises women being present and visible in leadership roles as one of the markers of equality.
- Challenges the invisibility, lack of representation and marginalisation of women in leadership arenas.
- Promotes equality, transparency and working collectively as women’s community education groups.
- Understands and values diversity.



**D. PROMOTES EQUALITY**

- Analyses how education’s resources and privileges are accessed and identifies the blocks and barriers to access to education for women.
- Contributes to equality through awareness-raising, communications and the creation of new and more equal education opportunities.
- Recognises that the achievement of equality within education requires adequate resources.
- Challenges attitudes and practices that threaten the equality of participation by women’s community education organisations in social structures.
- Believes that the achievement of equality is important to every group in society regardless of status – equality is about everyone, involves everyone and brings benefits to everyone.

**5.4. The Justice Principle**

Justice is about recognising and righting the wrongs that have been done to women by a society in which they are undervalued and discriminated against. Believing in justice for women means raising awareness of the injustices experienced by diverse groups of women in Ireland, creating opportunities to highlight and challenge injustice and confront the lack of action for, indifference and resistance to the achievement of justice for women.

**Women’s community education works from the principle of justice through:**

- A process of empowerment that values the full range of achievements – personal, political and collective – of the education process.
- Tackling the barriers that restrict equal access for women in education and training.
- Actively challenging the injustices encountered by women and the oppression and subordination of women in Irish society.

**The justice principle in women’s community education****A. RECOGNISES WOMEN’S LIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Is aware of and promotes the message that women have unequal access to choices, to resources and to power and influence relative to men.
- Challenges the differences in resources and power and influence between men and women.
- Makes justice for women a reality, visible in the world, through women’s community education.
- Celebrates women’s community and diversity and challenges the injustices that women experience in Irish society.

**B. EMPOWERS WOMEN**

- Recognises that many women as children were accorded less access to education and restricted choices in education.
- Recognises that many women in their childhoods and adolescence were failed by the education system in Ireland, that such failure continues, and that permanent hurt and harm was caused by the shaming and other abuses that were part of the education system.
- Recognises that education in Ireland is class – biased. For instance, whether or not someone is able to achieve in the formal school system may be linked to their parents being able to afford to pay for grinds or other types of educational support.
- Recognises that mainstream education uses methods of assessment and accreditation that privilege one type of intelligence over other types of intelligence. This way of working contributes to a deeply flawed system that continues to fail and exclude many girls and young women.
- Builds awareness of injustice in women and develops their confidence, knowledge and belief in women’s entitlement to justice in education and in society.
- Provides supports including child and elder care supports that allow women to move into and through education.

**C. PROMOTES WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP**

- Commits to fairness, even-handedness, inclusion, consultation and openness in its organisation and work.
- Leads the fight to tackle the barriers and blocks that restrict access and progression for women to fulfil their sense of purpose in life.
- Provides education that empowers women to address injustice.
- Works to transform the social, cultural and political structures and systems that have marginalised women and to establish the conditions necessary for women to hold positions of leadership in society.

**D. PROMOTES EQUALITY**

- Establishes women’s right and entitlement to justice and engages in the struggles that are an essential part of justice-making.
- Creates spaces in the public domain where women can identify and address justice issues and challenge the injustices women encounter.
- Engages with political systems, works at raising awareness, and challenges barriers to the achievement of justice for women.
- Keeps channels of communication and dialogue open and seeks support for social and structural change.

## 5.5. The Quality Principle

The principle of quality means commitment to a form of education that carries a vision of the best that is possible for women and promotes excellence. The criteria for quality, or excellence in WCE are unique and may be different to how other stakeholders, like funders or partner organisations define quality practice. For instance, an attractive, comfortable physical learning environment is an essential sign of quality in WCE. Women’s Community Education works from the principle of quality education and training through:

- Investing in the nurture, care and consideration of participants
- Taking a holistic women-centred and women-led approach to education that meets participants needs
- Valuing all stages of the education, training and lifelong learning process
- Commitment to the qualities that make women’s community education different to traditional education
- Demonstrating commitment to how women’s community education defines quality in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of its work.
- Making every effort to be a best practice WCE organisation.

### **The quality principle in women’s community education**

#### **A. RECOGNISES WOMEN’S LIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Encourages collaboration – working together and a sense of togetherness in shaping and delivering quality education and training.
- Contributes to quality communication: listening and being listened to, openness and respect.
- Pays attention to details: believes that attention to detail is essential in quality provision.

**B. EMPOWERS WOMEN**

- Involves and mentors members, provides them with supports throughout the education process and is woman-centred rather than provider-centred.
- Offers a confidential environment where women’s stories can be heard.
- Brings the knowledge, experience and expertise of all together to create a shared learning environment.
- Builds an atmosphere of trust through communication and participation.
- Requires trainers and facilitators with skills, knowledge and experience in women’s community education.
- Builds up skills, knowledge and experience in adult, community and women’s education.
- Encourages questioning, flexibility and dialogue.
- Has clear outcomes which contribute to enhanced quality of life and the expansion of life choices for women.

**C. PROMOTES WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP**

- Is owned and directed by women who are involved in women’s community education and standards are set with and by them.
- Maintains quality organisations with voluntary and paid workers holding clear roles and responsibilities dedicated to women’s community education.
- Promotes quality practice in all aspects of the work including documentation, record-keeping and financial systems.
- Stands for accountability and transparency.
- Promotes sustainable models of work.

**D. PROMOTES EQUALITY**

- Values quality assurance or benchmarking processes in education. In other words, contributes to a collective of WCE organisations that have evaluated the standard of what they do so that women around Ireland have equal access to quality WCE.
- Seeks to promote the WCE defined signs of quality and quality outcomes of education so that WCE organisations are perceived as and treated as equal to other education providers in Ireland.
- Emphasises being part of a community or collective of WCE organisations.
- Offers relevant and appropriate accreditation for education and training programmes if it is desired by learners.
- Seeks to influence structures and systems that negatively impact on quality of life for women in society.
- Encourages innovation – creative thinking and new ideas – in addressing barriers to equality.

## 5.6. Process for Step Two

The aim of this step of the process is:

*To ensure that every member of our working group is committed to and understands the four principles of women’s community education*

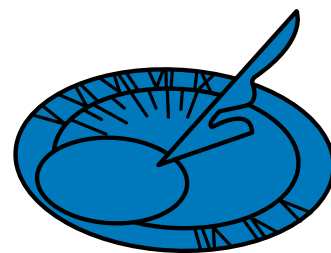
In this step of the best practice review process your working group will:

- *Review the working group Statement of Commitment*
- *Review the goals for women’s community education*
- *Discuss their own understandings of each of the principles of women’s community education*
- *Compare and discuss their understandings against what is written about the principles in the QAF*
- *Assure how rooted the work of their organisation is in each of the four principles of women’s community education.*

5.6.1. *Process for completing Step Two*

TASK	TIME ALLOTTED
1. Welcome the group and present the aim and objectives of the workshop to the group.	5 minutes
2. Post the working group’s Statement of Commitment on the wall and read it out to the group checking that the group is still committed to it.	5 minutes
3. Turning to your pre-prepared flipchart with the list of goals for women’s community education on it and a statement that describes each goal, review the different goals of WCE with the group (see Information Sheet 2 for an example).	5 minutes
<p>4. Turn to the pre-prepared flipchart sheet with descriptions of the four principles on it and read out the description of the women-centred principle to the group. Place the pre-prepared women-centred principle map (see Information Sheet 4) in front of the group and break the group up into four small groups. Divide the group into four small groups. Ask each group to go to a goal on the map and to nominate a scribe. Tell them that they are to feed in using their experience of the work of the organisation. Ask them to complete the statement at the top of the each corner of the map once or twice.</p> <p>Give each group 5 minutes for each goal and then ask each group to move to the right and work on the next goal.</p>	20 minutes
<p>6. Give each person a print out of the full explanation of the women-centred principle. Taking each goal in turn read out what is written about it in relation to the quality principle. Then, read out what the group have done on the map for each of the goals. Get the whole group to take a look at the map and ask these questions:</p> <p><i>Does our map fit? If no, how does it not fit?</i></p> <p><i>Can we agree that this map shows that we understand this principle and can see how our work is rooted in it?</i></p> <p>Make any changes necessary based on the discussion and/or take notes on the flipchart that describe where further discussion/work may need to take place during the action planning process.</p>	15 minutes

TASK	TIME ALLOTTED
<p>7. Turn to the prepared Root Chart (see Information Sheet 5). Ask the group to choose where the ‘organisation’ is on the chart by asking them this question:</p> <p><i>Based on the map before us how well rooted is this principle in the work of our organisation/group?</i></p> <p>Here it is important for the facilitator to ask prompting questions like – ‘tell me a bit more about that’ or ‘what makes you assign that score?’ when there are diverging opinions as this can provide valuable information for how a group can root their work more deeply in a principle.</p>	10 minutes
<p>8. Now ask the group: <i>What could we do to root this principle more deeply in our work, if at all? And, how could we make people who come into contact with our groups more aware of it?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take note of ideas and point out that the group will return to these ideas when they are creating an action plan.</li> </ul>	10 minutes
<p>9. Repeat steps 1 through 9 for the other three principles.</p>	
<p>10. Thank the group and start a round of applause for their hard work and to acknowledge the amount of work that they have identified that the group/organisation engages in.</p> <p>Ask participants to do the:</p> <p>What worked?</p> <p>What didn’t work?</p> <p>Evaluation (see Appendix C) on their way out and close the workshop.</p>	



### Tips

- If you prefer, rather than reading out a brief description of what each principle is about to your group you can get your group to create their own shared understanding of each one. Just ask the group to finish this statement and bullet point their responses to it:
  - *if members of a group or organisation believe that the (fill in the principle here) principle is essential in women’s community education they believe that education should be....*

This method takes a little more time than just reading them the brief description of the principle given in this guidebook so you will need to build that in. Also, it is important as facilitators to work with the group to flesh out how each principle is different to the next one

- If participants are having trouble with the principle maps you can prompt them by getting them to think about the importance of the principle using this question: “If we didn’t believe in this principle what would happen in relation to each goal of women’s community education?” Then, ask them to turn what they have said into a positive statement.

**5.6.2. Information Sheet 2 – Goals Descriptions**

These are the descriptions of the goals given in the QAF. Copy them onto a flipchart sheet and have them posted somewhere on the wall in the room throughout the review process.

<b>RECOGNITION</b>	WCE works to achieve recognition of women’s lives and achievements both for individual women and groups of women.
<b>EMPOWERMENT</b>	WCE works to make sure that individual women and groups of women choose and reach their own goals rather than doing it for them.
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	WCE builds, gives and takes leadership for women.
<b>EQUALITY</b>	WCE works to achieve equality through consultation and dialogue and to challenge injustice.

**5.6.3. Information Sheet 3 – Principles Descriptions**

These are brief descriptions about each of the principles. You can copy them onto a flipchart sheet or as many sheets as it takes. Keep them posted on a wall in the room throughout the review process.

<b>WOMEN-CENTRED</b>	The principal that fuels the provision of education that is holistic and creative taking into account the responsibilities that women have and what they say they want for their educational journey.
<b>EQUALITY</b>	Is a commitment to addressing the conditions that limit the freedom and choices of women individually and collectively in Irish society.
<b>JUSTICE</b>	Fuels the work that WCE groups do by making a commitment to believing in justice for women and challenging the injustices they face.
<b>QUALITY</b>	Is a commitment to a form of education that carries a vision of the best that is possible for women and promotes excellence.

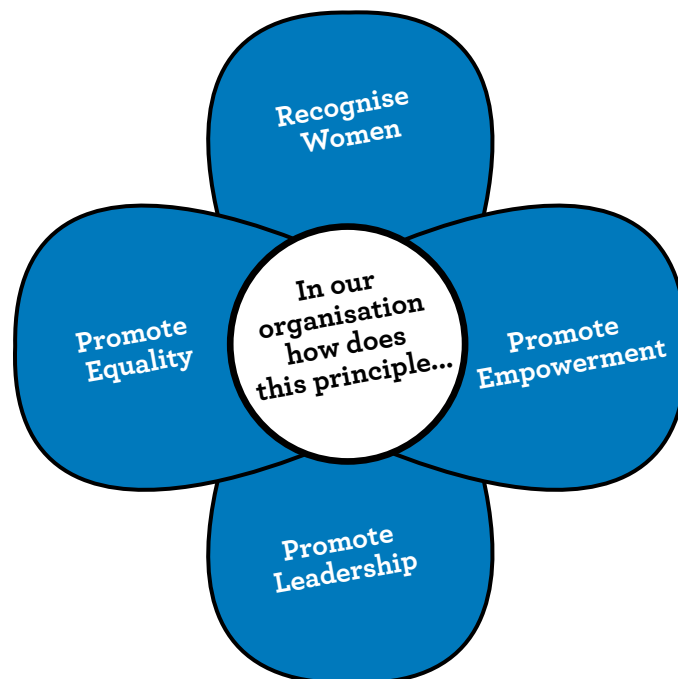
#### 5.6.4. Information Sheet 4 – The Principle Map

The principle map is a tool that can be used for groups to begin to look at their own understanding of each of the principles of WCE starting from their experience of the organisation. You then compare the map your group comes up with against the text about the principle in the QAF and discuss points that group members raise when you do that.

Usually what working groups put in their principle map echoes what is in the QAF. The principle review is a learning exercise and involves dialogue and debate. The only thing that your group needs to accomplish in this bit of the process is a discussion of the principle and a commitment to continue to root the work of the organisation in each principle. Once that is accomplished, the working group can move onto reviewing the work of the organisation in relation to the dimensions of WCE.

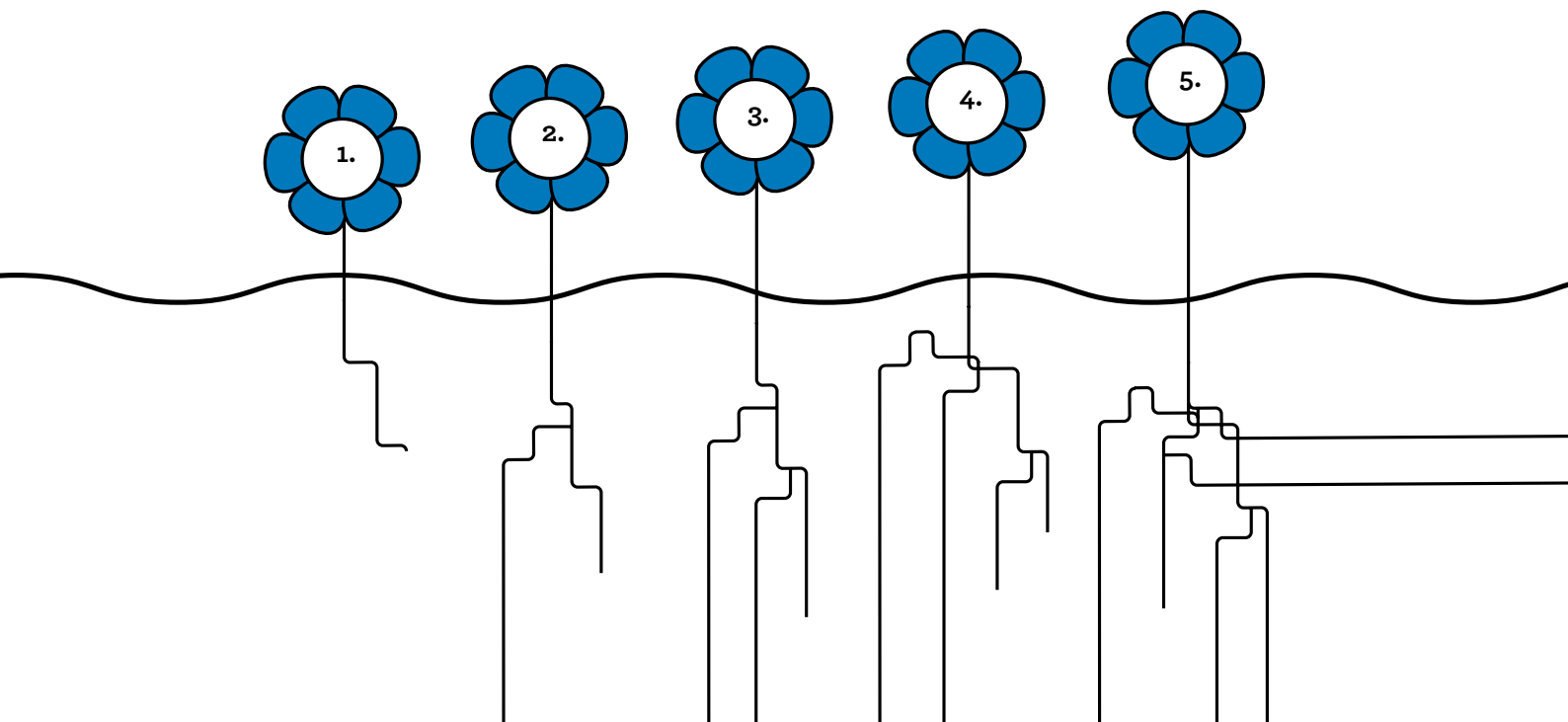
For each principle you fill out a map like the one below. These maps are usually drawn onto four pieces of flipchart paper taped together.

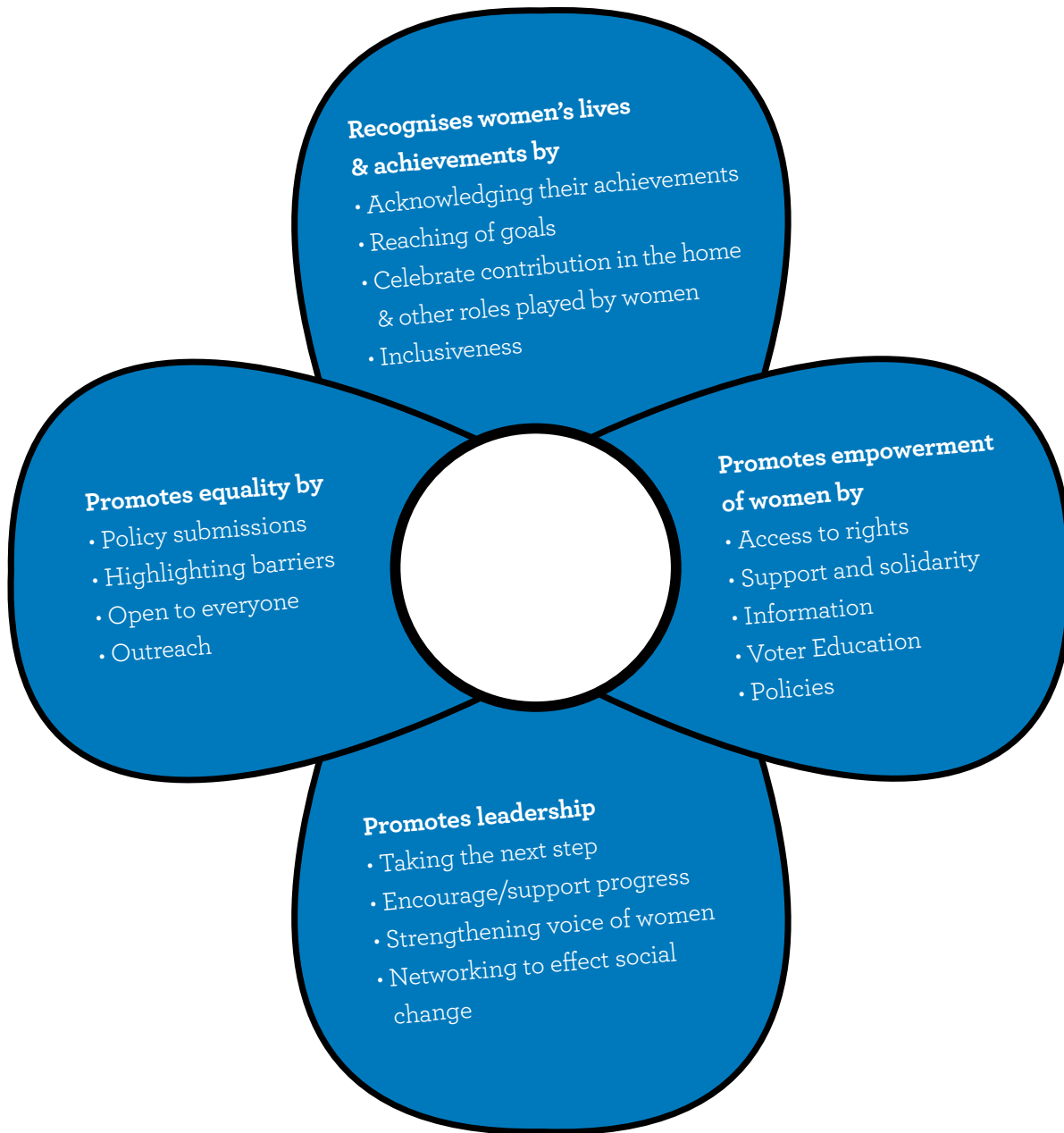
**Draw the map below on four pieces of flipchart paper taped together.**



5.6.5. *Information Sheet 5 - Example of a Root Chart*

1.	In danger of being rooted up
2.	Somewhat rooted
3.	Well rooted
4.	Very well rooted
5.	Deeply rooted



**5.6.6. Sample of completed Principle Map**How do we as an organisation believe quality...<sup>8</sup><sup>8</sup>Equality map completed by the Solas Women’s Group in Ballymun.

*5.6.7. Worksheets to be filled out at the end of Step Two*

**Work we Need to do Principles Recording Form**

During this workshop you and your working group discussed all of the principles of WCE and how rooted the work of your organisation is in each of them. On this form you need to record any actions/work your group decided they needed to do as a result of these discussions. Please fill in the tables below:

**Discussion of Women-Centred Principle**

What was the score on your root chart? .....

Comment/Action	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

**Discussion of Equality Principle**

What was the score on your root chart? .....

Comment/Action	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

**Discussion of Quality Principle**

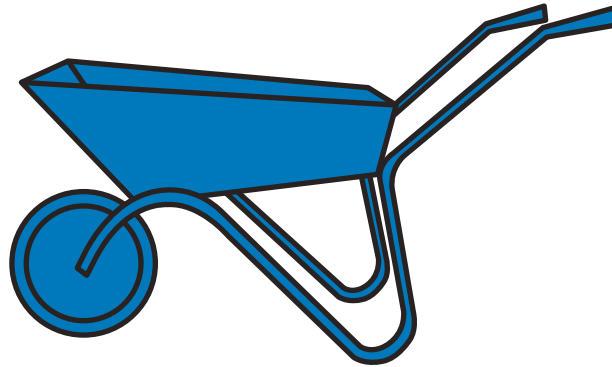
What was the score on your root chart? .....

Comment/Action	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

**Discussion of Justice Principle**

What was the score on your root chart? .....

Comment/Action	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	



### 5.7. Case Study – The Southside Women’s Group

The Southside Women’s Group are a small, self-managing women’s community education group of six women located in Limerick City. They began as a group of women who got together to do a personal development course taught by a local VEC tutor out of their local Family Resource Centre. After the course ended they decided that they wanted to stay up and running as a women’s group. It was at this stage of their development that they started the WCE benchmarking process.

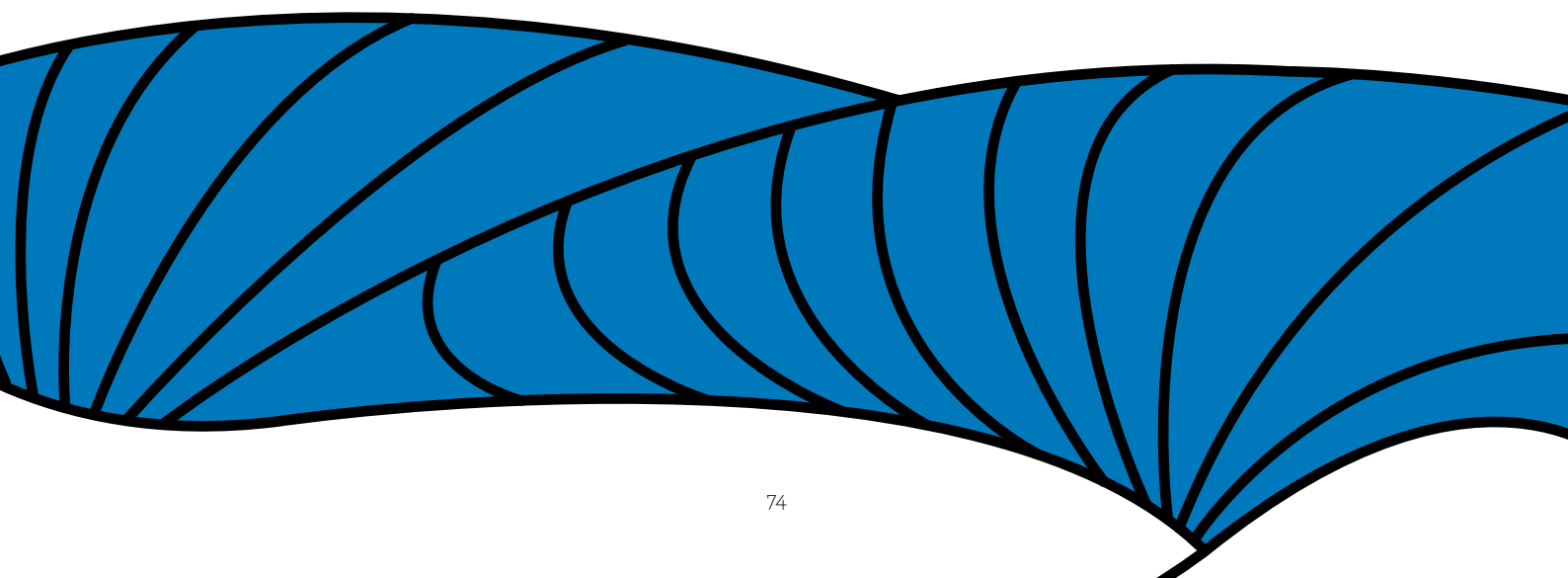
The group did their review process at the core level of practice, because they were a fairly new group without a separate management committee. Despite their newness, they discovered that they only had ten gaps in their core practice across all of the dimensions in the QAF, mostly within the ‘Rooted in the Reality of Women’s Lives’ dimension.

In order to address their gaps in practice they came up with the following actions:

- Meet members of the group with a smile and a nice handshake
- Develop booklets for new members with information on local education in the community
- Get in contact with the VEC to find out information on childcare support and other educational opportunities in the local area
- Check with women to make sure that the course times and content suited their members
- Work with the Family Resource Centre to find funding and a suitable premises.

This group of women had not really been involved in any other groups before this point, nor had they any experience of the WCE QAF. They were able to understand and use the QAF to look at their work without difficulty. The Leaders who facilitated the group through the process said, “It gave us lots of confidence to keep the group together and get us working together”.

Each member of their group participated in making sure the actions they decided on were carried out. They also decided that any new members to the group would get to know the QAF and that the framework would be “used at all times to help progress our group”.



## SECTION 6.

# The Dimensions of Women's Community Education

### 6.1. A note on Dimensions

As already indicated, the dimensions of WCE describe the day-to-day work of WCE organisations. A dimension is a category or groups of actions that seem to fit together. There are four dimensions to the work of WCE groups:

- The Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives Dimension
- The Women-Led Dimension
- The Political Dimension
- The Strategic Dimension.

In each section describing the dimension you will be given a clear description of what each dimension is about. Each dimension is further divided into six elements which are sub-groups of practices in the dimension. Each element is also described clearly in the relevant section.

#### 6.1.1. *Reviewing your work in relation to the Dimensions*

Women live in a political, social and cultural environment that excludes many women from equal access to education and employment, the exercise of real choice in their lives and from taking up leadership roles in society. Women's community education is not just about providing courses for women learners. Women's community education is a women-led, political and strategic education process. It is rooted in the complex and diverse realities of women's lives where organisations both provide educational opportunities for women, but also focus on collective empowerment and the achievement of equality for women.

The dimensions contain the practices that define how women's community education organisations go about doing the work described above. Women's community education groups and networks benchmark their work by reviewing each of the practices in these dimensions and elements and answering the following questions in relation to each practice:

- Do we do it?
- How do we do it?
- How can we evidence it?

This section provides the step-by-step guide that will assist groups to go through this questioning. Different groups may indicate how they do a practice in different ways, because the QAF is meant to respect the independent or different ways of doing things that each organisation might have. However, for each practice, a concrete example of 'how' groups do it is offered as well as what evidence of each practice could be. **Remember, your group's answers could be different to the examples offered.**<sup>9</sup>

In order to make keeping track of the practices in the review easier, each dimension, element and practice has a reference number or letter. Each dimension has a number from 1 to 4. Then each element is numbered from one to six in the dimension and each practice with a letter of the alphabet. The diagram below shows you how practices are referenced in the QAF.

If a practice has the reference 1.2.c.a	
1.	Refers to the dimension – in this case Rooted in the <i>Reality of Women's Lives</i>
2.	Refers to the element – in this case it would be 'Inclusion' practice
c.	Refers to this practice being a core practice. If it were an extended practice there would be an 'e'
a.	Refers to the practice itself

<sup>9</sup>Examples are an amalgam of practices of the groups who went through the pilot and mainstreaming phases for the QAF as well as the author's knowledge of the practice of other WCE groups in Ireland.

Again, this part of the best practice review involves looking at each practice listed in each of the dimensions set out over the next few pages and seeing whether or not your group actually does them or not. For those practices that you are not doing you will come up with a plan at the end of the review to help you begin to do them. Therefore, when you and your group are reviewing the work of your group in relation to the dimensions you do not have to come up with ideas to address gaps in practice at this stage. The planning phase gives your group the time and space needed to come up with actions to address gaps in practice.

However, groups may spontaneously come up with ideas during the dimensions review. Rather than discuss them fully, note them so that they can be discussed in full during the planning phase.

The documentation that you need to fill out in regard to the dimension review is at the very end of this chapter. You can work through all four of the dimensions in one day, or break your review of them up into the slots that are convenient for your working group.

### *6.1.2. Process for completing Steps Three to Six*

This process is the one you will use every time you review the work of your group in relation to each dimension of the QAF. The elements and practices contained in each dimension are set out after the process description below.

#### **The aim of the dimension review is:**

*To ensure that our group/organisation's work is committed to and benchmarked in relation to the four dimensions of women's community education.*

#### **In this step of the process your working group will:**

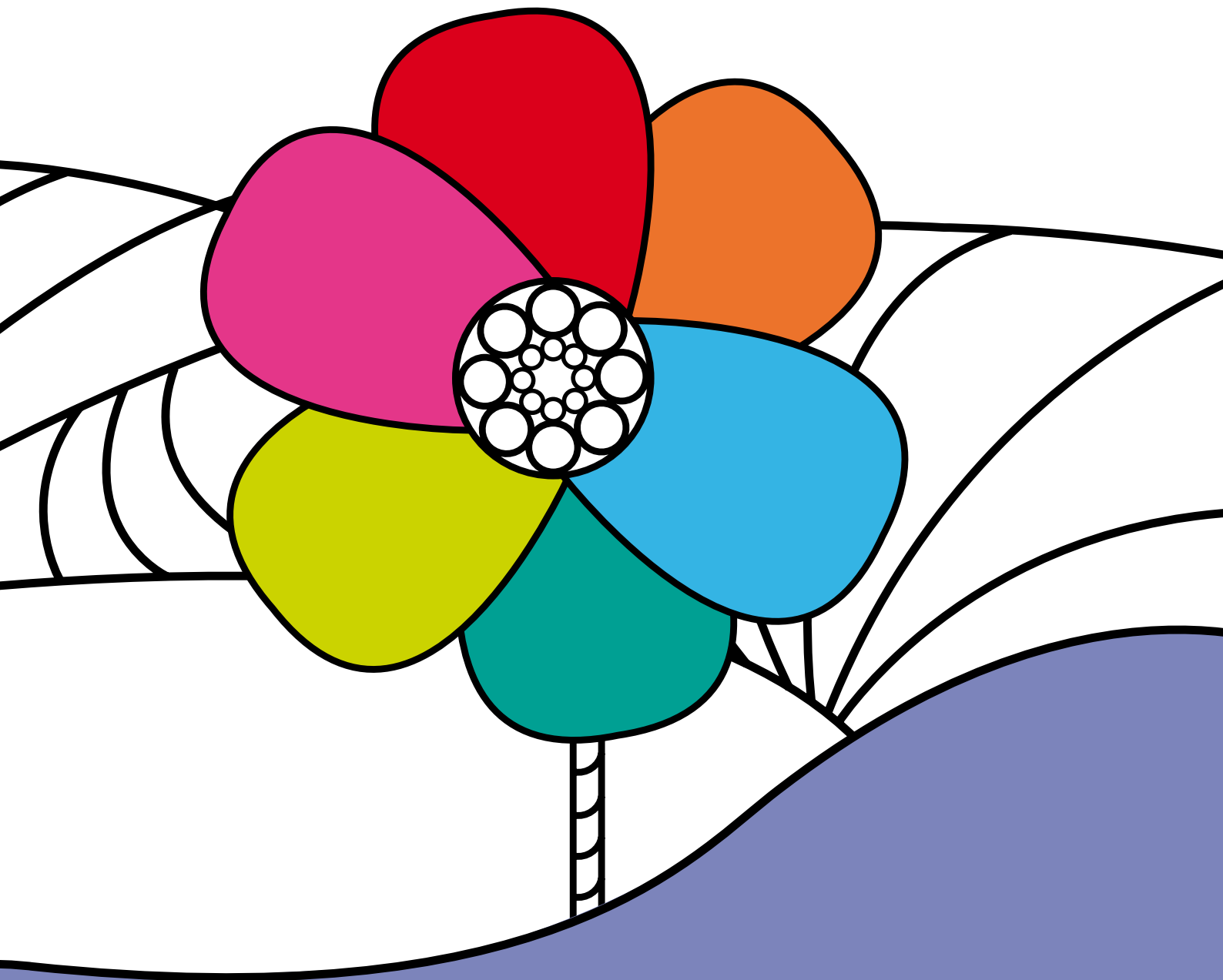
- *Learn about each dimension to the work of women's community education groups;*
- *Benchmark the organisation's work in relation to all of the elements in all the dimensions*
- *Agree responsibility for collection of pieces of evidence*
- *Create a list of practices that the group will have to make plans to develop during the planning phase.*

TASK	TIME ALLOTTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome the group and tell them the aims and objectives of the session and read out the group's Statement of Commitment.</li> </ul>	5 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefly review the work that the group has done so far. Review what dimensions and elements describe in the context of the QAF. Tell the group that the first dimension they are going to benchmark their work in relation to is the <i>Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives</i> dimension and give them a brief description of what the dimension is all about. Say that you have a simple process for enabling the group to review the work of the group in relation to it.</li> <li>• Give each member of your group a photocopy of the description of the dimension at the beginning of each subsection in this chapter and each element in the dimension you are reviewing.</li> </ul>	10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lay the pre-prepared elements charts on the floor/table in front of the group (See Information Sheet 6). Take the group through the description of each element in the dimension you are reviewing. Say, <i>As you can see each element has a set of practices in it that makes up that element of women's community education. Today we are going to find out if we are doing the practices listed under each element or not.</i></li> </ul> <p>Explain the idea of evidence and point to the flipchart sheet that you will have posted somewhere in the room that lists different types of evidence. State that there may be other types of evidence that are not listed.</p>	10 minutes

TASK	TIME ALLOTTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divide the group into six groups (or pairs). Point out that breaking the group up will help them progress this aspect of the review within the time frame for the workshop but that there will still be time for full group discussion. Give each group one of the flipchart sheets with a pre-prepared elements chart on it. Ask each group to read the description of the element they have in front of them. They can then go through each practice under the element they have been assigned at the level that has been decided for your group (i.e. 'core' or 'extended') and from the perspective of their group/organisation discuss the answers to the following questions: <i>Do we do it?</i> <i>How do we do it?</i> <i>How can we evidence it?</i> <i>Who might be able to collect the evidence?</i></li> </ul> <p>Point out that if participants find it difficult to think about evidence for a practice that the group will be focusing on this during the next part of the session.</p>	20 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Now bring the group back together and one-by-one take each element chart and present it to the group posting it on the wall around the room. As you review each sheet, focus on the gaps in practice identified or where participants filled in that the group did not do the practice. Double check that nos and gaps are correct.</li> <li>• Also double check that responsibility for collecting pieces of evidence has been assigned.</li> </ul>	60 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask participants to tour the sheets and then get the group to answer this question: <i>Based on a review of the work we do in relation to this dimension are we strong, on shaky ground or in uncharted territory in relation to it?</i></li> </ul>	10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Point out to the group the gaps in practice identified in the workshop and ask, <i>Are we agreed that during the action planning meeting that we will talk about how to address these gaps?</i></li> <li>• Thank the group and start a round of applause for their hard work and to acknowledge the amount of work that they have identified that the group/organisation engages in. Ask participants to do the: <i>What worked?</i> <i>What didn't work?</i> <i>Evaluation on their way out and close the workshop or move on to the next dimension.</i></li> </ul>	5 minutes

### *Tips*

- If there are not enough people in your working group for pairs then facilitators should participate in this exercise as well. If your group prefers, you can divide the group into three groups and give each group two elements to work through.
- Do not forget to put the practice reference numbers in the first column of the elements flipchart or ask your groups to do it when they are reviewing the practices in the element that they have been given to review.
- If you want to energise the elements review you can rotate the elements charts around the group. So, if you have six pairs working on one element each, you could ask each pair to just review two practices in the element and then pass their sheet clockwise to the next group. By using this method, everyone gets an opportunity to learn about each element in the dimension.
- Some practices may look repetitive. As a facilitator of the process it is important to remind your group that each practice is shaped by the element that it is in and to read the description of the element carefully. They will usually find that the element in which the practice is named distinguishes it from other practices in the QAF.
- Remember, the dimensions review is not the point at which your group has detailed discussions about actions to address gaps in practice. If your group does come up with ideas, record them and point out to the group that they have been noted for the planning phase of the review and there will be time for a fuller discussion of them then.
- If possible, try to discourage the group from coming up with ideas to address gaps in practice as the step-by-step guide to creating an action plan helps groups to come up with ideas that can address more than one practice at a time.



## 6.2. Step Three – The Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives Dimension

- 6.2.1. Element 1 – Outreach Practice
- 6.2.2. Element 2 – Inclusion Practice
- 6.2.3. Element 3 – Course Development and Delivery
- 6.2.4. Element 4 – Ongoing Participation
- 6.2.5. Element 5 – Access, Transfer and Progression
- 6.2.6. Element 6 – Celebration
- 6.2.7. Case Study – SOLAS

## 6.2. Step Three – The Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives Dimension

The first dimension you will benchmark the work of your organisation in relation to is called the Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives dimension. Women's community education groups root their education and training programmes in the realities of women's lives. The six elements in this dimension and descriptions of them are set out in the table below. In the following sections the descriptions of each element and the practices in each of them are set out.

<b>1.</b> <b>Outreach</b>	Is a set of practices which focus on how women are invited into the organisation. These practices have become an essential part of the work of WCE, because they demonstrate to women that groups understand the issues and challenges that may make it difficult for many women to return to education.
<b>2.</b> <b>Inclusion</b>	Is a set of practices that promotes all women in a WCE group feeling included regardless of their background. If a WCE organisation is doing these practices it shows that they are aware of the barriers women encounter in accessing education and the impact of earlier negative experiences of schooling.
<b>3.</b> <b>Course Development and Delivery &amp;</b>	Focus on the practices that shape how education is provided by with and for women in WCE. They describe the ongoing supports, space and encouragement women are entitled to in their journey through education. For instance, in WCE
<b>4.</b> <b>Ongoing Participation</b>	women make a difference for and with each other by sharing life stories, by affirming the power and strength that comes through in those stories and by rooting their education and training there.
<b>5.</b> <b>Access, Transfer and Progression &amp;</b>	Describe practices that work to remove progression barriers for women locally, regionally and nationally, resourced by the relevant statutory authorities.
<b>6.</b> <b>Celebration</b>	They also describe the necessity of celebration to WCE.

### 6.2.1. Element 1 – Outreach Practice

Women's community education recognises that schooling was oppressive for many women. Many women were further marginalised and excluded from education due to factors such as class and ethnicity. Women's community education recognises that the return to education is filled with difficulties and challenges. Outreach work is based on understanding the issues and barriers that the traditional education system has generated. Doing these practices helps to build trust, confidence and equality of relationship.

#### Outreach Practice

Through outreach work, women are invited to rejoin education in a new way and with new direction as women together.

#### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
1.1.c.a	Make informal contact with women: through word-of-mouth invitation, discussion and promotion with neighbours, friends, acquaintances	Meeting people in the community, talking to friends and acquaintances, inviting them to open day	Invitation to Open Day and notes of group discussions
1.1.c.b (F) <sup>10</sup>	Promote our group: posters and other forms of promotion are placed in key points around the neighbourhood (examples school, surgery, supermarket, social services and community centres, FÁS, MABS) with contact names and numbers, group times and location	Poster in Community Centre	Poster itself
1.1.c.c	Work proactively to make contact with excluded and isolated women	Meeting people and knocking on doors	Notes of group discussion where women talk about how they first got involved in group

<sup>10</sup>The 'F' indicates that this practice is also a FETAC requirement for its quality assurance process.

## Extended Practice

## WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
1.1.e.a	Make contact with women through other community and women's organisations	Do outreach sessions in other organisations	Calendar of dates for outreach sessions
1.1.e.b (F)	Make contact with those who work with women in the locality (examples include teachers, public health nurses, community workers, education workers, youth workers, social workers, employment services)	Start a service provider mailing list/database and ring each provider twice a year	Completed telephone contact sheets
1.1.e.c (F)	Promote our work by doing such things as writing articles in newspapers, and/or giving talks where requested on the benefits of being part of a women's community education group	Do one press release a year	Copy of press release
1.1.e.d	Establish connections with outreach workers/ neighbourhood workers working with women	Hire or find volunteer outreach worker	Copy of job description for outreach worker
1.1.e.e	Engage in intensive face-to-face work to encourage hard-to-reach women (for example through the neighbourhood work approach)	Hire or find a volunteer outreach worker	Copy of job description for outreach worker
1.1.e.f	Develop specific initiatives targeted at Traveller women, refugee and asylum seeking women, women in minority groups and women experiencing isolation	Develop a leadership programme for minority women	Copy of programme outline

### 6.2.2. *Element 2 – Inclusion Practice*

Women's community education inclusion practices encourage a sense of belonging and inclusion by all participants in the education process.

#### **Inclusion Practice**

##### **Core Practice**

WE

<b>PRACTICE</b>		<b>EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS</b>	<b>EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE</b>
1.2.c.a	Provide a welcoming and inviting environment	Listen/friendship and giving time to others	Membership log
1.2.c.b	Pay attention to the creation of a welcoming and holistic atmosphere	Provide food and beverages, plants and pictures, flowers, candles	Receipts from the centre (for purchase of tea/ coffee etc.)
1.2.c.c	Ensure that the room layout promotes the ethos and atmosphere of women's community education	Circle of chairs, heating, lighting, cleanliness, comfort	Photo of space
1.2.c.d	Offer an individual and personal welcome to a new member with a cup of tea/ coffee and a chat	Specifically encourage and support new members through meetings with development worker	Notes from one of these meetings (with identifying information removed)
1.2.c.e	Give attention to new members until they feel comfortable	Have a buddy system for new participants	Copy of buddy policy
1.2.c.f	Help them establish contact with other women in the group	Introduce new members to the others	Notes from group meetings
1.2.c.g (F)	Provide new members with information on our education programme, our activities and our group	Group timetable	Paper copy of timetable

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
1.2.c.h (F)	Provide information on childcare and other supports that are available	Notice board with information about crèches in area	Photo of noticeboard
1.2.c.i	Respect social, leisure and relaxation goals in relation to education including contact, company, sharing with other women, personal space from caring responsibilities/ employment responsibilities	Breaks during the sessions	Copy of timetable
1.2.c.j (F)	Identify our members' formal and informal education interests	Group always has a meeting to decide what they want to do in the coming year	Copy of annual plan
1.2.c.k (F)	Ensure that courses respond to members stated needs	As above	As above
1.2.c.l (F)	Consult with group members in relation to the design and delivery of the course	A general meeting is held with each tutor so that group can input into course	Copy of timetable
1.2.c.m	Ensure that the timetable is flexible and based around women's lives and responsibilities	Timetable is devised to suit group's needs	As above
1.2.c.n (F)	Recognise the needs of different groups of women – Traveller women, migrant women and refugee and asylum seeking women, women with literacy needs	Courses are delivered using creative methods	Copy of attendance records showing consistently high attendance

## Extended Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
1.2.e.a	Work proactively to bring in women experiencing exclusion and isolation	Hold programmes for very disadvantaged women in spaces they are comfortable in/or second tutors to groups working with these women who can assist their progression to our premises	Photograph
1.2.e.b (F)	Ensure that our premises and our work reflects the lives of different communities of women	Hold an intercultural day	Invitation
1.2.e.c (F)	Ensure that our all of our education and training programmes are relevant to the needs of different groups and communities of women	Conduct regular needs assessments targeting specific communities of women	Copy of most recent needs assessment

### 6.2.3. *Element 3 – Course Development and Delivery*

Women's community education encourages participation by women members in all aspects of the development and delivery of education and training. This set of practices informs the development of every programme run by the organisation and can be used as a checklist for individual programmes.

#### Course Development and Delivery Practice

##### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
1.3.c.a	Ensure that the facilitator/trainer understands the principles and practice of women's community education	Apprenticeship training, participants become facilitators	Meeting minutes
1.3.c.b (F)	Structure our courses to ensure that they can be responsive, adaptable and flexible to meet participants needs and to their experience of the course as it is delivered	All programmes needs based and participant led	Session plans and reports
1.3.c.c	Ensure positive group maintenance through good group work practice e.g. check-in time, participation	Group agreements and opening rounds for each programme	Session plans and reports
1.3.c.d	Understand the importance of creativity and innovation in education	Various methods used, i.e. community arts	Session plans and reports
1.3.c.e	Provide women with the opportunity to reflect on their life story	Incorporate class/gender/diversity analysis into programmes	Session plans, reports, assignments

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
1.3.c.f	Work from an understanding that women's community education is an education process for all	As above	As above
1.3.c.g	Respect the equality of all involved in education and welcome the contributions of members to the education and training process	Regular evaluations held where participants, management and other stakeholders meet together	Evaluation report
1.3.c.h (F)	Cooperate with others, organisers and members, in the development and delivery of each education and training programme	Consultation with stakeholders to evaluate programmes	Advisory Group meeting notes
1.3.c.i	Provide support for childcare and elder care, for travel and course materials where possible	Childcare facility and funding for supports built into all funding applications	Annual report
1.3.c.j (F)	Structure evaluation into the course delivery	Participant evaluations at end of every course	Copy of evaluation form
1.3.c.k	Provide programmes and activities which result in being able to show outcomes in three key areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• women's confidence and sense of well-being</li> <li>• specific learning outcomes and</li> <li>• critical reflection for social change</li> </ul>	Incorporated as standard indicators in every evaluation form given out	Copy of evaluation form

**Extended Practice**

WE

<b>PRACTICE</b>		<b>EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS</b>	<b>EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE</b>
1.3.e.a (F)	Explore new possibilities in methods of assessment	Nominate a staff person or volunteer to do regular research on this and report back biannually	Agenda item on staff meeting agenda
1.3.e.b (F)	Provide creative assessment methods	Tutors only hired if they have this competency	Tutor/facilitator role description
1.3.e.c	Research the relevant accreditation that facilitates progression into further education, training and employment	Co-ordinator keeps up-to-date on the National Qualifications Framework	Copy of Co-ordinator role description
1.3.e.d	Identify and address the barriers to relevant accreditation	Have accreditation working group led by Co-ordinator	Minutes of meeting
1.3.e.e	Record/keep track of the barriers to securing accreditation and communicate these to key actors in the sector regionally and nationally	Integrate into lobbying activities and policy submissions where appropriate	Copy of policy work plan
1.3.e.f	Ensure that, if they so choose, learners can have access to the relevant accreditation that facilitates their access, transfer and progression.	Become a recognised FETAC accredited centre	Copy of registration letter

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
1.3.e.g	Participate in research projects designed to resource and give direction to the women's community education sector	Ask AONTAS to notify when such research is being conducted	Copy of email
1.3.e.h	Research the gaps in provision in relation to women's education and training needs	Conduct local action research project on said	Copy of research report
1.3.e.i	Seek resources to address such gaps	Notify VEC of gaps and see if they have resources to attend to them	Copy of correspondence
1.3.e.j	Build partnerships, where appropriate, to resource and address such gaps	Set up interagency group and petition CDB for resources	Copy of meeting minutes
1.3.e.k	Organise in partnership with key others research and development work relevant to the women's community education sector	Network with other organisations	Report of networking activities

### 6.2.4 Element 4 – Ongoing Participation

Women's community education organisations understand that women's roles and responsibilities in relation to social care can inhibit women's ongoing participation in education. Therefore, the sector strives to ensure that women are provided with the necessary opportunities, encouragement and supports in order to complete the education programme of their choice. Women's Community Education is committed to the right of women to an enjoyable and successful education experience.

#### Ongoing Participation Practice

##### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
1.4.c.a	Have an open door – open ear approach with women learners	Drop-in policy for centre	Leaflets about centre
1.4.c.b (F)	Ensure that supports are available	Nominate or hire a support person	Copy of support worker role description
1.4.c.c	Promote peer support systems	Have a buddy system	Copy of buddy policy
1.4.c.d	Recognise that there are many reasons for women embarking on and considering leaving education	Promote non-judgemental work with women	Statement of values
1.4.c.e	Respond to issues which arise seriously, recognising their impact on the individual woman and their part in maintaining the structures that impede women's progression into and through education	Nominate someone to link with women when serious issues arise (i.e. to go to funerals etc.)	Name of person in group records

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
1.4.c.f	Take clear steps to address issues	Issues brought to group meetings (with permission of woman)	Meeting minutes
1.4.c.g (F)	Ensure that participants are given information on the ways their issues and concerns may be addressed and have options about how issues may be pursued	Participant Handbook	Copy of Handbook
1.4.c.h	Contact women who leave the group or course, ask them about their experiences and evaluate practice in the light of their feedback	Hold exit interviews – leave the door open	Exit session report form
1.4.c.i	Seek out and learn from the experience of other women's community education organisations	Representation at relevant fora – NWCI	Membership list NWCI
1.4.c.j	Identify the key issues that impact on ongoing participation, make an effort to address them and communicate these through the relevant networks	Membership of Community Development Project Network	CDP meeting minutes
1.4.c.k	Seek the resources needed to make sure that women's ongoing participation in education is possible	Funding for supports built into funding applications	Copy of a recent funding application

**Extended Practice****WE**

<b>PRACTICE</b>		<b>EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS</b>	<b>EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE</b>
1.4.e.a (F)	Provide learning supports with assignments	Have referral agreement with partners who can provide that support	Copy of agreement
1.4.e.b	Provide programmes and activities which have demonstrable outcomes which show that learners have been provided with the appropriate supports needed to empower them to overcome the barriers stopping women's ongoing participation in and progression through education and training	Provide career and educational planning course	Copy of course outline
1.4.e.c	Identify the key issues that impact on ongoing participation with the women's community education sector and work to address these issues with key others including funders and policy makers	Become member of AONTAS Community Education Network	Copy of member list

### 6.2.5. *Element 5 – Access, Transfer and Progression*

Women's Community Education organisations are committed to a meaningful education process that facilitates women to engage in the opportunities in the organisation, move through different levels of education and progress into further education, training and employment programmes or any other activity that will help them to fulfill their sense of purpose in life.

#### **Access Transfer and Progression Practice**

##### **Core Practice**

WE

<b>PRACTICE</b>		<b>EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS</b>	<b>EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE</b>
1.5.c.a	Organise our programmes in a community-based premises or other location where participants feel 'at home'	Room in the Family Resource Centre	Photo of room
1.5.c.b	Time our courses to respect women's childcare roles and responsibilities	All programmes held in term time	Copy of timetable
1.5.c.c	Recognise that many women do not have the freedom or resources to organise their lives around an education course	Out of pocket expense provided	Copy of expenses form
1.5.c.d	Provide a crèche or other forms of childcare supports	Childcare centre	Photograph of centre
1.5.c.e (F)	Organise our courses around the expressed needs of learners	End of term feedback meeting for all participants	Meeting notes
1.5.c.f	Facilitate awareness and critical thinking of the barriers to women's progression from Women's Community Education	Opportunity for women to name these and reflect in the end of course evaluation discussion	Standard session outline for meeting
1.5.c.g	Provide information on education and training offered by other key providers	Noticeboard in the room with current information posted	Photo of noticeboard

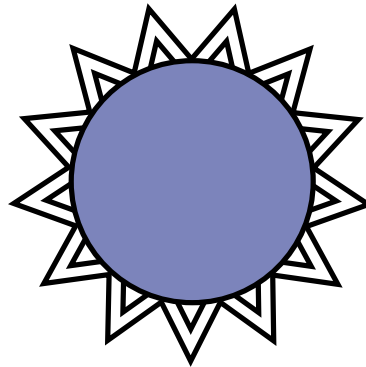
## Extended Practice

## WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
1.5.e.a	Provide travel/transport support where needed	Out of pocket expenses offered	Copy of expenses form
1.5.e.b	Make support available for women in relation to into their progression options	Each participant offered a one-to one session each term to discuss progression	Questionnaire used during sessions
1.5.e.c	Map out progression routes from one course to the next level	Internal and local progression map developed and updated by staff biannually	Photo of map
1.5.e.d	Ensure that where progression within our group is not possible information on progression routes through other groups or providers in the area is available	Progression database developed on foot of map.	Copy of page of database
1.5.e.e	Have forged the necessary connections to support women to make the transition to the next stage in their chosen progression route	Outreach worker visits/ rings each provider once every six months to foster relationship	Outreach Worker job description
1.5.e.f	Provide or organise through others follow-through with women in relation to the uptake of progression routes, CV preparation, interview preparation, life issues	Support Workers rings participant at one month, three month and six months post progression to check-in and if necessary make referrals to LES etc.	Copy of post-progression feedback forms
1.5.e.g	Ensure our premises are accessible to all women	Access sub-group on the Board meets biannually	Copy of sub-group meeting minutes

### 6.2.6. *Element 6 – Celebration*

Celebration is an essential element of women's community education. Through celebration we collectively affirm our achievements and create a culture that supports and empowers women. Celebration also creates recognition of women's achievements in their families, community and Irish society.



#### Celebration Practice

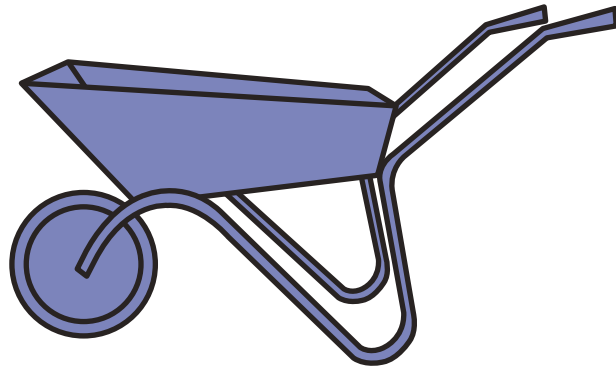
##### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
1.6.c.a	Ensure that all education and training programmes conclude with appropriate celebration	End of programme celebration for each group	Photos of celebrations
1.6.c.b	Organise a collective celebration with all participants annually	Christmas and Summer events held annually	Photos of events
1.6.c.c	Understand the importance of collective and public celebration of women's achievements and contributions in the field of education and training	Participants consulted about design of celebrations and involved in them	Event agenda
1.6.c.d	Highlight celebration in our group newsletter and local newsletters/publications/media	Get coverage of our events in the local media	Newspaper clipping, recording of radio interview

**Extended Practice****WE**

<b>PRACTICE</b>		<b>EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS</b>	<b>EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE</b>
1.6.e.a	Organise and participate in regional and national celebrations of women's community education	Attendance at AONTAS WCE QAF mainstreaming event and case study presentation on our work	Notes from the presentation
1.6.e.b	Encourage media coverage of local, regional and national celebrations	Radio interview for 2fm about NWCI/IWD celebration	Copy of radio interview
1.6.e.c	Build links with the broader community and adult education field as part of local, regional and national celebrations	Invite CEF and AEO to all our celebration events	Invite list for graduation
1.6.c.d	Build appropriate links with funders and policy makers as part of local, regional and national celebrations of women's community education	Invite all our funders and at least one policy-maker to all celebrations	Invite list for graduation



### 6.2.7. Case Study – SOLAS

SOLAS is a Women's Community Education project in Ballymun, Dublin. They are part of the Crosscare Community Education Programme, a network for community education groups in disadvantaged areas of Dublin. The Co-ordinator of the Crosscare Network used the framework to facilitate SOLAS through a benchmarking process.

When SOLAS started the process they were going through a great deal of change. The chair of their management committee was in the process of leaving together with another board member who had worked very closely with the team in SOLAS. The Co-ordinator of SOLAS was also due to leave within a short period of time.

As often happens when people leave a group, important knowledge about how the group implements the principles and practices of women's community education can go with them. The remaining staff and board member felt rudderless.

During this time, the framework became an invaluable tool to assist the group to manage the changes it was going through. At the beginning of the process, only the staff was involved in the review, and despite efforts made, remaining board members had not engaged.

However, the facilitator approached the Chair prior to her resignation, outlined the concerns of the remaining staff and the need for board members to engage with the framework.

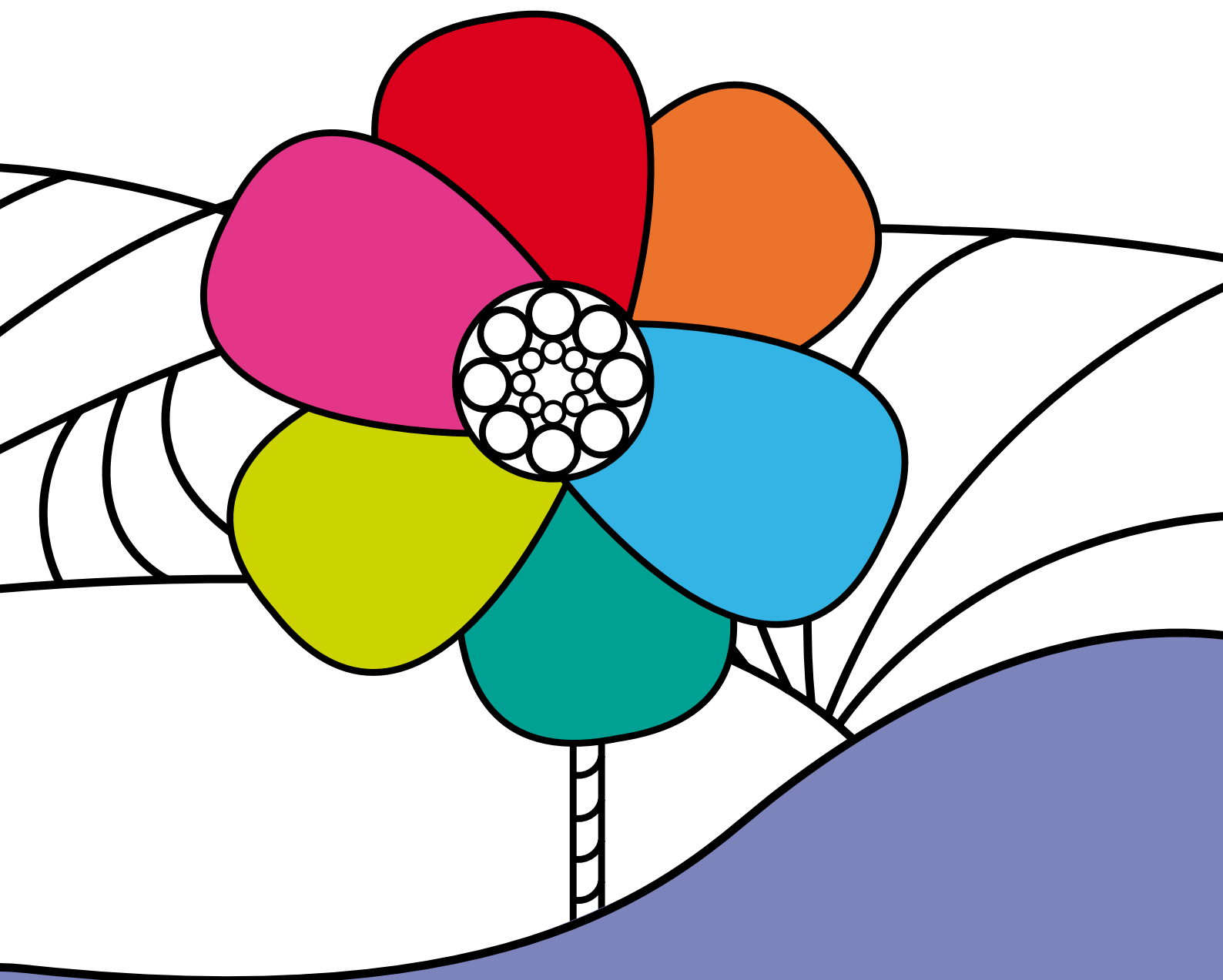
As there were new board members being appointed at this time, the facilitator ran a series of workshops to bring the new members and new Chair through the principle review in order to update them about the process.

After this was achieved, both board and staff continued the practice review together. By doing this exercise together, they developed a shared understanding of the work enhancing the governance of the group and its strategic direction.

In essence, the group used the QAF to rebuild the entire work of the group. They found through the process that they had gaps in all of the elements in each dimension. Rather than try to address all of the gaps at once, the group took the gaps in their work from the 'Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives Dimension' and the 'Women-Led' dimension and one gap in the Political Dimension first and created a plan to address those gaps. They then committed to taking each of the other two dimensions in turn and creating plans to address them, once every six months.

In their first round of planning the group decided that in order to address current gaps in practice they would:

- Hold a regular Monday morning drop-in lecture for women in the community on topical subjects like women's health
- Begin to hold fair trade mornings every second month
- Include information on local crèches in the SOLAS brochure
- Put in place a capacity-building plan for the group, including induction, funding, planning and review, governance and job descriptions
- Integrate social analysis into each course they run and also train the board and staff in social analysis
- Approach the City Council for new premises
- Take two days out every year to evaluate the work
- Create a plan for supporting leadership, for staff, board and participants.



## 6.3 Step Four – The Women-Led Dimension

- 6.3.1. Element 1 – Leadership
- 6.3.2. Element 2 – Voice
- 6.3.3. Element 3 – Consciousness Raising Education
- 6.3.4. Element 4 – The Learning Organisation
- 6.3.5. Element 5 – Empowerment
- 6.3.6. Element 6 – Organisation as a Collective
- 6.3.7. Case Study – South West Kerry Women's Association

### 6.3. Step Four – The Women-Led Dimension

The second dimension you will benchmark your work in relation to is the Women-Led dimension. Women's community education is women-led education. Women's community education reflects the truths of women's lives and recognises women's experiences of inequality. Many women identify that they are outside or excluded from mainstream society. Collectively, women in Ireland are on the margins of leadership and decision-making. Women-led education is about integrating reflection on women's experiences of inequality into the centre of the education process.

Society as it is currently structured poses many challenges for women. Women's community education believes that women's leadership and women's organisations are essential in the work for social change. Through women's community education women are facilitated to take leadership in bringing about structural and systemic change within education, within community and within society.

Women-led education is characterised by a cycle of women members moving into positions of leadership as:

- Group leaders and organisers
- Members of management committees
- Trainers, facilitators and tutors
- Co-ordinators
- Development workers
- Policy advisors and
- Lobbyists, activists and representatives.

WCE organisations develop and encourage leadership through dialogue, openness, freedom of participation and expression, capacity building, education and training. These leaders over time facilitate the emergence of new cycles of leadership.

This dimension of practices assists groups to facilitate leadership at different levels, for individual women, for groups of women and at the level of the organisation. The elements that make up this dimension and a brief description of each are set out in the table below.

<b>1. Leadership</b>	Describes practices that promote a qualitatively different model of leadership. The model of women's leadership in women's community education is characterised by listening, consideration and inclusion. In contrast to the hierarchical leadership-over model this model emphasises leadership-with women, leadership-by women and leadership-to effect change. This model may be unique to the way other groups of people understand that leadership should be practiced.
<b>2. Voice</b>	Are practices that look at how organisations can make spaces for individual women and the group of women who make up the organisation to speak out and be heard, an essential aspect of leadership.
<b>3. Consciousness-Raising Education</b>	Creating opportunities for women to critically reflect on women's inequality enables them to see why women have been blocked from positions of leadership. These practices describe how groups can integrate this type of education into their activities.
<b>4. The Learning Organisation</b>	WCE organisations also struggle to be leading organisations or to be open system, learning organisations that others take as models of best practice. This dimension presents practices that can help WCE groups to be leading organisations.
<b>5. Empowerment</b>	These practices set out how WCE organisations encourage and facilitate women to take up leadership roles and achieve their own goals.
<b>6. Organisation as Collective</b>	This set of practices helps the group to create a distinct identity for themselves and then contribute to a distinct identity for the WCE sector.

### 6.3.1. Element 1 – Leadership

Women's community education practitioners and leaders are committed to facilitating leadership with and for women within the organisation. Leadership is not solely invested in key roles but in the knowledge, wisdom and experience of the whole group.

#### Leadership Practice

##### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
2.1.c.a	Create space for women to share their personal journeys or stories of becoming leaders	Published booklet telling women's stories	Booklet entitled 'Women's Voices, Women's Strengths' <sup>11</sup>
2.1.c.b	Offer a model of leadership that women can identify with	Invite participants to come with management members to conferences and consultations	RSVP to recent conference
2.1.c.c	Put time and planning into our leadership	Provide childcare and supports	Receipts
2.1.c.d	Take time and care with each other and with women learners by doing such activities as mentoring or 'buddying'.	New members, staff, participants given a buddy to mentor them into the group	Copy of group pamphlet

<sup>11</sup>Produced by the Waterford Women's Centre.

## Extended Practice

## WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
2.1.e.a	Ensure that leaders in and for the organisation lift the lid on the 'taboos' and silences that surround women's experiences by communicating about them to others and encouraging others to do so.	Participation in 16 Days of Action – ran a community forum for women, agencies, other groups to discuss a community response to VAW <sup>12</sup>	Invite to forum
2.1.e.b	Set up structures that allow our leadership to be informed by women's experiences	Hold a biannual 'Policy Workshop' where we present on policy work engaged in and seek feedback	Agenda for workshop
2.1.e.c	Have procedures in place to ensure that the issues we represent in leadership roles are determined by what women learners need and want	Evaluations seek to elicit issues. Annual report written and those issues are fed into policy work for year	Copy of evaluation report
2.1.e.d	Provide a cycle of management and leadership that facilitates women to move from participation in our programmes to leadership roles	Apprenticeship model for all leadership roles, including management committee	Diagram of management structure
2.1.e.e	Provide support for those who are mentoring women in our organisation to become leaders	Run biannual mentor training workshop	Outline of workshop

<sup>12</sup>Stands for violence against women.

### 6.3.2. Element 2 – Voice

In this element women's community education offers a model of leadership that is a real voice for women and gives expression to their goals, experiences and achievements.

#### Voice Practice

#### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
2.2.c.a	Keep track, talk about, celebrate and promote our achievements ensuring that the voices of women involved in the organisation are heard through this work	Events and social evenings held, usually participants, members speak at these events	Photos of most recent event
2.2.c.b	Express our mutual appreciation of all the work and efforts of all those involved in and supportive of women's community education	Summer and Christmas events for participants, staff and management	Receipts for shopping for an event
2.2.c.c	Create opportunities for women to raise their voices and be heard in the organisation	Ground Rules for all meetings and programmes	Copy of management committee ground rules
2.2.c.d	Build our identity as a collective and develop a group voice	Participation in WCE benchmarking	Copy of list of participants in working group

## Extended Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
2.2.e.a	Encourage each other to challenge taboos and address issues, such as the isolation, loss, violence and racism that many women encounter in their lives	Hold annual mental health day for women in the local area with thematic discussions about such issues	Poster advertising event
2.2.e.b	Are a voice in the public domain through attendance at seminars and networking events, through presentations and performance, through publications and through lobbying on issues affecting our lives and those of other women	Annual communications/ public relations plan	Copy of most recent plan

### 6.3.3. *Element 3 – Consciousness Raising Education*

Consciousness – raising education involves encouraging reflection on the realities of women's experiences and analysis of the social systems that underpin that experience. Women's community education creates and maintains education that relates to the truths of women's lives and experiences.

#### Consciousness-Raising Education Practice

##### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
2.3.c.a	Integrate opportunities for women to identify the common issues and structures that have impacted on their life choices and life paths in all of our programmes, special events, or issue specific services or initiatives	At some stage of each activity participants are asked "What are the common issues here?"	Course Outline
2.3.c.b	Once common issues and experiences are named, create opportunities for women to collectively analyse those experiences using a social and gender analysis.	Class/gender/diversity analysis incorporated into all activities	Staff/facilitator role descriptions have this as an essential skill
2.3.c.c	Are committed to women to sharing their personal experiences before we introduce more theoretical ways of analysing those experiences. In other words, we go from practice to theory, not theory to practice.	Participants are always asked to share their own experience before theory or book knowledge is introduced	Group Policy for development of course content

## Extended Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
2.3.e.a	Are committed to gender-specific education that facilitates women's engagement with social analysis and gender studies	Run an annual Women's Community Leadership training programme	Written aim and objectives of programme
2.3.e.b	Plan and resource approaches which allow diverse groups of women to access gender-specific education, social analysis, anti-racism and intercultural training and gender studies	Liaise with local immigrant support group to recruit diverse groups of women to our activities	Meeting minutes

### 6.3.4. Element 4 – The Learning Organisation

Women's community education groups are participant-centred learning organisations committed to collective planning and evaluation of their work. Women's community education is committed to the pursuit of excellence in the quality and relevance of its contribution to women's leadership, to women's experience of education and training and to women's lives.

Women's community education groups conduct research into issues that impact on women's lives and women's access to and progression through education. They seek to address the research findings in the content, planning, delivery and evaluation of their work. This set of practices differs from the 'Course Development and Delivery' practices in the 'Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives' dimension, because they refer to how the whole of the organisation develops as opposed to how individual programmes are developed and run.

#### Learning Organisation Practice

##### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
2.4.c.a	Believe in the importance of listening as a method of research into issues and circumstances of women's lives	'Active Listening' training done with new staff and management as required	Diary page with training date written into it
2.4.c.b (F)	Use what we hear when listening to our own and other women's life experiences to help us design and deliver our set of activities or programmes	Facilitator records issues heard in each session	Guidelines for writing of session notes
2.4.c.c (F)	Keep track of feedback from participants and use feedback to inform course planning and delivery	Session notes analysed at end of year and included in evaluation report	Copy of evaluation report

2.4.c.d (F)	Build evaluation into the course delivery and into our way of working as an education provider	Staff, or volunteer, or member who works to set up education has demonstrated ability to carry out evaluation	Copy of their CV
2.4.c.e	Have a shared ethos, values, principles and practices which we document and make available	Organisation mission, aims and principles	Written copy of these
2.4.c.f	Transparently account for our funding	Nominate secretary for the group who keeps ledger book and receipts	Written list of those nominated to specific roles in group
2.4.c.g	Know that much more can be learned and achieved through a group, networks and collectives than can be learned and achieved alone	No events activities ever planned by one person or our group alone	Copy of this statement in group policies and procedures
2.4.c.h	Commit to taking time for reflection, creativity and celebration	Hold annual team development day involving work review, and fun activity	Agenda for last team development day

## Extended Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
2.4.e.a (F)	Engage in a process of learning and development in partnership with members and other allies through a cycle of internal research, reflection and evaluation and use those findings to inform the planning and delivery of all of our activities	Annual evaluation report presented to management, staff and some partner agencies to inform annual work plan sessions and strategic planning sessions	Agenda for most recent workplan sessions
2.4.e.b	Keep up-to-date on the systems and structures that oppress and subordinate women by accessing information or research on such things as barriers to education, training and employment opportunities, lack of childcare, violence against women, racism, poverty	Co-ordinator's role description includes this practice as a main task for the work	Copy of co-ordinator's role description
2.4.e.c	When relevant, conduct or commission external research into the needs and issues impacting on women in our community, and use research findings to inform the planning and delivery of all of our activities, including our lobbying and work with other service providers	Annual evaluation report reviewed at work plan sessions and go ahead given for necessary pieces of research	Call for tenders for most recent piece of external research being done by organisation

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
2.4.e.d (F)	Communicate the findings or learning of any internal or external research and evaluation conducted to the community, other WCE organisations, other community organisations, lobbyists, politicians, decision-makers and the media	All pieces of research launched and these launches are integrated into annual communications plan	Newspaper clipping about most recent launch
2.4.e.e	Ensure that all of the staff, volunteers and/or management are able to make links between women's experiences and the social theories that help us to analyse those experiences and create appropriate solutions for the challenges that women experience	New staff, volunteers and/or management able to demonstrate ability to make those connections	Written copy of interview questions for each of these roles
2.4.e.f	Engage in strategies to progress issues identified through internal and external research	Action planning session takes place at end of every piece of research	Session minutes from most recent action planning session
2.4.e.g	Allocate resources for reflection, evaluation and teasing out lessons and learning to influence future planning and direction of the organisation and the sector	Budget for external facilitator to lead team development day written into annual budget	Copy of budget
2.4.e.h	Evaluate any set-backs that the organisation experiences in order to see what lessons they can offer about how we can work more effectively to achieve the vision, aspirations and goals of women's community education	Where set-backs occur, hold emergency meetings to evaluate	Meeting minutes

### 6.3.5. Element 5 – Empowerment

Women's community education is led and driven by the idea of empowering women to take their place as equal members of society and realise their own visions for fulfilling their sense of purpose in life.

#### Empowerment Practice

##### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
2.5.c.a	Provide opportunities for women to take their first steps into group participation	Once off workshops or thematic events, i.e. health	Posters
2.5.c.b	Value the social and leisure dimensions of education and of life by providing opportunities for these types of activities in the work and the learning	Take a break during each session to talk and break bread together	Receipts for purchase of food for breaks
2.5.c.c	Develop inclusive, creative and holistic education and training processes which reflect women's diversity	Facilitators must demonstrate how they will meet these objectives in their activities	Copy of principles for education
2.5.c.d	Participate in, and encourage the participation of our members in, activities organised by women's community education groups, local community projects and wider networks	Participation in local Intercultural Food Event	Photos of event

## Extended Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
2.5.e.a	Reflect the breadth and diversity of women's experiences in our education and training programmes	Use lots of case studies or written stories from women of diverse backgrounds to facilitate learning	Copy of some case studies used in courses
2.5.e.b	Facilitate each woman individually to step back and critically reflect on her life and community	This written in as essential skill for facilitators	Copy of role specification for facilitators
2.5.e.c	Bring a radical perspective on community and gender to women's community education. In other words, encourage women to think about the fundamental changes that are needed to create a just and equal society for women	Each activity has an action component where group is offered opportunity to get involved in campaigning or ideas given about actions they can take individually	Policy on creating course content
2.5.e.d	Respect difference, minority experiences and their questioning of structures and systems	When research is done ensure that it takes into account views of women representing minority groups as set out in the 9 grounds	Copy of most recent piece of research
2.5.e.e	Conduct activities which create solidarity between women	All day event to create an election manifesto from women in the community	Copy of manifesto

### 6.3.6. Element 6 – Organisation as a Collective

Women's community education groups acknowledge and affirm their collective contribution to women, to community and to education and seek to value each unique and distinctive voice that makes up that collective. These practices focus on: 1) how the staff, volunteers or members of WCE organisations go about creating a shared group identity and purpose, 2) how individual organisations can contribute to a shared identity and purpose for the WCE sector or a collective of WCE groups around Ireland.

#### Organisation as a Collective Practice

##### Core Practice

WE

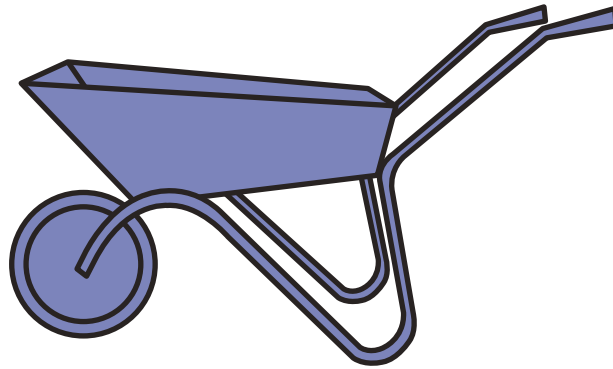
PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
2.6.c.a	Listen to each voice, particularly the minority voice	Ground rules for meetings	Copy of ground rules
2.6.c.b	Work collectively to gather and share information and pool our knowledge and experience	Participatory planning for all events through sub-groups made up of participants, staff and members	Agenda from sub-group meeting
2.6.c.c	Have a transparent and representative structure as an organisation	Have mapped out our organisation showing the structure and the cycle of leadership	Organisational chart
2.6.c.d	Be part of local, regional, and national WCE networks, both formal and informal	Active membership of NCCWN <sup>13</sup>	Copy of affiliate list of NCCWN
2.6.c.e	Believe in the value of holding different perspectives and questions	In ground rules for our meetings	Copy of ground rules
2.6.c.f	Strive for effective communication and solidarity with other groups within the sector – acting collectively and responding to issues together	Participation in WCE QAF training programme	Copy of training programme outline

<sup>13</sup>National Collective of Community-Based Women's Networks.

## Extended Practice

## WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
2.6.e.a	Have processes in place to ensure transparent and accountable representation of our organisation on different networks or committees we are members of, because they demonstrate pathways to leadership for women in society	All staff, volunteers or members representing the group hand in written notes on meetings they attend	Copy of guidelines for writing meeting notes
2.6.e.b	Have a role in organising the sector as a collective, linking up and networking regionally and nationally	On board of management for NCCWN	Copy of list of directors for NCCWN
2.6.e.c	Develop the appropriate training and supports that maximise collective empowerment and effectiveness	Biannually have an in service training day themes of which are decided at staff meetings	Copy of diary pages with the training dates written in
2.6.e.d	Support our representatives participation in political and strategic networking	Ensure that there is agenda point in each management, and/or staff meeting to discuss this work	Agenda for meeting
2.6.e.e	Take time to reflect on and analyse the overall achievement and challenges for our whole organisation to see if they impact on our shared goals	Commence strategic planning by looking at achievements and challenges over last plan	Outline for strategic planning process
2.6.e.f	Work to create positive long-term relationships within the WCE sector, because of the long-term nature of the collective women's community education project	Regular visits/ meetings with other WCE groups in the sector	Copy of diary entry for next visit



### 6.3.7. Case Study – South West Kerry Women's Association

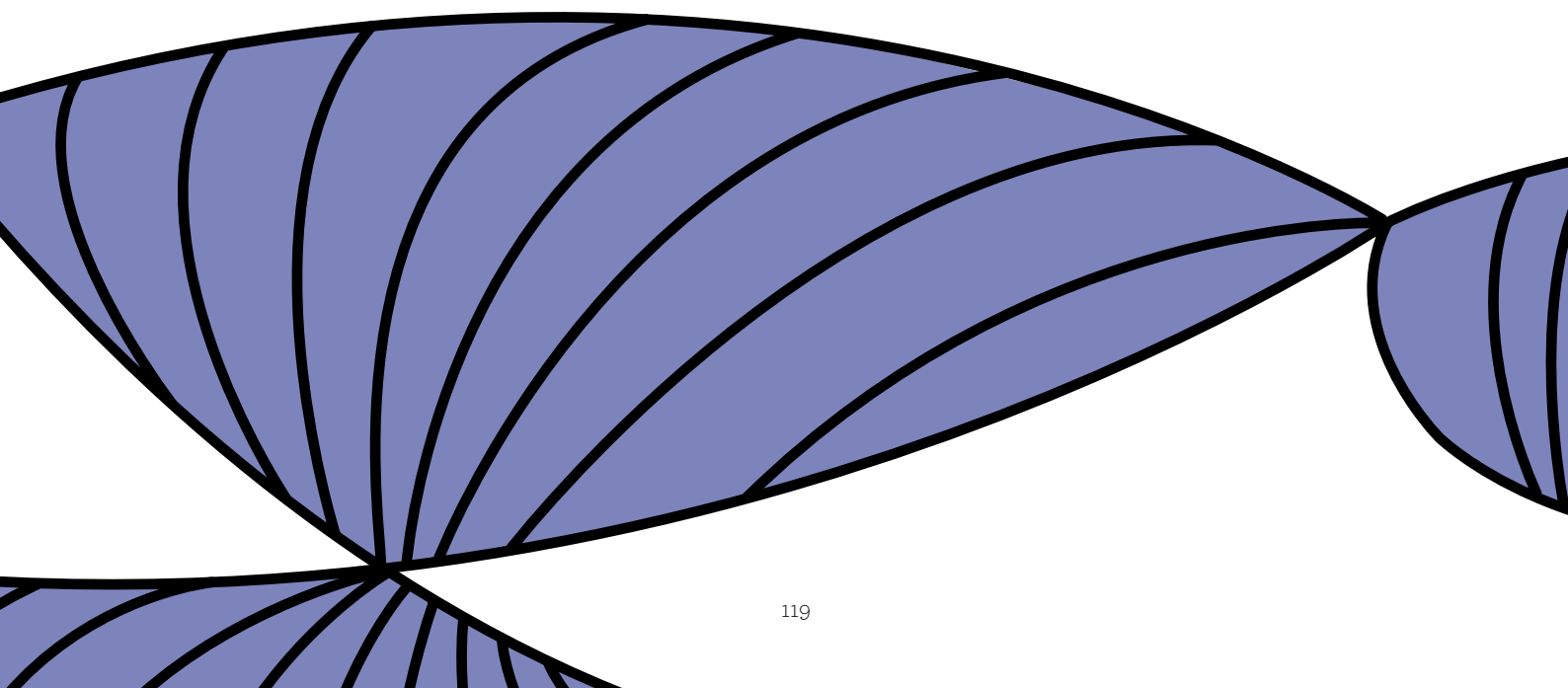
South West Kerry Women's Association (SKWA) is a network of locally-based women's groups in South West Kerry. They used the framework to benchmark the work of the network at the core level of practice. As they reviewed their work they found out that they had gaps in their work revolving around:

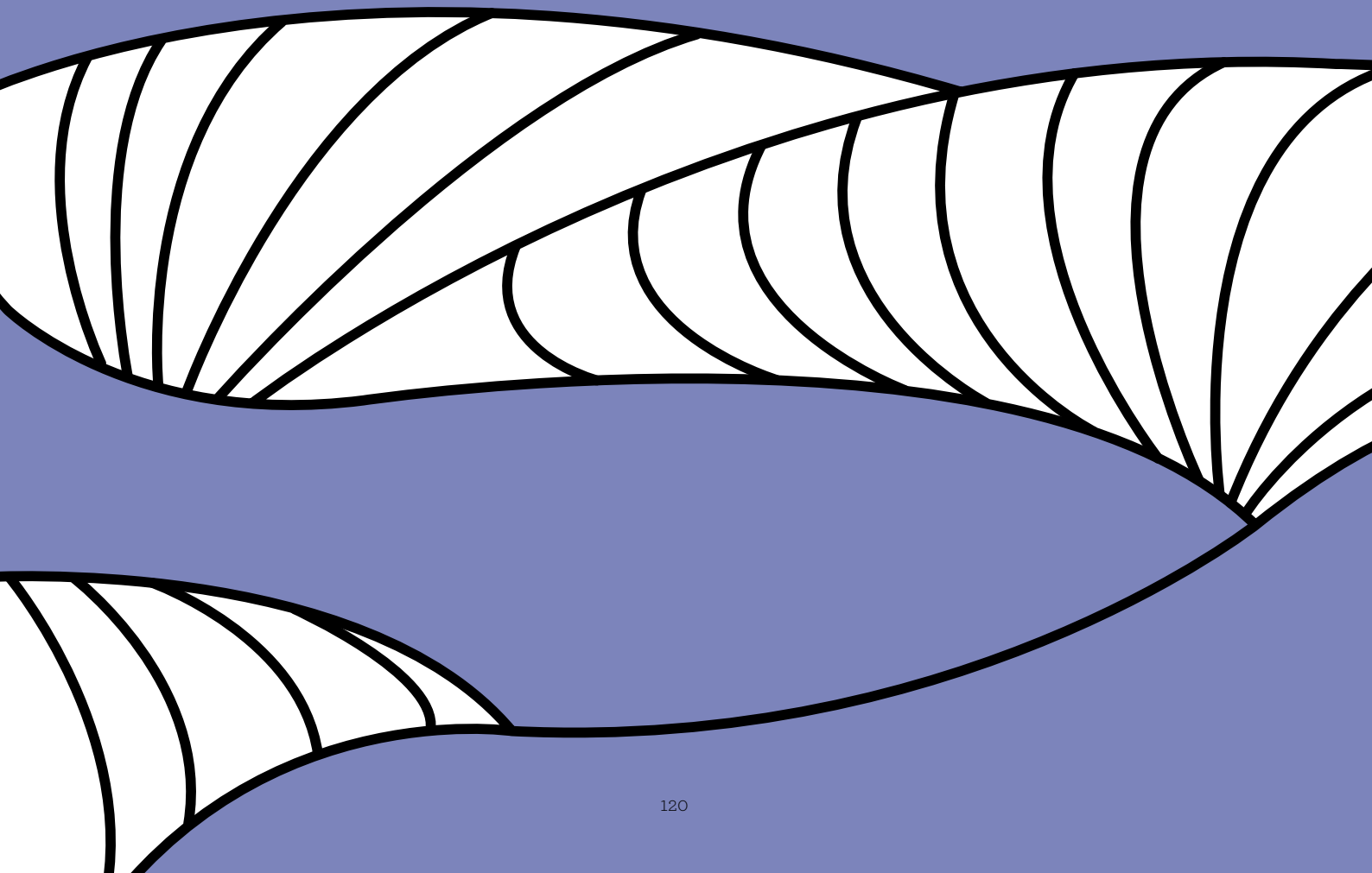
- The power of providing opportunities for art and craft work in the work
- The need to raise their capacity to do partnership work
- Keeping a list of and linking with local politicians and key local agency staff, and
- Providing voter awareness and political awareness training for participants, board and staff.

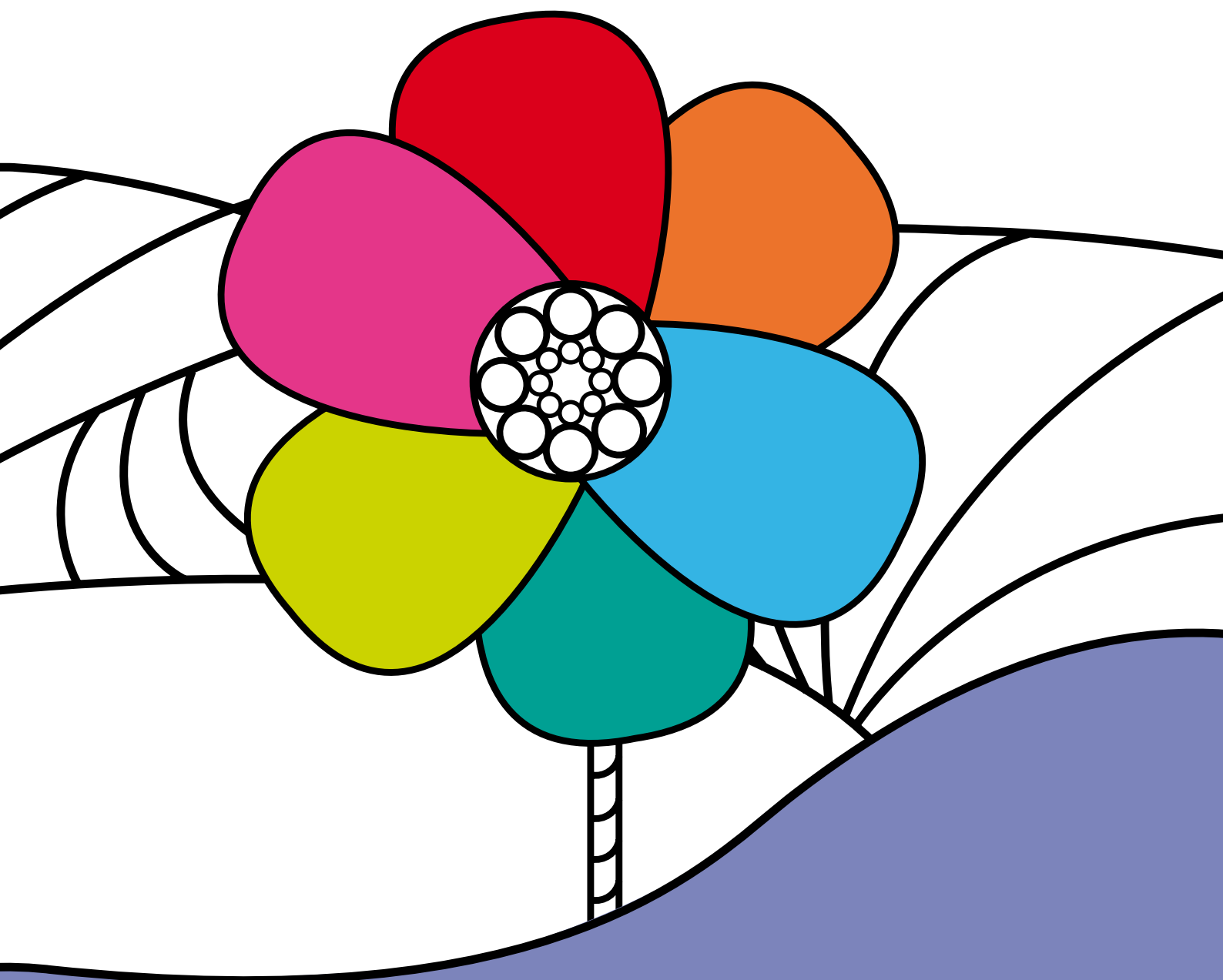
In order to address these gaps the network decided to work on nine different actions:

- Design and disseminate an information newsletter
- Create a database of local politicians and local agencies
- Source funding to provide craft work opportunities
- Conduct a skills audit across the network, develop a database of women who are willing to share their skills with other groups and disseminate the contacts across the network
- Begin to attend their local TD's clinic
- Set up a sub-group to conduct political lobbying
- Hold voter awareness workshops
- Put on a craft exhibition
- Investigate ways of supporting a women's project in the Southern world
- Source and develop a database of mentors for the network.

SKWA's management committee was the working group for the review. They decided that they would use the QAF and their action plan to inform the workplan for the network and would review it biannually. They also decided that they would use the QAF for inducting new members of the board.







## 6.4. Step Five – The Political Dimension

- 6.4.1. Element 1 – Visibility
- 6.4.2. Element 2 – Activism
- 6.4.3. Element 3 – Resources
- 6.4.4. Element 4 – Commitment to Equality
- 6.4.5. Element 5 – Commitment to Diversity
- 6.4.6. Element 6 – Representation
- 6.4.7. Case Study – Waterford Women's Centre

#### 6.4. Step Five – The Political Dimension

The third dimension that groups benchmark their work in relation to is the Political dimension. Women's lives are rooted in a political, social and cultural environment that excludes many women from accessing education and employment and fulfilling their potential. Women have not achieved equality with men in holding positions of power, influence and decision-making.

In the QAF political means to:

- Break the cycle of silence, isolation and disempowerment that marks many women's lives and experiences
- Provide information and support to women on issues that affect their lives
- Identify the social and educational structures which oppress women
- Address the issues that affect and impact on women's lives
- Develop liberatory and participatory alternatives for women
- Provide opportunities for women to build their analysis and awareness of how society works and promote women's unique model of leadership
- Promote women's community education as radical education for women.

The women's community education sector recognises that responsibility for care and nurture is still taken up largely by women. Commitment to the care of children, the ill and the older generation is essential for human development and for human society and makes an inestimable contribution to the collective good. However, responsibility for care presents a significant barrier to women's access to education, training and employment and to political influence and representation. The issue of women's access to education, and to the resources, power and influence that education gives access to, is a political issue.

The practices in the political dimension structure the work that women's community organisations do to challenge women's absence in positions of power relative to men, income inequality, lack of respect for difference and diversity and lack of political commitment to social care. The elements in this dimension and a brief description of them are set out in the table below.

<b>1. Visibility</b>	These practices set out how organisations make their work and the achievements of individual women visible in the world by communicating them in creative ways.
<b>2. Activism</b>	Taking direct action on issues affecting women involves a set of practices that WCE groups do and are described in this element.
<b>3. Resources</b>	This element presents a set of practices that WCE organisations carry out so that they can have the finances and people power necessary to carry out the other work that they do.
<b>4. Commitment to equality</b>	These practices describe the work that groups do to achieve equal relationships within the organisation and between WCE groups.
<b>5. Commitment to diversity</b>	WCE groups know that there are other forms of discrimination to gender and engage in a set of practices that show they understand how those forms intersect with gender discrimination.
<b>6. Representation</b>	These practices describe how WCE organisations represent women's issues when they are representing the group on decision-making bodies, and other committees or groups.

### 6.4.1. Element 1 – Visibility

Women's visibility is an essential element in the political dimension of women's community education. Women's community education organisations encourage women's visibility. Dialogue with women, and the creativity that comes out of this dialogue, is made visible through drama, creativity and public performance. The regular communication of achievement is an important part of being visible. Participating in the public arena, representation and lobbying is also part of visibility.

#### Visibility Practice

##### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
3.1.c.a	Organise our education and training programmes to support women's assertiveness	Provide drama workshops	Attendance sheet for last workshop
3.1.c.b	Are creative and flexible in the ways we promote our groups' presence and its achievements	Hold an annual open day where we display photos reflecting our achievements	Poster about open day
3.1.c.c	Create opportunities for women to stand up and be visible within our education and training programmes	Facilitators gently encourage participants to speak up	Copy of role description for facilitators
3.1.c.d	Are visible in our engagement with decision-makers and policy makers at local level	Invite each local politician to come and visit our group once a year	Template for letter to politicians

## Extended Practice

## WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
3.1.e.a	Support women's visibility through fact-finding, drama, and creativity	Write and stage a drama production once every few years to raise awareness about a priority issue for women in our community	DVD of last production
3.1.e.b	Document and publish accounts of our work	Commissioned and published research on impact of WCE on women in our community	Copy of front page of research
3.1.e.c	Organise public gatherings where we recount and celebrate our work and our achievements and those of women learners	Strategic Plan launches always involve these elements and a variety of stakeholders are invited	Invite list to last strategic plan launch
3.1.e.d	Create a newsletter, contribute to our Network's newsletter and to the newsletters of women's community organisations regionally or nationally	Policy worker collates newsletter twice a year and sends to local network, AONTAS and NWCI for use in their newsletters	Copy of most recent newsletter
3.1.e.e	Maintain visibility and public presence through our premises	Invite other groups and/or committees to hold activities in our premises	Copy of page out of room booking diary
3.1.e.f	Use our premises and the premises of ally organisations to their full advantage in promoting and making visible women's activities and achievements	Our walls are covered with graduation photos and historical photos about the group	Photo of one of the walls

3.1.e.g	Encourage media coverage of our work and achievements through local and national print, radio and television	Every time a major piece of work is done, press release written and circulated	Copy of most recent press release
3.1.e.h	Are visible in our engagement with decision-makers and policy makers at local, regional and national levels	On monitoring committee for National Action Plan for Women	Copy of list of representatives on committee
3.1.e.i	Secure resources to build the communications and representation skills of the women's community education sector locally, regionally and nationally	Worked with local network to secure funding for media training programme	Brochure about programme

### 6.4.2. *Element 2 – Activism*

Women's community education believes that the opportunity must be created for all women to become active on issues affecting their lives if they so wish.

Women's community education groups get involved in women's activism. Groups give women the option of becoming politically aware and active on women's, community and education issues.

#### **Activism Practice**

##### **Core Practice**

WE

<b>PRACTICE</b>		<b>EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS</b>	<b>EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE</b>
3.2.c.a	Participate in the activities of local, regional and/or national women's community education and women's organisations	Members of local network who are members of AONTAS and NWCI	Membership list of the network
3.2.c.b	Participate in and celebrate International Women's Day events to raise consciousness and public awareness about women's lives and issues	Participate or hold IWD event annually	Brochure about last IWD event
3.2.c.c	Organise voter awareness and political awareness education and training for members, staff and management committees	Each election year ask St. Vincent de Paul to send voter awareness trainer to us	Photo of group participating in training
3.2.c.d	Participate in protest or campaigning events to challenge policies and practices which deny equality and justice for women	Part of local hospital development group	Copy of recent submission from this group

**Extended Practice****WE**

<b>PRACTICE</b>		<b>EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS</b>	<b>EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE</b>
3.2.e.a	Understand local structures relevant to women's community education	Meet with Community Education Facilitator annually to map these structures	Copy of mapping document
3.2.e.b	Have contacts with our area's local and national political representatives on issues affecting women and women's community education	Policy worker maintains contacts list of these representatives	Copy of contacts list
3.2.e.c	Engage in political lobbying and awareness raising work with political representatives particularly at strategically important times	Part of policy worker's role description	Copy of the worker's written role description
3.2.e.d	Have a particular interest in and engagement with women politicians and elected representatives	Collect media clippings about women representatives and send them letters of support from time to time	Copy of page from media clippings file
3.2.e.e	Develop links and contacts with public and statutory sector staff appropriate to the work of women's community education	Task in development worker's role description	Copy of development worker's written role description
3.2.e.f	Identify the barriers to women's engagement with the political process and work with others to address such barriers	Send representative to NWCI panel meetings	Letter of invite to panel meetings

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
3.2.e.g	Understand the workings of Government Departments and local structures relevant to women's community education including local government, the public service and statutory service structures	Each year Co-ordinator presents on this topic to staff and management	Agenda for this meeting
3.2.e.h	Have information available on the current policy platforms of political parties in relation to women's community education, community development, poverty, women's health, interculturalism, domestic violence and social inclusion and the financing of social inclusion measures	Staff members volunteer to collect information on platforms from one party each. Responsibility rotated annually	Minutes of staff meeting where this occurs
3.2.e.i	Make this material accessible to other women's community education groups, and other women involved in the organisation either as learners, staff, volunteers or management members	Briefing document about policy platforms circulated to network members annually	Copy of most recent briefing document
3.2.e.j	Maintain women's issues on the political agenda through our public presence, visibility and activism	Engage in one campaign a year at least	Media clipping from most recent campaign

### 6.4.3. Element 3 – Resources

Women's community education's work to secure funding and develop as women's organisations is political activity. The sector is committed to securing the resources to maintain and develop women's community education. Women's community education sources resources to facilitate the access, transfer and progression of communities of women through education, training and where they so desire, into employment and self-employment.

The allocation of resources to capacity-building programmes may include the appointment of specialist support and development workers, low-cost childcare and crèche facilities and outreach education and training programmes. Resources are essential to realise the vision of access by all women to education and training that meets their needs.

#### Resources Practice

#### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
3.3.c.a	Research funding sources and secure funding necessary for women's community education	Receive online newsletter Activelink	Printout of notification email
3.3.c.b	Are knowledgeable about current statutory and voluntary funding sources	Have created a funding folder with entries about different funding sources	Copy of page from folder
3.3.c.c	Make our political representatives aware of the resource needs of our groups	Before election liaised with politicians about resource issues	Copy of letters to representatives asking for meetings
3.3.c.d	Regularly review the tasks and skills needed to do the work against our human resources, and when necessary, find new staff and/or volunteers and/or management members to fill in any gaps	From the QAF see if we have people we need; if not, members of group volunteer to search out new members	Best practice review session notes

## Extended Practice

## WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
3.3.e.a	Network within the sector in relation to funding and resource issues	Discuss in the NCCWN on regular basis	Meeting agenda
3.3.e.b	Identify the barriers to accessible education created by inadequate resources for women's community education	Ask question on course feedback forms and collate responses	Copy of evaluation form
3.3.e.c	Work and lobby collectively to ensure that women's community education has the resources to provide best practice women's community education	Part of the AONTAS Community Education Network	Network member list
3.3.e.d	Keep the resourcing of women's community education as a live issue on the political agenda	Contribute to NWCI budget submission	Copy of most recent submission

#### 6.4.4. Element 4 – Commitment to Equality

The commitment of women's community education to equality is rooted in the experiences of inequality, exclusion and oppression of women as a community. Women's community education groups are committed to equality and understand that commitment to equality means standing for the value of difference and diversity.

Women's community education challenges exclusion and marginalisation. It challenges inequality across the grounds of gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age and citizenship status and inequalities due to geographic location, lack of infrastructure and public services and educational disadvantage. The practices in this element help groups to do this work.

### Equality Practice

#### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
3.4.c.a	Create relationships of equality for women within women's community education whether as participants, members, facilitators, trainers, staff and voluntary management committee members	From time to time provide assertive communication training	Copy of page of diary with dates for training scheduled
3.4.c.b (F)	Develop with our members, staff and management policy statements on equality issues including gender equality, anti-racism and interculturalism, violence against women, and community education	Equality policy developed	Copy of written policy
3.4.c.c	Are members of local, regional and/or national networks that are working to promote equality	Members of SIM	List of SIM committee members

## Extended Practice

## WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
3.4.e.a	Work in solidarity with other groups and organisations that are working to promote equality	Part of our community development network	Minutes of most recent meeting
3.4.e.b	Are members of national organisations outside of WCE that work to achieve similar goals to ours	Members of AONTAS	Copy of AONTAS membership list
3.4.e.c	Make links between women's experiences locally, nationally and transnationally	Co-ordinator participated on Banulacht Tanzania exchange	Copy of letter of acceptance to exchange
3.4.e.d	Make connections between the experiences of women in the past and present in Ireland and the experiences of women globally	Where possible a global dimension integrated into activities and programmes	Copy of guidelines for course design
3.4.e.e	Raise the awareness of others about the global issues and challenges faced by women	Hold regular talks from women from other countries to highlight issues and advertise in community	Poster about most recent talk
3.4.e.f	Are committed to work at policy levels on issues relating to women's equality in education, training and access to employment	Part of AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN)	Copy of list of members for CEN
3.4.e.g	Pursue the implementation of policies to achieve equality	Network with other groups to monitor progress	Regular progress bulletin

#### 6.4.5. *Element 5 – Commitment to Diversity*

Women's community education believes that recognition of diversity is essential for the achievement of equality. Each woman is unique, different and individual. Commitment to diversity practices help organisations to show and communicate the value we place on difference and the essential contribution diversity makes to women's community education.

Within the general category of women there is great diversity across race and ethnicity, health, age, sexual orientation, disability, class, income, and citizenship status. Women's community education reflects the diversity of women in Ireland and addresses the causes of marginalisation of specific communities of women.

WCE groups are always trying to make sure that they are reaching out to women from all backgrounds and challenging themselves to attract and hold onto women participants from diverse backgrounds.

#### **Diversity Practice**

##### **Core Practice**

WE

<b>PRACTICE</b>		<b>EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS</b>	<b>EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE</b>
3.5.c.a	Seek to be inclusive of all women	Ensure management committee is a diverse group	Photo of management committee
3.5.c.b (F)	Recognise that women can be discriminated against not only on the basis of gender but across all the grounds of the Equal Status Act, 2000	Have an Equality Policy for group which references the Act	Copy of written policy
3.5.c.c	Promote awareness of discrimination against women and challenge such discrimination through our work	Hold an annual Health Day	Poster about event

## Extended Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
3.5.e.a (F)	Provide capacity building and training to build political awareness and consciousness of diversity	Staff and management participate in diversity training run once every two years	Copy of agenda from last training day
3.5.e.b (F)	Take specific steps to ensure our organisation is inclusive of all women	Do equality audit once a year	Copy of notes from audit
3.5.e.c	Work in solidarity with organisations addressing racism and marginalisation	Part of Amnesty local working group	Copy of list of members of local working group
3.5.e.d	Challenge racism and exclusion and promote interculturalism	Have an anti-racism and intercultural policy	Copy of policy
3.5.e.e	Actively celebrate diversity	Celebrate International Day against Racism	Copy of poster about event

### 6.4.6. Element 6 – Representation

Women have traditionally been a small minority within or absent from senior levels of decision-making and from political life. Women's community education represents the interests of women involved in women's community education and training through local, regional and national networks, partnerships, organisations and alliances. Representation practices describe how organisations go about placing the issues affecting women's community education and its members on the agendas of a range of organisations and work to address these issues.

Representation means:

- Gathering information and building the expertise to inform and influence decision-making bodies in relation to issues affecting women's lives
- Bringing learning about the barriers to women's access to employment, education and training to those who make decisions about structures and about resources
- Using knowledge of how systems work to inform and empower women
- Using this knowledge to challenge the ways that systems maintain gender inequality.

### Representation Practice

#### Core Practice

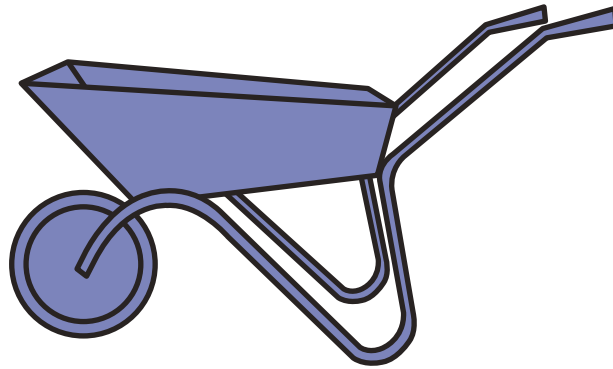
WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
3.6.c.a	Are part of informal networks in our area on issues that impact on women's community education	Part of local cluster groups	Report from groups
3.6.c.b	Participate in activities and celebrations organised by the women's community organisation sector and its allies	Attendance at AONTAS WCE events	Copy of letter of invite
3.6.c.c	Represent our groups and contribute to collective learning, practice and solidarity through collaborating, organising and participating in relevant workshops, training and consultations	Attended a Training for Transformation course	Copy of certificate from one of our members

## Extended Practice

## WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
3.6.e.a	Take up a representative role to ensure that women and women's community education issues are placed on the agenda and kept on the agenda	Participate in our County Development Board	Minutes of meeting
3.6.e.b	Represent women locally, regionally, nationally and internationally on needs and issues identified by women involved in women's community education	Did submission for the National Strategy for Women	Copy of submission
3.6.e.c	Represent women's issues in local, regional, national and international networks	Member NWCI and European Women's Lobby	Copy of membership paperwork
3.6.e.d	Evaluate strategically and collectively the achievements, barriers and learning from our representation activities	Have an annual review of this work with policy sub-group	Meeting agenda
3.6.e.e	Secure the resources, supports and training necessary to engage in networking and representation	Integrated into organisational training and development plan	Copy of plan
3.6.e.f	Maintain our professionalism, commitment, follow-through, and delivery of sustainable and realistic outcomes	Have key performance indicators which relate to these features and can show how we achieve outcomes	Copy of monitoring framework and key performance indicators



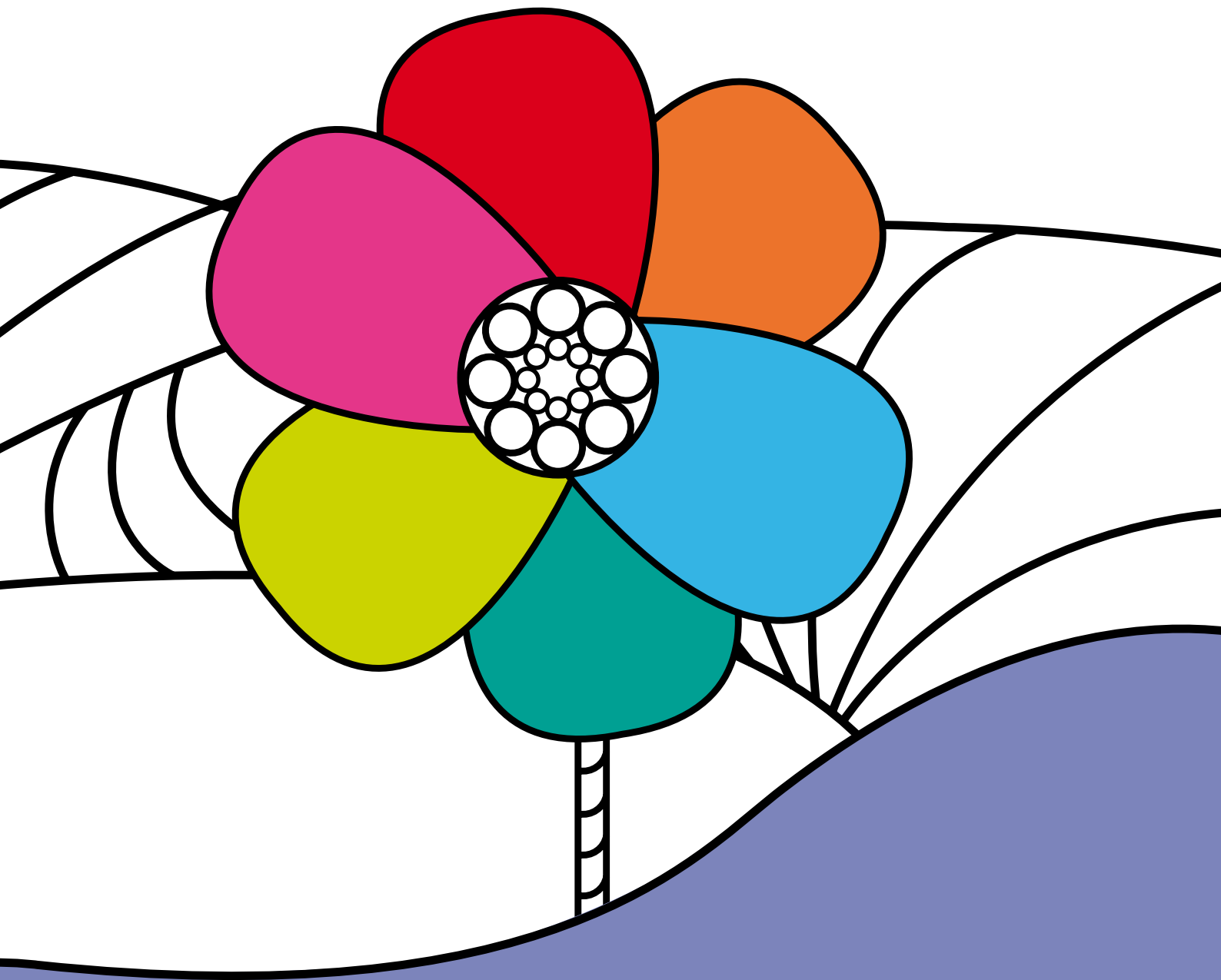
#### 6.4.7. Case Study – Waterford Women's Centre

The Waterford Women's Centre is a women's community education centre in Waterford City working in a disadvantaged area of the city. Management and staff joined to form the working group, and they reviewed the work of the centre using the framework. When they did this review they found that the centre had some gaps in the celebration, representation, outreach, visibility and learning organisation elements of the framework. In order to address these gaps they decided to:

- Develop a website for the centre
- Put together a funding application for renovating their current premises
- Host a national conference on a key theme decided by the policy group
- Conduct a longitudinal study on the outcomes of WCE for women
- Do a current impact assessment of the work of the centre
- Consult with participants to find out the key issues they are experiencing and draw up a policy-lobbying strategy based on findings from the consultation.

In order to set in place continuous review the working group decided:

- The members of the working group were also members of the policy group so took responsibility for seeing where else the framework could be used in the organisation
- The Co-ordinator of the centre was given responsibility for ensuring the actions in their benchmarking review were carried out
- To refer to the framework in their celebrations, annual reports, reviews and funding applications
- To distribute the framework to others linked to the organisation for their consideration.



## 6.5. Step Six – The Strategic Dimension

- 6.5.1. Element 1 – Capacity-Building
- 6.5.2. Element 2 – Creativity
- 6.5.3. Element 3 – Networking
- 6.5.4. Element 4 – Tactical Work
- 6.5.5. Element 5 – Partnership
- 6.5.6. Element 6 – Systemic Change
- 6.5.7. Process for completing Step Six

## 6.5. Step Six – The Strategic Dimension

The fourth and final dimension of practice you will facilitate your working group to use to review the work of your organisation is the strategic dimension. Women's Community Education is strategic education.

In the strategic dimension the practices describe the ways in which WCE organisations go about working towards equality for women, on collective empowerment and on the expansion of choices available to women in their education and in their lives. They also describe the methods that organisations use to do strategic work.

In the QAF strategic means to:

- Identify and strengthen the practices which contribute to the growth and sustainability of women's community education
- Identify and address the factors which undermine the capacity of the sector to effect change
- Work towards the fulfillment over time of the long-term goals and aspirations of women's community education.

The elements of this dimension and a brief description of them is set out in the table below.

<b>1. Capacity-Building</b>	These practices are ones that WCE groups carry out to ensure that individuals involved in the running of the organisation have the skills, training and support needed to do their work.
<b>2. Creativity</b>	This element lists the creative practices that WCE groups use to go about running the organisation such as drama and storytelling.
<b>3. Networking</b>	Sets out the practices that assist groups to reach out and work with other women's groups.
<b>4. Tactical Work</b>	Involves skilful work that organisations do to work towards bringing down the blocks to women's equality in society.
<b>5. Partnership</b>	These practices are about how WCE groups go about doing partnership work.
<b>6. Systemic Change</b>	Sets out the practices that allow WCE organisations to work with other groups in order to create the fundamental changes necessary to achieving women's equality.

The first three elements in this dimension – Capacity Building, Creativity and Networking – identify strategic work practices within groups and networks. The next three elements – Tactical Work, Partnership and Systemic Change – identify strategic work practices as part of the broader women's sector, with the community and voluntary sector and with other sectors.

Every women's community education group, whatever its size or scale, can make its own unique contribution to the strategic dimension of women's community education.

#### *6.5.1. Element 1 – Capacity-Building*

These practices describe how WCE organisations go about ensuring that staff, management and/or volunteers have the capacity needed to keep the organisation running. Women's community education believes that management and staff have an entitlement to training and supports in their work and provides and encourages participation in capacity building education and training programmes.

Training and capacity building supports management committees and staff to remain energised and proactive and is part of a commitment to holistic women-centred education. The capacity building element ensures that those who give to the organisation of women's community education also get back benefits from their work.

Women's voluntary commitment to their group in voluntary management committees or activities is the heart of the women's community education movement and the driving force which mobilizes and energises the sector.

Capacity building means giving women opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge essential for the management of women's groups and the maintenance of women's community education. Capacity building practices demonstrate that volunteer management committee members are respected and valued as the core providers of women's community education.

If your group does not have a separate management committee, you can still review your work in relation to these practices, because at the same time that you are a group of women participating in WCE you are also working to manage your group and will need to engage in practices that assist you to do that, such as finding funding and evaluating your activities.

## Capacity Building Practice

### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
4.1.c.a	Value and appreciate ourselves, our work and our promotion of women's community education	Hold a St. Patrick's Day concert	Poster for concert
4.1.c.b (F)	Provide support and training for staff and/or management members, or ourselves that is about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction, information sharing and informal networking</li> <li>• Group work and communications</li> <li>• Funding sources and procedures</li> <li>• Planning and review/evaluation processes</li> </ul>	Have induction packs for new members that give information on all of these topics	Copy of induction pack
4.1.c.c	Source either rented or no cost premises for the provision of women's community education	Have room in our local family resource centre	Photo of room
4.1.c.d	As gaps in skills or knowledge arise ensure that training or time is devoted to addressing those gaps, thereby developing the management committee's (or our own) collective empowerment to manage the work of our organisation.	Hold training day once a year for management on topic they identify as priority	Copy of invoice from facilitator for most recent training

## Extended Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
4.1.e.a	Secure resources for the provision of quality, accessible and reputable training programmes for staff, and/or volunteers, and/or members	Build training and development in as part of budget for every funding proposal	Copy of budget from a recent proposal
4.1.e.b (F)	<p>Develop and promote in partnership with other key providers a cycle of theoretical and practical training for management members which includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications and group work which we place at the core of capacity-building</li> <li>• Leadership training</li> <li>• Facilitation</li> <li>• Team development</li> <li>• Social and gender analysis</li> <li>• Participation and representation</li> <li>• Policy work</li> <li>• Anti-racism and interculturalism</li> </ul>	Have a two year training and development plan for whole organisation	Copy of plan
4.1.e.c	Establish and maintain a permanent premises dedicated to women's community education that is owned by the organisation	Ownership of building	Copy of deed

### 6.5.2. Element 2 – Creativity

Creativity in women's community education is a process in which the imagination, resources and experiences of the group provide opportunities for women's self-expression. Creativity allows new approaches to women's collective empowerment and new responses to the issues encountered by women to emerge.

#### Creativity Practice

##### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
4.2.c.a	Use creative methods in our education and training programmes to empower women	Ensure that courses are provided that are facilitated creatively	Copy of recent course outline
4.2.c.b	Encourage story-telling, creative writing and the recording of women's stories and lives	Write a local women's history	Copy or DVD of history
4.2.c.c	Provide opportunities for craft work	Did painting of QAF flower	Photo of painting
4.2.c.d	Offer opportunities for women to experience art exhibits, dance performances, and dramatic productions	Attended West Clare Women's Forum drama about domestic violence	Leaflet about performance
4.2.c.e	Offer opportunities for women to experience community arts programmes or activities	Took group to photo exhibit done by local CDP	Flyer about exhibit
4.2.c.f	Provide opportunities for creativity and creative expression throughout our work to run the organisation	Engage local women artists to design logos or other visual products for the group	Copy of some of the things we have had designed for the group
4.2.c.g	Use humour helps us confront the issues that impact on women's lives	Comics and posters on the wall about women's issues	Copy of poster

## Extended Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
4.2.e.a	Celebrate and raise awareness about women's lives and experiences through creativity such as developing and running art exhibits, dance performances, dramatic productions and community arts programmes	Run a drama programme and participants write and produce a film annually	DVD of last film
4.2.e.b	Use creativity and the power of the imagination in our planning and reviews	Use mindmapping as a tool for our work	Flipchart sheet with a mindmap on it
4.2.e.c	Are able, from these creative processes, to set clear goals and move forward with confidence in our work for social change and for an inclusive society	Include photos and collages that we have used to brainstorm in our plans as appendices	Copy of appendix from the last strategic plan
4.2.e.d	Collectively and publicly acknowledge women's creativity	Write letters of support to female artists locally	Copy of a letter

### 6.5.3. Element 3 – Networking

Women's community education groups share their experiences, learning, achievements and issues with each other through networking. At local, regional, national and international levels women generate ideas, energise each other, chart directions and work out strategies together.

#### Networking Practice

##### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
4.2.c.a	Share experiences within our own group and with women in other groups	Host other groups to visit us	Photo of a group coming to visit
4.2.c.b	Exchange information and learn from the experiences of other groups	Ask other groups to display some of our art work on their premises	Photo of us presenting work to another group
4.2.c.c	Take part in joint information and awareness sessions on common issues	Attended NWCI local session on Social Welfare Reform Campaign	Copy of email about the session
4.2.c.d	Celebrate together	IWD celebration was put together by a number of groups	Poster about celebration
4.2.c.e	Are dedicated to grassroots women's groups, activities and issues	Consult with network member groups when we do policy submissions	Flipchart sheet recording results of last consultation session

## Extended Practice

## WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
4.3.e.a	Organise support, information meetings and workshops on issues affecting women locally, regionally, nationally and internationally	Hold an annual Women's Health Day	Poster about event
4.3.e.b	Organise seminars and workshops relating to the issues of women, community and education	Organised information and discussion session on pornography	Copy of invitation to session
4.3.e.c	Publicly and collectively celebrate the achievements of our sector	Attended AONTAS WCE QAF event to celebrate completion of benchmarking	Copy of certificate of quality received
4.3.e.d	Are clear about the purpose for networking and understand the potential it has to further empower the work we do	Have a written statement about the importance of networking in our policies and procedures	Copy of statement

#### 6.5.4. Element 4 – Tactical Work

Tactical work means being able to come up with skilful courses of action which contribute to taking down the barriers to women's full and equal participation in society.

#### Tactical Work Practice

##### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
4.4.c.a	Publicly, name the issues affecting women's lives	Do press release once a year	Copy of recent press release
4.4.c.b	Work towards developing the resources, skills and knowledge to address these issues	One person attends policy training seminars	Copy of promotional material for course
4.4.c.c	Find out how to source reliable information on these issues and take the time to do so	Policy sub-group searches for relevant research reports quarterly	List of reports/ books in group
4.4.c.d	Find out which key systems impact on women's lives and have a basic understanding about how they impact on them. For instance, we understand how the health system, the social welfare system, the education system and so on discriminate against women	Sub-group reads new research as it comes in and circulates notes from the reports to all members of the group	Copy of email

## Extended Practice

## WE

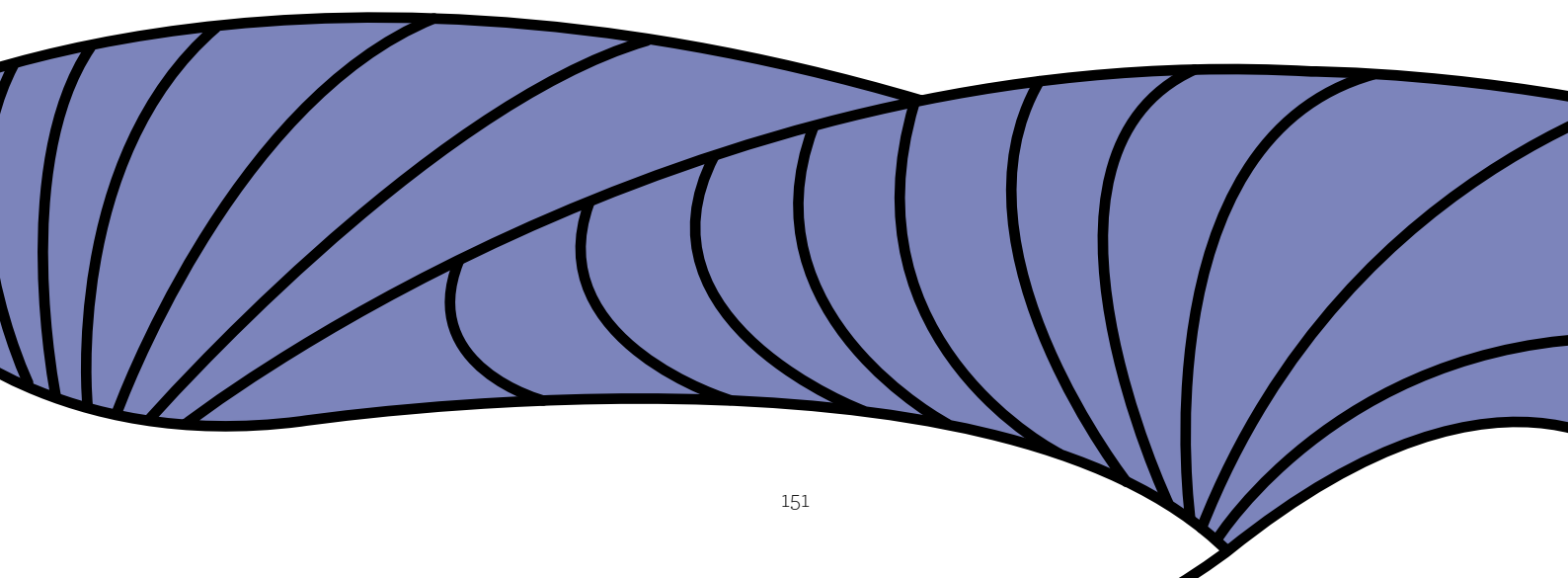
PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
4.4.e.a	Build up our detailed understanding of local, regional and national statutory systems, structures and strategies that impact on women's lives	Do local power mapping exercise	Copy of results
4.4.e.b	Work at building our expertise and being well-informed about issues, practices and developments in relation to those systems	Identify mentors in each system for representatives of organisations	List of mentors
4.4.e.c	Work on having a presence in strategic positions	Have annual audit of representation work	Copy of meeting notes
4.4.e.d	Place women's equality and justice issues on the agenda	Policy worker supports representatives to name issues at the tables they are at	Copy of Policy Worker job description
4.4.e.e	Build alliances to ensure these issues are progressed	Representatives work with mentors to do this	Copy of guidelines for representation work in organisations
4.4.e.f	Find and communicate to key people relating to these issues	This is an instruction in the guidelines given out to representatives	As above
4.4.e.g	Work from the ethos of making our point rather than scoring points	As above	As above

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
4.4.e.h	Assess every situation we get involved in for its potential to contribute to gains in relation to our long-term goals	Annual audit of representation work	Copy of meeting notes
4.4.e.i	Plan in advance, prioritise our actions and the arenas we get involved in around what we consider sustainable, realistic and achievable and which offer a return on our time	Annual lobbying strategy (linked to strategic plan)	Copy of strategy
4.4.e.j	Make regular assessments on our progress towards achieving short-term and long-term goals relating to achieving equality and justice for women in different arenas	Have key performance indicators relating to this work and monitor progress towards them	Copy of monitoring framework for organisation
4.4.e.k	Analyse the environment to appropriately time actions and see if it is the right time to progress issues	Monthly policy sub-group meetings	Meeting minutes
4.4.e.l	Allocate time as a sector for reflection together on the strategic dimension of our work	Strategic planning and interim reviews	Calendar of work in relation to this

### 6.5.5. *Element 5 – Partnership*

Partnership allows individuals and groups with different perspectives, resources and skills to come together to work towards collectively agreed goals. In women's community education partnership means that each partner is accorded equality of respect and equality in the decision-making process. Women's community education representatives keep their focus on progressing women's equality issues.

Oftentimes, WCE organisations are represented in partnership arenas where they are not accorded equality, respect and decision-making power. The practices here describe what partnership work should be like for WCE organisations and also describe how they can evaluate their partnership work, choosing which partnerships to get involved in and which ones to withdraw from or not participate in from the beginning.



## Partnership Practice

### Core Practice

WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
4.5.c.a	Are committed to the principles and practice of partnership within our own group – management committee, staff, members and participants work in a spirit of equality and partnership with each other	Included as part of the ground rules for meetings	Copy of ground rules
4.5.c.b	Identify mentors who can support us to do partnership work	A development worker from a CDP mentors us in partnership work	Copy of Development Worker's role specification
4.5.c.c	Source resources for the capacity-building necessary for women's community education to be represented effectively as an equal partner within partnership	Our funding is based on us building capacity of member groups	Copy of recent funding contract
4.5.c.d	Work in partnership with representatives of community and voluntary and statutory organisations within our community	Members of the group are volunteers within local organisations	List with names of members and where they volunteer

## Extended Practice

## WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
4.5.e.a	Represent our groups and networks in formal partnership structures	On board of Area-based Partnership	List of board members
4.5.e.b	Seek partnerships with groups and organisations which have a strategic focus related to the goals of women's community education	Work closely with another women's network in a different county	Minutes of meeting
4.5.e.c	Establish partnerships with other organisations across the community, voluntary and statutory sectors in order to address barriers to women's full and equal participation in society	Represented on County Development Board	List of CDB members
4.5.e.d	Seek in partnership a commitment to equality of relationship and status for all partners	Part of guidelines for this work	Copy of guidelines
4.5.e.e	Evaluate and review the outcomes of partnerships in relation to achievement of the goals of women's community education	Conduct annual review of partnership work	Meeting minutes
4.5.e.f	Make a strategic assessment over time on whether or not there is a return on our investment of time and resources in the different partnerships we are involved in	As above	As above

4.5.e.g	Invest strategically in places where we are likely to get the greatest return in relation to our short and long term goals	Make decisions in above meeting	As above
4.5.e.h	Work with our own sector and with our partners to build awareness of good partnership practice and commitment to the factors that create and maintain effective partnerships, such as partnership or interagency agreements	Have developed guidelines for effective interagency practice which we seek to integrate into any of said work we do	Copy of guidelines

#### 6.5.6. *Element 6 – Systemic Change*

Systemic change means making changes throughout organisations, structures and systems that impact on women's lives. Systemic change involves changes in ways of thinking, and ways of working and organising so that society reflects the reality and diversity of women's lives.

Women's community education organisations recognise that women's groups alone cannot bring about the scale of social and attitudinal change that is required to achieve equality for women. Through alliances, networks and partnerships and through activism and policy work women's community education seeks to contribute to systemic change.

Women's community education seeks to extend its influence in and on local, regional and national structures in order to contribute to such change. Groups extend their influence by building and maintaining key alliances, by securing the resources for strategic work, by engaging in challenge and protest, and by keeping the focus on the achievement of women's community education's vision and goals.

## Systemic Change Practice

### Core Practice

#### WE

PRACTICE		EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS	EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE
4.6.c.a	Identify the key issues for women's community education that threaten the existence of WCE organisations or that prevent them from being seen as essential for realising women's equality and equal to other education providers, statutory agencies and non-profit organisations	Participation in WCE QAF training where those issues are raised and discussed	Copy of discussion notes from WCE QAF training
4.6.c.b	Identify the key players in our community who are responsible for these issues	Regularly make contact with service providers and other key players	Notes of a telephone conversation with one of them
4.6.c.c	Maintain an up-to-date list of such key players - local politicians and local agency staff	Have a contacts list	Copy of first page of list
4.6.c.d	Inform local politicians and local agencies on issues impacting on women's community education	Work closely with Community Education Facilitators and keep them up-to-date	Calendar of scheduled meetings with CEF
4.6.c.e	Challenge local politicians and local agencies to address issues impacting on women's community education	Regularly write to local politicians about current issues	Copy of a recent letter
4.6.c.f	Know and work reciprocally with the people who engage with the issues facing women's community education	Member of AONTAS Community Education Network	Copy of membership list

**Extended Practice**

WE

<b>PRACTICE</b>		<b>EXAMPLE OF HOW THIS HAPPENS</b>	<b>EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE</b>
4.6.e.a	Seek allies within the systems and build relationships and alliances there	Policy worker is responsible for this	Copy of Policy Worker's job description
4.6.e.b	Work at different levels within the systems-aiming for the most senior levels of decision-making and also using channels within the system in order to exert our influence on developments	Integrated into policy lobbying strategy for the year	Copy of strategy
4.6.e.c	Recognise and create opportunities to exert influence outside formal decision-making arenas	Have an annual think tank session about key issues and invite key local stakeholders	Copy of invite to last session
4.6.e.d	Work out and name the specific changes to systems and organisations that progress women's equality	Biannual policy position papers on key themes	Copy of most recent policy position paper
4.6.e.e	Lobby and challenge public representatives, policy makers and policy administrators to implement the necessary changes in systems and organisations that secure equality for women in Irish society	Use policy lobbying plan and position papers to conduct this work	Copies of excerpts of these documents

### 6.5.7. *Process for completing Step Six*

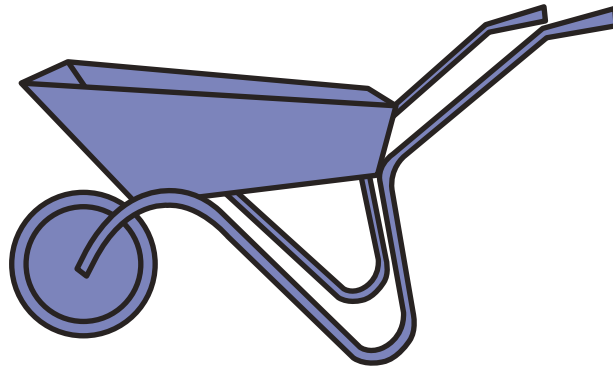
Again, with this dimension you follow the same process that you have followed for all the others. Once you have finished reviewing your work in relation to this dimension it is important to inform your group of where they are at in the benchmarking process. Show them the review process flow chart that you presented to them in Step One of the process and show them what is left in the process. At this stage the steps that are left are:

- Step Seven – Developing an Improvements Action Plan
- Dimension 1 Review
- Dimension 2 Review
- Dimension 3 Review
- Dimension 4 Review.

Remember, the dimension reviews can be done at an interval decided by the group at no more than a year apart.

### *Tips*

- Again, if the group is saying that there is repetition in practices as they are reviewing them it is important to facilitate them to see how a practice that looks the same in more than one element is different, because of the element it is placed in. Where groups raise this point, ask them to find the practice they think is repeated elsewhere in the QAF and gently encourage them to think about how the practice becomes different in the element they are currently looking at. If, after exploration, they still feel there is repetition, then record that in your notes from the session.



#### 6.5.8. Case Study – Southside Women's Action Network

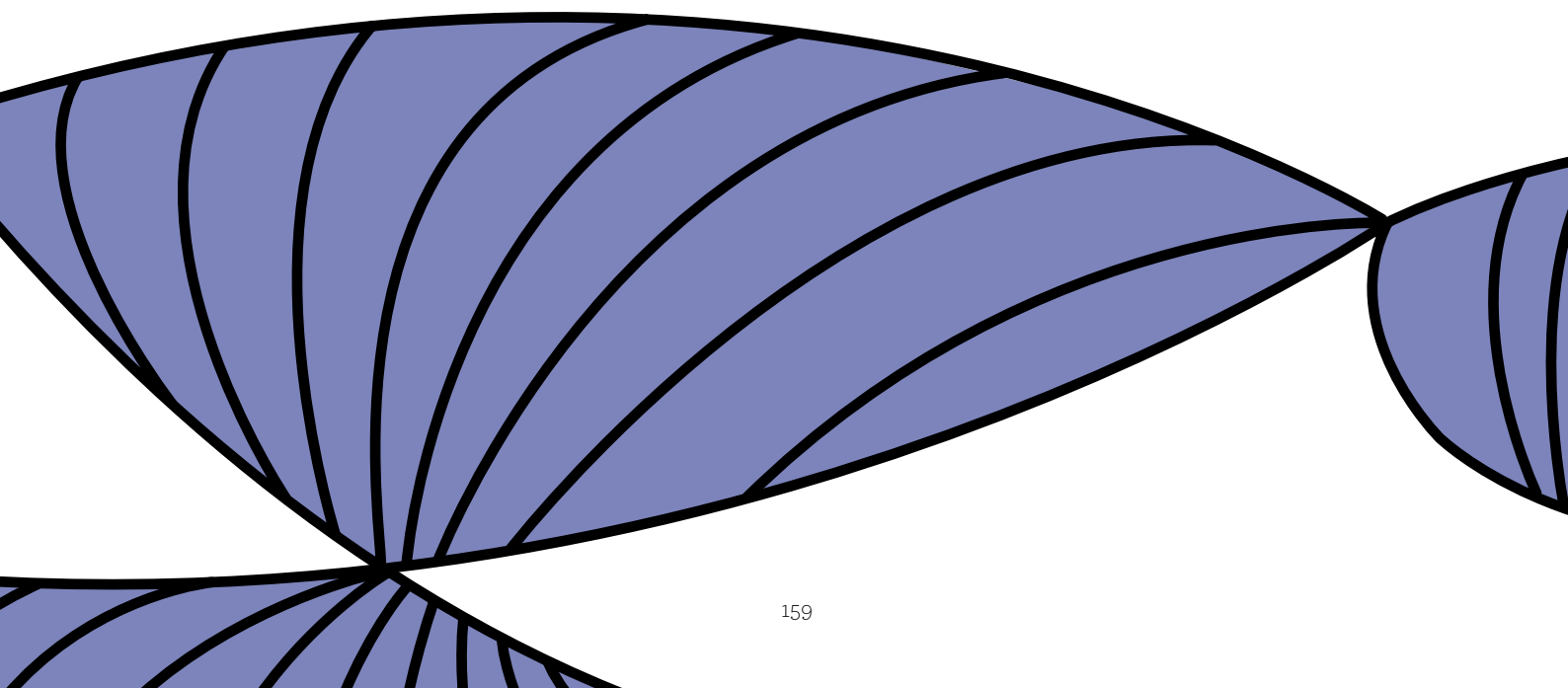
Southside Women's Action Network (SWAN) is a network of women's groups and community development projects in Dun Laoghaire, Dublin. The working group for the network consisted of management members and staff. When they reviewed their work they realised that they had gaps in their work in relation to:

- Ensuring that courses concluded with celebration and facilitated a political and gender analysis
- Addressing barriers to participation in education and providing childcare support
- Having links with local agencies to facilitate women's progression
- Giving attention to new members and all members working together as equals
- Participating in protest events and building their identity as a collective, and
- Encouraging creativity in the work.

In order to address these gaps the working group decided to pursue the following actions:

- Holding formal and informal workshops and discussions three times a year about their work and philosophy with staff and management
- Identifying staff people who could take responsibility for some of the gaps in practice identified through the process and incorporate those practices into their job descriptions
- Developing a promotion policy for the organisation
- Beginning to organise celebrations as part of the calendar of work
- Developing new courses aimed at increasing the awareness of women's issues, like women's studies
- Removing barriers to participation by setting up referral relationships with agencies who can support women and naming the barriers in promotional material about the organisation.

SWAN decided that the working group would meet every three months to review progress around the action plan and nominated one person to co-ordinate the work to carry out the actions. They also planned to present the overall plan to the staff and board and begin to look at how they would set up continuous review of their work using the framework.





## 6.6. Worksheets to be filled out at the end of the Dimension Review

### *Work we need to do after the Dimensions Review – Recording Form*

On this form you can record the gaps in practice you identified throughout the review of all the practices in all of the dimensions of WCE. Just note the reference number of the practice you identified that your organisation is not doing under the appropriate heading in the table below.

Rooted In The Reality Of Women's Lives Gaps In Practice (i.e. 1.2.c.a)	Women-Led Gaps In Practice	Political Gaps In Practice	Strategic Gaps In Practice
Strong, shaky ground or uncharted territory in this dimension?	Strong, shaky ground or uncharted territory in this dimension?	Strong, shaky ground or uncharted territory in this dimension?	Strong, shaky ground or uncharted territory in this dimension?

In the table below you can note any ideas for addressing gaps in practice that your group came up with during the dimension review.

DIMENSION	IDEAS (IN BRACKETS INDICATE THE PRACTICE IT WOULD ADDRESS)
Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives	
Women-Led	
Political	
Strategic	

## SECTION 7.

# Creating an Action Plan

Congratulations! You and your working group have made it to the stage where you can create your first ever WCE improvement action plan. This chapter presents the step-by-step process and documents that will help you to come up with a plan.

Rather than have groups try to come up with an action for each gap that was identified in the dimension review, the process for planning assists groups to come up with a series of actions that address more than one gap at once. You may have already noticed when you were reviewing your work in relation to the dimensions that one activity in your organisation could encompass more than one practice in the QAF, albeit to a different function.

The planning process helps you to come up with activities that will do that for the gaps in practice you and your group identified. Thus, carrying out the plan should hopefully be less work for the organisation than carrying out one action for every gap in your work.

The planning process should also help you to time when you will accomplish the actions in your plan so that they are realistic and achievable.

### 7.1. The Matrix

The central method used to assist groups through the planning process is called a matrix. There are detailed instructions on how to do the planning matrix set out in Information Sheet 8. A matrix is a simple tool that can help groups come up with solutions to address problems, or in this case, actions to address gaps. It also is very visual and helps to focus group discussions.

### 7.2. The Action Plan

This section also contains the worksheets that you can fill out at the end of the planning process. When put together with the other documentation completed during the process it becomes your group's action plan.

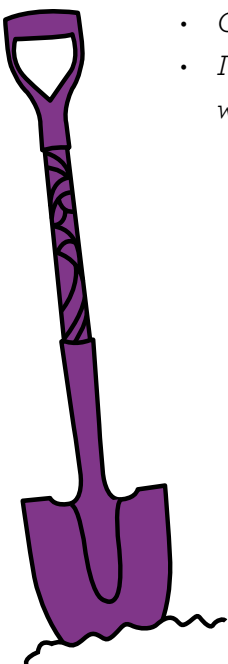
### 7.3. Step Seven – Planning to make improvements

The aim of this step is:

*To ensure that every member of our working group contributes to and agrees a an action plan that will guarantee achievement of the best practice standard in women's community education for our group/organisation.*

In this step of the process your working group will:

- *Review the working group Statement of Commitment*
- *Contribute to the development of an action plan that will address gaps in practice identified during the last five workshops*
- *Take responsibility for carrying out actions identified in the plan*
- *Decide how the plan will be finalised and monitored*
- *Celebrate the work they have done throughout this process*
- *Identify the first dimension review that will be done and how often these reviews will take place.*



7.3.1. *Process to follow for completing Step Seven*

TASK	TIME ALLOTTED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome the group and present the aim and objectives of the workshop to the group.</li> </ul>	5 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post the Working Group's Statement of Commitment on the wall and read it out to the group checking that the group is still committed to it.</li> </ul>	5 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Either give each member a photocopy of 'Work we Need to Do – Dimensions Review' recording form, or point out where you have the list of gaps you need to address written onto flipchart sheets. Also point out the flipchart sheet on which you will have written any ideas that the group came up with to address gaps in practice as they did the dimension review. Ask the group to take time to either read through their material or tour the room looking at the gaps in practice identified throughout the process.</li> </ul>	15 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Point to the 'Planning Questions' (see Information Sheet 7) that you will have written onto a flipchart and posted on the wall. Read each of them out to the group and say that they may wish to refer to these questions throughout the planning workshop to assist with their thinking about what actions to pursue.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarise for the group their discussions about each of the principles and remind them where the organisation was on the each root chart for each principle. Ask them to discuss this question:  <i>Now that we have discussed all of the principles of women's community education, checked our rootedness in them and reviewed our practice are we still happy with the rootedness scores we gave initially? Let's select the principles or aspects of principles that we need to plan some actions around.</i></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put the pre-prepared matrix form (see Information Sheet 8) on the floor/table and say to the group.  <i>This is a matrix – it is a way of helping us develop and score ideas to address gaps in practice.</i></li> </ul>	15 minutes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there are aspects of principles you want to plan around write them into the matrix. You can work with up to ten gaps on your matrix. If you only have a few gaps to work with now is the opportunity for your group to pick out some extended practices in the QAF or practices you wanted to improve on and include them in the planning process. Ensure that all the practices you are going to plan around are included on the matrix.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turning to the matrix, take each practice in turn and ask the group: <i>What action/s would satisfy this practice?</i></li> </ul> <p>Try to get the group to come up with actions by themselves. If they are having trouble thinking of an action they can refer to their handouts on the elements to see examples of actions for each practice in the QAF. The group may also need to think if there are upcoming projects the organisation will be engaging in that will satisfy gaps as well.</p>	60 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the group identifies actions, make sure you ask them: <i>Is this a new action or a step to achieving the action we have just named?</i></li> </ul> <p>If the group identifies it as a step to achieving an action already named, then the co-Leader needs to note this step in case the group needs it later in this planning process and it does not go on the matrix.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In front of the group, score the matrix the way it is described in information sheet.</li> </ul>	10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate the group to pick the six top-scoring actions on the matrix ensuring that all of the gaps in practice have been satisfied by them. Write each action on top of its own flipchart sheet as a heading. Where you have identified a step to reach one of the actions already write that under the appropriate action heading.</li> </ul>	10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break the group up into small groups – either pairs or whatever amount you think would work and divide the actions equally amongst the groups. Ask them: <i>Looking at each action what steps would need to be taken to achieve it. Write these down in the order they will need to happen.</i></li> </ul>	40 minutes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once the group has done this work, ask them to tour the results of everyone's work. Ask them to answer this question: <i>Looking at the actions we have chosen and the steps that will achieve them, are we happy that they will assist us to root ourselves more deeply in the principles of women's community education?</i></li> <li>• Facilitate a short discussion in answer to this question. If the group feel some extra steps need to be added in to assist rootedness in the principles then insert them into the action they belong to.</li> </ul>	10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the group to point out any forgotten steps to achieve any of the actions. Fill in the gaps. Now ask the group this question: <i>Taking a look at the steps needed to achieve each action, when do they all need to be completed by so that this practice becomes ongoing in our organisation? In the short-term (1-6 months), medium-term (6-12 months) or long-term (1-2 years)</i></li> <li>• Taking each action in turn write onto the flipchart sheet when each action and its steps will be commenced by (as they are ongoing practices).</li> </ul>	10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At this point it will be important to communicate to the group how this plan will be carried out and monitored. If the working group will also be responsible for doing the work then you will need to facilitate the members to take responsibility for particular tasks in the plan and make times to meet to see how the implementation of the plan is progressing.</li> </ul>	10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the group is not responsible for carrying out the plan, just let them know where it is going. Remind them that this group will still continue to meet to go on with the rest of the review process which will focus on doing a review of each dimension at an interval agreed on by the group.</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind the group that benchmarking is meant to be continuous and once the process is finished it is intended to start up again. Remind them that the guide recommends an organisation going through the process once every five years. Facilitate a discussion in answer to this question: <i>How often should our group go through a review?</i> <i>We need to review each dimension again once before the whole process starts again. How often will we come together to do this?</i></li> </ul>	15 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind the group of the scores they gave for each of the dimensions (strong, shaky ground, uncharted territory). Ask them to answer this question: <i>In what order will we review the dimensions?</i></li> </ul>	10 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a date for the first dimension review. Thank the group for all the work so far, and ask them to do the ‘what worked’, ‘what didn’t work’ evaluation on the way out.</li> </ul>	

*Tips*

- If there are particular principles or aspects of principles that the group thinks really need to be worked on then they become gaps that go on the matrix.
- If you identified more than ten gaps during the dimension review it is suggested that you take the first ten gaps on your list and do a matrix around them. Then, move onto the next ten. Remember that ideas to address gaps in practice from the first matrix could also be ideas for subsequent matrices. Keep going through the matrix process until you have all the gaps covered and then come up with steps to achieve the actions chosen to address all of the gaps. You may find that actions chosen from previous matrices end up being part of the top six for subsequent ones as well. So, let's say your group has 30 gaps (which would be dealt with on three matrix charts). You might think that would mean that there will be 18 actions for your action plan. However, maybe 6 of the actions cover 20 gaps so you only need to find as many other actions as are needed to cover the remaining 5 gaps making it so that you might only have a few extra actions to choose on top of the 6.
- Remember, you can have more than one idea to satisfy a gap in practice.

### **7.3.2. Information Sheet 7 – Important questions to keep in mind when you are planning**

It can be helpful to keep the questions set out below in mind when planning actions. Write these questions onto a flipchart sheet and post them somewhere in the room during the planning session.

#### **Questions we may need to consider while we are selecting actions we want to pursue in our Plan**

- Do we have the resources to carry out this action – i.e. time, staff, volunteers, money?
- Is there an opportunity in our environment that influences if and when we should do this action?
- How long will it take to get the steps done to achieve this action?
- Does this action fit with our mission/aims/strategic plan/ethos?
- Is someone else already doing this action that we could link with or could we do the action in partnership?
- Will carrying out this action or set of steps root us more deeply in the principles of women's community education?
- Who might be able to carry out this action?
- Will this action benefit us or change our profile?
- Do our learners say we really need to do this and if we do not we will lose them?

### 7.3.3. *Information Sheet 8 – Doing a matrix*

See the instructions below for how to use a matrix to assist your group during the QAF planning workshop.

1. Depending on the size of your space, tape either two, four or six flipchart pages together width wise.
2. Draw a grid on the worksheet that has 11 rows and 21 columns.
3. In the top left hand cell of the grid, write ‘gaps’ horizontally at the top of the first column.
4. In that same cell, write ‘actions’ vertically at the beginning of the very top row (so the top left hand cell will have two words written into it).
5. Put each of the gaps in practice that you are going to work with in the planning process in its own cell in the first column in the grid under ‘gaps’. Remember that your group may want to add in some others at the planning workshop because you can work with up to ten gaps.
6. With your group you ask them to develop actions to address gaps in practice. As they come up with an action do not forget to ask them “Is this a new action or a step to achieve an action we have already identified?”
7. When new actions are identified they are placed in their own cell in the very top row of the grid, one next to the other.
8. Once you have worked through all the gaps and developed actions to address them take each action in turn and see which gaps in your list it addresses by going down the list of gaps one by one.
9. If a gap is addressed by the action you are working with put a ✓ in the cell across from that gap and under the action you are working through.
10. Repeat this process for every action you have come up with until you have gone through all the actions.
11. Add up the number of ✓ in each column and write the total at the end of the column.
12. Taking a red marker circle the top 6 scoring actions in the matrix.
13. Looking across the matrix see if there are any gaps in practice that are not addressed by any of the 6 top scoring actions. If there are gaps you must select actions to cover the gaps.
14. You can create a plan around as many as actions as you want, but if you only want 6 you will need to work with your group to prioritise the 6 actions you are going to go forward with and ensure all gaps are covered.
15. HINT! The ‘Planning’ questions can help your group to focus in on what actions they want to go forward with.

7.3.4. Example of a completed action planning matrix

ACTIONS							
Gaps in Practice	Development worker to meet with all those working with women in Limerick City	Invite relevant organisations working with women to events organised by LINK	Create links with Doras and Traveller Development Group	Invite Doras and Traveller Development Group to all LINK events	Revisit make up of management committee	Revisit Make up of Steering Group of Network	Develop quarterly newsletter for members groups
1.1.E.B	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.1.E.F	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2.5.E.D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.6.E.C	✓	✓	✓	✓			
4.1.E.B		✓					
4.2.E.B					✓	✓	
4.3.E.B	✓	✓	✓				
3.1.E.B							✓
3.4.E.C	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3.4.E.E	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
TOTAL	7	8	7	6	6	6	2

### 7.3.5. Worksheets to be completed at the end of Step Seven

#### Matrix Recording Form

Record on this form what your matrix looked like when it was completed by your group. If you did more than one matrix you can photocopy this form as many times as you need to. Enlarging this form to A3 may make it easier to fill out.

<b>ACTIONS</b>								
<b>Gaps in Practice</b>								

**Blank Action Plan Template**

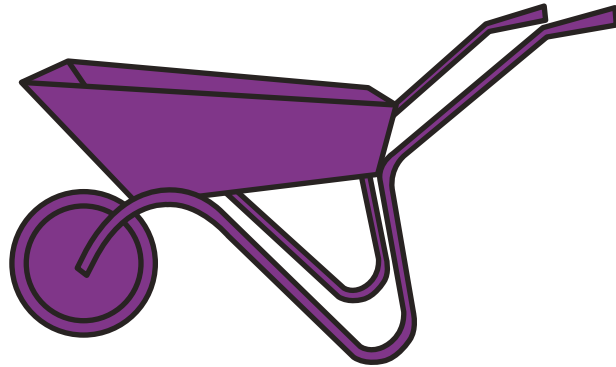
Photocopy this form until you have a blank one for each action that you have chosen for your plan and fill in one per action. Enlarging it to A3 may make it easier to fill out.

**Is this a short, medium or long-term goal?**

What is the Action?	What Gaps does it Address (i.e. number of practice or name of principle/aspiration)?	Steps to achieving action	Who will do it?
		1.	
		2.	
		4.	
		5.	
		6.	
		7.	
		8.	
		9.	
		10.	

**What piece of evidence will be collected to show that this action has been achieved?**

**What is the deadline date for the achievement of this action?**



### 7.3.6. *Case Study – Completed Action Plan from LINK The Limerick Women’s Network*

LINK is a network for women’s groups in Limerick City. They went through the best practice review process at both the core and extended levels since they have been in existence for a long time and have paid staff and a Management Committee. While they were doing the majority of practices listed in the dimensions they found that they had two to three gaps in each dimension. Below you will see the actions they came up with to address their gaps and their plans to achieve them. In order to ensure that they would continually review their work against the QAF they decided that:

- All members of the working group would continue to sit on the Management Committee of LINK
- The Action Plan would form part of the agenda at Management Committee meetings
- Feedback would be given on the progress at monthly meetings
- Members agreed that the QAF would be used when planning the annual review and the three year work-plan for the organisation
- The guidebook was to be used as a guide when planning events, training and education courses.

Medium-Term Action for LINK for the Plan (6-12 months)

What is the Action?	What Gaps does it Address (i.e. number of practice or name of principle/aspiration)?	Steps to achieving action	Who will do it?
Development worker to meet with all those working with women in Limerick City	1.1.E.B. 1.1.E.F. 2.5.E.D. 2.6.E.C. 4.3.E.B. 3.4.E.C. 3.4.E.E.	1. Gather information on all groups working with women in Limerick City	Development Worker
		2. Arrange meetings with groups to exchange information	Development Worker
		3. Compile database of organisation	Development Worker
		4. Give presentation on LINK to all groups and gather information on their services	Development Worker
		5. Produce brochure with information on all groups working with women in Limerick	Development Worker
		6. Invite all those working with women in Limerick to network premises to view information database	Development Worker
		7.	
		8.	
		9.	
		10.	

What piece of evidence will be collected to show that this action has been achieved?

Database of groups working with women in place

What is the deadline date for the achievement of this action?

June 2009

**Short-Term Action for LINK for the Plan (1-6 months)**

What is the Action?	What Gaps does it Address (i.e. number of practice or name of principle/aspiration)?	Steps to achieving action	Who will do it?
Invite relevant organisations working with women to events organised by LINK	1.1.E.B. 1.1.E.F. 2.5.E.D. 2.6.E.C. 4.1.E.B. 4.3.E.B. 3.4.E.C. 3.4.E.E.	1. Contact Education Guidance Counsellor to get information on all community education provision in Limerick 2. Set up sub-group of representatives of those working with women to plan information sessions on issues relevant to women 3. Organise information session on educational opportunities for women in community education 4. Develop specific information sharing initiatives in response to identified needs of women's organisations in Limerick 5. Send invitations to everyone on database to LINK events and training courses 6. 7. 8. 9.	Development Worker  Development Worker/ Co-ordinator  Development Worker/ Co-ordinator  Development Worker/ Co-ordinator  Development Worker/ Co-ordinator

**What piece of evidence will be collected to show that this action has been achieved?**

Attendance sheet at educational information event

**What is the deadline date for the achievement of this action?**

March 2008

Short-Term Action for LINK for the Plan (1-6 months)

What is the Action?	What Gaps does it Address (i.e. number of practice or name of principle/aspiration)?	Steps to achieving action	Who will do it?
Create links with Doras and Traveller Development Group	1.1.E.B. 1.1.E.F. 2.5.E.D. 2.6.E.C. 4.3.E.B. 3.4.E.C. 3.4.E.E.	1. Arrange meeting with Anne in Doras to deliver presentation on network	Development Worker/ Co-ordinator
		2. Invite Doras to join network and to send a representative to steering committee	Co-ordinator
		3. Work with Doras to raise awareness of issues affecting refugee/asylum seeker women	Co-ordinator
		4. Provide support to representative to attend meetings and participate in training courses	Development Worker
		5. Contact representative of Traveller women's group and deliver presentation on network	Development Worker/ Co-ordinator
		6. Invite Traveller woman to join network and to send a representative to steering committee	Development Worker
		7. Work with Traveller Development Group to raise awareness of issues affecting traveller women	Development Worker/ Co-ordinator
		8. Provide support to representative to attend meetings and participate in training	Development Worker
		9. Support women experiencing multiple disadvantage to have a voice and to lobby on their issues with support of LINK	Co-ordinator
		10. Develop mentoring system to provide ongoing support to all network members	Development Worker

What piece of evidence will be collected to show that this action has been achieved?

Membership details of network steering committee

What is the deadline date for the achievement of this action?

February 2009

## Ongoing Action for LINK for the Plan (ongoing)

What is the Action?	What Gaps does it Address (i.e. number of practice or name of principle/aspiration)?	Steps to achieving action	Who will do it?
Invite Doras and Traveller Development Group to all LINK events	1.1.E.B. 1.1.E.F. 2.5.E.D. 2.6.E.C. 3.4.E.C. 3.4.E.E.	1. Work with network members to raise awareness of needs of minority groups of women 2. Arrange for Doras and Limerick Travellers Development Group to deliver presentations at network steering committee 3. Work with all groups of network to develop understanding of each others issues 4. Arrange team-building event with all member groups of the network	Development Worker
		5. Provide appropriate support for members of minority groups to attend all LINK events	Development Worker/ Co-ordinator
		6. Include Doras and Traveller Development Group in all LINK events	Development Worker/ Co-ordinator
		7.	
		8.	
		9.	
		10.	

**What piece of evidence will be collected to show that this action has been achieved?**

Attendance sheet of information events/courses

**What is the deadline date for the achievement of this action?**

ONGOING

**Ongoing Action for LINK for the Plan (1-2 years)**

Please fill in as many tables as you need to document the actions and steps to achieving them that will be completed in the medium term and insert them into this section of the plan.

What is the Action? Develop quarterly newsletter for member groups	What Gaps does it Address (i.e. number of practice or name of principle/aspiration)? 1.1.E.B. 3.1.E.B.	Steps to achieving action		Who will do it?
		1. Source funding to develop quarterly newsletter	Co-ordinator	
2. Invite all member groups to submit articles/ advertise events etc. to newsletter	Development Worker			
3. Write articles on work of LINK	Development Worker/ Co-ordinator			
4. List upcoming events and courses to include in newsletter	Development Worker/ Co-ordinator			
5. Contact women for photographs of celebrations and award ceremonies to acknowledge achievements	Development Worker/ Co-ordinator			
6. Develop emagazine and email to all community organisations and groups working with women	Development Worker/ Co-ordinator			
7. Develop hard copy of magazine and send to all member groups, CDPs and community organisations	Development Worker/ Co-ordinator			
8.				
9.				
10.				

**What piece of evidence will be collected to show that this action has been achieved?**

Copy of newsletter

**What is the deadline date for the achievement of this action?**

Ongoing

**Long-Term Action for LINK for the Plan (1-2 years)**

What is the Action?	What Gaps does it Address (i.e. number of practice or name of principle/aspiration)?	Steps to achieving action	Who will do it?
Revisit make up of management committee	1.1.E.B 1.1.E.F. 2.5.E.D. 4.2.E.B. 3.4.E.C. 3.4.E.E.	1. Source funding to employ a facilitator to work with group 2. Work with facilitator to identify gaps in representation on Management Committee (M.C.) 3. Agree new representative structure for M.C. 4. Meet with potential members and give them information on LINK 5. Arrange induction training for new members	Co-ordinator Board Member Board Member Board Member and Staff Co-ordinator
		4. Provide support to new members to become part of M.C. – Childcare/Expenses	Staff/Board Member
		6. Include new members in Buddy system and identify partner to support them	Staff/Board Member
		8.	
		9.	
		10.	

**What piece of evidence will be collected to show that this action has been achieved?**

List of new representatives on LINK Management Committee

**What is the deadline date for the achievement of this action?**

February 2010

Long-Term Action for LINK for the Plan (1-2 years)

What is the Action? Revisit Make up of Steering Group of Network	What Gaps does it Address (i.e. number of practice or name of principle/aspiration)?	Steps to achieving action	
1.1.E.B. 1.1.E.F. 2.5.E.D. 4.2.E.B. 3.4.E.C. 3.4.E.E.		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Source funding for facilitated session with all network members</li> <li>2. Identify what works well and what is problematic in terms of representation on steering committee</li> <li>3. Work with facilitator to identify most suitable structure for steering committee</li> <li>4. Support members to put new structure in place</li> <li>5.</li> <li>6.</li> <li>7.</li> <li>8.</li> <li>9.</li> <li>10.</li> </ol>	Co-ordinator  Steering Committee members/ Development Worker  Steering Committee members/ Development Worker  Staff

What piece of evidence will be collected to show that this action has been achieved?

Notes of facilitated session outlining new structure

What is the deadline date for the achievement of this action?

June 2010

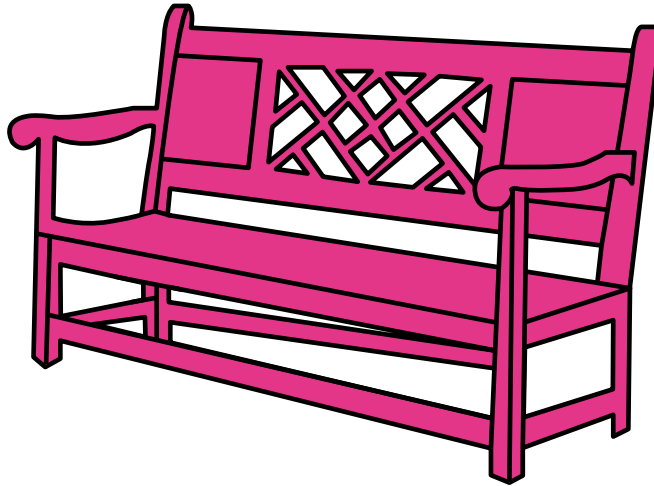
## SECTION 8.

# Making Benchmarking Continuous

### 8.1. Making sure the plan gets carried out

Now that your plan is finished the group will begin to carry it out. How this implementation happens depends on the organisation. Below you will see a range of suggestions for how different types of groups could carry out plans. This list is not exhaustive so the way in which the plan is implemented in your group might be different to what is listed below.

TYPE OF ORGANISATION	IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN
Self-managing, voluntary, no management committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tasks in plan assigned to different members</li> <li>• A person is elected by the group to mind the plan</li> <li>• Time given over once a month to discuss progress of plan</li> </ul>
As above, but supported by a co-ordinator in a family resource centre or partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinator oversees plan and carries out some actions</li> <li>• Sub-group of smaller group could be created to assist</li> <li>• Regular updates sent to group from Co-ordinator in regard to implementation of plan</li> </ul>
Voluntary with management committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management committee members or a sub-group of members take up responsibility for different actions in plan</li> <li>• Chair is responsible for overseeing implementation of plan</li> <li>• Best practice/benchmarking is an item on management meeting agenda</li> </ul>
Staffed organisation with management committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee signs off on plan and gives Manager or Co-ordinator responsibility of implementing plan</li> <li>• If Manager is only staff member, she may ask for sub-group of management to assist with implementation and they can divide tasks in plan amongst them</li> <li>• If Manager has other staff, then actions in plan are assigned to appropriate staff person or people and she assists them to integrate those actions into their work plans</li> <li>• Benchmarking/best practice becomes item on staff meeting agenda and management meeting agenda</li> </ul>



Remember, that the working group in your organisation still stays up and running. They will be engaging in a dimension review at regular intervals. At each dimension review another plan will emerge. Thus, best practice review becomes a process that the organisation is always involved in.

A really useful way to make sure an action gets carried out and becomes an ongoing practice in the group is to write the action as a responsibility in a role description for staff, volunteers or members of the organisation. So, if your group is revising role descriptions for key people in the organisation see if the opportunity can be taken to place practices from the QAF into descriptions (see Section 9.2 for ideas).

## 8.2. Doing the Dimension Review

In this step you will review each dimension of the QAF once more at a regular interval (for instance, once a year or once every six months). The idea is that by the time you end your review of all four dimensions it will be time for the group to go through the entire review process again (for instance once every three to five years).

The way in which Leaders facilitate the working group through a dimension review can vary depending on whether or not they worked through the process at just the core level or the core and extended level.

### 8.2.1. Core Level – Dimension Review

If you reviewed your work at the core level then your working group will need to make a choice. These are the steps you will follow during each dimension review.

1. Give each member of the group a photocopy of each of the elements for the dimension you are reviewing.
2. Break them up into smaller groups, either pairs or into whatever size group you think will work and then divide up the elements equally between the groups.
3. Ask participants in their small groups to consider this question for each element they have in front of them:  
*Are we ready to begin looking at how we can meet the extended practices in this element or should we stay at the core level of practice? State your reasons for your answer.*
4. Take feedback from each group and note on the flipchart what level the group thinks each element should be reviewed at.
5. Facilitate the group to come to consensus about the level for each element.
6. If the group has decided to move into the extended practice on some or all of the elements then the group can move immediately into doing a matrix for the first ten extended practices in the dimension and can keep doing matrices until all the gaps in extended practice in the dimension have been covered (see the Tips in Section 7.3.1). For those elements at which the group felt they were still at core level, put them to the side and they will be revisited when the entire review process is done again.
7. If the group has decided to stay at the core level for all the elements then the idea is to push the group to begin to move towards extended practice. If this situation is the case then you ask participants to go back into their small groups and divide the elements from the dimension equally between them, giving them the original elements charts flipchart sheets. Ask them to discuss and answer this question in relation to each element:  
*Of the practices we said we were doing which ones could we improve? For each practice that needs to be improved agree a reason why it needs to be developed.*
8. Take feedback from the group and put it onto the Improvement Chart (see Information Sheet 9). Facilitate the group to come to an agreement about what practices need to be improved.
9. When agreement has been reached then do a planning matrix for those practices that need to be improved.
10. Regardless of what level your group is working at, once the matrix is complete and you have a set of actions follow the instructions for creating and timing steps to achieve actions as set out in Section 7.3.1. filling out the accompanying worksheets for the action plan.

**Tips**

- For the dimension review you do not have to pick the six top scoring actions. Instead, just choose as many actions as you need to cover all the gaps or improvement practices.

**8.2.2. Extended Level – Dimension Review**

- 1) Divide the group into small groups, either pairs or into whatever size group you think will work.
- 2) Give each group an equal amount of their previously completed elements charts from the dimension you are working on. Ask them to answer this question in relation to each element:  
*Of the practices we said we were doing at both core and extended level which ones could we improve? For each practice that needs to be improved agree a reason why it needs to be developed.*
- 3) Take feedback from the group and put it onto the Improvement Chart (see Information Sheet 9). Facilitate the group to come to an agreement about what practices need to be improved.
- 4) When agreement has been reached then do a planning matrix for those practices that need to be improved.
- 5) Once the matrix is complete and you have a set of actions follow the instructions for creating and timing steps to achieve actions as set out in Section 7.3.1, filling out the accompanying worksheets for the action plan.

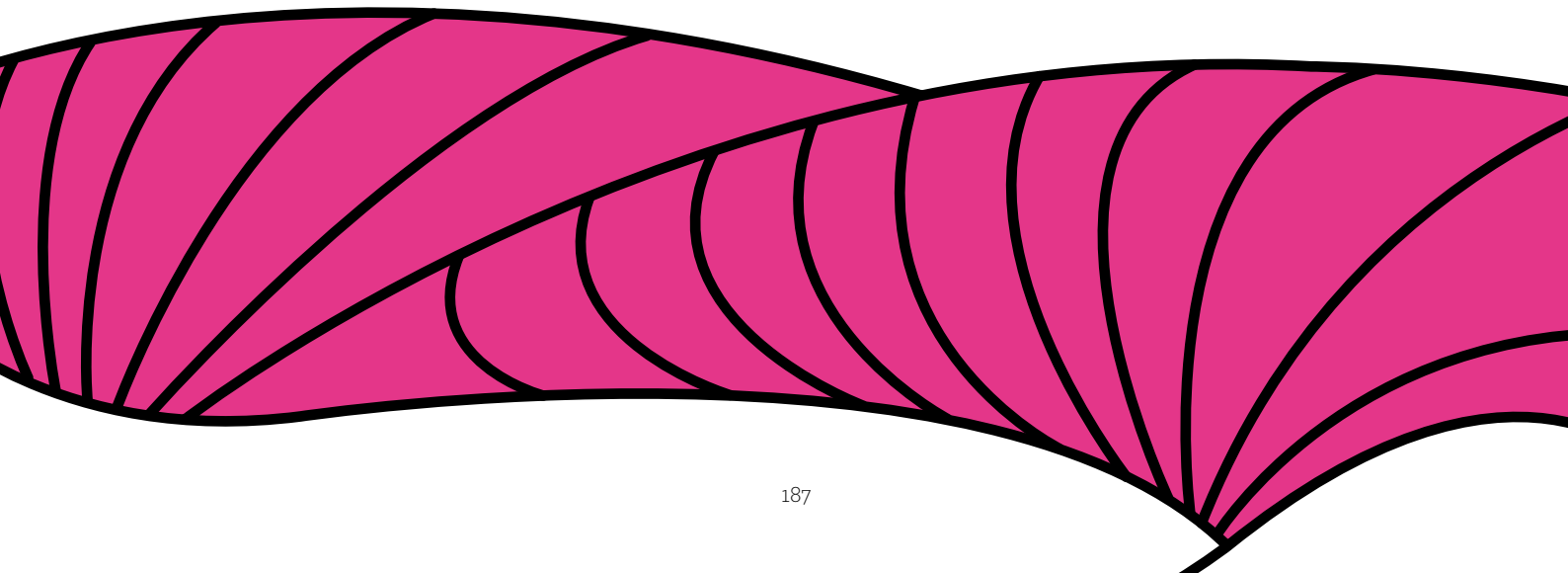
**Tips**

- Again, for the dimension review at the extended level do not choose the top six actions. Instead, only choose as many actions as you need to cover the practices you want to improve.
- It might be good to take any ideas that the group has had in the past to address gaps in practice that were not put into the original plan and collate them into a handout that the group can use for ideas during the dimension review.

### 8.3. Doing the entire Best Practice Review a Second Time

In order to do the review a second time and then again on subsequent occasions you will follow the process laid out for Steps One to Seven keeping the following instructions in mind:

1. You may wish to consider electing new Leaders to facilitate the process and change the make-up of the working group. Fresh eyes to the process can be valuable for the organisation. It will also give other people in the group the chance to get involved in an in-depth learning about WCE.
2. If you did the process the first time at the core and extended level your question in the dimension review is not “Do we do it?”, and instead becomes, “Do we need to improve it?”. Then, your planning becomes a plan to make improvements instead of addressing gaps.
3. If you went through the process the first time at the core level only, stay with the identification of gaps but go through the process at the core and extended level so that the group is assisted to grow and develop by going through the review process.
4. All organisations doing the cyclical dimensions review (after Steps One to Seven) for the second time are looking at how they can improve their practice in relation to each dimension.





### 8.4. Ideas for Integrating the Structure and Language of the Framework into our Work

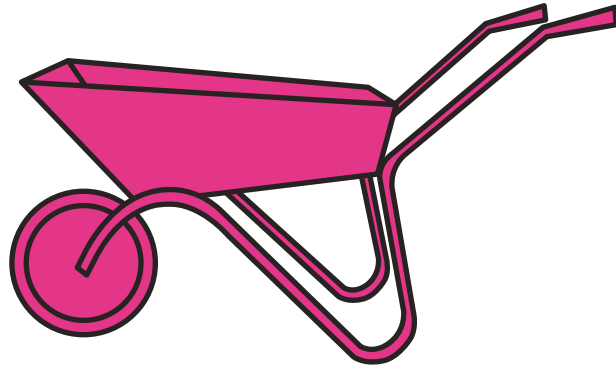
Other groups that have benchmarked their work using the QAF have found ways to integrate the QAF into what they do. Listed below are some of the ways that this goal could be achieved. The next chapter describes some, but not all of these ideas in detail. For presentation these ideas have been divided into three categories:

- People – or ways in which the group can bring people together to learn about the QAF and WCE
- Processes – putting in place guidelines or instructions that help organisations operate in a routine way
- Products – publishing or producing for the group.

PEOPLE	PROCESSES	PRODUCT
Mentoring	Write policies about bits of QAF that are important	Post QAF flower somewhere visible in the organisation/group
Peer discussions	Use dimensions/elements of QAF as headings to structure reports developed for team meetings	Write new mission and aims based on QAF and incorporate into all external communication including emails
Staff training	Use QAF to inform your evaluations and those of other groups	Write a history of the organisation using the QAF as chapter titles
Thematic talks/workshops	All new staff have to read the QAF or research about women's community education	Create a scrapbook of evidence collected throughout the process
Apprenticeships to the organisation from partners	Use QAF to help develop interview questions for new board members/staff	Create a scrapbook of evidence collected throughout the process
Working group set up as sub-group of board and staff that meets quarterly to see how the organisation is doing – new members recruited every year)	Use QAF to create workshop themes for strategic reviews and planning	Use the QAF to assist completion of funding applications

PEOPLE	PROCESSES	PRODUCT
Use QAF to prepare shared mandates with allies at representative fora	Incorporate priority elements of QAF into staff job descriptions	
	Use QAF to develop indicators for programmes and other activities	
	Use QAF to develop programme aims and objectives	
	Ensure celebrations incorporate some exploration of the dimensions of the QAF	
	Use QAF dimensions to structure course content	



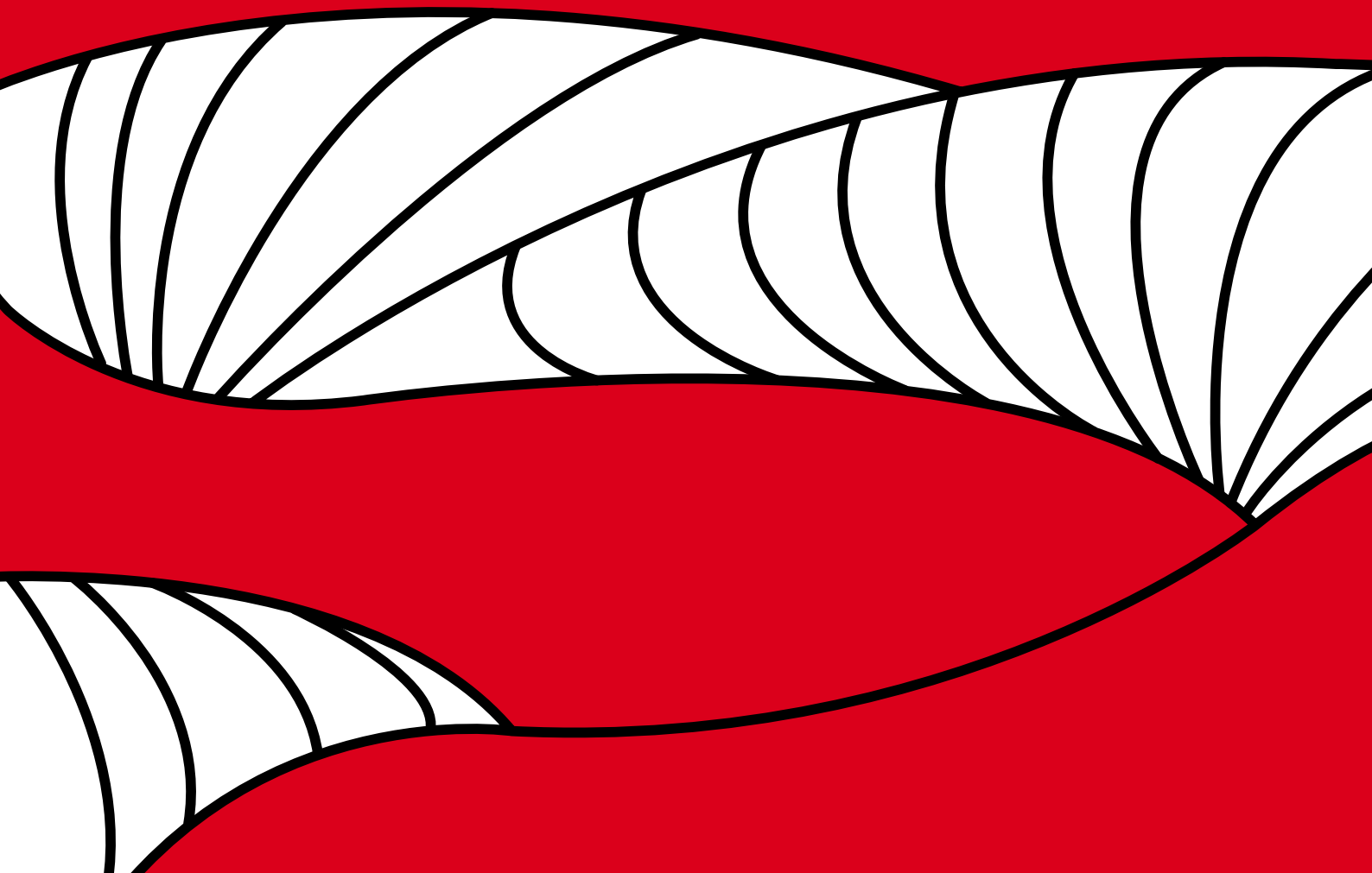


### 8.5. Case Study – Amerge

Amerge are a small women's community education group in County Donegal that is run by volunteers. They used the framework to review their work. As they collected evidence to show how they were carrying out the practices of WCE they began to see that going through the process was assisting them to document the history of their group.

When they had come to the end of the process they decided to collate the evidence they had gathered and organise it into a scrapbook about the group. This document was not just an archive of the group's history but was also a manual for how the group operates.

Any group that documents the review of their work using the framework could use the records to create a manual for the group, or use it to write policies and procedures for the group. By documenting the work in this way, if the people or person responsible for leading the group leaves and new people come on board they will understand how the group runs, rather than having to start from scratch and come up with new ways of doing things.



## SECTION 9.

# Other Ways to Use the QAF

This section presents four different processes that you can use the QAF to help you develop. They involve using the QAF to:

- evaluate different activities
- help develop a role description for a staff person
- focus a strategic plan
- facilitate a board induction.

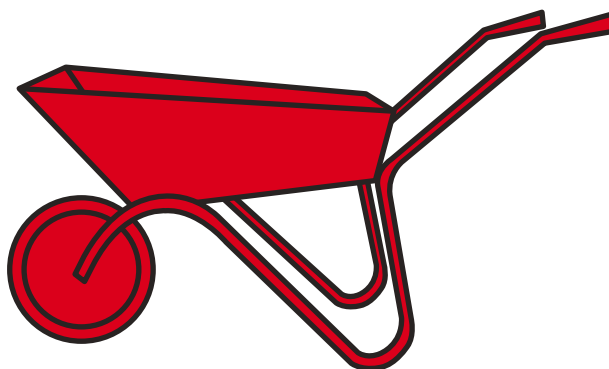
### 9.1. Using the QAF to Evaluate Different Activities

The QAF can help groups to formulate the criteria they need to follow when they develop activities and afterwards when they need to evaluate them. The simple instructions to do this are:

1. Find the dimension or elements of the QAF that relate to the activity you want to evaluate.
2. Review the element headings or the practices within the element to see if they offer you ideas about the kinds of things you will need to make sure happen or have happened in the activity.

The table below gives you some ideas about what parts of the QAF relate to different activities that a WCE group engages in. These ideas are not exhaustive. Feel free to come up with more. See the case study in this section to give you an idea of how these instructions would work in practice.

PART OF THE QAF	WHAT WILL IT HELP TO DESIGN
Course, Development and Delivery Element and Ongoing Access as well as some other practices in other elements in this dimension	Participant evaluation form for an individual programme
Strategic Dimension - the elements give you headings for the design of the process or what the process should be like	Strategic planning process for the organisation
Visibility and Activism Elements in Political Dimension, also Tactical Work element in Strategic Dimension and Leadership Element in Women-Led Dimension	Lobbying campaign on a women's issue
Resources and Representation Elements in Political Dimension as well as Tactical Work and Partnership Elements in Strategic Dimension	Representation or partnership work in relation to a specific committee or project



### 9.1.1. Case Study – Using the QAF to Evaluate

In the mainstreaming phase of the QAF one of the Leader training groups completed an exercise about using the QAF to help develop evaluations for different activities they engage in. One of the small groups came up with the following list of questions to help them evaluate a lobbying campaign. See if you can identify which parts of the QAF helped them to formulate their questions.

1. Did the campaign encourage women's visibility and voices?
2. Was the campaign creative and if so, how?
3. What public arenas did we target?
4. Which decision-makers/policy-makers did we target?
5. Did we use our allies to our full advantage at local and national level?

6. Did we spread out wide enough or too wide?
7. How did we use the media?
8. Did our campaign address the issue in a way which challenged policies and languages that denied quality and practice for women?
9. Did we address issues about diversity?
10. Did we have information about the current policy platforms on the issue?
11. Was our material accessible to women's groups?
12. Did we check out and target relevant government departments at national and local level?
13. Did we engage with women politicians and elected representatives?
14. Did we strive for effective communication and solidarity with other groups within the sector?
15. Did we use the campaign to celebrate women's achievements?
16. Did we prioritise our actions around what we consider sustainable, realistic and achievable and which offer a return on time?

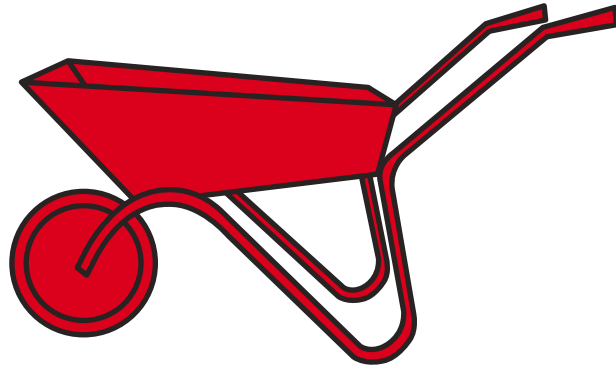
## **9.2. Using the QAF to Develop a Role Description for a Staff Member**

You can use the QAF to help develop a role description for different staff or voluntary members of your group. The instructions are the same as when you use it to assist evaluating your activities. Simply find the dimension or elements of the QAF that fit the position you are looking to recruit and see what they can offer you to help write the role specification.

Remember that you will probably want any new person who comes into the organisation to know and believe in the vision, aspirations, goals and principles of WCE so this will be written in as a standard requirement for any role description.

PART OF THE QAF	WHOSE ROLE COULD IT HELP TO DESIGN
Outreach and Inclusion Elements of the Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives Dimension	Development Worker or Neighbourhood Worker
Course Development and Delivery and Ongoing Participation Elements in the Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives Dimension	Group Facilitator/Tutor
Access, Transfer and Progression and Celebration Elements of Rooted in the Reality of Women's Lives Dimension as well as the Empowerment, Consciousness-Raising Education and Learning Organisation Elements of the Women-Led Dimension	A Programmes Co-ordinator with responsibility for running a number of learning programmes
Voice Element in Women-Led Dimension, the Visibility Element in the Political Dimension	Communications Worker
Activism, Representation Elements in the Political Dimension and Networking, Tactical Work, Partnership and Systemic Change Elements in the Strategic Dimension	Policy Worker or Manager
Capacity Building, Creativity Elements in the Strategic Dimension and Resources, Organisation as a Collective and Leadership Elements in the Women-Led Dimension	A Centre Manager or Co-ordinator <sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Although a Co-ordinator would need to have an in-depth knowledge of the whole QAF so that they could manage centre staff and might also engage in some of the policy and communications work with the Policy Worker or all of it if there was no staff dedicated to those elements. Management committee members might also perform some of the practices related to communications and policy as well.



### **9.2.1. Case Study – Drafting a Role Description using the QAF**

Below you will see a role description for a policy worker for a women’s network. See if you can find which parts of the QAF different aspects of the description were taken from.

#### **Policy Worker**

The Policy Worker will lead on the network’s activism, representation and partnership work using the stated needs and issues of women involved in our network to inform that work. The worker will work closely with the Network Co-ordinator and Programmes Worker to ensure that the recorded barriers to women’s progression and equality are fed into the policy work. The worker will also lobby to remove the barriers affecting the sustainability of women’s community education locally, regionally and nationally. This person will also, from time to time, facilitate women from the network to raise their voices in the lobbying process and represent the network in other fora.

#### **Key Skills Required**

- An understanding of and commitment to the vision, goals and principles of women’s community education.
- A knowledge of the key local, regional and national decision-makers, agencies and stakeholders that can assist the achievement of women’s equality.
- An ability to research and collate up-to-date information on the systems and structures that block women’s equality.
- Excellent communication and alliance building skills.
- A knowledge of the women’s sector as well as the main partnership or representative groups that the Network could be linked to.
- Excellent lobbying skills and the ability to facilitate others to learn and practice those skills.

**Main Duties**

- Keep up-to-date on the main information and research emerging about the issues facing women in our community and locally as well as the key policy platforms of political parties in relation to those issues – summarise and distribute that information to our members.
- Issue position papers about how key systems are impacting on women’s lives and progression.
- Maintain an up-to-date list of the key local politicians and agency staff who are our allies in the work we do or have influence over it.
- Link with those decision-makers on a regular basis.
- Develop strategic, creative lobbying campaigns on key issues affecting the women who are a part of our network which demonstrate a contribution to achieving women’s equality.
- Represent the Network on partnership groups and the national membership organisations we are affiliated to and evaluate those activities.
- Organise regular voter awareness and political awareness training for our members and other staff in the network.
- From time to time mentor other women involved in the network to take up policy work on behalf of the network.
- Participate in protest events on behalf of the network.

**9.3. Using the QAF to help you develop your Strategic Plan**

The QAF can help an organisation to prepare a strategic plan because the group can take the dimensions of the work and do what is called a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities) analysis in relation to each of them. A SWOT is usually one of the first exercises that a group engages in during a strategic planning process. See the steps below to understand how the QAF could add value to strategic planning. These steps can be followed with any group who the organisation wants to feed into the strategic plan. This process is just one way of using the QAF to plan, but there may be other ways you can think of.

1. Gather your group together.
2. Briefly introduce the vision, aspirations and goals of WCE as they are presented in the QAF. Then present the vision, mission and aims of your organisation. Ask the group to discuss if there might be a need to revise the vision, mission and aims of the group or if it is clear that the organisation is contributing to the vision, aspirations and goals of WCE in its unique way.
3. If the group thinks the vision, mission and aims might need to be revised then ask them to make some suggestions about changes.

4. Do an environmental analysis<sup>15</sup> with the group. In other words, ask them to think about the main things happening in the community, region and country that could impact on the work of the group. Post these on the wall where everyone can see them.
5. Next, introduce the dimensions of WCE and, very briefly, the elements of each dimension. To assist with this exercise you could give the group a copy of the introductory notes about each dimension that summarises each of the elements. Do not go into detail about the practices in each element.
6. Divide your group up into four groups and assign each one a dimension to work with. Also give them a flipchart sheet with a SWOT chart on it (see Information Sheet 10) and ask them to fill in the chart in relation to the dimension of WCE they are working with. Say that they can look at the results of the environmental analysis to help them with this work.
7. When all the groups are done their SWOTS post them on the wall and ask the group to tour the results. Then, ask the group to pick out the top two issues emerging from each SWOT.
8. Carry out this process with the other groups you want to feed into the strategic planning process.
9. Then, you could look back over all the data that has been gathered and pick the top four to five goals that you see need to be accomplished in the next strategic plan given the analysis of the work that has been done using the dimension of the QAF. These goals become your strategic goals and then a series of objectives need to be devised to achieve each of them.
10. You can check the strategic goals you come up with against the QAF to see if they contribute to reaching the overall goals and vision of WCE.
11. If you like, you could also use the dimensions as headings for the strategic plan with a goal to reach in relation to each heading.

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<sup>15</sup>Can be done according to headings for instance the PEST model which gets groups to look at things happening in different arenas of the environment: 'Political, 'E'conomic, 'S'ocial, and 'T'echnological.

### 9.3.1. Information Sheet 10 – SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis helps groups to look at things inside and outside the organisation that could impact on or help to come up with actions that need to be taken as part of a strategic plan.

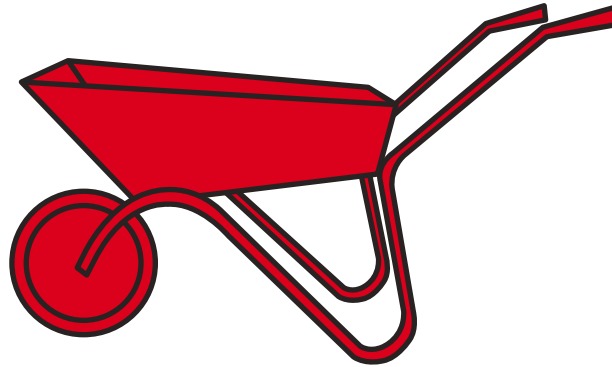
In a SWOT you ask people to identify:

- The ‘S’trengths the organisation has
- The ‘W’eaknesses the group has
- The ‘O’pportunities in the environment outside that the group could draw on to help them fulfil the mission and vision of the organisation, and the
- ‘T’hreats that could stop the group doing their work.

Strengths and weaknesses are internal to the organisation while opportunities and threats are about things that are located outside the group in the environment it is located in.

For a SWOT analysis you give a group a chart like the one below to fill out.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>



### 9.3.2. Case Study – the Second Chance Education Project

The Second Chance Education Project in Donegal participated in the development and piloting of the QAF. They used the QAF to get their Board of Management to feed into their strategic plan. The Board was introduced to the dimensions of the QAF and then divided into four groups. Each small group was assigned one dimension of the QAF and asked to think about the project's gaps and weaknesses in relation to each dimension. Their reflections fed into the strategic plan for the project.

Their experience of using the QAF in this way fed into the development of the instructions for strategic planning you have just read.

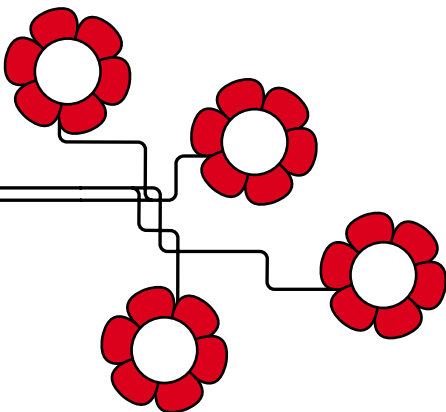
### 9.4. Using the QAF for Board Induction

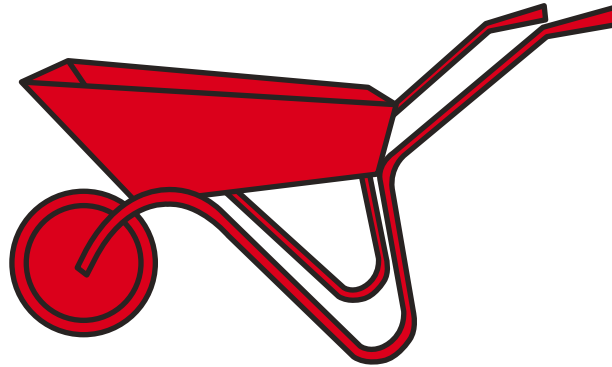
The QAF can assist new board members to understand WCE and their responsibilities as board members. As a reminder, boards of non-profit organisations perform the following actions for organisations:

- Approve the strategic plan and major changes to programmes and activities
- Mind and update the organisation's vision and mission
- Monitor the organisation (not getting into day-to-day operations as that is the job of staff to carry out)
- Supporting the manager of the organisation
- Sign off on financial accounts
- Assist the organisation in times of major change or crisis
- Sometimes, be the public face of the organisation through the media or fundraising.

Some board members could be involved in the best practice review process in the organisation. For those who are not, it would be valuable to get them to read the QAF so that they have a clear understanding of what the operations of a WCE group is like.

Since their role is top-level and strategic, it could be valuable for boards to have an in-depth understanding and commitment to the vision, aspirations, goals and principles of WCE. Organisations could consider running Steps One and Two of the process with board members from time to time as their knowledge of those aspects of WCE will help them to evaluate, contribute to and approve the strategic plan of the organisation. Knowing these parts of the QAF will also help them to evaluate and approve any major changes to the group's activities.





#### **9.4.1. Case Study – Longford Women’s Link**

Longford Women’s Link (LWL) is a 14 year old women’s resource centre in Co. Longford, committed to effecting social change to the benefit of women and their families. Their vision is that women in Longford can fulfil their potential in a safe and equal society. LWL has a number of core principles which underpins the work of all members of the organisation:

1. To be women-centred and women-directed
2. Advocacy, based on women’s needs
3. Working to support women to achieve their own potential and develop their collective voice.

The three integrated pillars of LWL’s work are, direct support, building community capacity and advocacy.

LWL attempts to influence policy and practice, both locally and nationally. Longford Women’s Link has a community crèche facility, and provides a CE employment scheme, domestic violence support service, refugee/migrant support service, outreach and collective-action work, education & training programmes, and an administration section. The facility also provides the ‘home’ for a wide-ranging counselling service.

The Women’s Link was involved in the action research project conducted to develop the QAF as well as in the mainstreaming project. Thus, when the organisation reviewed its work in the mainstreaming project it was their second chance to do so. The LWL working group used the QAF to review their work at both core and extended levels of practice. As they progressed, they identified the following gaps or areas of practice that could be improved:

- Providing progression information for participants
- Challenging local politicians to address issues affecting WCE
- In building capacity in the organisation by providing more training for staff and management, and valuing better the work of staff and volunteers
- Enhancing some course delivery by improving on how they introduce women learners to social and gender analysis, and recognising the power of creativity in empowering women.

In order to improve on these areas, the organisation undertook to:

**1. In providing progression information for participants**

- Put up an Education & Training notice board, including courses offered by other local organisations.
- Prepare a project funding application for a mentor to support women's progression using a Personal Development Plan.
- Publish an organisation newsletter.

**2. In challenging local politicians to address issues affecting WCE**

- Develop an Active Citizenship project that will produce a Women's Manifesto for the 2009 local elections.

**3. In building capacity in the organisation**

- Devise a staff development training plan.
- Hold awareness-training on LWL's Women's Community Education ethos and approach for all contracted tutors.

**4. In enhancing course delivery**

- Develop a strategy to ensure the sustainability of Women's Community Education in Co. Longford.
- Identify Staff who can deliver gender-analysis training and integrate diversity training into all LWL core education and training programmes.

In order to maintain the LWL goal of regular reflection and self-evaluation, all the organisation's teams will test their activities of the previous quarter against the shared principles underpinning the work of the Longford Women's Link.

**SECTION 10.****Appendix A –  
Checklist**

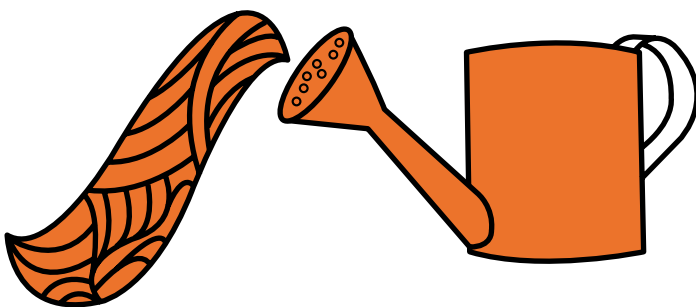
The checklists below can be used each time you prepare for and debrief from a review session. Take it out and photocopy it to assist you every time you move to a new step in the process.

Before you start have you:

TASK	COMPLETED ✓
Prepared flipchart sheets with different questions and headings in the process written on them (see process below)	
Written onto a flipchart sheet and posted somewhere in the room a brief description of the four goals of WCE	
Written onto a flipchart sheet and posted somewhere in the room a brief description of each of the principles of WCE (if you are not getting the group to come up with their own description)	
Prepared any necessary maps or charts that the group might need to complete by transferring them from Information Sheets to flipchart paper	
Photocopied the sections of the this guidebook that are relevant so that there is one for every member of the group	
Done a practice run through of different exercises in the process	
Made decisions on how the meeting will be co-facilitated – who will do what (remember, if one person is facilitating the other should be taking notes)	
Got post-it notes for evaluation	
Got blu tac	
Posted the Working Group’s Statement of Commitment somewhere in the room	
Posted or laid out the QAF flower somewhere the group can see it	

After you finished did you:

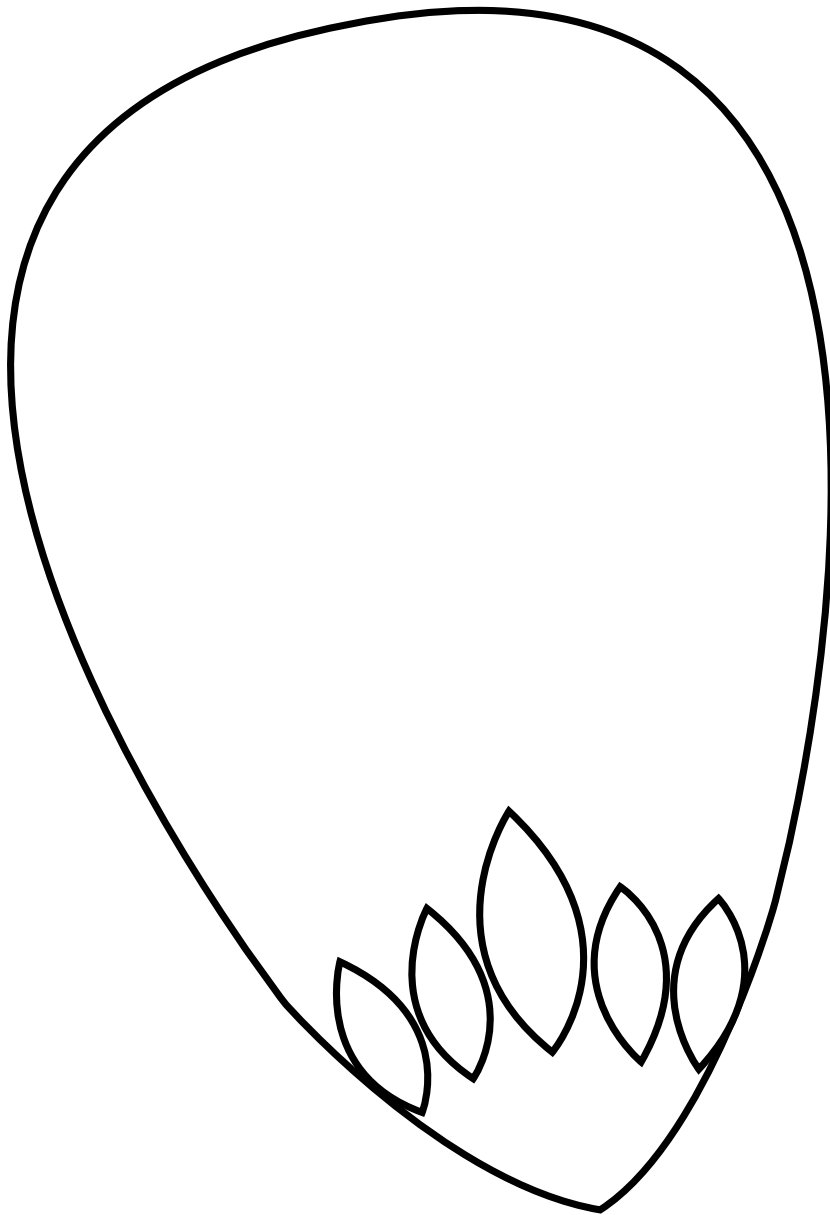
TASK	COMPLETED ✓
Label and date all flipchart sheets noting results of workshop and insert them into your portfolio	
Complete all the relevant worksheets for the part of the process you just completed	
Complete evaluation forms for the session (see Appendix C)	



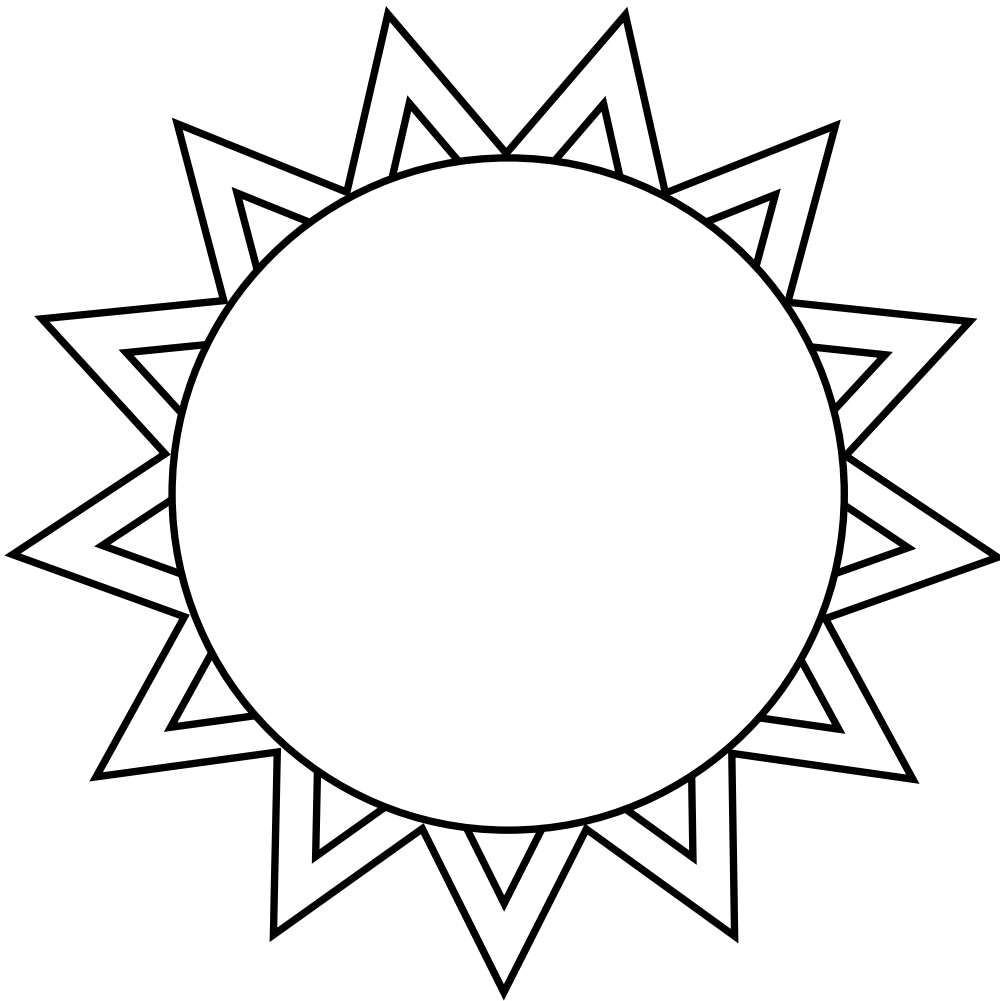
**SECTION 11.**Appendix B –  
Templates for  
QAF Flower

The templates in this section can be used to trace different parts of the QAF flower onto construction paper to be cut out to form the visual representation of the QAF for your working group.

## Petal Template



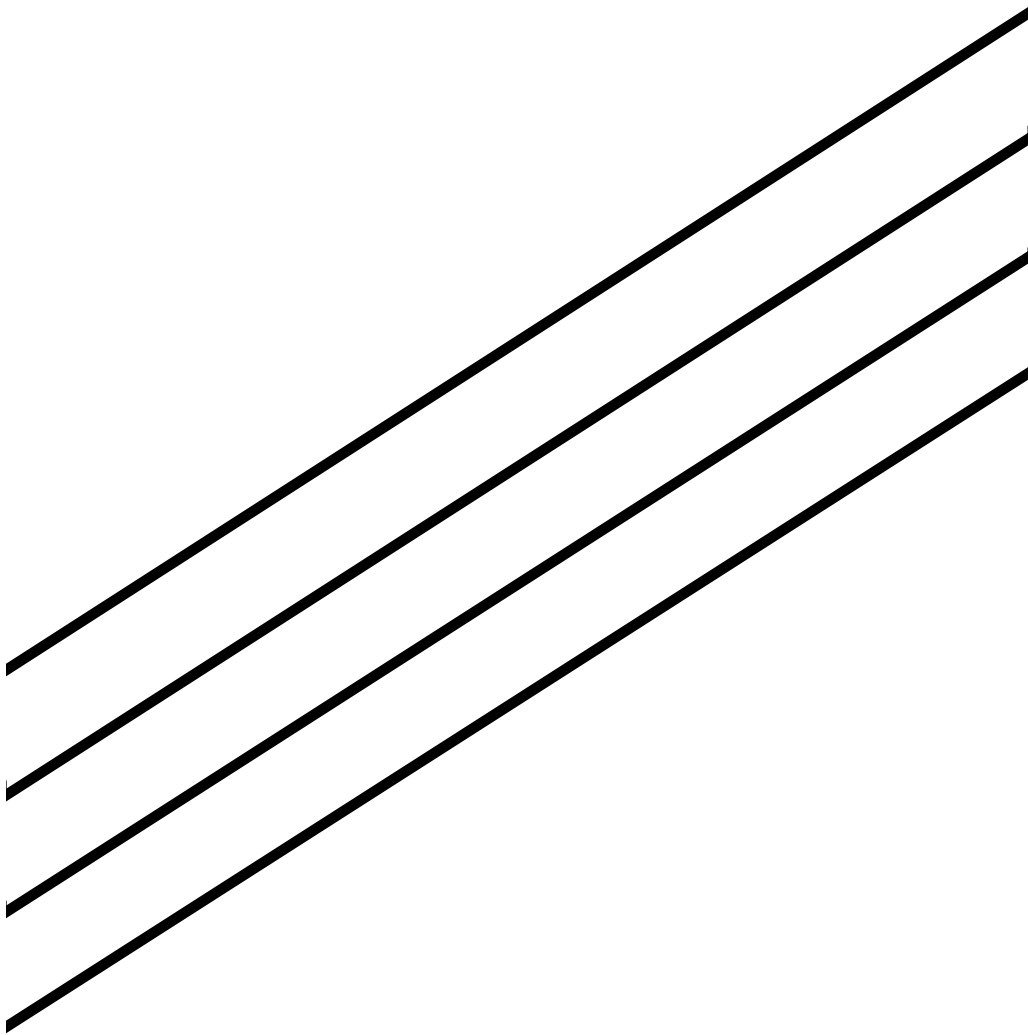
## Sun Template



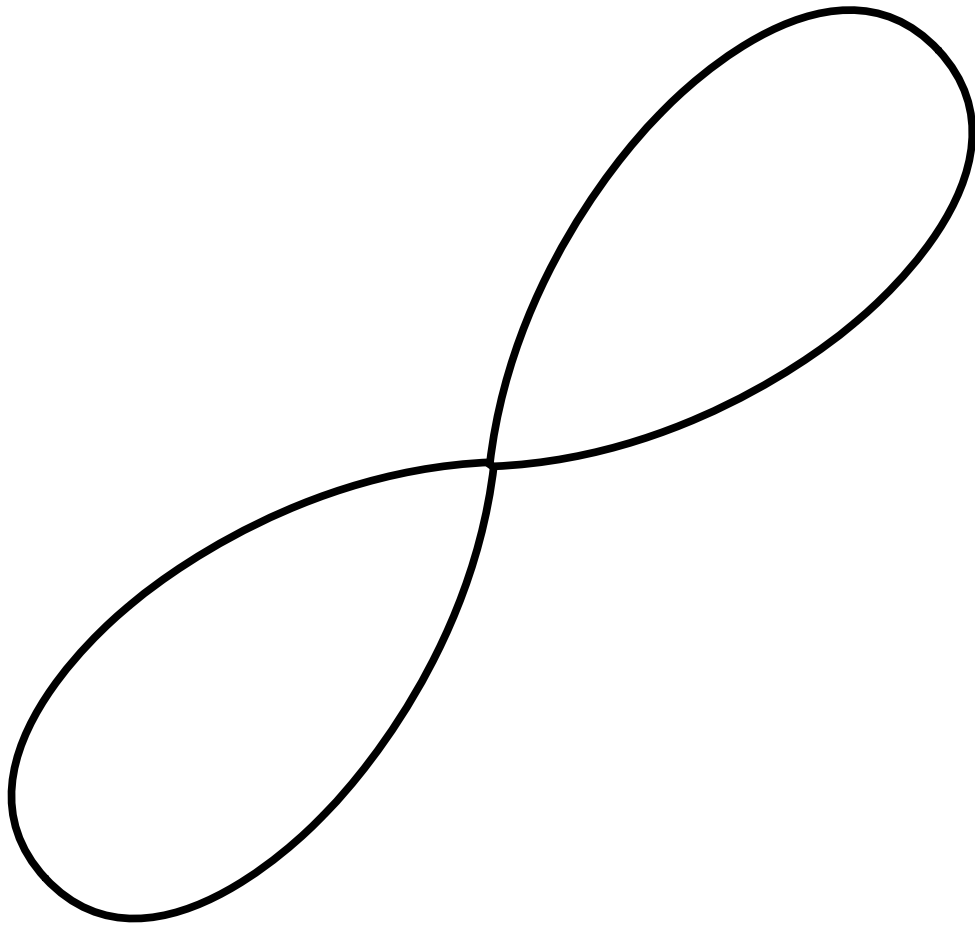
## Stem Template



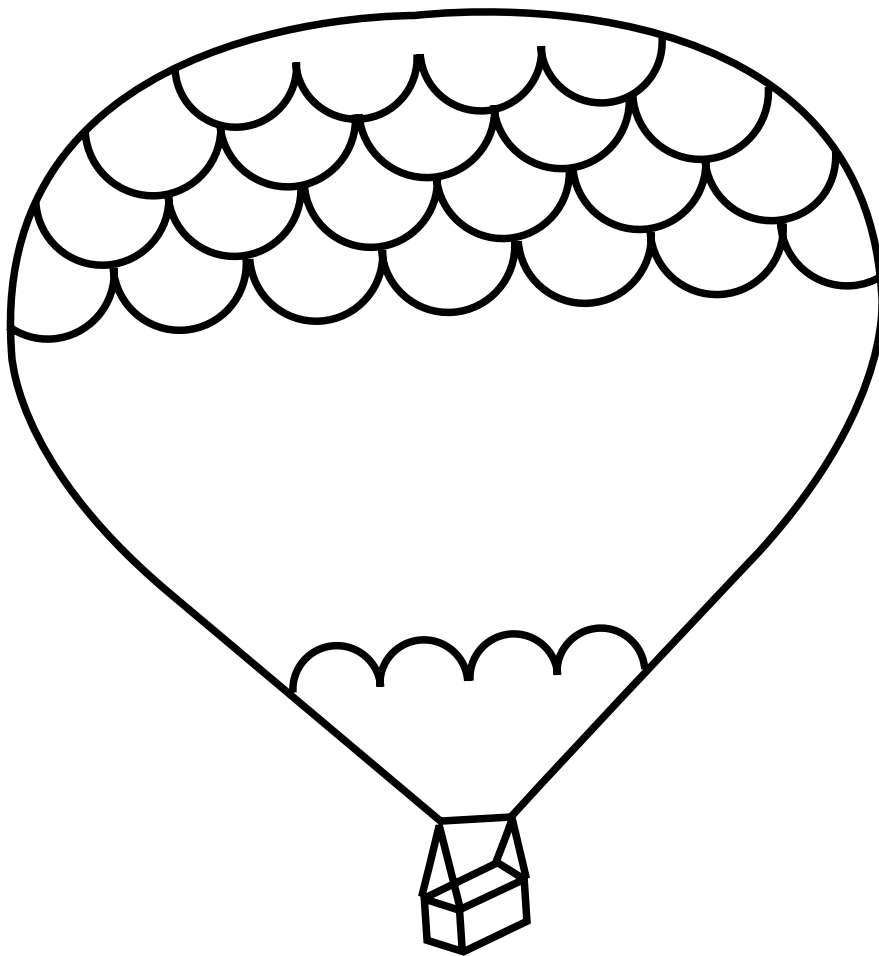
## Sun Beam Template



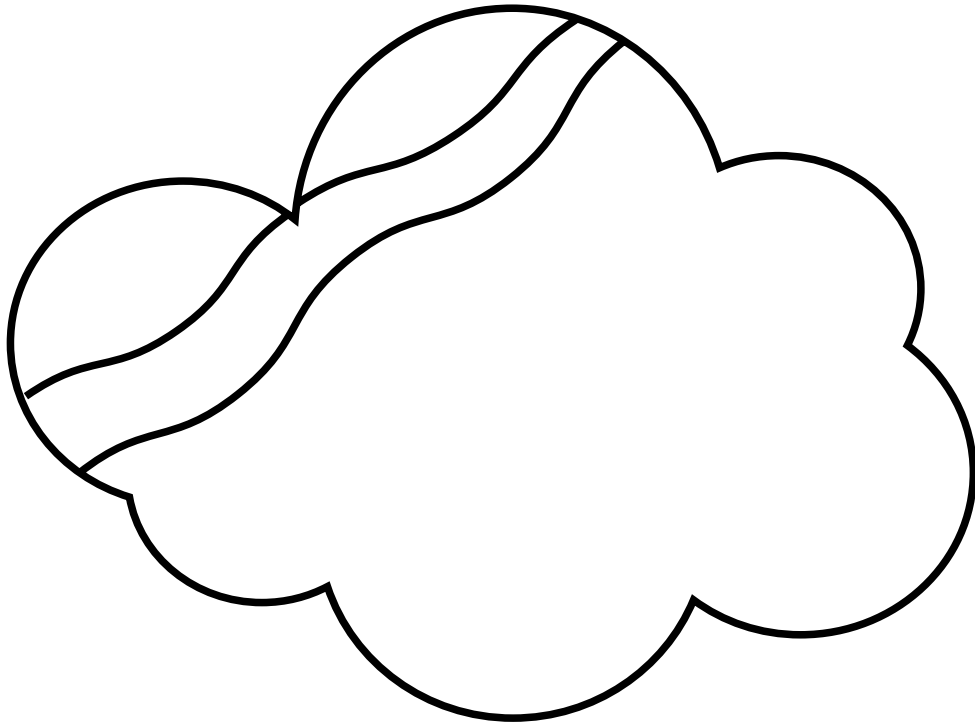
## Leaves Template



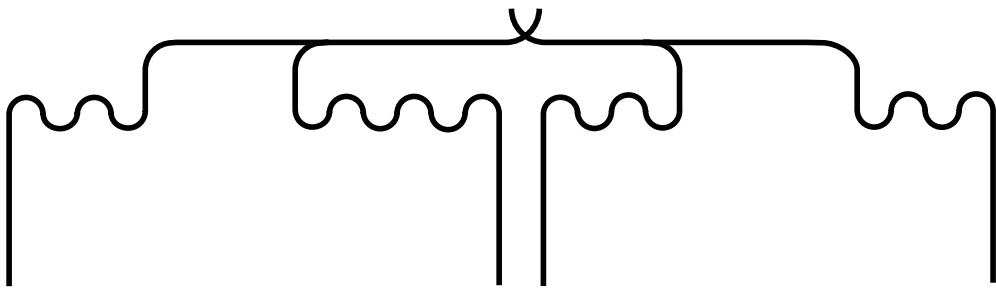
## Balloon Template

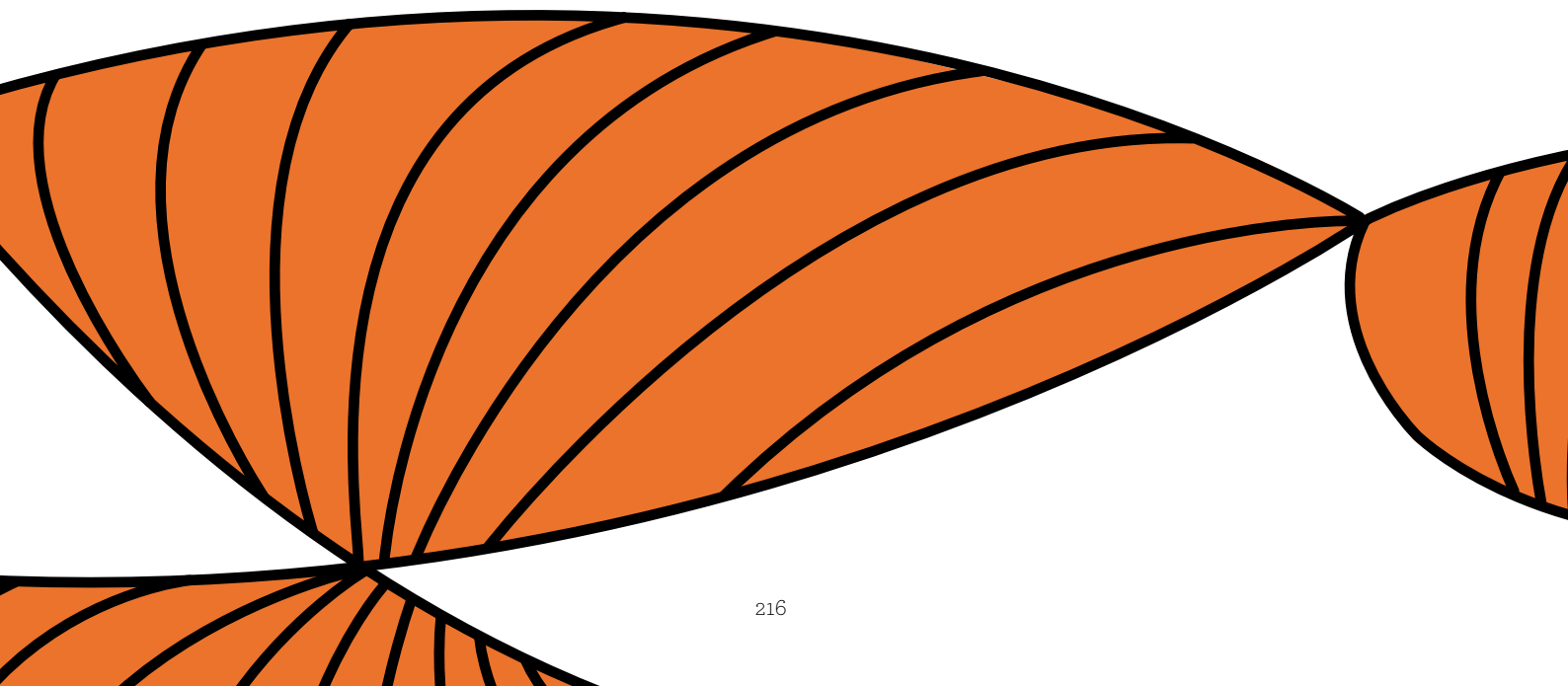


## Cloud Template



## Roots Template





## SECTION 12.

## Appendix C - Evaluating the Process

As Leaders it will be important to evaluate the process as you go along in order to reflect on your facilitation and to assist the QAF to evolve. Evaluation may also offer important learning for the organisation. Over the next two pages you will see an evaluation form that you and your co-Leader could fill out **each time you have completed one step of the review process.**

### Participant Evaluations

In the table below can you give a summary of what your participants thought of the workshop:

What worked (went well)?	What didn't work?

**From your own perspective as Leaders of the Process**

In the table below can you give a summary of what the two of you thought of how the workshop went:

What worked (went well)?	What didn't work?

What did you learn about facilitation and the process you followed during this workshop?	
We learned...	
We learned...	
We learned...	
We learned...	
We learned...	

### 12.1. How to do the Participant Evaluation

At the end of every session that you facilitate with your working group you can do the participant evaluation exercise with your group. This exercise involves you reproducing the table below on a flipchart sheet. Then, give everyone post-its and ask them to fill out one post-it per comment they have about the session they just participated in. They can post as many comments as they would like.

WHAT WORKED ABOUT THE SESSION?	WHAT DID NOT WORK ABOUT THE SESSION, OR WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE?

## SECTION 13.

Appendix D –  
Women’s Community  
Education Card Sort

If your group has never explored how distinctive WCE is you can kick off the review by doing a short introductory exercise with them. In the table below you will see characteristics of WCE as opposed to other types of adult education. Put each one of these characteristics on its own card (about half an A4 page). Then put the headings on their own card and place them in a row on the floor in front of the group. Then, after shuffling them flash the characteristics cards at the group one by one and ask them to put them under the right heading. The point is that women’s community education has to have the components listed underneath it here – while other forms of adult education may have them but does not have to.

WOMEN’S COMMUNITY EDUCATION	EDUCATING WOMEN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feminist/gender analysis</li> <li>• Owned and directed by women (leadership with)</li> <li>• Community development</li> <li>• Involves social action</li> <li>• Intensive outreach</li> <li>• Aims to achieve women’s equality</li> <li>• Collective empowerment</li> <li>• Power shared equally between learners, facilitators, management</li> <li>• Developed with learners</li> <li>• Radical</li> <li>• “No crèche, no class”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could be run by men and women</li> <li>• Education developed for learners, not with them</li> <li>• Does not necessarily foster gender/ social analysis</li> <li>• Provider-centred</li> <li>• May not include childcare</li> <li>• Learners may not progress to leadership</li> <li>• Service provider</li> <li>• Confidence not priority goal</li> <li>• Apolitical (not political)</li> <li>• Leadership may be outside the community</li> </ul>

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<sup>i</sup>Baker et al. (2004). *Equality- from Theory to Action*. Palgrave Macmillan: UK.

<sup>ii</sup>In this document the word group and organisation are used interchangeably to acknowledge that some entities providing WCE see themselves more informally and call themselves groups rather than organisations.

<sup>iii</sup>See for instance, Connolly, B. (2005). “Learning from the women’s community education movement in Ireland.” In J. Crowther, V. Galloway & I. Martin (Eds.), *Engaging the Academy*. Leicester: NIACE.

<sup>iv</sup>Summarised from McClorey, E. (2005). *Women’s Community Education Quality Assurance Framework Pilot Project Report*. AONTAS: Dublin.

<sup>v</sup>A Matrix is a Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) method. PLA can be described as “a growing family of approaches and methods [that] enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act.” See Chambers, R. (1994). *Participatory Rural Appraisal: Challenges, Potentials and Paradigm*. *World Development*: 22(10):1437-54.

Design: [www.language.ie](http://www.language.ie)

