

IDEA's Capacity Development Programme 2018 - 2021

Mid-term Reflections

Alasdhair Collins
Dörte Pommerening
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CONTENTS

1. Introduction	2
2. Overall Effectiveness	2
3. Practitioners' Knowledge and Skills.....	4
4. Strengthening Quality and Measuring Impact	5
5. Organisational Management.....	7
6. Policy and Advocacy	8
7. Communications, Representation and Partnerships beyond the DE Sector	10
8. Communication, Collaboration and Networking in the DE Sector	13
9. Internal Capacity to Deliver Programme	15
10. Conclusions	16
11. APPENDIX.....	18

1. 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 Mid-term Reflections report is a high-level, light-touch review of progress against objectives in the first two years of the programme. The methodology comprised a review of IDEA’s monitoring data, two online focus groups (one with IDEA staff and National Council [NC] members and one with IDEA members)¹, a review of the Annual Members Surveys (AMS) from 2018 and 2019 and a review of selected key outputs and activities.

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 2018 and 2019. It is beyond the scope of this report to examine all indicators and targets. We have endeavoured to choose 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 reflections using the thoughts and words of IDEA members, staff and National Council.

2. Overall Effectiveness

It is important to see IDEA’s work in context. The organisation is small, with 7 members of staff (6 full-time equivalent) including two posts dedicated to the EU-funded Bridge 47 project. In addition, there was an intern from the Bridge 47 project hosted in IDEA from July 2019 to January 2020. And yet, the scope of IDEA’s work is very broad, covering a range of activities from 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. It also represents a large and disparate membership, with 74 members currently (including one associate). A recent drive to re-engage lapsed members and recruit new ones led to an increase in paid memberships of approximately 50%.

¹ See Appendix for a list of focus group participants

Members are very positive about IDEA's work, making many, many complimentary comments in the focus groups and in both Annual Members Surveys:

"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

Members were asked to rate IDEA's overall effectiveness in both the 2018 and 2019 AMS. 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 in 2018 / 2019 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%

To be getting these kinds of ratings and these kinds of comments when working across such a wide range of areas and with such a small team is testament to the fact that IDEA is very effective in its delivery of the Capacity Development Programme.

Furthermore, members highly value the 'invisible support' which they gain. They see IDEA as the 'go to' place for information and guidance in the DE sector and really appreciate the fact that IDEA staff are not only knowledgeable but also extremely approachable.

"There is very little to criticise. It is only helpful that IDEA exists. It is so valuable to get feedback on draft funding applications and support from IDEA staff, including emotional support." – Members Focus Group

3. Practitioners' Knowledge and Skills

Objective	2018		2019	
	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
	58% of participants surveyed rate the quality of interventions as 'excellent' and a further 25% as 'good'.	56% 34%	59% 28%	64% 28%
	50 examples of increased capacity in DE Knowledge & Skills as a result of IDEA interventions in this area.	70	50	51

There were very good levels of participation in IDEA knowledge and skills events in both 2018 and 2019 and participants gave very positive effectiveness ratings in post-event surveys. The majority of comments in the 2018 AMS² were positive:

"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

Similarly, discussion in both of the focus groups around this topic was very positive:

"Staff from our organisation involved in IDEA events, whether they are helping to deliver or are there as participants, always have a good experience and we always ensure that they share their learning with colleagues afterwards." – Staff & NC Focus Group

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

"The Conversation Circle which I attended, featuring Tom Roche and providing an opportunity for him to reflect on many years of experience in DE was a good example of how IDEA shares knowledge and acts as a guardian of DE history in Ireland." – Members Focus Group

There was also discussion in both focus groups of the extent to which IDEA is Dublin-centric and how this can be addressed. The desire for more events outside Dublin was expressed in the 2018 AMS and IDEA attempted to address this in 2019, putting on four events in other locations (Cork, Limerick, Donegal and Belfast), all of which were well-attended. The activity in Cork was initiated by a member organisation, reaching out to other organisations locally and then inviting IDEA to attend on two occasions as part of a 'hub meeting' of DE practitioners in the region. Staff and National Council members felt that this level of regional activity was a measured response to the need and that IDEA should continue to offer this in future. One IDEA member suggested that the model in Cork could be replicated in Galway and would be likely to be justified by the level of uptake.

"IDEA should look to include regional members via online conference calls, Skype/Zoom for Dublin based conversation groups and trainings." – 2019 Annual Members Survey

One training event drew particular comment in the members focus group, namely the two-day workshop in June 2019 on Design Thinking. This presented a different approach to programme development based on the 'design

² The 2019 AMS was a "mini" survey and some areas of IDEA's work (e.g. practitioners' skills and knowledge) were not covered.

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."

– Members Focus Group

"The Design Thinking training was a real highlight and we are bringing this approach into our own events and how we run them." – Members Focus Group

Recommendations

Continue to offer around four (non-Dublin) regional events per year and consider running regional training events with members and other organisations in Galway.

Consider making some face to face training events and conversation circles available online (i.e. in addition to existing webinars).

4. Strengthening Quality and Measuring Impact

Objective	2018		2019	
	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.
	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.
	30 members reached in impact measurement training and support	21	30	20 (incl. 10 via 1:1 support)
	60% of participants surveyed rate the quality of interventions as 'excellent' and a further 30% as 'good'	96% of participants surveyed rate the quality of interventions as 'excellent' and a further 4% as 'good'.	60% 30%	94% 6%

IDEA interventions on impact measurement were rated extremely highly by event participants in both 2018 and 2019 and members of both focus groups proactively mentioned training delivered in 2019:

IDEA CDP 2018-2021, Mid-term Reflections, Final

“The training session on Report Writing was very good. We have taken the idea of using an Anecdotal Evidence Record directly from this session and this has really enriched our report writing.” – Staff & NC Focus Group

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

In 2018 IDEA piloted the Code of Good Practice in DE and there were several positive references to this in the 2018 AMS. In 2019 an Advisory Group was set up (meeting in September, October and November) and the Code was fully developed including branding and a range of supporting documents. The launch of the Code in December was attended by 84 participants and included speakers from Irish Aid, Tearfund Ireland, De Montfort University UK and UNESCO. Training was delivered to 42 participants from the membership in December and training is ongoing in 2020. Participants in the 2019 AMS and in both focus groups were extremely positive about the quality of the Code:

“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 were very effective in coordinating this development.” – 2019 Annual Members Survey

“The Code of Good Practice is a great guide for small and medium-sized organisations that do not have the time or resources to invest in this for themselves.” – 2019 Annual Members Survey

“We will give training on the Code to DE practitioners in Cork, bringing it to a wider audience, beyond IDEA members.” – Members Focus Group

“Following the Code launch I was able to use the materials immediately in training which I was delivering to people who do not see themselves as DE practitioners.” – Staff & NC Focus Group

It is very clear that a great deal of thought and a huge amount of work has gone into developing the Code. The materials produced are comprehensive and accessible. Members and practitioners can either choose to use the materials independently or they can voluntarily sign up to the Code by completing the Commitment form. The latter then entails a process of reflecting on practice, recording evidence, self-assessing performance against indicators and developing an action plan to become more compliant with the principles of the Code. IDEA will be offering training and networking opportunities to support those who sign up, along their Code ‘journey’. Signing up to the Code is a significant undertaking and IDEA will also have to work hard to provide the necessary support.

Having reviewed the concept and the materials we believe that the Code can make a significant contribution to raising standards and focussing efforts within the sector. There was a great deal of comment and discussion in the 2019 AMS and the focus groups on how the Code already is and will continue to influence DE practice:

“The Code gives us permission to focus on one or two areas of practice each year and to see how we can improve. The encouragement to focus on one or two areas makes it more manageable and thus more likely to take place, alongside the day to day pressure of work.” – Members Focus Group

“The Code of Good Practice on Development Education has provided us a toolkit in order to reflect on our current development education programme and look at ways that we can improve our quality and standards in 2020 and beyond. We have used the toolkit to do some self-reflecting as a team, and plan to

IDEA CDP 2018-2021, Mid-term Reflections, Final

develop an action plan for 2020 in the coming weeks. The toolkit within the Code made it easier and more efficient to do this reflection.” – 2019 Annual Members Survey

“Something which came from being in the working group to develop the Code was support for Critical Reflection. This led me to record one of the sessions I run with young people and to listen back and reflect on my own interpretations and values.” – Members Focus Group

“The Code is influencing our approach to developing resources through a checklist of questions about what already exists, who the resource is for, whether we can work with others, etc. This sounds simple but it will make us more efficient and encourage us to collaborate. It will also encourage us to take a more balanced approach, taking into account a range of viewpoints, not just from the liberal left but also from the right and thinking about how they fit in with our DE work.” – Members Focus Group

Recommendations

Ensure that plans and resources are in place to gather and analyse the evidence that will come back through the Code of Good Practice Self-Assessment Workbooks completed by those who sign up. This will have the potential to demonstrate the impact that DE practitioners are having, the gaps in provision that exist across the sector and the resources that may be needed to address them. If regularly and systematically gathered and analysed this information could become a valuable source of ‘intelligence’ which could help IDEA and members shape their future work. Some thought should also be given to how to present and share this information across the sector.

5. Organisational Management

Objective	2018		2019	
	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)
	40% of participants surveyed rate the quality of interventions as ‘excellent’ and further 40% as ‘good’	50% 50%	40% 40%	80% 20%
	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

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 2019) 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 (only two) 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

“I recall events and support for the IA grant rounds, but do not recall anything to do with the other areas.”
– 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.” – Members Focus Group

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

6. Policy and Advocacy

Objective	2018		2019	
	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
	5 examples of IDEA representing members at a national and EU policy level and/or with key institutional ‘gatekeepers’	7	6	6
	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%

There have been several notable examples over the last two years where IDEA members and those who took part in focus groups feel that IDEA has played an important role through advocacy, especially in terms of influencing Irish Aid policy and practice. Firstly, there was a view that the sector needed multi-annual rather than just annual grants from Irish Aid, in addition to strategic partnership funding:

“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 specific 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.

“This year, for the first time in a while, there are multi-annual 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.” – Members Focus Group

“IDEA coordinated the submission to the Development Education unit of Irish Aid on key findings from the sector, which included feedback from our submission. This led to multi-annual funding (2 years) being rolled out in the sector as of 2020.” – 2019 Annual Members Survey

Secondly, in 2018, IDEA facilitated a process to enable members to contribute to a White Paper submission on Irish Aid’s international development strategy.

“IDEA has had a successful year in influencing the White Paper review process from a DE perspective.” – 2018 Annual Members Survey

The consultation process included an invitation to join a task group, which ten members accepted. The group developed a draft submission and this was shared with members for comment before being amended and submitted to Irish Aid.

“Meetings were very good; everyone was able to take part and all members had the opportunity to contribute to the output.” – Staff & NC Focus Group

“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.” – Staff & NC Focus Group

Everyone seems to agree that IDEA has been very successful at developing and maintaining a constructive and productive relationship with Irish Aid:

“We have enjoyed positive engagement at senior levels within Irish Aid. A senior member of staff attended the launch of the Code of Good Practice and at an Irish Aid gathering of NGO CEOs in late 2019 the Minister highlighted the Code and also IDEA’s work generally as examples of good practice in international development. I feel we have created a space where DE organisations feel more confident about speaking up. When the Irish Voluntary National Review was presented to the High-Level Political Forum for SDGs in July 2018 in New York all three spokespeople were from the DE sector.” – Staff & NC Focus Group

“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.” – Members Focus Group

There are also positive comments about other advocacy roles which IDEA has played:

“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

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

There are, nevertheless, some areas where informants to this review feel that IDEA could do more:

“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.” – Staff & NC Focus Group

“IDEA is leading a process to formulate Vision 2025 (in relation to the call for 3% of ODA to be allocated to education) which is great. After the last meeting I felt that we needed a re-think. What do we want, how would the sector use any additional funding, in terms of doing things better and doing new things? I want the sector to think bigger and be really ambitious and IDEA should lead on this.” – 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? 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?” – Members Focus Group

Recommendations

Develop a strategy and plan to target political Parties with communications and advocacy work along with improving engagement with senior managers in Government Departments (other than Irish Aid / DFAT). A strategic approach should be taken to identifying and prioritising audiences for advocacy and other communications work, which also develops the strategies which are most likely to be effective with each audience.

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

Consider the question as to whether IDEA is being proactive and/or brave enough in taking an advocacy position and lobbying on a range of issues.

7. Communications, Representation and Partnerships beyond the DE Sector

Objective	2018		2019	
	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
	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
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% 50%	38% 40%	31% 65%
	3 examples provided of IDEA support enabling members to approach external Partners	3	4	4

There was a clear sense from both focus group discussions that IDEA has made real progress in communicating with and facilitating partnerships with actors outside the DE sector, particularly through the work of the Bridge 47 project.

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

IDEA/Bridge 47 and Business in the Community Northern Ireland (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.” – Members Focus Group

“The Belfast event opened up doors to reach different stakeholders. Businesses have significant potential to address the SDGs and injustice generally. As a result, we are now in discussions with a corporate on how we might collaborate and expect to carry out a needs analysis and run some workshops together.” – Members Focus Group

“The Belfast event and the contact with the corporate sector was very exciting and energising.” – Staff & NC 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.” – Members Focus Group

“Can we build on this success by engaging with Irish farmers around climate change and new ways of farming?” – Members Focus Group

“Can we reach out further within the CSO sector. There are around 25,000 non-profit organisations in Ireland. Many of these could be potential IDEA members or partners. Can we use the SDG agenda to reach out to them?” – Staff & NC 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 is very interested and wants to promote both Bridge 47 and IDEA.” – Staff & NC Focus Group

A further example of collaboration was also mentioned in one of the focus groups:

“An example of a positive collaboration was the training on sustainable communities and the SDGs and how to bring this into practice in both DE and community development. This was opened to The Wheel and IDEA members and it has also been used subsequently in training with organisations who would not normally see themselves as part of the DE sector.” – Staff & NC Focus Group

There was an interesting debate in both focus groups 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 feel 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:

“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.” – 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.” – Staff & NC Focus Group

“How can IDEA become thought leaders, so that journalists come to us on issues relating to DE or global citizenship. Can we create partnerships with key journalists and look for hooks to send them information?” – Staff & NC Focus Group

“I actually think we need to work with members on this so that we can draw on their expertise.” – 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.” – Members Focus Group

“Can IDEA increase its social media presence to cover learning opportunities, critical reflection and better marketing of IDEA itself?” – Members Focus Group

Recommendations

Develop plans to build on the success of partnership work, such as that with Business in the Community Northern Ireland, to reach out to other sectors, such as police, military and farmers.

Consider whether IDEA could reach out more widely to other CSOs and non-profit organisations beyond the DE sector.

Decide what IDEA’s role and realistic aspirations should be in terms of obtaining media coverage for DE. Consider the extent to which IDEA should work more closely with some key members on this. Consider the extent to which IDEA should proactively develop relationship with key journalists. Consider also whether there is scope to enhance IDEA’s presence on social media. Communicate the results of the thinking on these issues with members so that expectations are realistic.

Take all three recommendations above into account in considering how IDEA can reach wider audiences and make them more aware of DE messages and the work of IDEA and the sector generally. A broader strategy and plan, encompassing all of these points, could be developed to tackle the issue of building awareness with wider audiences.

8. Communication, Collaboration and Networking in the DE Sector

Objective	2018		2019	
	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%
	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 examples provided to demonstrate how IDEA's interventions helped to make strategic connections or increase knowledge or learning.	87	50	49

IDEA received good effectiveness ratings for communications and strategic networking within the sector in the 2018 AMS and very good ratings for both in the 2019 AMS. These ratings were echoed by many positive comments in both AMS and focus groups, with particular reference to the Annual Conference and to the e-Circular:

"The Annual Conference is very good. It gives us a chance to hear from a wide range of organisations and is a very good networking opportunity." – Staff & NC Focus Group

"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." – Staff & NC Focus Group

"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

"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." – Members Focus Group

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

"Networking with other practitioners at IDEA events is very useful. Members share all sorts of information very generously. IDEA provides a space for this." – Members Focus Group

"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 very useful. We often find events and resources that are useful and it is very good that it comes out on a regular basis. The IDEA website is also kept well up to date." – Members Focus Group

"IDEA is part of the development.ie consortium and always contributes positively. This is an example of IDEA collaborating with others in the sector but is not something that most members would be aware of." – Members Focus Group

IDEA CDP 2018-2021, Mid-term Reflections, Final

In the 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?” – 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.” – Members Focus Group

“The e-Circular is great but could it be used to highlight members’ work more, so that we know who is doing what, and what skills and interests they have. There used to be a highlight on a particular member in the e-Circular – could this be brought back?” – Members Focus Group

It is our understanding that there are plans to address this issue through the development of the IDEA website in 2020 to showcase information about members and the sector.

Recommendations

Consider running a networking event aimed specifically at smaller organisations to allow exchange of views on issues affecting them.

During the development of the IDEA website take into account the above comments from members about sharing information on what members do and possibly also resources. Consider whether the e-Circular could be used to highlight members work and areas of interest.

9. Internal Capacity to Deliver Programme

Objective	2018		2019	
	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
	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 Evaluation report	Living RF in use plus Meeting & Event tracker. MTR (this report) planned for Jan 2020.
	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.
	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

The very fact that IDEA has commissioned this Mid-term Reflections report, although not required to do so by Irish Aid, is indicative of an organisation that takes its own performance seriously and that wants to learn and improve. IDEA also asked DP Evaluation to carry out a review of its Monitoring and Evaluation tools and processes in early 2018 which led to the creation of a Living Results Framework which has been used to support monitoring and reporting to Irish Aid and to refinements in other M&E tools.

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.

A number of aspects of IDEA's internal capacity were discussed in positive terms in the Staff & NC Focus Group:

"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." – Staff & NC Focus Group

"The 2019 Annual Conference was really good. It showcased the sector and the IDEA team working really well together as a mutually supportive unit. This has been enabled by our generally strong internal processes – team meetings, planning, internal communications." – Staff & NC Focus Group

"IDEA has been very good at recruiting excellent staff, even to cover maternity leave." – 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.”
– Staff & NC Focus Group

There was also some self-critical reflection on the details of internal planning:

“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.” – Staff & NC Focus Group

When we asked how the IDEA Strategy is implemented, we were given the following clarification:

“The Strategy is being integrated into IDEA’s work through team meetings, team strategy and planning work, review and reporting of IDEA’s activity. IDEA staff report to all National Council meetings on our achievement of the Strategic Goals. The Strategy is used as reference for decision making and planning with regard to IDEA activities and collaborations.” – IDEA management response

We have reflected on this and while it is clear that IDEA is doing a good job of delivering on strategic goals overall, we wonder whether there might be room for an annual action plan which translates the goals into a series of specific actions for staff over the coming year.

Recommendations

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

Consider the development of an annual (high level) action plan to be used in identifying and monitoring key actions by staff members to implement the strategic goals for that year.

10. Conclusions

The Overall Goal of the 2018-2021 Capacity Development Programme 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.” The primary finding of this Mid-term Reflections report is that IDEA has delivered the CD effectively in the first two years and is broadly on track to achieve all elements of this overall goal. Most indicator targets have been met or exceeded and those which have not have only been missed by a small margin. There are no areas of serious concern.

It is clear that IDEA does the ‘bread and butter’ work of an umbrella organisation extremely well, such as supporting practitioners’ skills and knowledge through a range of interventions, communicating and supporting networking within the sector and representing the sector to key audiences, such as Irish Aid and the CSO sector more widely. Members value IDEA very highly. There are numerous expressions of support and gratitude in both the 2018 and 2019 AMS, of which the following is typical:

“I just want to thank you for your professional and inspirational support and your patience in coordinating us!” – 2019 Annual Members Survey

A number of pieces of work stand out as key achievements, in particular the Code of Good Practice, partnerships work and the relationship with Irish Aid.

The Code of Good Practice is comprehensive and high quality. It has been welcomed by members and promises to make a significant contribution to the sector’s capacity to deliver high quality DE. This is exactly the sort of thing which IDEA should be doing, and for which it is uniquely well-placed – nobody else would have the time, resources, opportunity and standing to carry this out.

Members have also identified IDEA’s work on partnerships as being potentially game-changing and again as something which individual organisations would be unlikely to accomplish. This is especially true of the cross-sector initiative with Business in the Community Northern Ireland.

It is essential that there is a constructive relationship with Irish Aid as the principal funder and most significant policy-maker in the sector. Again, IDEA is ideally placed to facilitate this relationship and it continues to do a good job of combining communication and representation with influencing policy and practice.

The various recommendations made in this report should be seen in the context of ‘keep on doing what you are doing as the majority of it is very good’. Many of the recommendations relate to items which would be ‘nice to have’ rather than essential improvements.

Two areas emerged as being particularly worthy of further development. The first is how to create an online directory of members, including their skills and areas of interest and, if possible, to combine this with a way of sharing resources and key information. The planned development of the IDEA website would seem to be the most obvious way to address this.

The second area is probably the ‘one big thing’ to pay special attention to over the rest of the programme, namely the work on partnerships. IDEA can build on the success of the collaboration with Business in the Community Northern Ireland to further enhance engagement with the corporate sector. In addition, efforts should be made to replicate this approach with other sectors such as the police, military, farmers and political Parties.

11. APPENDIX

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

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