

Understanding the Third Sector Support Infrastructure in Scotland

Overview of an EKOS Study for the DInC Forum

The Dynamic Inclusive Communities (DInC) Forum has commissioned EKOS to undertake a mapping study that will examine the third sector support infrastructure in Scotland. The study commenced in early 2009 and will be completed by summer 2010. This paper provides an overview of the study.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to provide an indicative baseline and changing perspectives on the third sector support infrastructure in Scotland. This will help to inform the work of the DInC Forum – to support an infrastructure in which healthy and vigorous voluntary and community activity can occur.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- map the existing support infrastructure for the third sector; and
- gather the perceptions and expectations of third sector organisations on this infrastructure, its fitness for purpose, and its future role.

Approach

There are two distinct elements to the study:

- mapping the third sector support infrastructure; and
- consulting with frontline third sector organisations.

1. Mapping Third Sector Infrastructure

The mapping exercise will examine the existing support infrastructure for the third sector. This desk based review exercise will examine sources of existing information on the support infrastructure and produce a 'map' of the support and networks available in Scotland.

EKOS is working with the Big Lottery and SCVO to ensure that the study builds on previous work and avoids repeating or duplicating previous mapping exercises.

The map will categorise infrastructure by 'tier', purpose, role, geography, thematic focus, and equalities remit (where relevant).



EKOS will consult with DInC Forum members and staff at SCVO and the Big Lottery to ensure that a comprehensive map is produced. This will be accessible and will clearly illustrate the different types and sources of support available to the sector. It will develop a local, regional and national picture of this support.

2. Consulting with Frontline Organisations

EKOS will also gather perceptions and expectations of third sector organisations regarding the support infrastructure that is available and the support that they receive. This will occur through a series of workshops and a panel survey that will involve organisations across Scotland.

A core group/panel of at least 100 third sector organisations will be identified and recruited to provide regular input during the research period (2009-2011). A sample of organisations will be identified using the SCVO database, information from the Big Lottery, evidence from DInC Forum members, and through notices on intermediaries' websites and in e-bulletins. The sample will be broadly representative of the diversity in the sector, reflecting geography, scale, and focus.

EKOS will invite organisations to participate during late March/early April and will facilitate consultation events in mid to late April. Five workshops across Scotland will be convened. Each workshop will bring together up to 20 organisations from the panel and will begin to tease out organisations' views about the current support infrastructure – the support received by organisations, their relationship with support providers/networks, and their future expectations and needs relating to this support.

The workshops will provide a starting point for the survey stage of the study. This survey programme will enable the participating panel of organisations to register their views on the support infrastructure by way of a self-completion postal survey or online. The survey will build on, and develop, the themes discussed at the workshop events. The organisations on the panel will be given the opportunity to register their views on a six monthly basis until mid-2010, thus providing a regular sounding board and helpful perspectives on the changing support infrastructure.

Timescales

This study commenced in late January 2009 and will draw to a close in the summer of 2010. The infrastructure mapping exercise and workshop series will be completed by the end of April 2009. The panel survey will be carried out in three waves – May 2009, November 2009, and May 2010 – with accompanying reports submitted to the DInC Forum.