

IDEA's Capacity Development Programme 2018 - 2021

End of Programme Evaluation

Alasdhair Collins
Dörte Pommerening
November 2021

IDEA’s Capacity Development Programme 2018 – 2021

End of Programme Evaluation

CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary	2
2. Introduction	5
3. Overall Effectiveness	6
4. Practitioners’ Knowledge and Skills	10
5. Strengthening Quality and Measuring Impact	14
6. Organisational Management.....	20
7. Policy and Advocacy	21
8. Communications, Representation and Partnerships beyond the DE Sector	26
9. Communication, Collaboration and Networking in the DE Sector	31
10. Internal Capacity to Deliver Programme	35
11. Conclusions	40
12. APPENDIX.....	42

IDEA CDP 2018-2021 Final Evaluation FINAL 02.02.2022

1. Executive Summary

The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) has been funded through a Strategic Partnership Agreement by Irish Aid to deliver a Capacity Development Programme (CDP) to support the Irish Development Education (DE) sector from January 2018 to December 2021 (following on from similar funding for the period 2013 to 2017). The Overall Goal of the 2018-2021 CPD is: “A Development Education sector consisting of strong practitioners and organisations, supported by an active and responsive IDEA network that builds strategic relationships and synergies across the sector and advocates for Development Education in a wider arena.”

We believe that overall IDEA has achieved this demanding goal. Most indicator targets have been met or exceeded. There is room for improvement in one or two areas but there are no serious gaps. There have been major outcomes, such as the Code of Good Practice and its positive impact on members’ practice and the Vision 2025 document which has enabled IDEA to influence policy in a number of ways. For such a small organisation working across such a broad range of activities and supporting such a diverse membership the effective delivery of the Capacity Development Programme is a major achievement.

IDEA is highly valued by its members. They have given IDEA consistently high ratings for overall effectiveness. There are numerous expressions of support and gratitude in the Annual Members Surveys. Covid-19 has had a huge impact on IDEA, its members and the whole sector in 2020 and 2021. As the key membership organisation for the DE sector IDEA found itself suddenly and unexpectedly in the role of Covid response coordinator and support giver. It rose to this challenge exceptionally well in terms of speed, proactivity and meeting members’ needs.

IDEA clearly knows how to run a good event. There has been very positive feedback on a large number of events in the areas of Practitioners’ Skills and Knowledge and Organisational Management. Several events over the four years have received particular praise: the Design Thinking workshop in 2019, the Moving DE online training in 2020, the Knowledge Exchange sessions in 2020 and 2021 and the annual support around funding applications to Irish Aid. Meanwhile the online Annual Conference in 2020 was clearly a tour de force. IDEA should learn from the experience of having to run so many events online due to the pandemic and consider which online elements to retain moving forward.

In the area of Strengthening Quality IDEA has broken new ground through the development over four years of the Code of Good Practice for DE in Ireland. This has been a major achievement and is making a real contribution to improved practice in the sector. The development process itself, which involved many members, was very good and the resulting concept, expressed through twelve Principles along with indicators for good practice and the accompanying submission process and materials, training and support and the feedback given to members have all been first class. There has been an overwhelmingly positive response to the Code from members and it has been recognised internationally through a GENE¹ Quality in Global Education award. Research into the Code data established some useful

¹ Global Education Network Europe

early trends and found that the Code encourages “critical reflection and discussion and can shape members’ behaviour in a positive way”². The Code has also shed light on the perceived lack of diversity among DE organisations’ staff and Boards. IDEA should continue to develop the Code, recruit more members, resource the provision of quality feedback to a growing Code membership and protect the Code from being used for marketing, fundraising or formal reporting purposes.

Support for Monitoring and Evaluation has been good and IDEA has strengthened members’ capacity through, for example, training on Results Frameworks and the sharing of tools such as the Anecdotal Evidence Record and Living Results Framework. In this notoriously difficult area IDEA staff feel that they have not yet “articulated the impact of DE as well as we would like”. In an attempt to partly address this IDEA has recently introduced case studies of impact as a different approach. This and the complementary approach of longitudinal impact studies should be explored further with members and Irish Aid.

Over the course of the Programme IDEA has successfully engaged in a number of policy and advocacy initiatives such as lobbying for the reintroduction of multi-annual grants by Irish Aid and the consultation for and coordination of numerous submissions to a range of Government Departments. The policy agenda was significantly disrupted by Covid-19 with long delays to focus areas, namely the Education for Sustainable Development National Strategy, the second National Implementation Plan for the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and Irish Aid’s mid-term review of its DE Strategy. IDEA concentrated on developing its Vision 2025 document which was launched at the 2021 Annual Conference. The document has provided IDEA and members with a shared policy position on many issues and makes a strong case for investment in DE, the development of the sub-sectors (Adult and Community Education, Formal Education and Youth) and for coherence across multiple Government Departments. It has already been used to support various submissions and to inform IDEA’s feedback to Irish Aid’s consultation on its new national GCE strategy. The draft Irish Aid strategy reflects a number of points expressed by IDEA members.

Overall, members feel that IDEA has done a good job of maintaining a productive relationship with Irish Aid while at the same time seeking to influence policy. Some members, however, have questioned whether IDEA is critical enough and whether the engagement with other Departments and political parties could be stronger. There have also been calls for IDEA to lead critical reflection in the sector on controversial topics such as neoliberalism and poverty, de-growth and the appropriateness of the SDG framework. It is also clear from various comments that members do not know enough about IDEA’s work in the policy arena.

IDEA has been active in representing DE with actors beyond the sector, including the Dóchas Policy Working Group, Coalition 2030, The Wheel, the Environmental Protection Agency’s Advisory Committee and the Department of Education’s advisory group on Education for Sustainable Development. It has also engaged with the Irish Social Enterprise Network, the Bridge 47 global network, and Deloitte Ireland. The work on partnerships with actors beyond the sector has been delivered through IDEA’s lead role on partnerships in the EU-funded Bridge 47 project. This project resulted in 21 practical collaborations across numerous EU countries with

² [Code of Good Practice Baseline Report, DP Evaluation, October 2021](#)

partners from the health, media, education and private sectors among others. In Ireland the key partnerships have been with BITCNI (Business in the Community Northern Ireland), Women for Election and Deloitte Ireland.

These partnerships brought the DE sector together with private sector organisations such as Lidl to discuss ways of reducing waste and with local councillors to explore the relevance of the SDGs for their work. The ongoing partnership with Deloitte Ireland has delivered workshops on DE to over 140 staff with more to come and the hope of a broader engagement in the future. The other key outcome, led by IDEA, has been the gathering together and dissemination of the learning on cross-sector partnerships from Bridge 47. This learning covers issues such as the time needed for successful partnerships, the importance of personal contacts, the role of MoUs and the difficulty of deepening relationships to make partnerships really meaningful. This difficulty was made even more challenging by the pandemic which made face to face meetings impossible and IDEA staff have acknowledged that as a result they did not meet all their partnership targets. IDEA sees this work as very important going forward and recognises that it will need proper resourcing if IDEA is to support members effectively.

Members have been consistently positive about IDEA's core role of communication and strategic networking within the DE sector. There has been praise for the e-Circular as an important source of information and following criticism of the IDEA website a new site has been developed which is much more user-friendly and informative. IDEA conferences and other events are seen as essential opportunities for networking and the coordination of consultation processes and submissions is welcomed. Members feel that the sub-sector working groups are a good method for sharing information and feeding through ideas and there is real appreciation for IDEA's 'invisible work' of matchmaking, responding to requests and individual support. The message from members is that IDEA should continue with all these activities. There was a suggestion to consider going beyond this to engage all the Irish Aid strategic partners to explore collaboration on impact and other topics.

As far as IDEA's internal capacity is concerned the picture is mixed. Strategy development, development of the Board and strategic reviews have all been positive but there have been some weaknesses in work planning and scheduling as well as in establishing a more systematic and structured approach to organisational learning and continuous professional development. Monitoring and evaluation has been very strong with a robust set of tools and processes and the regular involvement of the whole team. IDEA has been open to criticism, exemplified by the willingness to implement several findings from the Mid-term Review. Resourcing, in terms of staff levels has been challenging for several reasons, including the growth in capacity brought about by Bridge 47 and then the subsequent disappearance of those staff, along with the breadth of what IDEA does and the additional burden caused by Covid-19. The team have risen to these challenges extremely well but a different and more sustainable approach to resourcing is needed if IDEA is to continue delivering such a wide-ranging programme.

IDEA is very good at delivering the 'bread and butter' work of an umbrella organisation, such as sector communications, networking, consultation and coordination and the provision of high-quality training and events to support skills and knowledge. In addition to this it has taken advantage of its position to drive initiatives such as the Code of Good Practice, the development of the Vision 2025 document and the support and learning around cross-sector partnerships. It is ideally placed to do such work – work which others would not have the time, resources, opportunity or standing to carry out.

2. Introduction

The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) has been funded through a Strategic Partnership Agreement by Irish Aid to deliver a Capacity Development Programme (CDP) to support the Irish Development Education (DE) sector from January 2018 to December 2021 (following on from similar funding for the period 2013 to 2017).

The Overall Goal for the CDP 2018 – 2021 is, “A Development Education sector consisting of strong practitioners and organisations, supported by an active and responsive IDEA network that builds strategic relationships and synergies across the sector and advocates for Development Education in a wider arena.” To achieve this goal, IDEA has agreed eight objectives across three key outcomes. These objectives are captured in a Results Framework and are measured by a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators with specific targets set for each year of the programme.

This End of Programme Evaluation is a review of progress against objectives across the four years of the programme and builds on the Mid-term Reflections report produced in January 2020. The methodology comprised a review of IDEA’s monitoring data, a review of the Annual Members Surveys (AMS) in 2018, 2019 and 2020, and the Needs Analysis survey carried out in mid-2021, two online focus groups in late 2019 (one with IDEA staff and National Council [NC] members and one with IDEA members)³, two focus groups with IDEA members in 2021, participation in two training workshops in 2021, multiple interviews with staff and a review of selected key outputs and activities. It is important to note that due to the timing of this report the data for 2021 is not as comprehensive as for other years since at the time of writing the AMS has not yet been conducted and the monitoring data is only available for the first three quarters of the year.

This report is structured around the eight programme objectives. At the beginning of each section we provide a table giving a brief summary of performance against selected targets for each year of the programme. (Again, please note that data for 2021 is based on the first three quarters of the year only.) We have chosen a representative selection of indicators to include those where performance has met or exceeded targets as well as those where performance has fallen short of targets in order to give an accurate overall assessment of IDEA’s performance. In the tables, results which have met or exceeded targets are shown in green, those which have fallen short are shown in red and those which are very close to the target (but where there is some discrepancy such as a slight delay) are shown in orange.

As far as possible, we have tried to frame the findings using the thoughts and words of IDEA members, staff and National Council.

³ See Appendix for a list of focus group participants

3. Overall Effectiveness

IDEA is a small organisation. During the period of this Strategic Partnership staffing levels have varied between four and seven members, including two posts dedicated to the EU-funded Bridge 47 project plus an intern. The membership is large and extremely varied, including individual DE practitioners, small specialist DE organisations, domestic NGOs of various sizes and large international NGOs where DE is only one programme area among many. The needs and priorities of these different types of member vary enormously and IDEA seeks to be relevant to them all in terms of providing support, services, products, representation and leadership. There are currently 84 members.

In addition to this IDEA is active across a wide range of areas, providing training and resources, developing policy proposals, engaging with a number of disparate audiences, serving as a hub for sector communication and networking and reaching out beyond the sector, convening special interest and sub-sector groups and liaising with relevant Government Departments and especially Irish Aid.

It is essential to take these facts into account when assessing IDEA's overall effectiveness. The organisation continuously punches above its weight, not only delivering on the 'bread and butter' elements of the Capacity Development Programme such as training and sector communications and networking but also forging ahead with ground-breaking initiatives such as the Code of Good Practice for DE in Ireland.

It is striking how positive members are about IDEA's work, making many, many complimentary comments in the focus groups, in all Annual Members Surveys and in the Needs Analysis survey:

"IDEA is a wonderful support to the work we do as Development Education practitioners and puts on a diverse and interesting array of events. It is very important to meet regularly with other practitioners to ensure we keep up to date with new developments and find ways of improving our practice. IDEA provides a space in which to do so and opportunities to learn from each other and from experts in the field." – 2018 Annual Members Survey

"I find IDEA generally very effective, pro-active and responsive. The organisation's interventions tend to be very effective and well thought out, the staff are all very approachable, they pre-empt members' needs and queries and provide a very high standard of support for the community." – 2019 Annual Members Survey

"I think IDEA is a really important organisation for the sector and for the promotion and support of Development Education and Global Citizenship Education in Ireland." – 2019 Annual Members Survey

"We were delighted with the support we got during 2020 from all the IDEA team." – 2020 Annual Members Survey

"Just to say thanks! IDEA has been one of the bright lights in what has been a difficult year and it is much appreciated both personally and professionally." – 2020 Annual Members Survey

IDEA CDP 2018-2021 Final Evaluation FINAL 02.02.2022

“I would like to thank the staff of IDEA for all the excellent work it is doing in support, information exchange, training and communication with members.” – 2021 Needs Analysis Survey

“I think IDEA is doing an amazing job and has been invaluable to our organisation.” – 2021 Needs Analysis Survey

Members were asked to rate IDEA’s overall effectiveness in all the Annual Members Surveys. The following table shows the results.

IDEA aims to be an active and responsive network that builds strategic relationships and synergies across the sector and advocates for Development Education in a wider arena. In terms of its overall effectiveness this year in doing this, and in supporting a Development Education sector consisting of strong practitioners and organisations, do you think IDEA has been:					
		Very effective	Quite effective	Not very effective	Ineffective
2018	Number	15	17	0	0
	Percentage	47%	53%	0%	0%
2019	Number	28	13	0	0
	Percentage	68%	32%	0%	0%
2020	Number	35	11	0	0
	Percentage	76%	24%	0%	0%
2021 ⁴	Number	25	18	0	0
	Percentage	58%	42%	0%	0%

Given that IDEA is such a small organisation and that it works across such a broad range of areas in support of such a disparate membership, the volume and nature of the positive comments made and the very positive ratings in the table above are very strong indicators that overall, IDEA’s delivery of the Capacity Development Programme is very effective.

In addition to the positive comments about general support and specific areas of work it is also striking how many comments include an appreciation of the ‘invisible support’ which members gain from IDEA. They see IDEA as the ‘go to’ place for information and guidance in the DE sector and really value the fact that

⁴ As there has not yet been an AMS in 2021 the figures shown are proxy figures taken from a similar but different question in the 2021 Needs Analysis Survey: “Overall, how do you rate IDEA’s work in responding to meeting the needs of its members?”

IDEA staff are not only knowledgeable but also extremely approachable. There are numerous references to personal support, emotional support and responsiveness.

“The outreach and responsiveness of staff was excellent.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

The other contextual factor which must be taken into account when assessing IDEA’s overall effectiveness is the tremendous challenge posed to the organisation, its members and the entire sector over the last two years by the Covid-19 pandemic. As soon as the risk of lockdown became apparent IDEA began to plan for remote working, ensuring that appropriate equipment was available and that staff had access to remote communications and to files. This enabled a smooth transition to remote working when the office was forced to close in mid-March 2020. In addition to this IDEA had to re-plan its programme for 2020 and adapt it to online working, including the major task of converting the already planned, in-person Annual Conference to an online event.

As the membership and umbrella organisation for the DE sector in Ireland it was also essential that IDEA showed leadership, supported its members and provided a space and mechanisms for ongoing communication. This constituted a very significant challenge.

“Responding and adapting to Covid-19 became probably our main ‘area of work’ in 2020. We had to adapt our own work, many things were disrupted such as the policy agenda and thus our advocacy work, the opportunities for developing new partnerships and so on. We also needed to support people through offering as much compassion and flexibility as possible, for example by making the online conference ‘pay what you can, attend what you can, no pressure to sign up’. We needed to help members deal with the uncertainty of the situation, for example by successfully advocating to Irish Aid for a flexible approach to delivery of Annual Grants projects. We decided to focus as much as possible on providing practical help such as training and spaces for members to share, such as online meetings, the AGM and the Annual Conference. In general everything took much longer to prepare and deliver.” – 2020 Staff Member Interview

IDEA was very quick to react to the situation, engaging an external consultant to design and deliver a series of three online training workshops under the heading of ‘Moving Development Education Online’, in March and April covering three topics: ‘Tools for online DE’, ‘Hosting DE in the online space’ and ‘Designing and Delivering a Virtual DE conference’. These were deemed very successful and members made many positive comments about them and indeed they also informed IDEA’s planning for its own conference. Six practice sessions for moving DE online involving 24 participants were held between April and September and a weekly online coffee morning was introduced to keep members in touch. The latter proved so popular that it was developed into a ‘Member Knowledge Exchange’, running for 21 sessions involving a total of 191 participants (77 individuals with many attending several times) covering collaboration, shared learning and specific topics such as Fact-Checking and Fake News, Anti-Racism, Global Citizenship & Primary School Appropriate Activism, and the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals).

“IDEA’s response to Covid challenges was dynamic and innovative.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

“I thought IDEA responded quickly and effectively to COVID-19 and provided great support to the sector in terms of adapting to the online space and remaining connected virtually while working remotely. IDEA did great work in fostering [a sense of] community between organisations in light of COVID-19.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

“IDEA offered members a huge amount of opportunities and alternatives to engage given Covid restrictions.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey.

“IDEA's response to the Covid 19 pandemic was outstanding, we really felt extremely supported and the early training sessions on online facilitation through Zoom by Charo have been invaluable. You hit the ground running...” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

“These knowledge shares have honestly been so helpful and insightful from the get-go – one BIG positive to come from 2020. Thanks to you and the IDEA team.” – 2020 Anecdotal Evidence Record

“IDEA has been great at gathering the network together during the pandemic, the initial training for moving online built confidence and the space for sharing ideas with others has been very valuable.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

“Well done for keeping us so well connected and informed - particularity in the challenging last year!” – 2021 Needs Analysis Survey

In addition to these extra supports which IDEA was quick to put in place, the Annual Conference was moved from June to October and was run virtually over four days. It was well attended and received very positive feedback. The Conference is discussed further below.

In 2021, staff have continued to work remotely from home, with just the occasional individual visit to the office. At the time of writing it is not clear when the IDEA office will reopen. All IDEA events in 2021 have been run online, including the Annual Conference. While there has been less specific support in 2021 to members on how to deliver DE online, except for a two-part workshop on Monitoring and Evaluation of DE online, how to respond to the pandemic has become mainstreamed into everything that IDEA has been doing.

The pandemic has also had a significant impact on members. It has been harder to do joint planning due to the uncertainty, which has made organisations reluctant to commit.

“Members have been very creative in adapting their work and have delivered DE online across all the sub-sectors and have developed extra videos and materials (though it is not clear how much these have been used). However, there have still been many challenges such as the digital divide, access to classrooms and a reduced space for DE in formal settings.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

Covid-19 has completely reshaped the second two years of the CDP. It has necessitated a huge amount of flexibility and extra work on the part of IDEA staff and required the organisation to take the lead in supporting its members. Although many elements of this were very challenging there have also been some benefits, such as increased contact with members and greater geographical spread in terms of access to events. Overall, as the comments above demonstrate, IDEA has responded very effectively indeed to the pandemic.

IDEA CDP 2018-2021 Final Evaluation FINAL 02.02.2022

“It is important to remember that our response to Covid-19 and our support to members and the sector has been on top of our three flagship projects⁵, the Code of Good Practice, Vision 2025 and Bridge 47, all of which we have delivered effectively.” 2021 Staff Interview

4. Practitioners’ Knowledge and Skills

Objective	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result*
1.1 - DE practitioners have relevant knowledge and skills to deliver Development Education and communicate their work effectively	125 participants in DE Knowledge & Skills events	140	130	243	140	188	155	160
	58% of participants surveyed rate the quality of interventions as ‘excellent’ and a further 25% as ‘good’.	56% 34%	59% 28%	64% 28%	60% 30%	64% 29%	61% 29%	69% 22%
	50 examples of increased capacity in DE Knowledge & Skills as a result of IDEA interventions in this area.	70	50	51	50	64	55	41

*Note: 2021 results based on first three quarters of the year only

There were very good levels of participation in IDEA knowledge and skills events across the four-year programme and participants gave very positive effectiveness ratings in post-event surveys and made positive comments in the 2018 AMS⁶ and the focus groups:

“We attended a number of brilliant training events last year. Especially for new members it was useful to get more insight and skills.” – 2018 Annual Members Survey

“Lots of useful events supporting practice. I wish there were more outside Dublin.” – 2018 Annual Members Survey

“The capacity building training sessions are very valuable. It is great for us as a small organisation to hear from experts.” – 2019 Staff & NC Focus Group

“Membership is affordable, events are accessible and enable members to really feel the tangible benefits of membership.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

In 2018 some members had expressed concern that too many events were held in Dublin and requested more regional events. IDEA responded positively to this request by running four regional events in 2019 (in Cork, Limerick, Donegal and Belfast) which were all well-attended. In 2020, after an initial face to face Conversation Circle other skills and knowledge events were forced online as a result of the pandemic. IDEA ran the ‘Moving DE online’ workshops mentioned

⁵ These three ‘flagship projects’ are all discussed later in this report

⁶ The 2019 and 2020 AMS were ‘mini’ surveys and the area of Practitioners’ Knowledge and Skills was not covered.

above, a three-session 'Global Goals Jam' and the four-day Annual Conference all online. In 2021 this trend continued with online events including 'Purposeful Partnerships – Engaging new sectors in GCE', 'The Emergence of Development Education in Ireland' and the IDEA Virtual Annual Conference. This move to virtual events, while creating a lot of extra work for staff has also had some positive benefits.

“The online environment has actually made some things better. For example we were able to have a much wider geographical representation on our panel at the Annual Conference with participants from various countries. It also allowed members to take part in events without having to travel to Dublin and some events, such as our support for members applying for Irish Aid annual grants actually worked better online. We were able to open it to non-members and new people got to know us who would not have come to a face-to-face event. So we may well retain online events in the future.” – 2020 Staff Member Interview

Further indications of the high quality of IDEA knowledge and skills events come from the post-event surveys. For example in 2018, 60% of those surveyed stated that they were 'likely' to apply their learning to their practice and 85% reported an increase in their knowledge/skills (against targets of 53% and 78% respectively). Similarly, in 2020 66% of those surveyed stated that they were 'likely' to apply their learning to their practice and 87% reported an increase in their knowledge/skills (against targets of 58% and 80% respectively).

Across the four years of the programme several events stand out as having been particularly successful. These include the two-day workshop in June 2019 on Design Thinking. This presented a different approach to programme development based on the 'design thinking' techniques commonly used in the IT sector. The workshop was organised jointly by IDEA and Bridge 47 and was delivered by specialist trainers from the Netherlands who showed participants how techniques such as focussing in detail on the end-users of an intervention and continuous testing in the development stage can be applied to DE programmes. The workshop was subsidised, meaning that the cost to participants was very affordable. Feedback in post-event surveys was very positive, as were comments in the focus group:

“The Design Thinking workshop was mind-bogglingly brilliant and we will now train our own staff on this.” – 2019 Members Focus Group

Also worthy of special mention are the 'Moving DE online' workshops and the practice sessions delivered so promptly and effectively in 2020 which were clearly greatly valued by members. Similarly the 'Member Knowledge Exchange' sessions which developed out of initial coffee mornings and then ran throughout 2020 proved very popular. In 2021 IDEA planned to run two seasons of Knowledge Exchanges, with nine sessions already completed in Spring and a further nine planned for Autumn. So far 50 participants (29 individuals) have been involved and it is expected that by the end of the year the total number of participants will be around 70 to 80. Inputs to the sessions are being recorded and uploaded to the Members' Area of the website.

“The online DE sessions at the start of the Covid 19 pandemic were great. The content was really helpful but even more important was the sense of community and resilience.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

Despite the challenges of Covid-19 IDEA ran a full complement of Knowledge and Skills events in 2020 (three events plus the Annual Conference) and in 2021 (four events plus the Conference) in addition to the Member Knowledge Exchanges. This fact alone is a real achievement. Comments in post-event surveys are

overwhelmingly positive, such as the following comment about the seminar on ‘Global Housing Inequality, Finance and the Global South’ in September 2021 which looked into the issue of ‘financialisation’ of housing as a global justice issue and compared the domestic and global situations:

“Content was excellent. The timing was great - really good mix of discussion, work, excellent inputs.” 2021 Post-event Survey

One area which drew some criticism was the applicability of some of the topics covered in events. Focus group informants in 2021 acknowledged that it is very difficult to make events relevant and the knowledge and skills applicable to so many sub-sectors and settings but nevertheless felt that sometimes events felt “too theoretical, we need more practical tools” and also noted that there seem to be more resources for teachers but fewer for third level and youth work and that sometimes the DE language can be a barrier.

The Annual Conference in 2020 drew a great deal of praise from members, particularly in light of the fact that it had to be adapted from a face-to-face event to a virtual event. The title of the event was ‘Rising to the Challenge – Global Citizenship in 2020’ and was run over four days in October. It was well attended with 104 participants attending two or more sessions, including some from overseas. IDEA was able to attract an impressive array of speakers and presenters, including the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights as keynote speaker and others who were able to bring a range of domestic and international perspectives. The conference also included panel sessions, workshops and space for participants to exchange experiences and informal elements such as yoga as well as an online conference community on Slack.

“Overall, the pivot to online was excellent from IDEA. The conference was world class.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

“I have to say, the conference was AMAZING!!!! Well done to you all, I found all the contributions really engaging and thought provoking and I am still musing over the workshop content and keynote speakers, I was only sorry I couldn’t make the wrap up on Friday morning! Well done, not only for the bravery to take it online, but for the care and detail in the planning... it was felt and it was appreciated.” – 2020 Anecdotal Evidence Record

“Several people told me that the 2020 conference was a real eye-opener.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

The 2021 Annual Conference was also virtual and was run along similar lines, this time over three days. The title was ‘Global Citizenship and Inequality’ with a particular focus on how Covid-19 has revealed and illuminated aspects of inequality such as the digital divide and access to vaccines. It included a keynote speaker, panel sessions on gender and race with international speakers, a showcase of members’ projects on inequality and how to engage hard to reach audiences, training workshops and informal elements similar to the previous year. IDEA also launched the Vision 2025 document during the event. 74 people attended two sessions or more. Again, there was positive feedback after the conference. There were also a number of comments on the issue of representativeness among the DE practitioners’ community which resonated with comments on diversity coming out of the Code of Good Practice process (which is discussed below) and which should give IDEA and members some pause for thought.

“The DE sector, as mostly made up of educators, can be widely middle class and does not live the inequalities that exist for the groups we try to advocate for and/or reach. Therefore, we need to make more efforts to include them in the decision-making processes, design of programmes, etc.” – 2021 Post-event Survey

The success of the two conferences has led IDEA to consider whether to keep future conferences online since this offers greater opportunities to attract international speakers and participants while making attendance for non-Dublin based Irish members much easier. These advantages (plus the lower carbon footprint) though should be weighed carefully against the benefits of face-to-face events which were picked up in some participants’ comments. A hybrid event, with say one day in person and one day online might be a possible solution.

“Whilst it’s great to save time by having the conference on Zoom, I would rather have it in person as I feel there would be more opportunity to meet/chat and share ideas.” – 2021 Post-event Survey

“The conference seemed very well organised and the inputs were highly relevant and interesting. I found it difficult to participate in multiple platforms while trying to listen and concentrate on the inputs and longed to simply have more time to talk, share thoughts and reflections and process the material that had been brought. For that reason I feel the programme albeit rich, was actually too crowded and in effect was expert driven rather than collaborative.” – 2021 Post-event Survey

Recommendations

Consider the most appropriate mix of in-person and online events for the future in the light of the learning gained through having to respond to the pandemic. Do not lose sight of the need for accessibility to events for non-Dublin based members.

Build on the success of running online events in the last two years to make future face to face events available online as well if possible and continue to record inputs to events and share these via the Members’ section of the IDEA website.

5. Strengthening Quality and Measuring Impact

Objective	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result*
1.2 - A more consistent approach to strengthening quality and measuring impact is evident in the DE sector	IDEA Quality and Impact Strategy created	IDEA's Quality and Impact strategy is being finalised. To be adopted in 2019 in line with new IDEA Strategic Plan.	IDEA Quality and Impact Strategy in use in one area of IDEA's work and action plan created	IDEA Strategy 2019-2023 launched with focus on Q & I. Q & I action plan for IDEA team being piloted late 2019/early 2020.	IDEA Quality and Impact action plan is reviewed	IDEA staff using the Code of Good Practice in their work with each having responsibility for one principle.	IDEA Quality and Impact action plan in use by IDEA team across all relevant areas of IDEA's work.	We created an internal reporting document to be updated quarterly with RF by whole team – not in use yet
	Code of Good Practice is piloted among 8 IDEA members and finalised.	The Code of Good Practice piloted with 6 members - finalised February 2019.	Support structures for roll-out of Code are created and operationalised	Advisory Group (13 members 3 meetings). Code completed (incl. leaflet/poster; User Guide & Workbook) & launched & members trained.	Support structures for the Code's use among membership are strengthened and assessment mechanisms are developed	Code operational with 20 IDEA members. Article in Policy & Practice. Code Network Meeting, Lessons Learned report, new Advisory group.	Code in use and shared at international level. Engage 25 members about the Code (50% join in 2021). Retention of 90% of current members.	In use with 34 members. Shared internationally via DEAR team, Bridge 47 & received GENE award. Engaged 20 potential new members, 70% joined. 100% retention.
	30 members reached in impact measurement training & support	21	30	20 (incl. 10 via 1:1 support)	30	27	30	28
	60% of participants surveyed rate interventions as 'excellent' and a further 30% as 'good'	96% of participants surveyed rate interventions as 'excellent' and a further 4% as 'good'.	60%	94%	60%	54%	60%	50%
		30%	6%	30%	38%	30%	33%	

*Note: 2021 results based on first three quarters of the year only

IDEA CDP 2018-2021 Final Evaluation FINAL 02.02.2022

This objective has two related but distinct elements, namely quality and impact. The quality element has been delivered through one of IDEA's three flagship projects under the 2018-2021 Strategic Partnership, the Code of Good Practice for Development Education in Ireland.

It "is the first of its kind in Ireland and a trailblazer internationally. Developed by IDEA members it is a quality framework that articulates how to strengthen good practice across all our Development Education work."⁷ The Code consists of twelve Principles which cover all the areas of DE delivery which practitioners and organisations are likely to be involved in, such as "contributing to knowledge about global development, using participatory, creative methodologies, building skills for informed, meaningful action, reflecting the key values of Development Education in their work" and so on⁸. Each Principle is further described by several more detailed indicators, defining what 'good practice' would look like. Members who sign up to the Code commit to carrying out two self-assessments in the first year and one per year after that. They do this by assigning a fulfilment level⁹ to their current practice against each Principle and providing evidence to show how they meet the indicators. They must submit their self-assessment booklet, including an action plan to address any weaknesses and must contribute to the Community of Practice by sharing successes and learning with other Code Members and attending at least one Code network meeting. Members receive detailed written feedback from IDEA in response to their submissions.

The Code has been developed over the last four years with a great deal of consultation and involvement of IDEA members. IDEA managed the development process effectively, hitting all the annual targets for the different stages of development and at the same time receiving very positive feedback. The Code was piloted in 2018 and with the setting up of an Advisory Group was then fully developed (documentation, assessment process, branding etc) in 2019. It was successfully launched in December 2019 with training delivered to IDEA members in 2019 and 2020.

Altogether in 2020 twenty members joined the Code and submitted either one or two Self-assessment booklets and action plans (depending on when they joined). All received feedback. Code Network meetings began, a Lessons Learned report was delivered and a new Advisory Group was set up to review the Code content. In 2021 Code Network meetings have continued, Slack is being used to support the Community of Practice, two further Lessons Learned reports have been developed and some changes to some indicators have been made. Fourteen new Members joined in July while existing Members continued to make submissions. So far, all members who have joined have remained active. IDEA has promoted the Code internationally via the EU DEAR support team and Bridge 47. In May 2021 IDEA was chosen to receive a prestigious GENE Quality in Global Education award¹⁰ for the Code of Good Practice, having been nominated by Irish Aid. A Baseline research

⁷ IDEA website [Code of Good Practice for Development Education \(ideaonline.ie\)](https://www.ideaonline.ie)

⁸ A full list of the Principles can be seen in the Appendix

⁹ "Fully, Substantially, Partially or Minimally"

¹⁰ [Global Education Awards — GENE](https://www.gene-awards.eu/) (Global Education Network Europe)

report¹¹ was commissioned and published in October 2021 to examine the data emerging from the process in 2020 and establish what the Code reveals about Development Education practice and its impact, how it contributes to learning and how it might be developed in the future. A panel of external assessors has been recruited to lighten the load on IDEA staff in the assessment and feedback process and to widen the ‘institutional knowledge’ of the Code process.

The Code of Good Practice has attracted a huge amount of positive feedback, right through its development.

“The development and launch of the Code of Good Practice on Development Education was a very welcomed and necessary tool for the sector, and IDEA was very effective in coordinating this development.” – 2019 Annual Members Survey

“Involvement in the Code has been an excellent tool to look at our programmes and base internal discussions on programme progression on. We do now monitor all new programmes/resources/workshops against the code principles.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

“We found the process extremely useful. It gave us permission and space to take the time to reflect on our practice as well as a framework and a vehicle for doing so – it will be really helpful going forward.” – 2021 Code Member Interview for Baseline Report

“The Code of Good Practice is a really positive step for the sector. There is already a lot of interest in it around Europe.” – 2021 Code Member Interview for Baseline Report

“The Code gives us permission to reflect on our practice, especially since our senior management have signed off on our membership of the Code. It is very useful to be able to look back and see how our practice has been developing. But the process does take time.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

“In developing our organisations’ first full set of DE resource materials the Code was a brilliant guide for us.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

“It used to be a mystery as to what DE actually is! Now we have great definitions through the Code which is very useful for members and especially for new people.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

The task of developing the Code has entailed a huge amount of work for IDEA; consultation, developing materials, recruiting and training members, giving feedback, sharing good practice, recruiting advisors, panellists and researchers and so on. And all this has been completed on time despite Covid-19. It is a real achievement.

¹¹ [Code of Good Practice Baseline Report, DP Evaluation, October 2021](#)

“This has been a key activity for us and is a major success. It is our number one achievement within the Capacity Development Programme. Despite the pandemic and remote working we maintained momentum and have achieved high levels of buy-in from members as well as significant interest from abroad and from Irish Aid. It will have significant strategic implications for us going forward.” – 2020 Staff Member Interview

The Baseline Report provided a number of interesting findings, of which the following are perhaps the most important:

- The Code represents a large step forward in supporting Development Education practitioners, whether individuals or organisations (both large and small), to reflect critically on their practice.
- For nearly all principles, significantly more members report to be ‘Substantially’ fulfilling the principle than any other level. This alone is a powerful finding. It means that Code members’ practice, as a whole, is perceived by themselves as very much in line with the principles of the Code.
- The Code is not only a tool for capturing performance levels and examples of good practice but is actually a tool and a vehicle for critical reflection and discussion and can shape members’ behaviour in a positive way. It is therefore a learning and development tool as well.
- The Code is not a replacement for, or short cut to, impact assessment.
- It is essential that the results of the process and a member’s progress remain confidential and are not to be used for marketing, fundraising or formal reporting purposes.
- The make-up of boards of directors, staff, volunteers and external facilitators should reflect the population at large and be diverse, however self-assessment suggests that it currently does not.

The last of these findings chimes with the concern expressed by one informant and quoted above, that the “DE sector, as mostly made up of educators, can be widely middle class and does not live the inequalities that exist for the groups we try to advocate for and/or reach”. It was further echoed in the analysis of Code Members’ submissions which showed that one Principle in particular stood out as being the one which Code Members felt that they were fulfilling the least, namely Principle 11, “Reflect the KEY VALUES of Development Education: Equality, diversity, sustainability and human rights, and responsibilities, and challenging unequal and unjust power relations across all issues we work on”. This is an area for IDEA and members to address:

“IDEA’s membership and work is still not reflective of the population. We talk the talk but it is not lived yet. Disability, ethnicity, social class need to be reflected from within the organisation. We as members and the sector as a whole have to make more progress to internalise inclusivity.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

“IDEA is trying very hard in this area, for example by inviting more diverse speakers to events. Although they and we as members have grappled with this issue, the sector is still predominantly white, middle class and female. Maybe we need a Working Group on this.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

The other element of this objective relates to measuring impact. IDEA interventions on impact measurement were rated extremely highly by event participants in both 2018 and 2019 and members of both focus groups in 2019 proactively mentioned training delivered in 2019, while in 2019 and 2021 focus group members commented on the value of the Quality and Impact Working Group:

“We found the idea of an Anecdotal Evidence Record, presented at the training on Reporting, very good and put it into practice immediately.” – 2019 Members Focus Group

“The Quality & Impact Working Group took part in a review of Irish Aid annual reporting data from 2018. We had very open discussions about how to use and share this data with grantees and the sector to improve the quality of DE delivery.” – 2019 Members Focus Group

“IDEA has been a good forum to galvanise members on pushing back against an overly metrics-focused Irish Aid evaluation focus. The current Irish Aid management team, have displayed a greater level of interest in qualitative data, and it has been good to use the Quality and Impact Working Group, to query some of the indicators of quality and quantity for measurement of the work and to suggest ways to inform an approach that takes lifelong learning into greater consideration, which was evident in the Quality and Impact Working Group’s submission to Irish Aid.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

In 2020 IDEA ran an Impact Masterclass and some follow-up clinics and in 2021 a two-part training workshop on how to do M&E (Monitoring and Evaluation) of Development Education online. In post-event surveys the ratings for these events, while close to targets, were significantly lower than in the previous two years. It is not clear why this is the case. Indeed we attended the training in 2021 and found it to be excellent and 73% of participants stated that they are ‘likely’ to apply their learning to their practice and 93% of participants surveyed indicated an increase in their knowledge. IDEA staff have surmised that this fall-off in ratings may be due to the fact that the earlier interventions were very concrete, focussing on practical issues such as Results Frameworks and that now that members have mastered these basics something more refined is needed which is hard to deliver through training alone. This was echoed by comments made in one of the 2021 focus groups:

“As far as measuring impact is concerned, we still need more help, what to measure and how to measure it.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

“In the Quality & Impact Working Group we have been discussing qualitative measurement and how it can best be done.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

In 2021 IDEA has attempted to introduce a different approach by developing case studies and stories of impact from members and including these on the website¹². There is an intention to move beyond training, to create a space for members to discuss impact, which would fit well with the needs expressed in focus

¹² [Impact of Development Education \(ideaonline.ie\)](https://www.ideaonline.ie)

groups. This approach would also fit in with Irish Aid’s increased interest in the use of qualitative case studies to examine and describe impact and to measure impact over time.

“This is a challenging area and we have not yet managed to articulate the impact of Development Education as well as we would like.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

“There seems to be more awareness at Irish Aid of the need to measure impact over time. IDEA has helped to encourage this thinking and the case study approach is very good. IDEA should now support and share this approach with members.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

Recommendations

Continue to develop and promote the Code of Good Practice, ensuring that resources are in place to assess submissions and provide feedback.

Recruit more Code Members and especially more individual practitioners as Members of the Code of Good Practice as they are currently very under-represented

Repeat the Code Baseline Research every one or two years to build up an increasingly rich picture of DE practice in Ireland, including strengths and weaknesses and examples of impact.

Consider how to address the issue of diversity and representativeness in the sector, how to involve target audiences more in decision-making, how to include more voices from the global South, consider whether to create a Working Group to scope what is realistic and to develop strategies.

Consider asking the Quality and Impact Working Group to consult with members, Irish Aid and other IA Strategic Partners to examine in detail the issue of impact measurement and in particular the use of case studies and longitudinal impact measures. Advocate for this approach with Irish Aid.

6. Organisational Management

Objective	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result*
1.3 - DE Organisations strengthen their effectiveness in key organisational management areas (e.g. funding applications, governance)	20 participants in IDEA's funding/organisational management training and support	17 (incl. 10 via 1:1 support)	20	37 (incl. 21 via 1:1 support)	20	56	25	5
	40% of participants surveyed rate the quality of interventions as 'excellent' and further 40% as 'good'	50% 50%	40% 40%	80% 20%	40% 40%	82% 13%	40% 40%	50% 50%
	15 examples of improved organisational management capacity as a result of IDEA interventions in this area and/or accessing support sign-posted by IDEA	10	15	22	15	35	17	4

*Note: 2021 results based on first three quarters of the year only

This has traditionally been the area of IDEA's work which members have rated as least important to them (and this was again the case in the Annual Members Surveys in 2019 and 2020 and in the Needs Analysis carried out in 2021) although this average rating disguises real variability across responses from members. Larger organisations tend not to need this support at all, while for some smaller member organisations it is invaluable. The element which seems to be most valued is support on funding applications to Irish Aid. This picture is reflected in responses to the AMS and also the relatively few mentions of organisational management in the focus groups:

"We really appreciated IDEA's support in applying for Irish Aid's DE grant. The workshops added clarity and gave opportunity to ask questions, if needed." – 2018 Annual Members Survey

"We look to others for support in the area of governance - however support for the IA funding round with the grants clinic on other aspects of the application was helpful of course." – 2019 Annual Members Survey

"Input on funding applications is invaluable. I feel I can go to IDEA staff and I have had lots of support on applications and on Irish Aid's PMF and RF." – 2019 Members Focus Group

"IDEA is much better than other umbrella organisations at informing us on funding opportunities and deadlines for applications." – 2019 Staff & NC Focus Group

"The sessions on Irish Aid grants are very valuable to us. We have a small team and the sessions really helped to demystify the process and focus our thinking." – 2021 Members Focus Group

“The Irish Aid funding application support work offered by IDEA is a great asset across its member organisations. The space has been very supportive to member organisations in developing a strategy for applying for the Irish Aid funding and the toolkit¹³ developed as part of this response is excellent.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

The low numbers in the table above for 2021 are based on one small niche session on Reporting to the Charities Regulator. Further training is planned for the Autumn around the Irish Aid grants and on results frameworks.

7. Policy and Advocacy

Objective	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result*
2.1 - IDEA network promotes and facilitates a more enabling environment for DE through policy and advocacy	IDEA members supported to engage with 6 policy opportunities	8	6	6	6	8	6	6
	5 examples of IDEA representing members at a national and EU policy level and/or with key institutional ‘gatekeepers’	7	6	6	7	7	7	5
	25% of members state that IDEA’s work in this area is ‘very effective’ and a further 65% state that it is ‘quite effective’	42% 58%	30% 60%	46% 54%	40% 50%	37% 43%	45% 45%	No data**

*Note: 2021 results based on first three quarters of the year only

**No data available as this is gathered through the Annual Members Survey which at the time of writing has not yet been carried out

Over the four years of the Capacity Development Programme IDEA has engaged in a number of significant advocacy initiatives and has been able to influence policy in a number of areas. The first of these centres on the issue of multi-annual funding. IDEA shared the view expressed by members:

“We need Irish Aid to reintroduce multi-annual funding for Development Education.” – 2018 Annual Members Survey

In early 2019 IDEA surveyed members for their experience of the Irish Aid 2019 Annual Grants call and made a successful submission to Irish Aid on grants, addressing issues such as timing, when funding is actually available, gaps between rounds and the need for multi-annual grants.

¹³ ‘Using Results-Based Approaches in Development Education Settings: A Practical Toolkit’, available at [Measuring Results \(ideaonline.ie\)](https://www.ideaonline.ie/Measuring-Results)

“This year, for the first time in a while, there are multi-annual (two year) grants from Irish Aid. This is so important as it gives real stability to our programmes. I believe this change is largely due to IDEA.” – 2019 Members Focus Group

“IDEA has advocated for multi-annual grants through formal feedback on the annual grants each year and also at other meetings. In November this year three-year grants are being introduced. IDEA has been a key voice on this issue and the change will make a big difference to members in terms of project design, planning and sustainability.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

Secondly, in 2018, IDEA consulted with members, ten of whom joined a task group to develop a submission on Irish Aid’s international development strategy.

“We are beginning to see the impact of our submission now. There are more references to global citizenship in Irish Aid language and policies and greater prominence of Development Education. It may even have contributed to the recent increases in funding for DE.” – 2019 Staff & NC Focus Group

Between Autumn 2019 and Spring 2021 IDEA consulted with members through the sub-sector Working Groups and other groups to develop the Vision 2025¹⁴ document which was launched at the 2021 Annual Conference. The purpose of this process was to create a clear vision for how the DE sector could develop and how it would respond to an increase in funding for DE from the current 0.6% to the EU benchmark of 3% of ODA (Official Development Assistance) for which IDEA had been advocating. The document endeavours to make the most compelling case for DE and address key needs, barriers and supports. The process was led by a dedicated Policy and Advocacy Officer and the consultation was made more complicated and time-consuming by the pandemic. The result is a detailed document which provides IDEA and the membership with an agreed position on a wide range of policy issues and specific recommendations to develop each of the sub-sectors, how to ramp up funding and how to ensure coherent policy across Government Departments.

“Vision 2025 is not a strategy document. It sets out an ambitious vision of possibilities for DE in Ireland. We will use it in future submissions, in our work to influence political parties, Ministers and Departments. We have already sent it to the Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, and as part of our submissions on the Education for Sustainable Development Strategy and the National Implementation Plan for the SDGs. It has been well received by Irish Aid and a lot of the points made in Vision 2025 are reflected in the new Irish Aid DE Strategy.” 2021 Staff Member Interview

IDEA’s advocacy work in 2020 was severely disrupted by Covid-19. It was expected to focus on three main areas, the Education for Sustainable Development National Strategy, the second National Implementation Plan for the SDGs and Irish Aid’s mid-term review of its DE Strategy. However the pandemic meant that all three of these were significantly delayed. Towards the end of 2020 there was a sudden rush of consultation work for IDEA to coordinate as the Departments of the

¹⁴ [Vision 2025 \(ideaonline.ie\)](https://www.ideaonline.ie)

new Irish Government asked for submissions to inform their new departmental strategies. IDEA made submissions to the Department of Education, Department of the Taoiseach, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Also in late 2020 Irish Aid announced that, instead of a mid-term review, it would be developing a new Strategy for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) to cover the period 2021 to 2024 and called on IDEA to coordinate a response from members to a series of questions. IDEA had to commit a lot of unplanned time to this process, consulting with sub-sector task groups, with each group preparing a written submission in addition to an overarching paper by IDEA. IDEA also took part in two of Irish Aid's Town Hall events. IDEA has welcomed numerous elements in the draft strategy including its overall goal (which is similar to that of Vision 2025), a focus on bringing DE to all parts of society, a focus on the Adult and Community Education and Youth sectors as well as the Formal sector, a focus on teacher training and research, increased funding for DE (although IDEA feels not enough), a commitment to coherence across Government Departments and the introduction of the Innovation Challenge Fund to support experimental approaches. Many of these elements were advocated for by IDEA members.

"All the work we had done on Vision 2025, supported by the Policy and Advocacy Officer, stood us in good stead to efficiently feed into the Irish Aid strategy process." – 2021 Members Focus Group

"Having a dedicated Policy and Advocacy Officer has been and will be crucial. This area is a core part of what we do and needs a dedicated person." 2021 Staff Member Interview

Discussion of the Irish Aid GCE Strategy process and Vision 2025 in one of the 2021 focus groups led to a debate about whether IDEA can and should claim to represent the DE sector or just its membership. There was consensus in the group that IDEA is there to represent its members.

"IDEA must take care not to be instrumentalised as 'the route to the sector' as this will compromise its ability to be critical of policy makers and funders." – 2021 Members Focus Group

We do not agree with any implication that IDEA does not represent the sector. IDEA is the only umbrella organisation in the Irish DE sector and the vast majority of DE actors are members. IDEA cannot be made responsible for Irish Aid's reliance on it to consult with the sector. Any criticism here is also balanced by a widespread view that IDEA has been very successful at developing and maintaining a constructive and productive relationship with Irish Aid which benefits the whole sector, as well as positive comments about other aspects of IDEA's advocacy work:

"IDEA is respected and is seen as a serious player and should be praised for its contribution to what has been a very positive time for collaboration between Irish Aid and the sector over recent years." – 2019 Members Focus Group

"Having IDEA on the Coalition 2030 steering committee in 2018 and 2019 was very important for having a Development Education voice present and advocating for informed action within the Sustainable Development Goals agenda in Ireland." – 2019 Annual Members Survey

IDEA CDP 2018-2021 Final Evaluation FINAL 02.02.2022

“IDEA provides a platform and a space for NGOs to engage in policy, advocacy and research. IDEA plays a huge role in supporting and giving NGOs a voice. This has strengthened DE within Ireland and highlighted its importance and relevance.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

While members are positive overall about IDEA’s policy and advocacy work there are four elements which have drawn some negative comments. These are 1) the breadth of engagement with Government, 2) the extent to which IDEA questions accepted frameworks for DE, 3) the force with which IDEA criticises decision-makers and 4) the extent to which IDEA reports back to members on its work in this area:

“Our engagement with other Government Departments (Department of Education and Skills, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment) has improved but it would be even better if we had more engagement with senior managers. We definitely need to do more to engage with the political parties.” – 2019 Staff & NC Focus Group

“A serious analysis of the connection between neoliberalism and poverty, inequality and injustice is long overdue in our sector. We also need to start debating ways of addressing this question including degrowth and a Green New Deal.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

“Despite high level criticism of the SDGs, this hasn’t been reflected in IDEA’s practice. IDEA has a responsibility as a national network to interrogate the SDGs and investigate whether they are a sound basis for DE. It’s difficult for individual members to do that because donors are so heavily invested in them. Opening up a dialogue to discuss whether the SDGs are fit for purpose would be welcomed.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

The suggestion that IDEA should do more to curate discussions on controversial topics such as neoliberalism and poverty or the SDGs is a minority view. IDEA has actually made space for debate among members, for instance by inviting a keynote speaker to the 2020 conference who is a leading critic of the SDGs and by having a specific Knowledge Exchange on this topic.

“Has IDEA been proactive in advocating on the issue of migrants and especially direct provision of services which has been prominent recently? Is IDEA being brave enough?” – 2019 Members Focus Group

“How can funded organisations, both IDEA and members effectively criticise policy-makers?” – 2021 Members Focus Group

“I don’t know much about this area of your work.” – 2019 Annual Members Survey

“I am not sure members know about some of IDEA’s advocacy work. We know about the reactive work such as submissions to Irish Aid but what about proactive work? – 2019 Members Focus Group

“I know very little about IDEA representing members at national and EU policy level and also the other fora mentioned [Coalition 2030, ESD Advisory Group, Irish Aid etc] - so it might be useful to update us more regularly on that.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

“It’s evident that work is happening though it’s unclear how the progress loops back down to organisations.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

IDEA CDP 2018-2021 Final Evaluation FINAL 02.02.2022

Recommendations

Consider the range of Government Departments which IDEA engages with. Seek to strike a balance between depth and breadth of engagement. (Do not engage with too many Departments such that the engagement becomes ineffective, but do seek to deepen the engagement with Departments beyond Irish Aid/DFAT, such as the Department of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.) Actively engage with political parties.

Make a conscious effort to share news on IDEA's advocacy work with members, for example through the e-Circular, website and Annual Conference. This is a gap which has been identified several times in the past and still seems to persist.

Consider the question as to whether IDEA is being proactive enough in taking critical advocacy positions and lobbying on some issues.

8. Communications, Representation and Partnerships beyond the DE Sector

Objective	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result*
2.2 - DE's contribution to global justice, global citizenship and sustainability is promoted through communications and representation with actors beyond DE	20 organisations /groups contribute to database of DE activity in Ireland	20	25	40	30	33	30	0 (but 40 underway)
	IDEA communicates about DE via the website, podcasts and e-Circular and disseminates 4 pieces of research related to DE	Website, 22 e-Circulars, 3 podcasts, 4 pieces of research	website, podcasts e-Circular and disseminates 5 pieces of research	Website, social media, 21 e-Circulars, 2 podcasts, 5 pieces of research. 4 Stories of Change Videos	website, podcasts e-Circular and disseminates 6 pieces of research	New website, social media, 24 e-Circulars, 3 podcasts, 7 pieces of research. 18 videos	website, podcasts e-Circulars and disseminates 6 pieces of research	Website, 16 e-Circulars, 15 videos and podcasts, 2 pieces of research
2.3 - Partnerships for DE with key actors outside of the DE sector created by the IDEA network	35% of members state that IDEA's work in engaging external partners is 'very effective' and a further 30% state that it is 'quite effective'	50%	38%	31%	40%	38%	45%	No data**
	3 examples provided of IDEA support enabling members to approach external Partners	50%	40%	65%	50%	62%	45%	
		3	4	4	5	3	5	2

*Note: 2021 results based on first three quarters of the year only

**No data available as this is gathered through the Annual Members Survey which at the time of writing has not yet been carried out

Throughout the Capacity Development Programme IDEA has been active in representing DE with actors beyond the sector. In 2018 IDEA represented Irish civil society and Irish development education at the UN High Level Political Forum in July. The IDEA Director addressed the High Level Political Forum intergovernmental review of SDG 12 ('Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns'), highlighting the target within goal 12 calling on all member states to implement Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development. He spoke as the representative of the UN Education and Academia Stakeholder Group, representing the global voice of education and academia at the UN.

In 2019 IDEA played a significant role in the development of Envision 4.7, the roadmap for the implementation of SDG 4.7¹⁵ in Europe. IDEA staff members, alongside officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Department of Education and Skills invited by IDEA, participated in the Envision 4.7 conference in Helsinki that drew practitioners, academics and officials from across Europe. This conference developed and agreed a roadmap for the implementation of SDG Target 4.7 across Europe. IDEA members played a pivotal role in this work and had an important influence on the final roadmap document.

IDEA has been part of the Dóchas Policy Working Group, which in 2020 successfully campaigned to increase the ODA budget. IDEA is a founder member of Coalition 2030, (an alliance of 75 civil society organisations working together to ensure Ireland keeps its promise to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both at home and abroad) and chairs its advocacy working group. There have been meetings and presentations involving the Irish Social Enterprise Network, the Bridge 47 global network, the Wheel and Deloitte Ireland as well as participation in an EC consultation process on the CSO Thematic Programme. IDEA is representing the Wheel (Ireland's national association of community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises) on the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) Advisory Committee and also sits on the Department of Education's advisory group on the National Strategy for ESD (Education for Sustainable Development). IDEA has been able to ensure that a civil society voice is central to the ESD processes and is well represented in the ESD strategy roll out, for example through the annual ESD forum and has contributed significantly to the design of the consultation process for the new ten-year ESD Strategy. IDEA has contributed a video for a Global youth work module being developed by NYCI with Maynooth University to be published in early 2022.

This type of representation work has been made more difficult by the pandemic as face-to-face meetings ceased. Also it has been harder to record examples and evidence due to all meetings being online and it being more difficult to distinguish one meeting from another when completing the monitoring tools.

“Our representation work has been more challenging due to remote working but overall we feel that we have been able to expand the space for DE, both with other CSOs, for example through Agenda 2030 and by bringing it into areas where it is not known such as with the EPA.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

There was an interesting debate in both focus groups in 2019 about IDEA's media work and the extent to which it should be IDEA's role to gain media coverage of DE issues on behalf of the sector. While several people felt that it would be a huge benefit if IDEA could obtain more coverage there was also a recognition that this is a very difficult task and that IDEA is perhaps not resourced to prioritise this:

¹⁵ By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

“We are still not in a position where our work gets national media coverage. Public awareness of DE is limited and we are not the go-to people when it comes to commenting on international development.” – 2019 Staff & NC Focus Group

“This is very hard. There are large international development NGOs with whole teams working on this and still struggling to get media coverage for DE or even for international development.” – 2019 Staff & NC Focus Group

“What even is a ‘story on DE’? Usually it will be about international development and there are numerous large NGOs whom journalists will go to. It’s tricky for IDEA. Maybe the focus could be more on social media.” – 2019 Members Focus Group

IDEA’s work on partnerships with actors beyond the DE sector has effectively been delivered through the EU-funded Bridge 47 project. While not strictly part of the Capacity Development Programme this work has been enabled by the Irish Aid Strategic Partnership funding which allows IDEA to exist and it has clearly contributed to the capacity of the sector in Ireland and beyond. Furthermore Irish Aid provided €21,000 as a contribution towards Bridge 47 and the project has led to several important partnerships in Ireland. For these reasons it is included in this report.

‘Bridge 47 – Building Global Citizenship’ has involved 14 European and global partner organisations over the last four years. The project attempted to bring together a range of people and organisations to collaborate across sectors and to mobilise and strengthen civil society worldwide to support GCE (Global Citizenship Education). It has explored the development of 36 partnerships involving GCE organisations and actors in other sectors. 21 of these resulted in practical collaborations, for example with a media partner in Estonia, the NHS in Scotland, museums in Latvia, a trade union in Denmark and an Adult Education Institute in Slovenia. IDEA has been the lead organisation on partnerships and staff feel that real progress has been made.

“Our partnerships have moved from development to activity, as best exemplified by the work with Business in the Community and Women for Election.” – 2019 Staff & NC Focus Group

In Ireland the most important outcomes of the partnership work have been collaborations with BITCNI (Business in the Community Northern Ireland), Women for Election, Deloitte Ireland and perhaps most importantly the gathering together and sharing of the learning gained across the Bridge 47 project. IDEA/Bridge 47 and BITCNI organised an event in Belfast in September 2019, bringing businesses and CSOs together to look at the SDGs, both to raise awareness and to explore ways in which the two sectors might collaborate. Over 70 people from both sectors attended, with large businesses such as Diageo, Asda and Lidl taking part as well as a number of SMEs. One of the areas of focus was to look at different types of partnership between the sectors which do not just revolve around funding.

“Lidl worked together with an NGO to explore ways of reducing waste in their stores. There was no funding involved – it was all about sharing skills and working together.” – 2019 Members Focus Group

“The Belfast event was great. It challenged my thinking – I had previously assumed businesses were not interested in the SDGs. It made me realise that they are, which was very uplifting. It would have been very hard for individual members to achieve this level of engagement but IDEA and Bridge 47 showed that it can be done. I want more of it. Perhaps we should approach other sectors as well, such as the Gardaí and the military.” – 2019 Members Focus Group

There has also been successful work with Women for Election, supporting the involvement of women in politics. Three joint workshops have taken place (two in Dublin in 2019 and one in Cork in January 2020). As a result of this work a councillor in Meath became very interested and promoted both Bridge 47 and IDEA. Also one of the councillors made a submission to Louth County Council which led to them including the SDGs in their County Development Plan. This collaboration has also given IDEA some useful contacts, especially given that one participant has since become a Minister and others have become senators and councillors.

In 2020 and 2021 IDEA ran a series of workshops for over 140 staff at Deloitte Ireland. These were delivered in conjunction with Development Perspectives. The third of these was part of Deloitte’s Climate Impact week in 2021. These workshops have successfully brought DE onto Deloitte’s radar and indeed they have requested a further workshop and a meeting to discuss other possibilities for collaboration.

IDEA has led on the sharing of learning through the ‘Purposeful Partnerships’ training delivered to 20 IDEA members in 2021 and Train the Trainer courses delivered in Ireland, Bulgaria, Estonia, and Finland in 2021 and through the publication of a wide range of reports and resources. These include an excellent over-arching report on the Bridge 47 partnerships and the learning they have produced, ‘Out of the comfort zone? GCE and Cross-Sector Partnerships for Sustainable Development’¹⁶. It considers questions such as why cross-sector partnerships are important for sustainable development, how to go about partnering with ‘unusual’ partners and presents case studies from Bridge 47. In addition to this there are three IDEA/Bridge 47 publications, ‘Stronger Together: A toolkit for partnerships in and beyond Development Education’, ‘Building Business Partnerships for Global Citizenship Education’ and a ‘Training Manual: Local Political Leadership for Sustainable Development’ as well as a range of other resources¹⁷ produced by Bridge 47 covering topics such as cross-sectoral cooperation, GCE and the Police and Knowledge Exchange partnerships. This wide array of publications makes a significant contribution to learning about partnerships for the DE sector.

The learning from Bridge 47 is crucial for strengthening the sector. Some of the key learning points are that 1) partnership building takes time and a real investment of staff time and organisational commitment, 2) DE is well suited to the initial development of partnerships, 3) following up and deepening those relationships is more challenging, 4) a willingness to enter into the uncomfortable space is essential, 5) personal contacts and relationships are key and 6) having an MoU is the best way to ensure clarity and make the partnership less dependent on individuals.

¹⁶ The publication and case studies can be found [here](#)

¹⁷ These resources can be found [here](#)

IDEA members recognise the importance of partnerships with other sectors but some question whether this should be a priority for IDEA, moving forward, given that the additional funding through Bridge 47 has now ended.

“It is very important to speak with other sectors. If conversations on the SDGs are happening in corporate settings, then IDEA should be trying to shape them if possible.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

“IDEA’s role is to represent members and Bridge 47 was an opportunity to increase this work but what is the way forward now? We must remember that we cannot do everything.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

IDEA also feels that Bridge 47 brought further benefits such as an opportunity to advocate at EU/global level and to network worldwide. Most members feel that Bridge 47 has been useful but there are some who feel they don’t know enough about it.

“Bridge 47 is a really important example of increased engagement with a widening group of stakeholders.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

“It is a hugely important part of our work to engage beyond our ‘bubble’. We need to go to people who know nothing about DE. Bridge 47 and in particular the event with BITCNI in Belfast was great. It was really valuable to bring people from different sectors together. We need it one hundred-fold. But will IDEA have the capacity to do this moving forward?” – 2021 Members Focus Group

“I would like to know more about the outcomes of Bridge 47 – can IDEA share these please.” – 2021 Members Focus Group

Recommendations

Decide what IDEA’s role and targets should be in terms of obtaining media coverage for DE. Consider how IDEA could work more closely with some key members on this. Consider how IDEA could proactively develop relationship with key journalists. Communicate the results of the thinking on these issues to members so that expectations are clear and realistic.

Consider how best to build on the Bridge 47 partnerships work, addressing issues such as:

- how to benefit from the learning gained from Bridge 47?
- ensuring that members receive feedback on the outcomes of Bridge 47 and are signposted to the learning resources
- should IDEA continue to work on partnerships, if so, how and how will this be resourced?
- should the focus be on supporting members’ partnerships?
- can the partnership with Deloitte Ireland be maintained and replicated with other corporates?
- would it be possible to reach out to other sectors, such as police, military and farmers?

9. Communication, Collaboration and Networking in the DE Sector

Objective	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result*
3.1 - IDEA supports communication, shared learning and collaboration within the DE sector	40% of AMS respondents rate IDEA's communications as 'very effective' and a further 50% rate as 'effective'	61% 27%	45% 45%	51.5% 48.5%	50% 40%	68% 32%	52% 38%	No data**
	45% rate IDEA co-ordination & strategic networking within the sector as 'very effective' & additional 45% as 'quite effective'.	41% 59%	50% 40%	51.5% 48.5%	50% 40%	79% 18%	55% 35%	No data**
	50 examples provided to demonstrate how IDEA's interventions helped to make strategic connections or increase knowledge or learning.	87	50	49	50	46	55	19

*Note: 2021 results based on first three quarters of the year only

**No data available as this is gathered through the Annual Members Survey which at the time of writing has not yet been carried out

Members feel that this is an important role for IDEA. On the communications front the effectiveness ratings were consistently high in 2018, 2019, and 2020. (There is no data yet for 2021.) In Annual Members Surveys and in focus groups there were many positive comments about communications and the sharing of learning.

"The e-Circular is great, and we've accessed a number of excellent resources through it, which we have subsequently used in our work." – 2018 Annual Members Survey

"The e-Circular provides lots of solid and informative information, that we would not otherwise be aware of." – 2019 Annual Members Survey

"The e-Circular is great, and anytime we have any questions or want to share information through the network, the IDEA staff are so quick to respond - and so warm and encouraging." – 2020 Annual Members Survey

"I really found the Knowledge Share events to be useful." – 2020 Annual Members Survey

"IDEA has fostered a sense of solidarity through their approach to the sharing of learning and resources. The sector is now very generous and IDEA has been key in this." – 2021 Members Focus Group

"This is the most beneficial area of IDEA's work. The staff are great and the quality is very high. I wonder whether it would be possible to have communications which are tailored for the various sub-sectors?" – 2021 Members Focus Group

"The website can be very difficult to navigate!" – 2020 Annual Members Survey

In response to this final comment and other feedback IDEA has developed a new website, as part of a rebranding exercise which included a new logo and brand guidelines. The website was launched in December 2020 and is much more user-friendly. Navigation is much easier and the site covers all the areas of IDEA's work plus a large collection of knowledge products and resources. It also has improved functionality which allows for the use of more audio-visual tools. There is also a Members' Area which includes member profiles, policy documents, submissions, recordings of events, working group documents and information on Irish Aid.

Members also gave IDEA strong effectiveness ratings for co-ordination and strategic networking within the sector in 2018, 2019 and particularly in 2020 during the first year of the pandemic. (Again there is no data yet for 2021.) It is clear that members find training events and showpiece events such as the Annual Conference and launches invaluable both from a knowledge-sharing point of view and as a networking opportunity.

"The Annual Conference and other events such as the launch of the Code of Good Practice are invaluable for networking and IDEA plays a very important role in this regard, especially for organisations which are not DE specialists." – 2019 Staff & NC Focus Group

"Communications are excellent and the networking opportunities at training events and the Annual Conference are amazing. IDEA even helped to facilitate our networking through training sessions in Cork." – 2019 Members Focus Group

"The 2020 Annual Conference was excellent, I made strategic connections with different people, even discussed current organisational topics [in our organisation] at the time in a breakout group." – 2020 Annual Members Survey

"IDEA's AGM and meetings are always well attended and a good opportunity to meet others. Something we would find potentially helpful would be a meeting specifically targeting smaller organisations designed to allow networking and sharing of support around organisational challenges. We consistently have struggled with logistical challenges around areas which funders won't cover, not being big enough to have finance and admin staff, etc. It would be useful to have a forum to discuss these challenges with like-minded organisations." – 2019 Annual Members Survey

IDEA acted on the suggestion made in the final comment above and also contained in the Mid-Term Review that smaller organisations should be given specific support. In 2020 IDEA made an effort to engage with smaller members, including a survey and holding meetings with smaller and specialist DE organisations to discuss their specific needs. A paper was developed with key messages for funders on the needs of small organisations and how to support them. IDEA gave written feedback to Irish Aid on the 2021 Annual Grants round including a section specifically on the challenges for smaller and specialist organisations. The information requirements for the 2022 grant applications have been eased and three-year grants have been introduced.

Members also find the sector-specific Working Groups to be a good way of networking and sharing with others:

"Bringing people together to discuss issues and share experiences through the Working Groups is a good form of networking." – 2018 Annual Members Survey

“I have been co-convening the Adult and Community Education Sector Working Group and found this a great way to network and interact with the wider sector.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

An interesting suggestion was made by one member in the 2020 Annual Members Survey on the topic of sharing and strategic coordination which goes slightly beyond the DE sector. It was echoed by a comment made by a staff member in 2021:

“I would like to see a group or engagement with strategic partners of Irish Aid as a collective in IDEA - so we share information, learning, issues, updates, etc.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

“In the area of case studies for impact perhaps IDEA and the six other strategic partners could combine to lead the way.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

In the 2019 members focus group there was a discussion on how to better share information about other members and their areas of interest as well as sharing resources:

“Could IDEA further enhance its support of knowledge and skills by creating a virtual hub to share knowledge, resources, facilitation techniques, facilitators’ details, etc?” – 2019 Members Focus Group

“It would be good to know how to contact other members easily and to know what their areas of interest are, perhaps through an online directory or even just a Slack channel.” – 2019 Members Focus Group

This issue has been addressed through the development of the IDEA website, in particular through the Knowledge Hub and Members’ Area.

Finally, there is the ‘invisible’ work which IDEA carries out, especially in this area of sector communications and networking. There have been many, many comments in Annual Members Surveys, the Anecdotal Evidence Record and the focus groups over the last four years showing the appreciation which members have for IDEA staff’s approachability, responsiveness and willingness to share and support.

“I would congratulate IDEA for its excellent service, support and communication with members and its commitment to quality assurance.” – 2020 Annual Members Survey

Recommendations

Continue with sector communications through the e-Circular, website and Slack workspaces. Continue to enable networking and knowledge sharing through the Annual Conference, launches, training events, Working Groups and the new Knowledge Shares.

Consider whether it would be possible to target communications, especially through the e-Circular, to the various sub-sectors.

Consider how to convene all of the Irish Aid strategic partners to discuss collaboration on case studies for impact, measuring results, relations with Irish Aid etc.

Continue the invaluable 'invisible work' of matchmaking, providing information, responding to requests etc. Ensure that this work is not forgotten when reporting to funders and other stakeholders.

10. Internal Capacity to Deliver Programme

Objective	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result
3.2 - IDEA has the internal capacity to deliver a strategic and effective programme as the national network for DE	IDEA Strategic Plan drafted to follow current plan 2016-2018	The Strategic Plan is in train, to be completed April 2019	NA	NA	IDEA Strategy 2019-2023 is being implemented & progress monitored by National Council.	IDEA workplan linked to Strategy used to monitor progress in implementation. Progress on Strategy monitored by NC at all 6 meetings	NA	Review of current Strategy, incl. survey of members; session at AGM for members; and sessions with staff/NC
	Further refinements to M&E system	DP Evaluation carried out review of M&E tools and developed Living RF	Implementing M&E system, with Mid-term Review	Living RF in use plus Meeting & Event tracker. MTR completed Jan 2020.	Implementing CDP based on findings of Mid-Term Review	Acting on MTR: 'small members' meeting; info sharing on website; ToR for research on Code data	Final Evaluation report on CD programme	This report. Code research completed.
	Organisational Learning System in pilot phase	OLS piloted incl. staff support & supervision meetings, team review, planning & strategy sessions.	Organisational learning system in operation	OLS in operation incl. staff support & supervision meetings, team review, planning & strategy sessions.	Organisational learning system in operation	lessons learned review informed 2020 planning; quarterly team planning & M&E reports; debrief after Conference	Organisational learning system in operation	Needs Analysis completed; 2020 review session; debrief on Conference with facilitators and full team
	Staff CPD continues	Staff CPD has continued in 2018. 5 occasions of staff CPD in 2018	Staff CPD continues	10 occasions of staff CPD listed on our tracker	Staff CPD continues	6 occasions of staff CPD listed on our tracker	Staff CPD continues	2 occasions of staff CPD listed on our tracker

There are five main areas to consider in relation to IDEA's capacity. These are 1) strategy and planning, 2) monitoring and evaluation, 3) organisational learning 4) staff CPD (continuing professional development) and 5) resources.

Strategy and Planning

The area of strategy and planning has been a mixture of successes and challenges over the course of the Capacity Development Programme. IDEA successfully developed a new strategy to cover the period 2019-2023 and used this to guide activity and monitor progress both among staff and the NC (National Council).

"The strategic planning process was very inclusive, involving a wide range of members through several different channels, such as a workshop, online consultation, internal sessions for the National Council and the option to contact IDEA directly. 25 people attended the workshop. The resulting strategy is high quality." – 2019 Staff & NC Focus Group

"The IDEA team has been working really well together as a mutually supportive unit. This has been enabled by our generally strong internal processes – team meetings, planning, internal communications." – 2019 Staff & NC Focus Group

"The National Council has been really effective. Meetings have been very focussed. We have done a lot of work on Board development, including a facilitated session in early 2019 which was hugely effective in terms of how we work, how we focus and how we communicate. I feel we have built on this over the year." – 2019 Staff & NC Focus Group

"Our existing strategy proved to be remarkably robust and we managed to stay on track despite the Covid-19 pandemic." – 2021 Staff Member Interview

"The mid-term review of our strategy this year involved a lot of work but has proven useful, feeding into our Strategic Partnership application, foregrounding some useful questions about clarity in how we articulate our 'pioneering' work and how to pursue partnerships post-Bridge 47. It will help us to align our organisational strategic objectives with those of the Strategic Partnership." – 2021 Staff Member Interview

However there have also been some weaknesses in some internal processes such as scheduling and work planning, though Covid-19 has made these more difficult.

"In 2019 our scheduling was not very good, with lots of activity in the latter part of the year, which was challenging for us and for members. We need to communicate and plan better across programme areas and look at the broader implications of any changes in schedule." – 2019 Staff & NC Focus Group

"At the start of 2020 we identified some internal procedures to improve, such as setting KPIs to use in our reporting to the Board and increasing our efforts on performance development. However this did not happen due to the extra workload caused by Covid-19. The pandemic impacted our planning but irrespective of that we can still improve our scheduling so that we don't end up so busy at the end of the year." – 2020 Staff Member Interview

"Work planning has been a challenge this year and we should learn from this experience. For example the Code of Good Practice was not even among my objectives but it has turned out to be a huge piece of work." – 2020 Staff Member Interview

Monitoring and Evaluation

IDEA has a very robust approach to M&E and wants to use it to learn and improve. IDEA commissioned a review of M&E tools and processes in 2018 which led to the creation of a Living Results Framework (LRF) which has been used to support monitoring and reporting to Irish Aid and to refinements in other M&E tools. It also commissioned a Mid-term Review of the programme, although not required to do so by Irish Aid. In addition to the RF (Results Framework) IDEA has developed a comprehensive set of M&E tools, including the Living Results Framework, the Annual Members Survey, Post-Event Surveys and Anecdotal Evidence Record and a CPD and Events Tracker. M&E is a standing item on the agenda for team meetings and a quarterly review of progress against the RF indicators is carried out and the LRF and RF are updated. There are 'post-mortem' reviews after major events. All team members contribute to these processes. IDEA has demonstrated its openness to constructive criticism and willingness to adopt useful suggestions through the way in which it implemented several of the recommendations made in the Mid-term Review.

IDEA has recognised that M&E is an important lever not only for improving its own performance but also that of members. Similarly, there is a realisation that this is an area which some members do not have sufficient capacity to develop alone and that IDEA thus has a role to play in sharing its own learning. IDEA's commitment to investing in Monitoring and Evaluation has not only helped to make its delivery of the Capacity Development Programme more effective but has also directly enhanced members' capacity through the development and sharing of tools such as the Anecdotal Evidence Record and Living Results Framework, the delivery of training on using RFs and through updating the online toolkit, 'Using Results-Based Approaches in Development Education Settings: A Practical Toolkit' and introducing impact stories on its website.

The need for this range of support has only increased in the last two years as a result of the pandemic:

“There is real evaluation fatigue – people are fed up with surveys and they often cannot remember which event was which since they are all online with no physical setting or ‘water-cooler chats’ to distinguish them and they can easily merge into one another in the memory.” – 2020 Staff Member Interview

Organisational Learning

The organisational learning system was piloted in 2018 with the introduction of staff support and supervision meetings and team review, planning and strategy sessions. However it seems to have stalled since then and instead of an organisational learning system the main activities have been reviewing and planning without any formal way to record learning.

“For the last two years our Organisational Learning System has operated at a basic level. We have carried out reviews of important events and quarterly team planning and M&E. It has been much harder to do this online and we have therefore not been able to deepen this work as we had hoped to.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

“Our Organisational Learning System has not really been a ‘system’ as such. This year it has consisted mainly of the review of our strategy and our M&E activities.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

Continuing Professional Development

The approach to CPD could be better structured with a clearer link between upcoming strategic needs and the training and development given. The number of instances of CPD, such as training courses attended, has gone up and down over the last four years with a fall-off in the last year due to Covid.

“Staff CPD and training has suffered as a result of the pandemic and time constraints. We did have a staff reading group for a couple of months where we had to read an article and then discuss it. But we did not attend much external training.” – 2020 Staff Member Interview

“Our CPD this year has been minimal due to Covid-19. What training we did do was actually coaching on how to manage in the pandemic!” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

“We are behind with staff CPD this year due to Covid-19 but expect to carry out more in the final quarter of the year. Nevertheless this is an area where we could do better and be more structured about.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

Resources

As mentioned at the beginning of this report IDEA has a small team to cover a wide range of activities. In order for this to work staff members have to put in a great deal of time and effort. It is a credit to the organisation that several members in the focus groups expressed the belief that IDEA is “well-resourced”. Increases in staffing, through the recruitment of a Policy and Advocacy Officer and through the extra funding and staffing from Bridge 47 have increased capacity for certain periods of time. However the current staffing levels are not sustainable if the current range of objectives are to be pursued and if the work on partnerships is to continue.

“Having a dedicated person in IDEA to work on this area [policy and advocacy] is hugely important and has/will increase capacity for organisations and the sector. A much needed and welcome appointment.” – 2019 Annual Members Survey

“One of our key challenges relates to our capacity and staffing levels. Our flagship projects throw up many opportunities but we do not always have the capacity to take advantage of them.” 2020 Staff Member Interview

“Our ability to support members to build external partnerships and for us to maintain the relationships created through Bridge 47 has been significantly reduced by the ending of the project and the consequent loss of staff. As a result we probably won’t hit all of our partnership targets. Partnership work could really do with a dedicated member of staff.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

“We are now thinking about how to build our team. For some time we had seven members of staff plus an intern which really increased our capacity. But with the end of Bridge 47 and the Policy and Advocacy Officer moving on we are down to four. One idea would be to have a part-time Membership Officer.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

“We have now gone through the gearing up cycle twice with EU-funded projects (Challenging the Crisis and Bridge 47) bringing extra staff and additional capacity, only for this to disappear when those projects ended. The key learning from this experience is that we need to increase our capacity on a more sustainable basis to enable us to achieve our objectives. We will be including additional posts in our next Strategic Partnership application.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

In addition to the pressures of delivering on a broad front with a small team and the challenges presented by changes in staffing levels, it is very important to remember just how difficult the last two years have been and the enormous strain which Covid-19 has placed on the organisation:

“In considering our work over the last eighteen months it is important to remember the toll on staff of remote working, with additional burdens such as limited space at home, childcare, looking after ill parents and so on, which has meant that we have been very stretched.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

“We may have some budget underspend at the end of the year. This may give the impression that there has been less activity whereas in reality staff have been working harder than ever as everything takes longer to plan online plus the challenge of the whole team working from home.” – 2021 Staff Member Interview

Over the course of the last four years IDEA has demonstrated that it has the internal capacity to deliver an effective programme. However that capacity has been severely tested. Because of this IDEA can be forgiven for a few shortcomings in some internal processes around planning, organisational learning and continuous professional development but should seek to address these moving forward. Overall, the Capacity Development Programme has been funded to the tune of €1,235,000 from 2018 to 2021 by Irish Aid. This equates to just over €300,000 per year. Given the successful achievement of so many targets and objectives and a range of important outcomes as discussed above, plus the ‘multiplier effect’ of strengthening the capacity of many other organisations, we feel that this represents excellent value for money. However, we also feel that the current level of staffing is not sustainable if IDEA is to continue delivering an effective Capacity Development Programme in the future.

Recommendations

Make scheduling a standing item on the agenda for team meetings to ensure that activity is spread more equally across the year.

Enhance planning processes to ensure a stronger connection between strategy, annual activities and individual staff members' objectives.

Adopt a more systematic and structured approach to organisational learning and continuing professional development to ensure that key learning is captured, stored and easy to access and that staff members' skills and knowledge are developed in line with personal learning plans and organisational strategic needs.

Ensure that staffing levels are commensurate with the level of activity needed to deliver such a comprehensive programme. Consider how best to resource specific areas of work such as partnerships and membership/network support.

11. Conclusions

IDEA has, broadly speaking, achieved the exacting Overall Goal of the 2018 -2021 Capacity Development Programme, namely, "A Development Education sector consisting of strong practitioners and organisations, supported by an active and responsive IDEA network that builds strategic relationships and synergies across the sector and advocates for Development Education in a wider arena." This is a major achievement.

IDEA is very good at delivering on the 'bread and butter' tasks of a membership and umbrella organisation such as training, networking and communications. It goes beyond these to drive important initiatives such as the Code of Good Practice and Vision 2025 which have a positive impact not only members but on the whole sector.

IDEA is highly valued by its members and is perceived to be very effective overall. It consistently punches above its weight in terms of delivering in so many areas with such a small team. Members are particularly appreciative of IDEA's 'invisible' work in providing support, information and quick responses. Its response to Covid-19 in terms of adapting its own work and providing leadership and support to members and the sector was excellent.

The organisation responds to feedback as exemplified through organising events outside Dublin, commissioning research on the Code of Good Practice data, re-developing the website and providing tailored support to smaller organisations.

Training on DE skills and knowledge, organisational management (especially funding) and M&E as well as networking events, both face to face and online, have been very good, especially the Annual Conferences. Communications and coordination within the sector are also very strong.

The development and implementation of the Code of Good Practice for DE has been ground-breaking. It is making a positive difference to members' DE practice, in particular carving out space and providing a mechanism for critical reflection.

There has been good support for measuring impact but more work is needed in this challenging area, for example exploring with members and Irish Aid the use of case studies and longitudinal studies of impact.

IDEA's advocacy work has influenced policy such as the introduction of multi-annual grants by Irish Aid and the new Irish Aid GCE strategy. The Vision 2025 document provides members with a shared policy position on a range of issues and is being used in various engagements with Government. Some members feel that IDEA could be stronger in its criticism and lobbying of decision-makers and there is still a need to feed back better to members on policy and advocacy work.

Work on partnerships beyond the sector has been delivered through the EU-funded Bridge 47 project leading to several partnerships in Ireland. This work was hampered by Covid-19 in the last two years and IDEA has not been able to support as many members as hoped for to develop their own cross-sector partnerships. Learning on partnerships from Bridge 47 has been gathered and disseminated through a range of resources and reports. Developing and maintaining partnerships is time-consuming and needs to be properly resourced.

IDEA's strategy withstood the test posed by the pandemic and guided the organisation successfully. There have been some weaknesses around work planning, scheduling, organisational learning and continuing professional development for staff which need to be addressed. M&E tools and processes are very strong. Staffing levels have been challenging with fluctuating numbers and capacity, putting real pressure on the team. A more sustainable approach to staffing is needed if IDEA is to continue delivering an effective Capacity Development programme.

12. APPENDIX

2019 Staff & National Council Focus Group

Frank Geary, Director, IDEA
Elaine Mahon, Capacity Development Officer, IDEA
Orla Devine, Bridge 47 coordinator (incoming Feb 2020), IDEA/Bridge 47
Ji Hyun Kim, Bridge 47 Partnerships Officer, IDEA/Bridge 47
Johnny Sheehan, The Wheel, NC Chair
Stephen Farley, Trócaire, NC member
Vikki Brennan, Proudly Made in Africa, NC member

2021 Members Focus Group One

Adrienne Boyle, Individual member
Aishling McGrath, WorldWise Global Schools
Dorothy Jacob, Self Help Africa
Ellen Corby, GOAL
Stephen McCloskey, Centre for Global Education
Aidan Clifford, Individual member
Kieran Allen, ECO UNESCO

2019 Members Focus Group

Emma Lynch, Tearfund Ireland
Tessa Cornally, EIL/Global Citizen Award
Mags Liddy, Individual member
Caroline Murphy, Children in Crossfire
Birgit O'Driscoll, An Taisce
Clare Sheppard, Eco UNESCO
Michael Doorly, Concern Worldwide

2021 Members Focus Group Two

Gertrude Cotter, Praxis Project, University College Cork
Emma Lynch, Tearfund Ireland
Sally Daly, NYCI (National Youth Council of Ireland)
Leo Gilmartin, NYCI
Dorothy Jacob, Self Help Africa
Helen Concannon, DICE
Jane O'Hanlon, Poetry Ireland
Niall Barrett, Gaisce –The President's Award
Emma Brown, Engineers Without Borders Ireland

Code of Good Practice Principles

Principle 1: KNOWLEDGE	Contribute to KNOWLEDGE in Ireland about global development
Principle 2: ROOT CAUSES	Explore the ROOT CAUSES of local and global injustices and inequalities in our interdependent world
Principle 3: DE ETHOS	Be explicit about the ETHOS OF DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION - global solidarity, empathy and partnership, and challenging unequal power relations across all issues we work on
Principle 4: CRITICAL THINKING	Encourage CRITICAL THINKING in our exploration of local and global justice issues and seeking of solutions
Principle 5: METHODOLOGIES	Use PARTICIPATORY, CREATIVE methodologies
Principle 6: RESOURCES	Produce and use QUALITY RESOURCES and MATERIALS, based on continuous learning
Principle 7: ACTION	Build SKILLS FOR INFORMED, MEANINGFUL ACTION that is COLLECTIVE in nature
Principle 8: IMAGINE AND EXPLORE	IMAGINE and EXPLORE SOLUTIONS for a better world
Principle 9: REFLECT AND LEARN	Actively and consistently REFLECT AND LEARN from our own DE practice and participants' feedback
Principle 10: DE STRATEGY	Have a clear DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION STRATEGY and ACTION PLAN and be clear how it fits into and is supported by your organisation
Principle 11: DE VALUES	Reflect the KEY VALUES of Development Education: Equality, diversity, sustainability and human rights, and responsibilities, and challenging unequal and unjust power relations across all issues we work on
Principle 12: ADVOCATE	ADVOCATE FOR QUALITY DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION for all learners in Ireland which is adequately funded and in line with Sustainable Development Goal target 4.7

Principles 1-9 relate to educational practice and Principles 10-12 relate to organisational practice