

Report of a workshop held at Community House, Belfast on Thursday 19 May  
2011

## **1. Attendance**

Amanda Pawar	Big Lottery Fund
Brian O'Brien	Strabane and District Rural Community Network
Denise Hayward	VNOW
Denise McCann	NICVA
Eamonn Donaghy	Disability Action
Iris Elliott	CFNI
Jacqueline Irwin	CRC
John Waddell	DARD
Kathleen Healy	CFNI
Kathy Trainor	Community Network Craigavon
Margaret Alton	Early Years
Margaret Ferguson	Community Change
Michael Briggs	East belfast Community Development Agency
Michael Hughes	RCN
Punam McGookin	Charity Commission
Roy McGivern	DSD VCU
Sandara Kelso Robb	Lloyds TSB Foundation
Sandra Adair	VNOW
Sandy Wilson	North Antrim Community Network

## **2. Context**

Building Change Trust Directors and representatives of the original bid partners have been concerned that small community and voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland have not been well represented in Trust initiatives to date and wishes to engage in a process to consider what the issues, challenges and opportunities facing small organisations might be and how the Trust and others need to respond to those.

As a first step in the process the Trust Administrator identified a range of stakeholders and proposed a focused workshop to consider the issue.

## **3. Workshop outputs**

The workshop was facilitated by Charlie Fisher and Nigel McKinney using the Consensus Workshop Method.

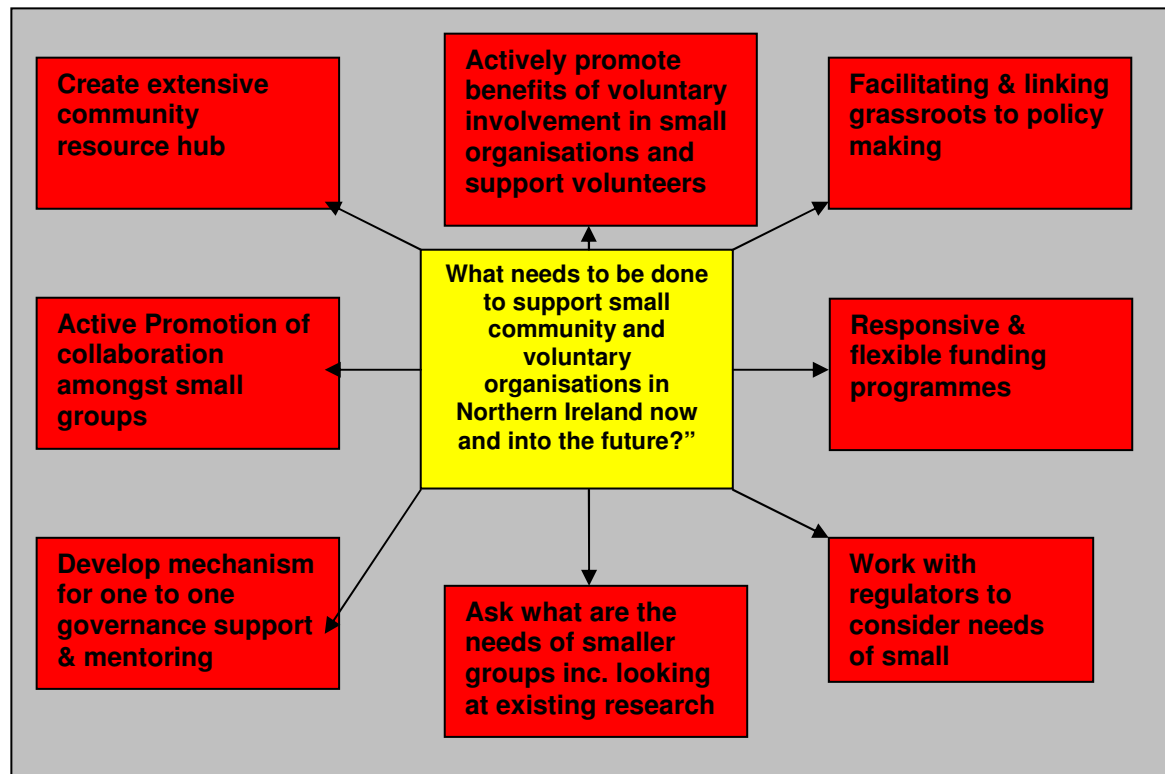
The focus question under consideration was

**“What needs to be done to support small community and voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland now and into the future?”**

Before considering the question participants were engaged in a brief focused conversation on the issue. As a result of this it was agreed that for the purposes of the workshop, small organisations were those with an annual income of less than £100,000. This included organisations with paid staff and those relying entirely on volunteer input.

Individuals listed answers to the question. They then worked in pairs to prioritise answers. Answers were then collectively grouped by consensus and groups were given names by consensus. The answers agreed by the group to the question and names given to groups are detailed in the embedded spreadsheet.

### **Summary of workshop outputs**



Actively promote benefits of voluntary involvement in small organisations and support volunteers	Facilitating & linking grassroots to policy making	Responsive & flexible funding programmes	Work with regulators to consider needs of small organisations	Ask what are the needs of smaller groups inc. looking at existing research	Develop mechanism for one to one governance support & mentoring	Active Promotion of collaboration amongst small groups	Create extensive community resource hub
Motivate through the heart rather than head	Policy - guidance & share groups views/exp with stats	Reduce red tape with funding	Regulation - reducing fear, making it simple, practical & helpful	Critical analysis of - current work, local environment change, appropriate response	Mentors for committee members	Link groups up to share resources	Community resource bank
Encouragement & motivation & celebration - at a local level	Strategies - Support to develop links with policy makers, links with public	Flexibility - fewer restrictions/conditions placed on funding	Meeting regulatory requirements e.g. CCNI annual returns	Research mapping then conduct appropriate research to fill gaps (ask small organisations directly)	Good governance - performance mgmt, evaluation of work	Locality collaboration - maximise use of scarce resources	Co-ordinated support throughout NI & locally
Increase volunteering to strengthen mgmt committees	Communication - policy relevant messages from grassroots to policy makers	Sign posting from funder - to advice & resources	Lower threshold for registration with CCNI example for reducing bureaucracy	Research - clearly establish what help small groups need	Skills development - committee, volunteers, affordable, appropriate training	Opportunities for sharing learning - especially what not to do	Use existing regional/sub regional networks
Understand & implement effective volunteer engagement	Change - influencing, keeping up with, coping	Allow space for risk taking & creativity		Research into sector	Governance - less bureaucracy around governance	Assist making links - develop relationships	Basic support services beyond training e.g. photocopying
Volunteer - recruitment - development - motivation - succession		Funding - longer term to encourage sustainability		Research to identify small organisations support needs	One - to - one governance support	Commonality - encourage groups to share learning & best practice	Better information & sharing btw infrastructure orgs to provide more effective support

		Collaboration - Funding criteria stressing collaboration as essential		Research - needs on ground, how to deliver, ongoing, differentiate btw community & voluntary	Financial procedures & awareness	Help with joined up working & collaboration	Central resources - internal conflict resolution, HR, legal etc
		Providing "Grants Plus" funding (cash & more)			Strengthen committees - support for governance	Share networking - skills, support, solidarity, success	Local access to expert advice
		Access to small grants			Funders provide funds & insist on governance one-one sessions		Combine their needs & development support
		Target uptake and delivery of small grants			Reduce governance & accountability requirements		Liberation from back room issues - HR, finance etc
							Practical resource to do things for groups eg finance governance, evaluation, strat planning, employment, audits, legal

#### **4. Evaluation of event**

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Well facilitated	
Format worked well	
Good session	
Effective use of time and very informative	
Good session but	Be careful of reinventing wheel ( loads of information out there – better communication and facilitation is key)
Good format , kept to time	
Good facilitation and opportunity to have this discussion	

#### **5. Next steps**

Building Change Trust board will be considering the report of the workshop at their meeting on 3 June and agreeing next steps.