

Evaluation of the Wider Role Funding Programme

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by

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A report to Communities Scotland

March 2008

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Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to acknowledge the valuable guidance provided by the *Evaluation Steering Group*:

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We are also grateful to all of those people that have contributed invaluable information and views as part of the study.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Scottish Executive has encouraged Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to think as broadly as possible about how they can help to regenerate their local communities.

This 'wider role' for RSLs relates to:

"...activity that RSLs are involved in that goes beyond the provision, improvement and management of housing with the aim of improving the economic, social and environmental circumstances of the communities within which RSLs operate."

To support this, a Wider Role policy was launched in 2000 by Scottish Homes. Ministers subsequently decided to make wider role an RSL exclusive programme and as such a refreshed strategy and a modified programme were later introduced in 2003 by Communities Scotland. The current programme runs up to March 31st 2008.

Wider Role in Context

Since its relaunch in 2003 the Wider Role Fund has operated within an increasingly cluttered policy and funding landscape.

A number of policy statements now position RSLs as:

- providers of quality affordable housing;
- deliverers of regeneration activity; and
- social enterprises in their own right.

While this suggests that Wider Role activities have policy legitimacy, the challenge has been to find a clear niche for the Fund within this complex policy landscape.

In this respect this study highlights the Social Enterprise Strategy for Scotland as an important backdrop against which to deliver any continuing Wider Role Programme.

Involvement in Wider Role

The study highlights steady growth in RSL involvement in wider role activity. Annual RSL statistical returns to Communities Scotland indicate a growing participation, with almost two-thirds of RSLs now involved. This includes activity supported by the Wider Role Fund and from other funding sources. The engagement of RSLs in wider role activity is driven by a number of factors, with active encouragement and the availability of funding from Communities Scotland being just one influence. The majority of RSLs have reported a strong commitment to undertaking regeneration work, and most use Wider Role Fund to help support these activities.

RSLs have delivered a broad range of regeneration activity and many have made effective links into local regeneration structures, priorities, and funds. However there are further opportunities for RSLs to increase participation in these areas.

Wider Role Activity and Outcomes

The findings suggest that the Wider Role Fund has provided a significant level of investment in new RSL-led regeneration activity.

The Programme has committed £30.8m of Wider Role funding in the three years since April 2003, which has supported 655 new projects. These projects have spanned an array of regeneration activities.

Wider Role funding has helped to attract a further £87.3m in public and private sector funding contributions. It has proven particularly important in unlocking other sources of public grant funding for regeneration activity.

The majority of Wider Role investment has been made largely in areas of socio-economic need, principally located in Glasgow and the West of Scotland. The focus of investment to date has been in delivering locally generated projects and activities in what has been a very “bottom up” approach.

The process of delivering agreed activities has proved challenging for many RSLs. But as experience has been gained, the difficulties have eased. Now many RSLs have considerable experience in tackling complex projects.

The evidence available suggests that the activity supported has brought about wide-ranging benefits for RSLs, their partner organisations, and the communities they serve.

Moreover we have found that the availability of Wider Role funding has been instrumental in making projects happen.

Overall, the study confirms that the Fund is contributing to the national *Closing the Opportunity Gap* priorities.

Programme Implementation

The Wider Role Funding Programme is managed by Communities Scotland. At a national level, policy and programme management responsibility rests with the Social Economy Unit and the programme is delivered locally through the Area Office Network.

A review of Programme implementation conducted as part of this evaluation has indicated that the management and administration of the Wider Role Fund is generally effective.

However, the study suggests two key areas where existing arrangements should be reviewed:

- the consistency of grant application and project appraisal processes – this is key to the effective delivery of any national programme; and
- the establishment of a robust national monitoring and evaluation framework for Wider Role.

Continuing RSL Needs and Aspirations

Based on survey feedback gathered from the RSLs, the study finds that ‘wider role’ is now becoming part of the mainstream business of many RSLs.

The responses to the survey also suggest that, not only will those RSLs who already deliver wider role activities continue to do so, but that in most cases the level of activity is likely to increase.

Also, a number of RSLs who had not recently been assisted now intend to become involved in wider role (or will deepen their involvement in it) and will be seeking support from the Wider Role Fund.

Finally, the report emphasises that more money for wider role is not the only requirement of RSLs. A number of areas have been identified where Communities Scotland might seek to provide access to additional support/advice.

Study Conclusions

Overall, the evaluation concludes that the Wider Role Funding Programme has achieved much since its relaunch in 2003 and continues to make a strong and important policy contribution.

The report highlights a number of important issues in relation to:

- Communities Scotland communicating clear policy messages and priorities;

- achieving a targeted impact by the RSL sector;
- strengthening the connection with local regeneration plans;
- strengthening and sustaining wider role activities and outcomes;
- harnessing the collective expertise and capacity within the sector; and
- strengthening project monitoring and evaluation.

Given the progress made over recent years the study also suggests a potential shift in emphasis from pump-priming RSL involvement in regeneration to consolidating and deepening this involvement. Moreover, it highlights the need to establish a sharper focus for the Programme and to express its policy contribution more clearly within the context of national policies for social enterprise and regeneration.

The Way Forward

The Wider Role Fund, as currently constituted, will continue until 31st March 2008.

In looking forward, the evaluation suggests that the rationale for special policy attention on the RSL sector remains valid.

However, reflecting its changed operating environment, and in light of experience to date, the report suggests that the Fund (in its current form) is not entirely fit-for purpose.

But on the basis of the research findings presented, and the views provided during the course of the study, there is strong evidence and support to justify the continuation of the Wider Role Fund.

1. Introduction

1.1 Study Background

The Scottish Executive, through Communities Scotland, has encouraged all Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to think as broadly as possible about how they can help to regenerate their local communities. This 'wider role' for RSLs includes:

"...activity that RSLs are involved in that goes beyond the provision, improvement and management of housing with the aim of improving the economic, social and environmental circumstances of the communities within which RSLs operate."

To support this RSL-led regeneration activity, the Wider Role funding programme was launched in 2000 by Scottish Homes. A refreshed policy statement and reformed programme was later introduced in 2003 by Communities Scotland. The current programme runs until March 31st 2008.

The programme seeks to generate wider regeneration activity, securing benefits across a broad range of factors such as health, education, employment, transport and environmental sustainability.

In order to better understand the effectiveness and impact of Wider Role, EKOS was commissioned by Communities Scotland to carry out an independent evaluation of the programme. This report presents the findings of the evaluation study.

1.2 Study Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of this study was to carry out an independent review of the Wider Role funding programme. To achieve this aim, the following main objectives were set:

- to identify what has been achieved by Wider Role since 2003;
- to establish how Wider Role fits within the current policy landscape;
- to highlight the lessons that can be learned from Wider Role;
- to assess the value of Wider Role funding being exclusively available to RSLs; and
- to identify options for future Scottish Executive support for RSL-led regeneration activities.

1.3 Study Method

The evaluation fieldwork was carried out between July and October 2006 and included a number of main elements.

1.3.1 Desk-based Research

An initial review was undertaken of the current strategy for Wider Role and all associated data and documentation. The research included a review of:

- relevant contextual documentation – to position the programme within wider housing, regeneration, and social economy policy;
- programme documentation – to develop a detailed understanding of the mechanics of the programme and its management; and
- project approval and expenditure data – to establish the scope, scale, and cost of activity brought forward under the funding programme.

1.3.2 Stakeholder Consultations

Following this initial review, the evaluation team provided key stakeholders with the opportunity to reflect on and share their experiences of the Programme. This included:

- one-to-one interviews with all seven Communities Scotland Community Regeneration Managers and the two managers within the Social Economy Unit responsible for Wider Role at a national level;
- one-to-one interviews with 15 strategic-level stakeholders (e.g. key policy makers, agency partners, and intermediary bodies);

- one-to-one interviews with representatives from 20 Community Planning Partnerships from across Scotland; and
- a participatory workshop involving 17 staff from the Communities Scotland area-based Community Regeneration Teams.

1.3.3 RSL Surveys

In order to enable all RSLs in Scotland to provide feedback on wider role activity generally, and the Wider Role Fund in particular, two parallel self-completion postal surveys were carried out.

The target audience for the surveys were:

- RSLs that had accessed Wider Role grant funding since 2003 ('assisted' RSLs) – the survey was administered to a population of 133 RSLs and yielded 80 responses (a response rate of 60%); and
- RSLs that had either not applied or not been successful in accessing Wider Role funding since 2003 ('non-assisted' RSLs) – the survey was administered to a population of 85 organisations and yielded 21 responses (a response rate of 25%).

In addition, all grant recipients (RSLs and partner organisations) were asked to complete a short evaluation form relating to each of the 655 projects assisted by the Fund. Evaluation forms were returned in 393 cases, which represents a high response rate of 59%.

1.3.4 Project Case Studies

The experiences of a number of assisted projects were examined in more depth. The case study research was based on a review of available project documentation and one-to-one interviews with representatives from participating RSLs and project partners.

A sample of 11 case studies was selected to represent a cross-section of activity by location, scale, and thematic focus. The case studies are presented in Appendix 4.

1.3.5 RSL Workshops

In addition, a set of workshops was held to gather the views of RSLs on the perceived performance of the funding programme and to identify any opportunities to strengthen this.

Using a tailored participatory evaluation tool, the evaluation team facilitated a total of eight workshops. The workshops were held in each Communities Scotland area, and involved 58 individuals: Aberdeen (4 people); Dundee (4 people); Edinburgh (5 people); Glasgow (2 workshops, 14 people); Hamilton (6 people); Paisley (10 people); and Portree (15 people).

A summary of workshop feedback is provided in Appendix 2.

1.4 Structure of the Report

The remainder of this document is structured as follows:

- Section 2 describes the background to Wider Role, discusses its main objectives, and sets it within its wider policy/funding context;
- Section 3 discusses the scope and scale of RSL involvement in wider role activity generally, and the arrangements to support this;
- Section 4 provides an analysis of the funding committed through the programme, the project activity resulting, and its outcomes;
- Section 5 reviews the arrangements in place to manage and administer the Wider Role funding programme;
- Section 6 discusses the continuing and future needs identified by RSLs in relation to Wider Role funding and support; and
- Section 7 draws together the main findings of the evaluation study and discusses the implications and future options arising from these.

In addition, the document contains the following appendices:

- Appendix 1 lists those individuals and organisations that contributed their views as part of the evaluation study;
-
- Appendix 2 provides feedback from the set of evaluation workshops conducted;
-
- Appendix 3 provides an overview of a number of main options to inform the future direction of the Wider Role Fund; and
-
- Appendix 4 provides written case studies of the 11 projects examined in detail during the evaluation.

2. Wider Role in context

2.1 Introduction

This Section examines the origins of, and influences on, the Wider Role Programme. It begins by examining the background, rationale, and priorities for the Wider Role Fund, before turning to the evolving policy influences in Scotland and elsewhere.

2.2 Background and Origins

The genesis of Wider Role was based on recognition that (in addition to their role as landlords) RSLs have always played an important part in regenerating communities and in tackling social exclusion in Scotland.

While the provision of quality affordable housing was regarded as an essential part of building strong, safe communities, it was also recognised that there was a much wider range of community needs that that could have a major impact on the quality of life experienced by local residents.

To address these issues, Wider Role was first launched as a programme in its own right in 2000 by Scottish Homes. The first policy statement on Wider Role¹ signalled a commitment to raise awareness of the role of RSLs in community regeneration, and established a dedicated fund for this.

Following its establishment, the newly formed Communities Scotland carried out an internal review of the Wider Role programme in 2002.

2.3 The 2003 Policy Statement

In order to clarify the policy and regulatory context for wider role activity, a revised **Wider Role Policy Statement**² was introduced in September 2003. This reaffirmed the commitment of Communities Scotland to support RSLs to play a full role in community regeneration.

The Statement acknowledged RSLs as being well placed to make a strong contribution to community regeneration by virtue of their financial strength and stability, strong connections with local communities, professional expertise and organisational capacity, and track record of delivery.

Whilst recognising that RSLs could not be responsible for tackling all the problems that their local communities may face, they were encouraged to consider how they could best use their skills, experience and resources how they might work to improve the quality of life locally.

The revised Policy Statement aligned Wider Role to the Executive's priorities for regenerating communities: tackling poverty; building strong, safe communities; and helping to support people back into work.

This provided a broad mandate for RSLs and partners to design and test an array of regeneration activity within their communities.

2.4 Emerging Policy Influences

Since the revised Policy Statement was issued in September 2003, there have been a number of strategic policy developments at national level that now influence and inform the Wider Role funding programme.

¹ Scottish Homes, *A Wider Role for Registered Social Landlords*, Scottish Homes Policy Statement, July 2000

² Communities Scotland, *Regenerating Communities: The Role of Registered Social Landlords*, September 2003

2.4.1 Linking Housing and Regeneration

The Wider Role Fund was established to strengthen and support the role of social housing providers in regenerating their communities. As such the Fund must be set within the context of Scottish housing policy.

The most recent *Housing Policy Statement for Scotland*³ seeks to transform housing in Scotland, while building strong sustainable communities and ensuring that an affordable home is within everyone's reach. It recognises that investment in the quantity and quality of housing is not, on its own, enough to create better communities.

The Housing Statement signals an ongoing commitment to ensure that housing investment is linked to strategic regeneration priorities, via the targeted management of the *Housing Investment Programme* by Communities Scotland.

Recent policy has facilitated the transfer of housing into community ownership and of associated regeneration activity⁴. For example, in Glasgow this included a commitment to fund regeneration activity linked to housing stock transfer, which provides an additional resource to the Wider Role Fund.

The role of RSLs in regeneration, neighbourhood management and anti-social behaviour has also been enshrined within housing legislation. An amendment to the Housing (Scotland) Bill 2005, clarified Wider Role as a legally permissible purpose for RSLs⁵.

2.4.2 Regenerating Communities

The 2003 Wider Role Policy Statement put forward RSLs as key partners in regenerating their communities, and set out an expectation that wider role activity would be consistent with, and supportive of, local regeneration policies and plans.

Since then the Scottish Executive has committed itself to *Closing the Opportunity Gap* (CtOG), through six key objectives launched in July 2004. These objectives are to:

1. increase the chances of sustained employment for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups;
2. improve the confidence and skills of the most disadvantaged children and young people;
3. reduce the vulnerability of low income families to financial exclusion and multiple debts;
4. regenerate the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods;
5. increase the rate of improvement of the health status of people living in the most deprived communities; and
6. improve access to high quality services for the most disadvantaged groups and individuals in rural communities.

The Wider Role Fund was established with a broad remit to enable RSLs to contribute to these priorities in communities across Scotland, both urban and rural.

Although not strictly geographically targeted in the manner of programmes like Community Regeneration Funding or Social Inclusion Partnership Funding, the Wider Role Fund has, in the main, been used to undertake activity in some of Scotland's most deprived communities.

The fit with, and contribution to, *Community Planning* priorities and delivery arrangements across Scotland is also an increasingly significant influence. Where RSLs are regenerating the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the alignment of these activities with *Regeneration Outcome Agreements* (ROAs) is also important.

A continued commitment to regeneration has been reiterated in the Executive's *Regeneration Statement*⁶. This document identifies a range of spatial and high level priorities around creating mixed communities and growing vibrant communities.

³ Scottish Executive, *Homes for Scotland's People: A Housing Policy Statement*, March 2005

⁴ Scottish Executive, *Community Ownership Review: Report of the Expert Group*, February 2004

⁵ Housing (Scotland) Act 2005, section 155AB paragraph (b)

⁶ Scottish Executive, *People and Place: Regeneration Policy Statement*, February 2006

2.4.3 Developing the Social Economy

The 2003 Wider Role policy statement set out the role for RSLs in working with voluntary sector partners to deliver regeneration activity.

Since the introduction of the 2003 Policy Statement, the role and significance of the social economy has steadily risen up the political agenda. This now forms a direct link for the Wider Role Programme into Scottish Executive policy priorities.

Following on from an earlier *Review of the Social Economy*⁷, the Scottish Executive established the Futurebuilders Scotland funding programme to extend and strengthen the role of the social economy sector in delivering better public services.

This introduced an £18m package of investment, training and support that has been open to social economy organisations (including RSLs). The outline document for *Futurebuilders Scotland*⁸ explicitly commented on the role of the RSL sector, acknowledging that:

“there are key roles for Communities Scotland in encouraging Registered Social Landlords to carry out a wide range of activities in support of the social economy beyond their housing function”.

More recently, the *Social Enterprise Strategy*⁹ confirms social enterprises as a distinct business model and sets out five main objectives for the development of the sector:

- increasing the use of the social enterprise business model;
- opening up markets to social enterprise;
- developing social enterprises as businesses by increasing the range of finance available;
- developing the trading capacity of social enterprises by better business support; and
- raising the profile and demonstrating the value of social enterprise.

The Social Enterprise Strategy identifies RSLs as important social enterprises and recognises the large amount of social enterprise activity developed throughout Scotland as a result of Wider Role Fund investment. As such the strategy now provides the key influence on any future form of Wider Role activity.

2.4.4 Other Policy Drivers

In addition to the specific and related policy framework, it is important to recognise that Wider Role does not exist in a vacuum and will be influenced by wider policy intentions.

While a detailed review is outside the scope of this report, some of the key policy developments that should be considered for any future programme would include:

- Efficient Government;
- Modernising Government;
- Public Sector Procurement;
- Evidence based policy-making; and
- Changes to European Regional Policy.

Details on how these may impact on any future programme should be built into any revised framework developed by Communities Scotland.

2.4.5 Key Messages

The Wider Role Fund was introduced in 2000 to pump-prime the role of RSLs in regenerating their communities. Since 2003 particularly, the Wider Role Fund has operated in an increasingly cluttered policy and funding landscape.

⁷ Scottish Executive, *Review of the Scottish Executive's Priorities to Promote the Social Economy*, January 2003

⁸ Scottish Executive, *Futurebuilders Scotland: Investing in the Social Economy*, September 2004

⁹ Communities Scotland, *Better Business: A Strategy and Action Plan for Social Enterprise in Scotland*, March 2007

The interrelated policy statements now potentially position RSLs as: providers of affordable and quality social housing; partners and deliverers of regeneration activity; and social enterprises in their own right.

It is clear that Wider Role activities continue to have a policy legitimacy and strategic fit. As the Wider Role policy statement is now three and a half years old it is unsurprising that it does not reflect the current, more complicated policy landscape.

With the publication of the Executive's Social Enterprise Strategy, Wider Role has the potential to take on a sharper focus and to make a clearer policy contribution. However, within this context it will be important to:

- clarify the rationale for continuing to drive wider role activities through RSLs as opposed to other social economy or regeneration organisations; and
- re-establish focus and priorities for Wider Role funding, to ensure that it complements and is additional to other policy interventions.

These policy discussions are considered in more detail later in the report.

3. RSL involvement in Wider Role

3.1 Introduction

This Section discusses the scope and scale of RSL involvement in wider role activity – this includes all activity that goes beyond the core housing work of RSLs and is not limited to project activity supported through the Wider Role Fund.

In particular the Section examines: the growing involvement of RSLs in wider role; the depth of involvement and factors influencing involvement; the connections to wider regeneration activities; the arrangements in place for funding and delivering wider role; and the support available to RSLs undertaking wider role activity.

The findings presented draw on an analysis of: RSL Annual Performance Statistical Returns; interviews with Community Planning Partnership (CPP) representatives; interviews with Communities Scotland staff; and survey responses from RSLs (both assisted and non-assisted).

3.2 Scope of RSL involvement in Wider Role

We start off first by examining the scale, scope and motivation for involvement in wider role activity.

3.2.1 The Social Housing Sector in Scotland

The social housing sector in Scotland is now substantial in scale. The most recent statistics available for the sector indicate that:

- there are now over 200 RSLs operating in Scotland;
- over 2,100 volunteer committee members govern RSLs;
- collectively the sector owns nearly 258,000 houses;
- 2% of RSLs own 38% of the stock, with 43% of RSLs owning 500 houses or fewer; and
- more than half of RSLs now have charitable status.

While suggesting that the RSL sector offers a significant financial and physical presence in Scotland's communities, these headline statistics fail to reveal the significant diversity that exists within the RSL sector, in size, type and location. Although similarly registered and regulated, it is clear that the organisational capacity and ability of individual RSLs to carry out wider role activity will vary greatly.

3.2.2 The level of Involvement in Wider Role

The annual statistical data for the RSL sector also demonstrates a pattern of steadily increasing involvement in wider role activity (not necessarily supported solely by the Wider Role Fund).

The figures presented in Table 3.1 provide the most recent estimate of 123 RSLs involved in wider role activity of some kind (almost two-thirds of all RSLs). This indicates growing involvement in wider role, even before the introduction of the 2003 Wider Role Policy Statement.

Table 3.1: RSL Involvement in Wider Role Activity 2000-05

Year	Number of RSLs Reporting Involvement in Wider Role
2001/02	88
2002/03	105
2003/04	113
2004/05	123

Source: Communities Scotland, Annual Performance and Statistical Returns

3.2.3 Factors Determining Involvement

The national data suggests that size and location are important factors. The RSLs most active in wider role activity are larger organisations operating in older urban areas. The group that has been the least likely to be involved are small rural RSLs (albeit it should be noted that the Wider Role Fund budget is relatively small for rural Scotland). This has been a consistent picture over the last few years.

Examining the experience of those RSLs assisted specifically by the Wider Role Fund, survey responses indicate that a number of main factors have been driving RSL involvement. The main motivations noted are:

- identifying an unmet demand;
- thought they were uniquely placed;
- committee/tenants encouraged involvement; and
- encouraged by Communities Scotland.

Interestingly, the availability of a specific funding programme was only reported as a factor by 20% of respondents, suggesting that money is not by any means the main determinant of participation in wider role activity.

3.3 The Strength of Involvement in Wider Role

Moving on, we now turn to the strength and depth of RSL involvement in, and commitment to, wider role activity (both funded by Communities Scotland and from other sources).

3.3.1 RSL Commitment to Wider Role

For nearly 60% of RSLs assisted by the Wider Role Fund, involvement in wider role activity is reported as strong as opposed to only 8% who report only marginal involvement.

For many RSLs, wider role has represented a growing activity in financial terms. Over the last three years 43% of assisted RSLs have allocated a greater proportion of income to wider role activities, with only 8% reporting a decline.

The main reasons cited by RSLs for increased activities were:

- greater/better promotion of wider role;
- more/more appropriate RSL internal resources available;
- RSL now at stage where able to focus on non-core business; and
- more project ideas.

Conversely, it was a lack of internal funding/resources that was the main reason for less intervention. Despite the increase in the proportion of income being allocated to Wider Role, it remains in financial terms a marginal activity. The assisted RSLs reported that on average 2.7% of income is devoted to Wider Role. There are variations, nonetheless, with four respondents reporting more than 10% (and in one case 24%) of income devoted to these activities.

Of those RSLs responding, over 74% have used housing revenues and 46% have used financial reserves to fund wider role activities. However, this does not imply that the scale of internal resources deployed has been substantial in all cases.

For those who chose not to invest internal resources, the main reasons given were that:

- own funds used only for housing projects;
- only invest time in projects and not capital/revenue funding (although this investment of time might have been substantial); and
- there was no need to use their own funds, as funding was available from elsewhere.

3.3.2 Wider Role Activities Undertaken

The wider role activities delivered by RSLs are wide-ranging. The top five activities reported, in order of occurrence, are:

- employment and training schemes;
- youth services and initiatives;
- community facilities;
- community arts, culture and recreation; and
- money, debt and welfare advice.

Importantly, such activities can be seen as directly supporting the overarching strategic objectives of the Wider Role programme.

Interestingly, those RSLs that were not supported by the Wider Role Fund report a broadly similar range of projects focused on: employability; youth projects; and social and cultural activity.

3.4 Delivering Wider Role Activity

We now examine a range of issues around the funding and capacity of the RSLs to deliver wider role activities.

3.4.1 Access to Funding

In addition to the funding provided through the Wider Role programme, the RSLs and partners have accessed a range of funding from over 15 other categories of grant funding.

Other sources of funding reported were: Local Authorities (49%); SIP/CRF Funding (41%); Grant-making trusts (41%); and European funding (36%). In some cases projects may have received funding from some or all of these sources.

With success in securing funding from such a wide range of sources (often with the support of project partners), a key issue will be the level to which this fund-raising experience and good practice is transferred to and shared among RSLs.

Capital projects show a significantly lower level of wider role grant requirement than revenue projects. However, this is a common occurrence in relation to all types of revenue funded activities and not exclusive to wider role projects.

However, while the breadth of funding sources suggest that some RSLs are adept at seeking out and securing other funding, this has to be balanced with the fact that, in 76% of cases, the Wider Role Fund is still reported to be the main source of support for RSL-led regeneration activities.

Where Wider Role is not the principal funder often high levels of additional funding have been secured by RSLs or their partners as part of large (capital) projects. It should be borne in mind that RSLs may be small but pivotal funding partners in large wider role projects.

For non-assisted RSLs (albeit a small sample of them), less than 5% of respondents believe their RSL is highly familiar with the Wider Role Fund, with 15% reporting they are not at all familiar.

3.4.2 Delivery Arrangements

RSLs utilise a range of methods to deliver their wider role activities including:

- direct delivery (78%);
- supporting other organisations (71%);
- contracting with other organisations (62%); and
- through an arms length organisation (34%).

The most common method used by RSLs is direct delivery and the least common is using an arms length organisation. Non-assisted RSLs are much less involved in direct delivery (43%) and more inclined to sub-contract or partner with other organisations (44%).

In many cases the RSL takes the lead. In 41% of cases, RSLs have reported that they usually lead in delivering wider role activities, although for most this tends to depend on the individual circumstances (the key factor being the availability of a better placed organisation with the expertise to deliver a project or activity).

For example, in one of the Drumchapel case study projects examined, Drumchapel Opportunities (an experienced provider of employment and training services) has taken the lead in delivering a construction skills training programme for young people. In other case studies relating to new-build community facilities, for example, the RSLs have themselves taken the lead in managing these capital projects.

3.4.3 RSL Wider Role Capacity

Over 75% of assisted RSLs report themselves to have some form of written strategy or plan in place to guide their wider role activities (in over half of cases this is part of the RSL business plan). While this may appear high, it is important to note that one-quarter of RSLs are making investments without any internal plan or strategy.

Communities Scotland can influence this through making it a condition for supported RSLs to have in place a clear wider role strategy.

RSLs are taking a range of measures to equip themselves with the skills necessary to design and deliver wider role activities, mainly through:

- attending events/networks (90%);
- seeking advice/guidance (68%);
- forming partnerships with other relevant bodies (67%); and
- bringing in consultancy support when required (61%).

Some 72% of assisted RSLs have incorporated wider role activities into existing staff roles, but only half provide specific training. Moreover, 44% have specifically employed staff to work on wider role activities. Over 30% of assisted RSLs report that they are not as well equipped as they would like to be to deliver wider role activities. The reasons for this response vary equally between those who report it is only about staff numbers and those that report it is more about staff skills and the costs/time associated with acquiring them.

This concern raises challenges for the voluntary housing movement and in particular for those organisations that represent and support the sector. For example, around 14% of RSLs assisted by the Wider Role Fund have reported always having difficulties in delivery, with 58% reporting that they sometimes encounter difficulties.

To our knowledge no attempt has been taken to systematically identify the specific 'skills gap' or needs of the RSL sector in this respect. There is perhaps the opportunity for the movement to do so in partnership with the Scottish Centre for Regeneration and others. It might be possible to make use of the Communities Scotland *Learning in Regeneration* Framework to progress this agenda.

3.5 Supporting RSL Involvement

Given the initial limited staff capacity and inexperience some RSLs had delivering regeneration activity, various arrangements were put in place to encourage and support RSL involvement in wider role, for example the Housing Wider Action and Making Connections projects.

The vast majority of RSLs assisted by the Wider Role Fund (85%) have received information or advice on wider role activities, with almost two-thirds (65%) reporting that these support arrangements have been adequate (only 13% have deemed them inadequate).

The main source of information/advice noted by RSLs is Communities Scotland (94%) with the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Housing Wider Action Ltd, and other RSLs being other major sources. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to examine the relative effectiveness of various methods of support.

Communities Scotland Area Teams have provided advice and support to encourage RSLs to become involved in wider role activity, and to build on this involvement. From the perspective of RSLs assisted by the Fund there is overall satisfaction with the information/advice provided by the Area Teams:

- more than three-quarters (77%) found them supportive or very supportive;
- the majority of RSLs believe them to be accessible and well informed; although;
- over half (57%) of respondents report that there are instances of inconsistency from Area Offices (often among staff within the same Office) and
- 41% of respondents believe that the Area Offices are proactive in offering support.

The main area for improvement would appear to be the need to adopt a more consistent approach to appraising wider role applications.

The assisted RSLs were also asked to report those areas where support was most/least helpful and the results are presented below.

Most Helpful	Least Helpful
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provision of advice on potential bids (pre-application); ▪ experience of other projects; and ▪ supportive approach from staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ inconsistency largely through changing personnel; ▪ limited funds; and ▪ level of bureaucracy/time to respond.

Respondents were asked in what ways information and advice could be improved. The main areas reported were: regular meetings/workshops – more pro-active communication; provision of hands-on support and advice; and expanded guidance/case studies.

The incidence of advice to those RSLs not assisted by the Wider Role Fund is broadly similar to those assisted (although again it should be noted that the survey sample was small). These RSLs are generally less positive than the supported RSLs, which is perhaps to be expected given their lack of direct involvement in Wider Role. However, 77% of respondents report that the support they received from Communities Scotland on the issue was helpful.

From the perspective of those delivering information and advice, a number of key constraints and challenges have been highlighted by the Area Office Community Regeneration Teams, including:

- ongoing staff recruitment and retention difficulties locally;
- ongoing training needs arising from new staff responsibilities for Wider Role; and
- competing pressures on already demanding staff workloads.

Overall then, the evidence suggests that Area Offices have generally provided a competent and effective service to customers, despite internal constraints and challenges.

3.6 Fit With the Wider Regeneration Agenda

We now go on to discuss the extent to which RSL wider role activity (supported by the Wider Role Fund and other funding sources) has been connected into local regeneration structures and priorities. Here we refer to the regeneration of any communities where needs arise, not only those neighbourhoods facing the greatest levels of recognised disadvantage.

3.6.1 Involvement in Local Regeneration Structures

For RSLs, the main route into the regeneration of their communities is via local partnerships. This is reflected in the formal connection of RSLs into local Community Planning structures (involvement reported by 57% of RSLs) and local/neighbourhood regeneration partnerships (involvement reported by 47% of RSLs).

Despite productive involvement locally, the feedback received from local CPP representatives suggests that RSLs are involved as operational rather than strategic partners in the regeneration process. Moreover, the CPP feedback suggests that RSL involvement occurs largely in an ad hoc way. Overall, these findings point to scope for more and stronger engagement of RSLs in Community Planning.

3.6.2 Alignment With Local Regeneration Plans

RSLs have reported the influence of local regeneration plans and strategies on their work. This influence is most notable in relation to local/ neighbourhood regeneration plans, which are said to directly influence the wider role projects of two-thirds of assisted RSLs. Most RSLs report that they attempt to maintain consistency with other strategies through: partnership working; reviewing other strategy documents to ensure fit; and through the project design and application process.

From the CPP perspective, RSLs have been generally acknowledged as important players in the regeneration of local communities, although usually no special status has been attributed to them. Rather,

RSLs have been regarded as just one of many organisations expected to make a contribution to the needs and priorities of local communities.

3.6.3 Synergy Between Local Funding Streams

As noted earlier, the evidence suggests that RSLs are able to secure grant funding from a range of sources. In many cases support comes from local Community Planning partners and through regeneration funds, such as the Community Regeneration Fund (CRF). In this, the opportunities for financial synergy are evident, where it is possible to combine Wider Role with other forms of funding to local communities.

The feedback from CPP representatives indicates that these funding connections are often made (e.g. through local funding packages). However, this tends to occur on a case-by-case basis, rather than by strategic intent.

These findings suggest scope to increase the added value of the Wider Role Fund in relation to other locally administered funds. A key responsibility for making these connections rests with Communities Scotland as the national steward of a number of the main funding streams and as a local partner on CPP boards.

3.7 Engaging with the Wider Social Economy

RSLs are themselves increasingly acknowledged as some of the most successful social economy organisations currently operating. However RSLs are different to most other social enterprises because of the very specific way they are funded and scrutinised by Communities Scotland.

As well as learning from the financial scale and sophistication of the RSL sector, the evidence presented later in this report suggests that other local social economy organisations are themselves beneficiaries of the wider role activity of RSLs. This is not surprising given that much activity is delivered with and through partner organisations.

In addition, recent research conducted by Communities Scotland¹⁰ highlights the role of the RSL sector in procuring services from elsewhere in the social economy.

The research finds that:

- more than half (56%) of RSLs outsource services, with one-quarter procuring services from other social economy organisations;
- larger RSLs serving urban communities are best placed to use procurement to impact on the local social economy;
- barriers exist to doing business with the social economy, relating to value for money, quality of service, dependability, and not least the perceived financial fragility and grant dependence of the sector; and
- there is the opportunity for RSLs, alone and collectively, to make a more significant impact through their procurement.

In this respect, the introduction of a *Social Enterprise Strategy for Scotland* provides a coherent framework to develop the role of RSLs and their connections with other social enterprises and the wider social economy.

3.8 Key Messages

The analysis has highlighted a number of key messages that will influence the future development and direction of Wider Role:

- a growing number of RSLs are delivering wider role activities – this is a key success indicator of the Wider Role programme;

¹⁰ Communities Scotland, *Registered Social Landlords and the Social Economy*, Research Report No. 94, September 2006

- the engagement of RSLs in wider role activity is driven by a number of factors – the availability of funding is only one influence;
- the majority of RSLs indicate that they are committed to wider role, and most use the Wider Role Fund (often as a small but vital part of funding packages);
- RSLs continue to develop their role in regeneration and the structures and skills to do so;
- the information/advice offered by the Communities Scotland Area Offices in relation to wider role is generally highly regarded by RSLs;
- RSLs are making connections with local regeneration planning structures, priorities, and funds although more can be done; and
- RSLs have an important role to play in developing the social economy sector in the communities they serve.

4. Wider Role activity and outcomes

4.1 Introduction

This Section discusses the project activity designed and delivered through the Wider Role programme since 2003. It examines in particular the: funding allocated and activity initiated; grant awards made and financial leverage secured; the RSLs assisted; the activity delivered and money spent; the reported outcomes arising; and the potential legacy of this.

The findings are based on an analysis of: approval and expenditure data drawn from the Communities Scotland grant management system TRS; survey responses from RSLs that have accessed Wider Role funding since 2003, and responses from those that have not; and the project evaluation survey based on returns relating to 393 of the 655 projects supported.

4.2 Projects Approved and Funding Committed

Over the evaluation period since 2003, there have been a total of 655 projects approved.

The Wider Role Fund has a notional budget of £8 million per annum, although on average the fund has approved just over £10m across the last three financial years. The breakdown of figures provided in Table 4.1, indicates substantial funding approvals in the first two years, made possible by the reallocation of available resources within the Scottish Executive's Communities portfolio.

Table 4.1: Annual Wider Role Project Approvals Since 2003

Financial Year	Number (and %) of Projects Approved	Funding Awarded (and %)
2003-04	238	£11,667,930
2004-05	222	£11,636,267
2005-06	195	£7,456,849
TOTAL	655	£30,761,046

Source: Communities Scotland TRS Grant Management System

The figures presented in Table 4.2 indicate that the bulk of Wider Role funding awarded has occurred in the Glasgow area, which accounts for circa 40-45% of project activity and expenditure through the Fund. This is unsurprising given the strong base of community based housing in the area and the scale of socio-economic need evident there.

Table 4.2: Wider Role Project Approvals by Area Since 2003

Area Office	Number of Projects Approved	Funding Awarded
Glasgow	286	£12,513,099
Grampian	44	£2,539,311
Highlands and Islands	37	£1,147,531
Lothian, Borders, and Fife	45	£3,122,366
North and South Clyde	123	£5,294,724
South West Scotland	61	£3,700,558
Tayside and Forth Valley	59	£2,443,459
TOTAL	655	£30,761,046

Source: Communities Scotland TRS Grant Management System

4.3 Grant Awards and Leverage

4.3.1 The Grant Awards

The figures presented in Table 4.3 illustrate that the Wider Role Fund has made a relatively large number of small awards since 2003. More than two in every five awards have been for less than £20K, which is in keeping with other grant funds for community economic development and regeneration.

Table 4.3: The Size of Wider Role Grant Awards

Award Level	Number of Awards	% of Awards
Less than £20,000	289	44%
£20,000 - £49,999	177	27%
£50,000 - £99,999	110	17%
£100,000 - £149,000	46	7%
£150,000 and over	33	5%
TOTAL	655	100%

Source: Communities Scotland TRS Grant Management System

The average grant award was £46,963 and there were 13 grants made of over £250,000 of which the largest was £908,000 (all of these were capital grants).

4.3.2 The Financial Leverage Secured

The analysis shows that 95% of approved projects have secured funding from sources other than the Wider Role Fund, either from the RSL, other public or private sources.

The figures presented in Table 4.4 indicate that, since 2003, the Wider Role Fund has brought forward project activity to a value of just over £118m. This represents a leverage ratio of almost 1:2.8, and means that, for every £1 spent by Wider Role, a further £2.80 has been secured elsewhere.

Table 4.4: Wider Role Fund Leverage (April 2003 to March 2006)

Source of Financial Contribution	Number of Projects	Financial Contribution
Wider Role Grant	655	£30,761,046
Other Public Contribution	304	£60,061,503
RSL/Private Financing	160	£15,531,696
Other Private/partner Contribution	157	£11,682,554
TOTAL	-	£118,036,799

Source: Communities Scotland TRS Grant Management System

The main source of co-financing has been through public sector grant funding (£60.1m), secured from an array of sources. This high level of external grant funding reflects the fact that while Wider Role typically provides the main (first) source of funding that RSLs will turn to, it also represents a small (if important) contribution to a larger funding package.

Also of note is the apparently high level of RSL financing for project activity (much higher than RSLs themselves suggested in earlier survey evidence). This is explained by the composition of this category of funding, which appears to include private loan financing and RSL 'in kind' contributions. For example, in a number of the larger capital projects the figures are heavily skewed by the RSL investment in their own relocated office facilities in new-building community premises.

4.4 Project Activity

4.4.1 Geographic Spread of Activity

Unlike other funds under the stewardship of Communities Scotland, the Wider Role Fund has not explicitly targeted particular communities or localities – it was designed to enable RSLs to play a role in the regeneration of their communities, regardless of type or location.

The information presented in Table 4.5, however, does suggest that the spending is having a targeted impact. Some 58% of spending has related to RSLs in communities falling within the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland as identified by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. The Fund has also a clear focus on urban areas and cities experiencing greatest disadvantage, as indicated earlier through the large allocation to Glasgow.

Table 4.5: Geographic Allocation of Wider Role Spending (April 2003 to March 2006)

Geography	15% Most	
	Deprived Areas	Other Areas
Cities	£9,598,726	£5,264,401
Rural	£414,758	£3,148,954
Urban	£6,201,538	£1,838,729
Total	£16,215,022	£10,252,084
No Geographic Approved Development Programme		£1,362,378

Source: Communities Scotland TRS Grant Management System

This suggests a strong natural correlation with those areas of greatest need, and therefore the overriding Communities Scotland priority of *Closing the Opportunity Gap*.

4.4.2 The Type of Investment

The data presented in Table 4.6 indicates a fairly even split between Wider Role funding approved for capital and revenue purposes.

The most salient point to note is that, while revenue funding has remained constant over the last three years, capital funding has not been sustained at the high level built up over the first two years.

Table 4.6: Wider Role Grant Funding Approved by Category Since (April 2003 to March 2006)

Funding Type	2003	2004	2005	TOTAL
Capital	£6,232,145	£7,161,927	£2,328,414	£15,722,485
Revenue	£5,251,756	£4,474,340	£5,173,436	£14,899,532
TOTAL	£11,483,901	£11,636,267	£7,501,849	£30,622,017

Source: Communities Scotland TRS Grant Management System

4.4.3 The Purpose of Investment

The figures presented in Table 4.7 indicate that RSLs and partners spend the vast majority of Wider Role funding on the delivery of regeneration projects.

Table 4.7: Purpose of the Wider Role Grant Funding (April 2003 to March 2006)

Purpose of Grant	Number of Projects	% of Projects
Developing regeneration activity	121	19%
Delivering regeneration activity	474	74%
RSL organisational capacity to deliver activity	47	7%
TOTAL	642*	100%

Source: Communities Scotland Area Offices * 13 incomplete records

Only a small minority of projects are focused on building the organisational skills and capacity of RSLs to deliver regeneration activity (e.g. wider role planning, training, and the recruitment of specialist staff). This is significant given that this was one of the three areas for Wider Role activity noted as important in the

2003 Policy Statement and that RSLs themselves have reported a continuing lack of skills and capacity in this respect.

4.4.4 Project Activities

The figures presented in Table 4.8 serve to highlight the spread of project activity.

Table 4.8: The Focus of Projects Approved (April 2003 to March 2006)

Thematic Focus on Projects	Number of Projects	% of Projects
Community care services	17	3%
Childcare services	11	2%
Education and learning initiatives	27	4%
Employment & training schemes	78	12%
Debt, money advice, and welfare rights	27	4%
Environmental clean ups, maintenance etc	40	6%
Sustainable development (e.g. recycling, energy)	31	5%
Community health initiatives	18	3%
Community arts, cultural, recreational events	50	8%
ICT & digital inclusion projects	32	5%
Community safety initiatives (e.g. CCTV)	34	5%
Community transport services	2	0%
Youth services and initiatives	51	8%
Community facilities, workspaces, accommodation	122	19%
Homelessness and housing/tenancy support	18	3%
Other	97	15%
TOTAL	655	102%

Source: Communities Scotland TRS Grant Management System

* exceeds 100% due to rounding error

Interestingly, the most dominant activity relates to employment and training (a local priority for two of the Area Offices with the largest Wider Role funding allocation), and the development of facilities. These are the areas closest to the core business of RSLs and where RSL involvement has traditionally been strong.

4.5 Project Implementation

4.5.1 Delivery Arrangements

As presented in Table 4.9, the results of the project evaluation survey indicate that, for the most part, RSLs have been involved directly in the delivery of Wider Role projects (in 43% of cases).

However, the results again serve to highlight the substantial use made of partners to deliver activity on behalf of RSLs. On the one hand, this might suggest that RSLs are making use of those organisations best placed to deliver. On the other, it brings into question the extent to which RSL capabilities are likely to increase, where they are not directly involved in delivery.

Table 4.9: Project Delivery Methods

Delivery Method	% of Projects*
Direct Delivery	43%
Arms length organisation	6%
Contract other organisations	34%
Support other organisations to deliver	34%

Source: EKOS Project Evaluation Forms * Exceeds 100% due to the use of multiple delivery methods

4.5.2 Project Implementation

While much of the activity initiated since 2003 has now been delivered, and funds drawn down, it seems that the process of delivering projects has not been without its difficulties.

The survey of assisted RSLs indicates that in three-quarters of cases, RSLs have encountered some form of difficulties (58% sometimes and 14% always) in designing, setting up, or delivering Wider Role funded projects.

The feedback from this survey and the returned project evaluation forms, suggests that the three main difficulties experienced have related to:

- securing and managing funding packages;
- building and sustaining partnership efforts; and
- accessing appropriate resources and skills.

4.6 The Outcomes Arising

4.6.1 The Reported Outcomes

The Outcomes for Tenants and Residents

The perceived contribution of Wider Role project activities to local tenants and residents is reported to be strong.

Some 93% of assisted RSLs have reported that Wider Role funding has enabled them to make some or a major difference for the tenants and communities they serve.

In addition to the benefits of the actual projects themselves, the main reported impacts have been in terms of:

- improving access to services and facilities;
- more engagement with and empowerment of local people; and
- consequent improvement in the quality of life locally.

Again this points to a strong influence from the community regeneration activities initiated.

The Outcomes for RSLs

Over 90% of assisted RSLs have reported some or major benefits to their own organisation as a result of support from the Wider Role fund, with it being too early to say in 8% of cases, and only 1% reporting no benefits.

The main reported benefits to the RSLs themselves are seen as:

- providing the RSLs with a higher profile in the community (91%);
- better able to contribute to wider regeneration (75%);
- better at working in partnership (74%); and
- better relationships with tenants (63%).

The feedback suggests that these projects are having an important catalytic effect in involving RSLs in the regeneration of their communities.

The Outcomes for Partner Organisations

Examining the experience of the projects delivered, we find that in 72% of cases the project activity is reported to have directly brought some form of benefit to the other organisations (usually social economy organisations).

The main reported benefits arising for other organisations have included the:

- establishment of new or innovative organisations and services;
- development or expansion of pre-existing activities/services;
- introduction of new funding streams or earned income opportunities;
- transfer of skills and experience from within the RSL; and
- improved access to facilities, credibility, and resources.

These findings point to a strong and positive impact of the Wider Role Fund on the wider social economy.

4.6.2 Contribution to National Policy Objectives

Given the absence of consistent monitoring data for the fund it is not possible to comment on the overall impact of the Fund in relation to the Executive's *Closing the Opportunity Gap* objectives.

However, based on a categorisation of activity and the evaluators' own judgement and experience, it is possible to say that most, if not all, of Wider Role project activity is well placed to contribute to the objectives.

There is also a significant body of evidence being collected by RSLs in relation to usage of services and facilities funded through Wider Role initiatives and financial and social inclusion benefits arising.

Table 4.10, suggests that the principal contribution lies in addressing the objective relating to neighbourhood regeneration. This reflects the strong geographical concentration of Wider Role activity in the West of Scotland and other deprived urban communities.

Table 4.10: Alignment of Projects to Closing the Opportunity Gap Objectives

CtOG Objectives	% of Projects Contributing	% of Projects with a Primary Fit
Objective 1: Employability	20%	15%
Objective 2: Children and Young People	18%	14%
Objective 3: Financial Exclusion	5%	5%
Objective 4: Neighbourhood Regeneration	62%	57%
Objective 5: Health	10%	5%
Objective 6: Rural Services	10%	4%

Source: Communities Scotland Area Offices * includes 13 incomplete records

4.6.3 The Additionality of Outcomes

The survey findings suggest that the Wider Role Fund has been instrumental in bringing forward activity and outcomes.

In terms of additionality:

- in 58% of cases the funding was reported to be fully additional – activity would not have occurred otherwise;
- in 38% of cases some level of additionality has been reported – the funding has brought benefits in terms of timing, scale or quality; and
- only 4% report no additionality – activity is likely to have proceeded in the same form and in the absence of Wider Role funding.

For a public sector funding programme this is a good result, with some form of additional benefits being generated in 96% of cases.

4.6.4 The Sustainability of Outcomes

A key consideration is the potential for project activity to become *sustainable* over the longer term (where this is the intention). By sustainability we mean the ability of a project to develop a more stable, reliable income base (not just earned income) that allows it to meet identified local needs now and into the foreseeable future.

While this evaluation comes much too early to comment meaningfully on the long-term financial sustainability of project activities (and outcomes), it is clear that the funding is leaving some form of legacy within communities:

- where grant funding was in support of physical assets, 90% of projects report that the grant has been fully spent and site or building developed for ongoing use; and
- where a revenue grant was provided, 46% of activity has ended although 41% is continuing – albeit it must be noted that many projects are designed as one-off or time limited initiatives.

Nevertheless, like other regeneration funds, concerns have been expressed in relation to the long-term financial sustainability of projects (in 29% of cases) in the absence of Wider Role funding. This becomes a concern where RSLs are unable to continue needed projects in the absence of alternative funding. It also highlights the need for greater consideration given to 'exit strategies' by applicants in relation to time-limited grant funding.

4.7 Key Messages

The preceding analysis has identified a number of key messages as detailed below:

- the Fund has provided a significant investment in new RSL-led regeneration activity, mainly in areas of socio-economic need;
- the Fund has been successful at attracting co-financing from other sources of public and private funding;
- the focus has been in delivering new regeneration activity, with more limited attention given to developing RSL organisational capacity;
- the activity supported has generated wide ranging benefits for RSLs, partner organisations, and local communities;
- high levels of 'additionality' suggest that the funding is required for projects to proceed; and
- by and large the Fund seems to be contributing to national regeneration and social economy development policy priorities.

The implications of this analysis are further discussed in the concluding section of this report.

5. Programme implementation

5.1 Introduction

Having examined RSL Wider Role activity, this Section focuses on the management and implementation of the Wider Role Fund. It starts by describing the management arrangements in place before turning to procedures for: promotion; application; appraisal; grant administration; and project monitoring.

The analysis draws on findings from: a review of the administrative procedures for Wider Role in each Area Office; one-to-one interviews and a workshop involving Communities Scotland staff; and survey responses from RSLs that have been directly assisted by the Wider Role Fund since 2003, and responses from those RSLs that have not been assisted.

5.2 Management and Administration

The Wider Role Fund has been managed by Communities Scotland since its establishment in November 2001, following the transfer of responsibilities for this from Scottish Homes.

Following an internal review of Wider Role during 2002, the Fund was placed within the newly formed Regeneration Division of Communities Scotland. More recently, responsibility for the Fund has been transferred to the Social Economy Unit (SEU) within the Regeneration Division.

Since its launch in 2000, the Fund has been administered locally through the Communities Scotland network of seven Area Offices. Over a period of time the operational responsibility for the Fund has been transferred within the Area Offices from Investment Teams to the Community Regeneration Teams (initially known as Social Justice teams).

5.3 Promotion

The priorities and requirements of the Wider Role Fund were set out in the 2003 Wider Role Policy Statement. Views on this Policy Statement are broadly positive:

- Communities Scotland staff have reported that the policy has provided a useful statement of intent, although it is now outdated and in need of refinement; and
- RSLs have reported the policy statement to be clear and appropriate (91% of assisted RSLs and 80% of non-assisted RSLs), although there are still a small minority who are unfamiliar with it. Area Offices have adopted a degree of local flexibility, in setting priorities that are informed by local needs (albeit consistent with national policy objectives). In some cases Area Offices adopted their own Wider Role policies in 2003-04, which set local priorities in the context of the national Policy Statement.

A similar percentage (72%) of both assisted and non-assisted RSLs report that Area Office wider role priorities have been clearly communicated. However this still leaves around 30% of RSLs who report that priorities have not been clearly communicated.

This suggests that a strong message is going out to the RSL sector, albeit one that now requires updating. Full and consistent communication of the Wider Role priorities is an issue that will also have to be addressed.

5.4 The Application Process

Area Offices have generally encouraged RSLs to become involved in wider role activity and to take advantage of the Wider Role funding on offer. In most cases a 'hands on' approach has been taken, designed to assist prospective applicants to design projects and bring forward applications.

The application process varies significantly across the Area Network. In some cases, Wider Role plans are agreed as part of an annual RSL planning process, prior to subsequent project applications. In other

cases, outline applications are requested prior to the submission of full applications (although all prospective applicants have the opportunity to submit an outline in advance of application).

RSLs generally regard application procedures to be clear and appropriate (less than 10% have reported difficulties) and the Fund does provide flexibility for RSLs apply as needs arise. Moreover, 15% of applicants have reported some form of difficulty in completing applications.

Project proposals are made on the basis of full applications. However, the application forms and guidance notes (initially standardised in 2004) have been subtly changed by Area Offices to suit local circumstances. Feedback from staff (both within the Social Economy unit who manage the Wider Role programme at a national level and the Area Network) has indicated some dissatisfaction with the current paperwork and highlighted the need for additional guidance on the application process.

The consistency of application information and guidance must be central to any nationally delivered programme.

5.5 Project Appraisal

The basis for project appraisal and selection has also been found to vary somewhat across the Area Network. There is currently no consistent approach to the appraisal of applications between Area Offices. Assessments are not made on the basis of an agreed scoring framework, as is standard practice for most funds. In each Office the assessment process relies heavily on the expertise and judgement of staff.

This is reflected in the survey responses, where one-third of assisted RSLs, and 25% of non-assisted RSLs have reported that the appraisal process is not transparent and fair. In some cases RSLs have indicated that they are unsure of the appraisal process, while in other cases they have challenged the perceived bureaucracy or lack of consistency in decision-making.

These findings suggest the need to strengthen project appraisal arrangements and to ensure consistent implementation across the Area Network.

5.6 Grant Administration

In each Area Office funding approvals are made on the basis of a Grant Offer letter, which sets out Terms and Conditions of grant. The standard Offer letter (which in some cases has been altered by the individual area team) forms a clear and auditable contract with the grant recipient.

Wider Role funding is released to grant recipients on the basis of submission of an acceptable financial claim with appropriate back up to verify the claim. While payment schedules are usually agreed in advance with grant recipients, these are usefully (by necessity) applied flexibly, with project timescales often subject to slippage. Payments are made in line with need, normally in arrears, but for some types of project (e.g. payment of salaries) payment can be made in advance.

Some 90% of assisted RSLs have reported no difficulties in receiving payments. This suggests that financial administration on the part of Communities Scotland is effective.

Some 83% of RSLs have indicated that they have a financial system in place that accounts separately for Wider Role funding, although some appear to regard this as generating more internal staff requirements.

5.7 Monitoring and Evaluation

Project *activity* is monitored on an ongoing basis by Area Office staff, who aim to maintain regular and supportive dialogue with grant recipients. Staff have indicated that this is helpful in ensuring that any implementation difficulties are identified and addressed at an early stage.

Project *outputs* and *outcomes*, however, have not been systematically collected. In most cases Area Offices have required grant recipients to complete and return project monitoring forms on a six monthly basis, and on project completion. These forms do not gather standardised output/outcome information and have not been returned in all cases.

This is not to say that Communities Scotland and RSLs are not monitoring and evaluating the wider role activity undertaken. Indeed, 70% of RSLs have indicated that they record the numbers benefiting from activities and 76% state that information is gathered from project beneficiaries. Formal monitoring is said not to occur in only 5% of cases.

Despite some monitoring activity by RSLs and recent attempts by Area Offices to strengthen programme monitoring arrangements (e.g. improve forms, conduct monitoring visits), there is no robust Monitoring and Evaluation framework in place at programme level. This means that no comprehensive information exists on the ongoing impact or value for money of the Fund, and as such represents a weakness in the Wider Role programme.

5.8 Key Messages

The research suggests that, despite broad satisfaction with current Fund implementation procedures, there are two key areas for improvement:

- the consistency of the project application and appraisal processes – this is key to the effective delivery of any national programme; and
- the use of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework – without this it is not possible to measure impact, benchmark nationally, and establish value for money.

–
In addition, the findings suggest that it will be important to prioritise communication with RSLs.

Therefore, while the programme management and administration is generally effective, there are key areas where significant progress should be sought in any future arrangements.

6. Continuing RSL needs and aspirations

6.1 Introduction

This Section discusses the future needs and aspirations of RSLs in relation to wider role activity. In particular it examines; the stated position of RSLs; future plans and prospects for wider role activity; potential future requirements from the Wider Role Fund; and other wider role support needs.

The findings presented are based primarily on survey responses from RSLs that have accessed Wider Role funding since 2003, and responses from those that have not.

6.2 Current Attitudes to Wider Role

In looking to the future, around half (52%) of RSLs assisted by the Wider Role Fund have reported wider role to be an integral part of their business strategy, with a further 34% believing it to be a useful add on. Only a minority of assisted RSLs (13%) regard wider role to be of marginal importance to core business and just 1% believe it to be an unhelpful distraction.

Over 80% of assisted RSLs plan to develop more wider role projects, with over 60% reporting that they intend to develop different types of projects. Their rationale reflects three main factors:

- wider role has now become part of the mainstream for them;
- they believe that previous wider role projects have been successful and helped deliver sustainable communities; and
- the benefits of wider role activities have now been recognised by management committees.

A similar percentage of non-assisted RSLs also believe that wider role activity will be an integral or useful aspect of their future business. All those surveyed have indicated that they will seek to pursue wider role activities where appropriate in the future.

It seems that RSLs have, by and large, bought into the concept of wider role and for most this is now a core part of their activities. Whether or not the Wider Role Fund has **directly** assisted them in recent years does not appear to reflect their commitment to future involvement.

6.3 Future Prospects for Wider Role

There has been much optimism reported regarding the future prospects for wider role activity. Almost two-thirds (65%) of assisted RSLs have reported a likelihood that their wider role activities will grow over the course of the next three years, with only 4% reporting a likely decline. The main reasons for the forecast increase in activity are:

- wider role now integrated into mainstream business strategy;
- developed a pipeline of wider role ideas for the future; and
- customer expectation.

The main reported reason for either static or declining activity was lack of internal resources to take forward such activity.

The prospects for those RSLs that have not recently received support also appear promising over the next three years, with one-quarter intending to embark on wider role activities for the first time and three-quarters planning to maintain or increase the level and scope of activity. Based on the reported evidence, nearly all RSLs will increase and widen their wider role activities over the short term.

The figures presented in Table 6.1 set out in more detail the stated ambitions of RSLs, both assisted and non-assisted. Interestingly, while the analysis shows a future commitment across all RSLs, it is those previously assisted who report a greater propensity for new activity across a wide range of interventions.

Table 6.1: The Stated Ambitions of RSLs

Thematic Focus on Projects	Assisted RSLs	Non-assisted RSLs
Design new regeneration projects	44%	24%
Implement more regeneration project activity	50%	24%
Work with new regeneration partners	48%	29%
Recruit new staff to help deliver activity	23%	10%
Become involved in formal partnerships	34%	34%
Other	8%	0%

Source: EKOS Surveys of Assisted and Non-assisted RSLs

The survey feedback also suggests that RSLs intend to be involved in delivering project activity across a wide spectrum. Importantly, there does not appear to be any bias towards any particular area of activity, with no area being seen as unimportant for future intervention.

In terms of funding for these activities, the RSLs are likely to continue to rely on those sources described earlier in the report. There is no evidence to suggest any change in balance or more bias towards any type of funding source in the future.

6.4 Future Wider Role Funding Requirements

Given the significant and wide ranging ambitions of the RSLs it is perhaps not surprising that the Wider Role Fund will be a focus of attention for most.

Over 90% of assisted and 60% of non-assisted RSLs have reported that they will require Wider Role funding to support their regeneration activities over the next three years. Of those that have already received this funding, 60% believe they will require a higher level of Wider Role funding than previously. Nearly all assisted RSLs and over 80% of non-assisted RSLs believe that this funding will be of importance to their ability to deliver wider role activities.

The survey responses presented in Table 6.3 set out the areas where Wider Role funding is regarded as potentially most important. Funding will be required mainly to deliver regeneration activity.

Table 6.3: Areas Where the Wider Role Fund is Regarded as Important

Area of Funding Support	Assisted RSLs	Non-assisted RSLs
Designing/developing wider role projects	59%	38%
Delivering wider role project activity	74%	52%
Developing RSL wider role plans/capabilities	9%	24%

Source: EKOS Surveys of Assisted and Non-assisted RSLs

The analysis tends to underscore the reported importance of Wider Role funding to the delivery of regeneration activities. However, there is a critical implication flowing from the analysis.

If demand for Wider Role funding increases without a subsequent increase in overall budgets, then there will be more need for robust appraisal processes to ensure that it is those projects which best contribute to strategic objectives and government policy that are supported.

6.5 Future Support Needs

From the survey findings it is also clear that funding is not in itself the only area where support will be required.

From a development perspective, and like other parts of the social enterprise sector, there are a number of areas where RSLs have reported they could benefit from further support and advice. The reporting highlights that the RSLs would welcome support across a range of areas.

The main ones are:

- help with securing grant funding;
- staff development;
- preparing a strategy/development plan; and
- generating new ideas.
-

It will be important examine ways to address the development needs of RSLs as part of a coherent approach to supporting the social enterprise sector, as set out in *the Social Enterprise Strategy for Scotland*.

6.6 Key Messages

The most important conclusion emerging is that overall, wider role now seems to be seen as part of mainstream activities for RSLs.

The survey response also suggests that, not only will those RSLs who already deliver wider role activities continue that activity, but that in most cases the level of activity is likely to increase.

Also a number of RSLs who had not recently been assisted now intend to become involved in wider role (or will deepen their involvement in it) and will be seeking support from the Wider Role Fund.

If this predicted demand emerges, this will place increasing importance on the management of the programme and the project appraisal processes – there will be a need to ensure that priority is given to those projects which best deliver against agreed objectives and targets. This may require a narrowing of the existing focus of the Wider Role programme.

Finally, there are a number of key areas where Communities Scotland could seek to develop additional support/advice mechanisms to support future wider role activities through the RSLs. There is a role here for various support providers as part of a coherent strategy for developing the social enterprise sector.

7. Study conclusions

7.1 Introduction

Based on the analysis presented throughout the report, this Section draws together the main findings and implications.

Mirroring the main aims of the evaluation, this Section discusses:

- the achievements of Wider Role investment since 2003;
- the fit of Wider Role within the current policy landscape;
- the lessons and implications from Wider Role to date;
- the value of funding being exclusively available to RSLs; and
- options for future Executive support for RSL-led regeneration.

7.2 Key Achievements

Carried out between July and October 2006, this evaluation study has examined the progress and achievements of the Wider Role Fund from April 2003 up to March 2006.

The study has identified a number of key achievements as follows:

- it has provided a significant investment in new RSL-led regeneration activity, mainly in areas of socio-economic need;
- it has encouraged a steady growth in RSL involvement in regeneration activity;
- it has provided an important catalyst for partnership working, and RSL involvement in regeneration structures;
- it has been successful at attracting co-financing from other sources of public and private funding;
- the activity supported appears to have generated wide ranging benefits for RSLs, partner organisations, and local communities; and
- it is contributing to the *Closing the Opportunity Gap* objectives, although this has proven difficult to measure and attribute.

Overall, these findings suggest that the Wider Role Fund has achieved much since 2003, and has made a strong contribution to the policy priorities of the Scottish Executive.

7.3 Fit with the Current Policy Landscape

The study has discussed the policy and funding landscape that the Wider Role Fund has operated in since 2003.

The interrelated policy statements described have positioned RSLs as: providers of affordable and quality social housing; partners in and deliverers of regeneration activity; as well as successful social enterprises.

The evaluation has suggested that Wider Role still has policy legitimacy (strategic fit), although has identified the need to establish a sharper focus for the Programme and to articulate its policy contribution more clearly.

The introduction of the forthcoming *Social Enterprise Strategy* would now seem to provide the main driver for any continuing or revised form of Wider Role initiative beyond March 2008. This will give a basis for providing support to RSLs as social enterprises in their own right and recognise the important role that they play within communities and in the delivery of public services at a local level.

7.4 Issues and Implications

Despite generally strong achievements, and continuing policy legitimacy, some ongoing issues and challenges have been acknowledged. These provide a number of key pointers for any continuing form of intervention. These issues and their implications are discussed below.

Communicating a clear policy message

Issue: The research has found that RSLs broadly accept the importance of wider role, and generally welcome the direction and advice received from Communities Scotland. However, they are less clear on the detailed policy priorities for wider role and how they can fully articulate their contribution to these priorities.

Implication: Given the changes in the policy landscape, and in order to achieve a renewed sense of purpose, there is the need to again refresh the Wider Role Policy Statement. This should be accompanied by continued communication from Communities Scotland in order to refocus, redirect, build on, or sustain RSL work in this area.

Achieving a targeted impact

Issue: The research has noted the high volume and broad scope of regeneration activity supported through the Fund. While this has meant that RSLs have tested an array of activity it also means that resources have been spread relatively thinly. This has perhaps been inevitable given the broad mandate associated with Wider Role.

Implication: This implies that there is the potential to strengthen the targeted impact of any continuing programme. There may be the opportunity to refine programme priorities beneath the broad CtOG objectives to provide a sharper and clearer focus. Greater consideration will also require to be given to the types of projects and RSLs (size, track record, location) that are likely to contribute most strongly to policy objectives.

Strengthening the contribution to local regeneration

Issue: The research has highlighted an increasingly visible and important contribution from RSLs to local regeneration work, albeit a contribution that is not always wholly aligned to local regeneration structures. Staff from Communities Scotland Area Offices have played an important role in working with RSLs and local partners to ensure that strategic connections are made but in some areas more could be done to strengthen local collaboration.

Implication: There is a need for a more coherent approach to local planning and delivery. This might include: a more explicit role for RSLs in delivering on local regeneration plans; an increasing role for Area Offices in facilitating RSL involvement in local structures; better alignment of funding streams at the local level; and a more joined up approach to planning wider role activities alongside other area regeneration investment.

Sustaining the impact

Issue: Despite some evidence of a legacy from Wider Role projects (in the short-term at least) the study has relayed some uncertainty and concern over the continuing viability of this activity in the absence of Wider Role funding. This is an issue where projects seek to carry on their work beyond time-limited support from the Wider Role Fund, and the flexibility of the Fund and other mainstream funding streams to offer continued support over the longer term.

Implication: If the initial investment in wider role is to be protected, this implies the need for a sharper focus on the potential sustainability of project funding (and outcomes). This could include: a more robust appraisal of financial sustainability; increased financial buy-in from RSLs and partners; greater emphasis on 'exit strategies' (where appropriate); a stronger focus on income generation from projects (where possible). It also requires a more considered focus from local partners in tracking project outcomes and packaging local funding to support project sustainability.

Building on the collective expertise of the RSL sector

Issue: The research has highlighted the variation in scale, skills and competencies across the RSL sector in relation to the delivery of community regeneration initiatives.

Implication: There is an opportunity to harness the collective contribution of RSLs, by: ensuring the transfer of skills between more and less experienced RSLs; further encouraging peer support and collaboration as part of consortia; and by improved information sharing and highlighting best practice. However, there is also a need for RSLs and support providers to examine in detail the training and development needs of the sector, and to find methods to address these requirements in a way that is systematic, comprehensive and coherent.

Implementing an effective and coherent national programme

Issue: Within a generally straightforward and appropriate funding model, the research has revealed some challenges for Communities Scotland in consistently administering the programme and tracking its outcomes.

Implication: While it will be necessary to retain some degree of local flexibility to respond to local priorities, it will be crucial as part of any continuing scheme to review existing guidance and procedures to ensure that there is a coherent, national approach to delivery. This means: updating the current standardised application process; ensuring a robust, transparent, and consistent project appraisal system; and the development and use of a national framework for monitoring, evaluation and impact measurement.

7.5 A Changing Rationale for Intervention

The Wider Role Fund was introduced in 2000 to pump-prime the role of RSLs in community regeneration and to take them beyond their core business of providing, developing, or managing housing.

There continues to be strong policy legitimacy for encouraging RSL-led regeneration. However the majority of RSLs now involved in the delivery of Wider Role no longer tend to see the fund as simply providing short term pump-priming, as they tackle ever more ambitious and complex projects to meet needs identified by the communities in which they operate.

Furthermore the publication of the Executive's Social Enterprise Strategy places RSLs and the wider role activities they deliver firmly within the context of the social enterprise sector.

The research findings suggest that there is still a strong case for retaining some form of funding intervention that is exclusively targeted at RSLs:

- RSLs are strong, stable, and professional organisations that are uniquely regulated and well placed to have a positive impact on community regeneration;
- wider role remains, in financial terms, a relatively marginal activity for the RSLs, and a relatively small part of local regeneration;
- the Wider Role Fund remains a key form of support for wider role activity, and a source of funding to which most RSLs turn;
- there are likely to be continuing and increasing demands for funding from RSLs for wider role activity, which are unlikely to be met from alternative funding sources; and
- there is still some way to go before the RSL sector as a whole is fully equipped to design and deliver effective regeneration activity.

Also, a good deal of evidence has emerged to suggest that the RSL sector as a whole has developed somewhat since the establishment of the Fund, and that RSLs are now able to play a fuller part in regeneration:

- RSLs are now generally aware of their potential to contribute to community regeneration;
- there has been a steady year-on-year increase in the number of RSLs becoming involved in wider role activities;
- RSLs are increasingly adept at securing funding from other sources to undertake regeneration work, often in collaboration with other partners from the voluntary or social economy sectors;
- by and large, RSLs appear committed to delivering wider role activity on an ongoing basis as part of their mainstream activities; and
- the availability of funding has been only one of a number of factors that appear to be driving RSL involvement in regeneration.

Therefore in overall terms, the rationale for special policy attention on the RSL sector remains valid (and was not challenged by stakeholders or policy makers during the course of our research).

However, based on the information provided by our research it can be argued that the priority for intervention has shifted since the revised policy statement was issued in September 2003 from:

- pump-priming RSL involvement and testing regeneration activities; to
- consolidating and deepening involvement in local regeneration.

Therefore any continued support for RSL involvement in wider role should focus on how to: consolidate the work done over the last few years; improve the capacity and capability of the RSLs to deliver Wider Role; and seek to deepen the level of commitment and engagement by the sector.

7.6 Strategic Options

Looking at the Wider Role Fund in isolation, and on its merits, it continues to make an important policy contribution, albeit one that might be refined and strengthened.

However, the Fund does not operate in a vacuum and it sits within a complex and dynamic policy landscape.

Given this quickly changing environment, it would be surprising if a Wider Role programme designed today, or indeed in April 2008 (after the end of the current programme), were to look exactly the same as one initiated in 2000 (or the 2003 revision).

In order to inform the debate on the future direction of support for Wider Role, and on the basis of stakeholder consultations, we identified four broad future options (Appendix 3 provides further information on each):

Option One: The Nuclear Option

Under this option, the ring-fenced or targeted allocation of funding for RSLs to carry out wider role would come to an end and this funding would be reallocated to an unspecified programme elsewhere within Communities Scotland or the Executive.

Option Two: The Business Improvement Option

Under this option, the existing Wider Role Fund would be continued along similar lines, albeit with management and operational procedures strengthened as outlined elsewhere within this report.

Option Three: The Strategic Realignment Option

Under this option the Fund would be recast as one of a suite of funds for social economy development and refocused on RSL capacity building and social enterprise activity.

Option Four: The Joined Up Community Regeneration Option

Under this option the funding allocation would be integrated into other sources of funding for local regeneration work such as the Community Regeneration Fund and more closely targeted towards identified priorities, within the Community Planning framework.

7.7 Future Direction

The Communities Scotland Wider Role Fund, as currently constituted, will continue until 31st March 2008. On the basis of the research findings presented, and the views obtained during the course of the study, there is strong evidence to justify the continuation of the Wider Role Fund.

On that basis we recommend continued refinement of the funding programme, rather than wholesale change – Option 2 (The Business improvement Option) as discussed above. This should include the following recommended actions:

- refresh the 2003 Wider Role Policy statement within the overarching framework of the *Social Enterprise Strategy for Scotland*;

- refine programme priorities and eligibility criteria to ensure a sharper focus for funding allocations and a more targeted impact;
- reinforce a localised basis for planning and delivering wider role activity, which ensures consistency with local regeneration priorities;
- bring forward measures to harness the collective contribution of RSLs and share learning and best practice across the sector;
- address the identified support needs of RSLs as part of an overall approach to developing the potential of the social enterprise sector;
- put in place measures to ensure the sustainability of wider role project funding (and outcomes);
- adopt a robust, transparent and consistent national framework for managing and administering the Fund; and
- introduce a Monitoring & Evaluation Framework capable of tracking and reporting on programme impact.

These actions should build on success of the Wider Role Fund to date as part of a wider package of support for the social enterprise sector in Scotland.

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The Individuals who contributed

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Barrhead Housing Association	Lochfield Park Co-operative
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Craigdale Housing Association	Partick Housing Association
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Gardeen Housing Association	Shettleston Housing Association
Glen Oaks Housing Association	Shire Housing Association
Govanhill Housing Association	Tenant Controlled Housing

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Highland Housing Alliance	Tryst / Hanover Housing Association
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Hillhead Housing Association	Waverley Housing
Hjaltland Housing Association	Wellhouse Housing Association
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Appendix 2 Workshop Feedback

Introduction

This Appendix examines the self-assessed performance of the Wider Role programme from the perspective of Communities Scotland staff and RSLs.

The analysis presented is based on feedback from: eight workshops involving 58 representatives from assisted RSLs; and one workshop which brought together 17 Communities Scotland staff involved in implementing the Fund. Full reports on the feedback from workshops are available.

Using a tailored participatory evaluation tool, participants assessed¹¹ the extent to which the Wider Role Fund has been successful in: encouraging RSL involvement in Wider Role; designing and testing sustainable regeneration activities; building the wider role capabilities of RSLs; delivering activities in a co-ordinated way; and delivering activities that contribute to CtOG Objectives.

1. Encouraging RSL Involvement in Wider Role

At workshops, participants were asked to consider the extent to which the Wider Role programme has been effective in: “encouraging RSLs to get involved in wider regeneration activity”

The Views of Communities Scotland Staff

Communities Scotland staff awarded a score of 7.4 out of 10 with regards to the effectiveness of the Fund in encouraging RSL involvement in wider role.

Reflecting a strongly positive assessment in this respect, staff reported the widespread and growing RSL participation in wider role in most areas. In this, the Fund is regarded as a vital catalyst in encouraging participation.

“Large numbers of RSLs have become involved in wider regeneration as a result of Wider Role funding.”

“Most RSLs in our patch are now involved.”

“The Wider Role Fund has helped persuade committees to try Wider Role. They might not have taken the plunge if they had to use entirely their own rental income.”

Nevertheless, staff acknowledged the variable level of engagement of RSLs across the country, and also noted particular obstacles or difficulties in getting all RSLs involved in the absence of a degree of compulsion.

“There are still RSLs who do not participate in Wider Role and some who feel that they should not be involved”.

“Depends on the local context, focus of RSLs and the level of resources available to them”.

“Smaller RSLs unable to input staff time to develop projects.”

The Views of RSL Representatives

In arriving at an overall assessment of success in encouraging RSL involvement in wider role, RSLs awarded an average score of six out of 10.

¹¹ Workshop participants were asked to score on a scale of 0 to 10 (with 0 meaning ‘not at all effective’, and 10 meaning ‘very effective’) the extent to which the Fund contributed to the given set of objectives.

The feedback suggests that for many RSLs the availability of a flexible and ring-fenced source of funding has provided sufficient incentive to become involved in wider role or provided a catalyst to deepen prior involvement.

“Wider Role fund is very open and not prescriptive – allows RSLs to match it towards their aspirations”.

“Funding has given the opportunity to try out new ideas and approaches.”

“A Fund just for RSLs has meant a plethora of partner organisations talking to us and this builds new relationships and opportunities.”

While some RSLs have clearly embraced wider role, others have suggested that Communities Scotland has not provided sufficient financial incentive nor conveyed sufficiently clear benefits for some RSLs to get involved. This appears to contradict the survey feedback presented earlier.

“No real encouragement from Communities Scotland staff – want us to jump through hoops for very small amount of money.”

“Lack of consistency of message re: Wider Role across Scotland has diluted impact on RSLs”.

“Limited grant availability – all very well encouraging is to get involved, but limited resources (grant) can be a barrier.”

Opportunities to Strengthen Performance

During the workshops with Communities Scotland staff and RSL representatives, a number of suggested opportunities to encourage further RSL involvement were put forward which can be summarised as:

- increased sharing of good practice and learning between active RSLs and those not yet involved in wider role activity;
- an increase in the Wider Role budget allocation and a streamlining of funding processes;
- clearer direction and greater ‘hands on’ support from Communities Scotland and others in relation to Wider Role;
- simplified, user-friendly information and easier access to Wider Role funding for inexperienced RSLs; and
- increased resources for staff posts and to cover the management and overhead costs to RSLs of participating.

2. Undertaking Sustainable Regeneration Activity

At workshops, participants were asked to consider the extent to which the Wider Role programme has been effective in: “establishing, testing and delivering sustainable wider role activity”

The Views of Communities Scotland Staff

Communities Scotland staff awarded an average score of 4.2 out of 10 in relation to the Fund’s success in delivering sustainable wider role activity.

Despite a perception among Communities Scotland staff of relatively limited effectiveness in this area, they highlighted the important role of the Wider Role Fund in establishing and testing project activity, which has been found to be highly innovative or successful in many cases.

“Wider Role has established, tested and delivered lots of activity.”

“Maximum of three year funding allows suitable time to test project idea and aims.”

“Wider Role is a ‘pump prime’ grant – this allows new project ideas to be developed before an RSL would mainstream it.”

However, staff have identified as a weakness the prospects for financial sustainability of the Wider Role project activity (where projects seek to continue) and have acknowledged that monitoring and evaluation procedures are, at present, insufficient to identify ongoing project successes.

“It has enabled projects to be established, tested and delivered but sustainability is up for question.”

“Many projects will never generate income or be mainstreamed but are producing great results.”

“No real evaluation of projects to date. Lots of short-term projects where no longer term effects have been measured”.

The Views of RSL Representatives

RSL representatives across the workshops awarded an average score of 4.7 out of 10 in relation to the perceived effectiveness of the Fund in delivering sustainable regeneration activity.

The feedback provided by RSLs is encouraging in many respects. RSLs have indicated that the Wider Role Fund has been instrumental in bringing forward new regeneration activity that is unlikely to have proceeded in its absence, and in delivering successful projects. This is consistent with the findings presented earlier.

“We have been able to develop and secure funding for new, innovative and ‘risky’ projects.”

“Funding for posts to develop wider role activity has allowed us to try out new ideas, which we wouldn’t have otherwise been able to do.”

“Significant projects have been delivered.”

However, RSLs reported difficulties in delivering and sustaining Wider Role project activities in the longer term and in the absence of Communities Scotland funding. For many RSLs the potential financial sustainability of activities, and the financial risk associated was noted as a concern.

“... projects are rarely given long enough to get going.”

“Most if not all of our project could not be sustainable without grant funding.”

“No mainstream funding for projects in the longer term.”

Opportunities to Strengthen Performance

From the various workshops a number of suggested opportunities were put forward to ensure the delivery of effective and sustainable regeneration activity, which can be summarised as:

- greater guidance and support for RSLs in delivering and sustaining regeneration activity;
- the structuring, and use of extended funding packages, to ensure that projects are supported for an appropriate duration;
- introduce a formal Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to track project activity during and after a period of Wider Role funding; and
- a greater emphasis on part of RSLs on self-sustaining social enterprise activity or cross-subsidies from housing revenues.

3. Building the Wider Role Capabilities of RSLs

At workshops, participants were asked to consider the extent to which the Wider Role programme has been effective in: *“building the capacity (i.e. confidence, skills, people and systems) of RSLs to undertake wider role activity”*

The Views of Communities Scotland Staff

Communities Scotland staff awarded an average score of 6.2 out of 10 in relation to the perceived effectiveness of the Fund in building RSL capacity.

Staff reported that the growth in RSL organisational capacity has been evident in many cases, as a result of Wider Role funding, particularly where specialist staff posts have been funded or development support available.

“Some RSLs are very experienced in delivering Wider Role activity and have considerable expertise – others are still at an early stage in their involvement...”

“Where funding for Wider Role officers has been given to RSLs – this has built the capacity of the RSLs.”

“Through development support funded by wider role RSLs have gained an increased capacity to put together projects/ideas.”

However, difficulties have been reported in establishing lasting competence to undertake wider role activity, particularly where involvement in this activity has been limited or is not yet regarded by RSLs as integral to their core business. This again is consistent with earlier survey evidence.

“Capacity is patchy across the sector. Many still see Wider Role as an add on which is done because Communities Scotland is asking for it.”

“Limited staff resources within RSLs”

“Good at building the capacity of RSLs already in engaged in Wider Role.”

The Views of RSL Representatives

Participants at the RSL workshops awarded an average score of 5.2 out of 10 in relation to the effectiveness of the Fund in building RSL capacity.

The feedback provided by RSLs points to significant growing organisational capacity and confidence in some cases as a result of regeneration activities, particularly where new staff and skills have been introduced.

“...having someone with a focus on Wider Role in the organisation has helped build capacity.”

“We have a much stronger strategic view of our wider role than we had three years ago.”

“Encourages partnership working between RSLs, therefore builds capacity and networking skills.”

In other cases the feedback has brought into question the extent to which the Fund has encouraged a systematic or structured approach to capacity building and skills development within RSLs. The feedback implies that, where wider role activity has been a marginal or add-on activity, without dedicated staff resources, that transformational change is unlikely.

“Limited staffing resources available in each RSL to make this happen effectively.”

“Staff do wider role in addition to their ‘day jobs’. They therefore develop limited relevant expertise.”

“The fund depends on existing structures being in place. Where there is no spare capacity, building capacity is very difficult.”

Opportunities to Strengthen Performance

Throughout the workshops a number of suggested opportunities were put forward to strengthen the organisational skills and capacity of RSLs to carry out wider role activity. These can be summarised as:

- the identification of wider development and training among organisations as the basis for a programme of support;
- a longer-term and more strategic approach to funding specialist wider role staff posts within RSLs or groups of RSLs;
- the development of opportunities for peer support, networking and sharing practice between RSLs on an area basis; and
- better access to existing sources of wider role information, support, and training, particularly for inexperienced RSLs.

4. Ensuring a Co-ordinated Approach to Regeneration

At workshops, participants were asked to consider the extent to which the Wider Role programme has been effective in: “ensuring that RSLs work with others to deliver on local regeneration priorities and plans”

The Views of Communities Scotland Staff

Communities Scotland staff awarded an average score of 6.4 out of 10 in relation to the perceived effectiveness of the Fund in establishing a coherent approach.

Staff reported positively that many RSL project activities are delivered in partnership and on the basis of local priorities. This was said to be ensured through the structure of the Fund and its application/appraisal.

“Part of the appraisal process looks at and encourages strategic partnership working – prevents duplication and can often help strengthen the project.”

“It has at least given RSLs the opportunity to input/meet/network as a result of some projects – gives them a route into discussion.”

“Many RSLs are encouraged through Wider Role activities to work with partners (SIPS & CPPs) – through the need for match funding to enable the delivery of Wider Role projects that meet local needs.”

However, staff also acknowledged that the ability of RSLs to work as full partners in the regeneration process varies, and that a strong fit between RSL activity and local regeneration plans is not always achieved.

“There are occasions when projects pay lip service to local plans and priorities.”

“RSLs not involved in the Community Planning process.”

“Many proposed projects are similar or duplicated to other RSLs, which demonstrates a lack of co-ordination and information sharing”

The Views of RSL Representatives

Participants at the RSL workshops awarded an average score of 5.1 out of 10 in relation to the perceived effectiveness of the Fund in ensuring a co-ordinated approach to regeneration.

For some RSLs the introduction of Wider Role funding has clearly acted as a catalyst for improved partnership working. These RSLs portrayed the funding itself as a helpful focus and leverage with which to build new relationships and progress new areas of project activity.

“Has encouraged RSLs to be more aware of other organisations in their area.”

“The policy has prompted RSLs to work with others – this has been a stronger ‘driver’ than the funding itself.”

“Because we have a pot of money to bring to the table local groups are keen to talk to us – its has allowed us to get into dialogue with a huge range of agencies.”

For some RSLs, however, partnership working was reported to be somewhat opportunistic and not without its downsides. Moreover, the framework for partnership working within regeneration was not always regarded as being coherent or strong enough to bind together partners’ efforts.

“RSLs can be seen as conduit by some external ‘partners’ and this is not helpful. Not considered full partners, but as organisations who can bring access to Wider Role funding.”

“Local regeneration priorities do not always dovetail with RSL priorities.”

“Plans are always dominated and controlled by the Council. RSLs do not always have a loud enough voice.”

Opportunities to Strengthen Performance

During the workshops a number of suggested opportunities were put forward to strengthen collaborative and planned approaches to wider role, which can be summarised as:

- increased co-ordination of the Wider Role Fund with other strategies, initiatives, and funds within the context of Community Planning;
- greater partnership working between local authorities, RSLs and other social economy organisations on wider role;
- greater encouragement for RSLs to work together and pool resources to deliver planned wider role programmes in a shared locality;
- provide additional resources to RSLs to cover the cost of building and sustaining involvement in partnerships; and
- a greater role for Communities Scotland in brokering partnerships and facilitating RSL links into local regeneration structures

5. Contributing to CtOG Objectives

At workshops, participants were asked to consider the extent to which the Wider Role programme has been effective in: *“delivering results that contribute to national ‘Closing the Opportunity Gap’ objectives”*

The Views of Communities Scotland Staff

Communities Scotland staff awarded an average score of 6.7 out of 10 in relation to the perceived effectiveness of the Fund in contributing to the CtOG Objectives.

On the one hand staff reported that the Communities Scotland project appraisal process has ensured that all projects are able to contribute to one or more of the CtOG objectives.

“Projects have to contribute or they are not funded.”

“Able to link many proposals to at least one priority.”

“Some local projects specifically focus on one or two of the CtOGs and appear to be going well.”

On the other hand staff have acknowledged that the CtOG objectives are so broad as to make it difficult to exclude any prospective RSL contribution, and to make measurement of project results and impact difficult.

“CtOG objectives are very broad – anything can be made to fit and RSLs know this! (undermines their meaning)”.

“We don’t evaluate results: we don’t track outputs/outcomes – mainly due to lack of resources.”

“Difficult to measure long term impacts at this point.”

The Views of RSL Representatives

The RSLs themselves awarded an average score of 4.2 out of 10 in relation to the perceived effectiveness of the Fund in contributing to CtOG Objectives.

The feedback received suggests both an ability of the RSLs to demonstrate a link with the CtOG objectives, and a broadly positive outcome in relation to one or more of these objectives.

“Wide criteria so more chance of hitting at least one of the CtOG objectives.”

“Would not get Wider Role grant approval if we did not meet any of the objectives...”

“Real progress in delivering opportunities to disadvantaged.”

However, the feedback highlights the primarily local perspective adopted by RSLs in establishing activity, which brings into question the extent to which the CtOG objectives provide a clear, meaningful, or practical guide to wider role locally.

“Don’t know what the objectives are.”

“Lack of clarity does not permit a full discussion on results.”

“Closing the opportunity Gap objectives are very broad. Difficult/impossible to deliver/initiate a project that does not meet objectives.”

Opportunities to Strengthen Performance

During the workshops a number of suggested opportunities were put forward to strengthen the contribution of Wider Role activity to national objectives, including:

- a clearer specification of national policy objectives and targets as they relate to wider role activity;
- the promotion of greater awareness among RSLs of national priorities;
- the introduction of a monitoring and evaluation framework that enables the collection of performance information linked to national priorities; and
- the introduction of a meaningful set of indicators and targets against which Wider Role project outputs and impacts can be reported.

Appendix 3 Option Appraisal

As part of the study, four main future options for the Wider Role Fund were developed as a basis for consultation.

Option One: The Nuclear Option

Under this option, the ring-fenced or targeted allocation of funding for RSLs to carry out wider role would come to an end and this funding would be reallocated elsewhere.

Option Two: The Business Improvement Option

Under this option, the existing Wider Role Fund would be continued along similar lines, albeit with management and operational procedures strengthened.

Option Three: The Strategic Realignment Option

Under this option the Fund would be recast as one of a suite of funds for social economy development and refocused on RSL capacity building and social enterprise activity.

Option Four: The Joined Up Community Regeneration Option

Under this option the funding allocation would be integrated into other sources of funding for local regeneration work and more closely targeted towards identified local priorities, within the Community Planning framework.

Option 1: The Nuclear Option	
Description	In this option, the ring-fenced or targeted allocation of funding currently available for RSLs to carry out wider role activity would come to an end after the current funding cycle. The Scottish Executive resources previously allocated to the Wider Role Fund would then be reallocated elsewhere within the Regeneration Division or wider Communities portfolio.
The Advantages	Among the main advantages of this option are that it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ is straightforward to implement and removes the managerial/administrative burden on the Area Network; ▪ enables resources to be released and reallocated elsewhere as priorities dictate; and ▪ levels the playing field for all regeneration/social economy organisations, with no special status attached to RSLs.
The Disadvantages	The main disadvantages of this option are that it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provides no dedicated focus or pump-priming for new wider role activity; ▪ removes a key source of funding to RSLs, making resources more limited or harder to secure; ▪ sends a signal that wider role is no longer a high priority for RSLs; and ▪ creates a potential backlash from the RSL sector, which has bought into the approach and values the Fund.
Potential Risks	Among the potential risks attached to this option are that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ some existing activity may be prematurely terminated in the short-term without clear exit route from the Fund; ▪ many RSLs may be discouraged from undertaking wider role, leading to a retrenchment around core business; and ▪ the traditional customer relationship between the RSL sector and Communities Scotland may be damaged.
Added Value	Overall, this option would appear to provide little or no added value if the goal is still to secure a full and sustainable contribution from RSLs in relation to public policy priorities.

Option 2: The Business Improvement Option	
Description	Under this option the existing Wider Role Fund would be continued along similar lines post 2008. It would continue to be co-ordinated by the Social Economy Unit and managed by the Area Network. However, management and operational procedures would be strengthened, supported by updated guidance and improved communications.
The Advantages	Among the main advantages of this option are that it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ is reasonably straightforward to implement; ▪ allows RSLs and partners to build on their progress and achievements to date; ▪ retains ease of access for RSLs to funding for wider role; ▪ builds on a tried and tested delivery model; and ▪ retains the status quo and therefore the satisfaction of the RSL sector.
The Disadvantages	The main disadvantages of this option are that it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ does not fully address the need to build RSL delivery capacity and ensure project sustainability; ▪ does not in itself guarantee improved strategic alignment with local regeneration structures and priorities; and ▪ does not ensure a coherent package of support for the social economy, of which the RSL sector is one part.
Potential Risks	Among the potential risks attached to this option are that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ nothing fundamental may change and the Fund would continue along similar lines; ▪ the opportunities for increased RSL impact and a stronger policy contribution may be missed; and ▪ there may be perception of an unfair advantage or special treatment for RSLs over other organisations.
Added Value	Overall, this option would potentially improve the administrative efficiency and value for money of the current Fund, although it may not lead to a transformational change in the contribution of RSLs to policy priorities.
Option 3: The Strategic Realignment Option	
Description	Under this option, funding to support RSL wider role activity would be recast as one of a suite of funds for social economy development. This might be co-ordinated by the Social Economy Unit and would be refocused on supporting RSL capacity building and social enterprise activity.
The Advantages	Among the main advantages of this option are that it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ establishes a strong strategic fit with the current policy agenda and support in relation to the social economy; ▪ retains commitment to wider role as a distinct funding priority; ▪ recognises the RSL sector as a distinct and important part of the social economy; ▪ brings a stronger focus on the RSL capacity and skills needed to deliver on regeneration; and ▪ addresses concerns regarding the financial sustainability of wider role activity.
The Disadvantages	The main disadvantages of this option are that it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reduces the focus and funding directed towards the delivery of regeneration projects; ▪ does not guarantee any improved strategic alignment with the local regeneration agenda; ▪ provides for no targeted impact on those localities facing greatest need; and ▪ appeals to a smaller segment of RSLs with an interest in pursuing social enterprise activity.
Potential Risks	Among the potential risks attached to this option are that:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ it may dilute the distinct focus of the Fund on RSL-led regeneration activity; and ▪ it may reduce the scale and scope of the regeneration activity in the short-term.
Added Value	Overall, this option appears to offer a broad and long-term perspective on strengthening its contribution to a range of policy objectives, but with a reduced focus on the deliver of regeneration projects.
Option 4: The Joined Up Community Regeneration Option	
Description	Under this option the funding allocation currently attached to the Wider Role Fund would be integrated with other sources of funding for local regeneration work, more closely targeted to identified local priorities and areas of need, and co-ordinated through Community Planning arrangements.
The Advantages	Among the main advantages of this option are that it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ increases the alignment and contribution of wider role activity to local regeneration priorities; ▪ strengthens the connection of RSLs directly into local Community Planning arrangements; and ▪ provides for a more joined up and targeted response to local needs.
The Disadvantages	The main disadvantages of this option are that it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ requires RSLs to secure resources for regeneration work in an increasingly competitive funding arena; ▪ does not significantly address the limitations on RSLs' delivery capacity; ▪ does not account for the capacity of Community Planning Partnerships in all areas to lead on this work; ▪ dilutes the distinctive focus of the Wider Role Fund within a expanded local regeneration 'pot'; ▪ reduces the flexibility of RSLs to meet needs outwith targeted localities or priorities; and ▪ spreads resources thinly across areas and brings an uneven or narrower focus on RSL wider role activity.
Potential Risks	Among the potential risks attached to this option are that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ it may reduce or dilute the contribution of RSLs as a unique and distinct sector; and ▪ it may do no more than provide a focus on one-off or short-term regeneration projects.
Added Value	Overall, this option appears to offer a more co-ordinated and coherent contribution from RSLs to local community regeneration work although would potentially constrain or dilute the distinctive contribution that RSLs currently make.

Appendix 4 Project Case Studies

This section describes the experience of 11 Wider Role Fund supported projects.

Lead Organisation	Project
Drumchapel Opportunities	Construction Training for Young People
Whiteinch and Scotstoun Housing	Community Centre/workspaces
Port of Leith Housing Association	Training Opportunities for Young People in Leith (TOIL)
Linthouse Housing Association	Linthouse Urban Village Co-ordinator
Calvay Housing Co-op	Robert Bennie Centre Manager
Hillhead Housing Association	Welfare Rights Officer
Fyne Homes Ltd	Bute Recycling Centre
Cunninghame Housing Association	North Ayrshire Fab Pad
Hillcrest Housing Association	Dundee Wider Role Alliance (web site)
Pentland Housing Association	Pulteneytown Family Centre
Grampian Housing Association	Solstice Phase II

Drumchapel Opportunities: Construction Training for Young People

Project Background and Objectives

Drumchapel Opportunities, is one of eight Local Development Companies operating in Glasgow, and aims to bring about the regeneration and economic development of the area by providing access to training, employment and business development opportunities. The organisation has a strong track record in delivering employability programmes designed to assist local people to secure and maintain employment.

The project was an extension of a previous pilot project and was designed to secure opportunities from construction projects being carried out by Pineview Housing Association and Drumchapel Housing Co-operative. This activity provided an opportunity to address the issue of youth unemployment and was consistent with the local Social Inclusion Partnership strategy priority of engaging with young people. The objective of the project was to recruit four young people and assist them, over a period of three months, to secure employment in the construction sector by providing them with appropriate skills. This skill development support also included support to secure appropriate CITB certification, which is a prerequisite for securing employment in construction. It was anticipated that over the course of the project, four young people would secure apprenticeships with contractors building over 2,000 new houses for sale in the area.

Strategic Fit

The Construction Training for Young People project contributes towards the Scottish Executive 'Closing the Opportunity Gap' objective which is aimed at increasing the chances of sustained employment for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups - in order to lift them permanently out of poverty.

Delivery, Management and Resources

The total cost for the initiative was approximately £10,000, of which, £6,700 was provided through the RSL Wider Role Fund. The balance of costs were met with an "in kind" contribution from Drumchapel Opportunities. This in kind contribution included the provision of access to customised employability support and careers guidance.

The Wider Role resources were used specifically to meet beneficiary costs associated with participation on the programme. This included the provision of trainee allowances, travel costs, lunch and protective clothing.

Management for the programme was provided by a 'Wider Role Officer' (WRO) based within Drumchapel Opportunities. The WRO was responsible for ensuring the effective delivery of the project and providing regular progress reports to the various partners.

Drumchapel Opportunities also drew on their working relationship with young people's Key Workers and employment advisors to ensure that comprehensive support was provided for each trainee. This included support to develop basic and core skills and the provision of customised career guidance support.

Activity and Progress

The project centred on a short-term intensive programme of support designed to assist young people to secure apprenticeships with companies carrying out construction work in their area. The project was completed in May 2005.

Particular challenges were evident both in recruiting and retaining participants and encouraging employers to provide work experience and new job interviews. Drumchapel Opportunities drew on their experience of dealing with these matters and additional influence was exerted on contractors by the participating housing organisations.

A critical success factor was the overarching role of the WRO. Through ongoing discussions with participants and partners the post holder was able to quickly identify and deal with specific issues as they emerged.

Emerging Outcomes

The implementation of this project has provided the opportunity to test new methods for addressing the issue of youth unemployment in a disadvantaged area.

Each of the participating organisations has benefited by achieving their 'wider role' and economic development objectives. In addition the working relationship established between RSL's, the local economic development company and employers will enable these organisations to exploit further opportunities as they arise.

As a direct result of the intervention seven young people secured employment or apprenticeships in various trades such as: joinery; roofing; and painting and decorating. A key to the success was the experience in dealing with issues and the commitment shown by the various partners to supporting the programme.

An indirect result has been that Drumchapel Opportunities have used the experience to negotiate a further 32 apprenticeships with contractors and a training and employment plan has been developed to maintain momentum and improve access to opportunity for local people.

Future Plans and Prospects

The project has potential to be rolled out on a larger scale and replicated in other communities. Success is dependent on the provision of realistic work experience and training allowances for participants during the training period. This approach has proven to be effective as it improves retention rates within the programmes and provides young people with a competitive edge in the labour market.

The importance of addressing a wide range of additional issues related to employability and providing intensive support should not be under estimated. As such, close working relationships between housing organisations hoping to provide access to opportunity for their tenants through their capital developments and appropriate agencies dealing with broader social issues are crucial.

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Whiteinch and Scotstoun Housing Association: Community Facilities and Workspace

Project Background and Objectives

The Association is located in the west of Glasgow and has its origins in two local community groups: the Whiteinch Housing Action Group (WHAG); and Scotfore. These two organisations formed the basis of the original membership of the Housing Association which was formally constituted late in 1977. The Association now has around 950 houses for rent with a further 30 sheltered housing units.

The project emerged from extensive community consultation designed to identify issues emerging from the closure of Whiteinch Neighbourhood Centre. This survey revealed the need for replacement accommodation that could house the community services and groups displaced by the closure, whilst also encouraging new social enterprise in the local area.

Drawing on similar experience elsewhere in the city, Whiteinch and Scotstoun Housing Association (WSHA) and Whiteinch Community Association (WCA) worked in partnership to develop a regeneration strategy to meet these aims.

Strategic Fit

The Community Facilities and Workspace project was established to contribute towards the Scottish Executive '*Closing the Opportunity Gap*' objective which is designed to bring about the regeneration of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods - in order that people living there can take advantage of job opportunities and improve their quality of life.

Delivery, Management and Resources

WSHA worked in partnership with WCA to build a new community facility and four workspaces on the site next to St. Paul's Hall on Dumbarton Road. WCA raised over £1.4m to build and fit-out these facilities, which will accommodate training and social events for the local community. Around 25% of the costs (£353,000) were funded through RSL Wider Role Grant.

In addition to the community facilities and workspaces the new build development also included social rented housing 23(flats) and new offices for the housing association.

WCA own the community centre while WSHA own their offices and the workspaces. All form part of the one building. WCA and WSHA established a separate company to employ the community centre staff and ensure clear structures and policies were in place to successfully manage the building whilst making best use of each organisation's strengths.

Activity and Progress

WSHA and WCA worked for almost six years to design and develop the project. During this time a number of difficult issues, including the purchase of the land and gaining planning permission, had to be resolved. The experience and skill of WSHA proved essential in this respect. The construction of the premises was completed and an official opening event was held in September 2006.

Emerging Outcomes

This is an exciting project for the Housing Association and has brought together opportunities for partnership working, creative design, physical regeneration and importantly, a valuable resource for the local community. As such, the community centre is now a focal point both for the local community and the Housing Association's ongoing wider role activity.

In addition to providing the basis for a good working relationship between the Housing Association and the community, one which allows for income generation through the workspaces, the project has also increased access to one stop community services.

Future Plans and Prospects

WSHA played a significant role in achieving the aims of the project. They are, however, intent on establishing the facility as a vibrant building that generates income to contribute towards viability.

As such, a Regeneration Co-ordinator post has been established. The Regeneration Co-ordinator will be responsible for:

- marketing and managing the facilities;
- developing or facilitating the delivery of ICT and employability programmes; and
- facilitating the development of childcare services and other social enterprise.

It is anticipated these activities will generate income that will contribute towards the maintenance of the building and the continued delivery of services.

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Port of Leith Housing Association: Training Opportunities for Young People (TOIL) Project

Project Background and Objectives

The Training Opportunities in Leith Project (TOIL) was launched in February 2004. The aim of the project is to provide school leavers with access to opportunities, and assist them to secure employment, in the construction industry. The project focuses support on young people in Leith, with few or no qualifications, and provides them with paid work experience that includes training and mentoring support.

Young people participate on the project for up to six months. During this period the participants work alongside local trades people, an approach that provides a real and practical introduction into the world of work and adulthood. It is anticipated that young people will then progress to modern apprenticeships, full-time paid employment or continue with vocational training.

Port of Leith Housing Association has established contact with a number of local companies and trades people. The local trades people play a key role in training the young people and acting as mentors during the period of their placement.

Strategic Fit

The TOIL project is designed to contribute towards the Scottish Executive '*Closing the Opportunity Gap*' objective that aims to increase the chances of sustained employment for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups - in order to lift them permanently out of poverty.

Delivery, Management and Resources

Communities Scotland's Wider Role programme provided a total of £197,735 to deliver the project over a three year period. These resources contributed to: the recruitment of a full-time Project Development Officer; project overheads; and corporate support. The Project Development Officer was recruited to develop and manage the project and ensure that sufficient numbers of young people were offered the mentoring based training opportunity.

Activity and Progress

At its inception it was anticipated that the project would provide opportunities and support for up to 12 young people each year. As a result of developments, and good partnership working arrangements with more than 20 local employers, the project has, in fact, recruited around 24 young people each year. There are a number of benefits for young people. Each trainee completes a six month placement for which they are paid a wage of almost £100 a week. Young people are also assigned a mentor to help improve their life skills.

Most young people are referred to the project by Careers Scotland, though this is not the only source of recruitment. The project has also received referrals from teaching staff at local schools and the local Social Work Department.

The project has encountered some challenges, particularly on retention of participants. Despite these challenges the project has achieved some notable success. Of the 63 teenagers who have joined the project: 26, (41%) have secured an apprenticeship opportunity; nine, (14%) are in full time work; and three, (4%) have enrolled on further college courses. As such the project has assisted young people to overcome significant barriers and achieve their goals of securing apprenticeships and employment.

Emerging Outcomes

Port of Leith Housing Association's TOIL Project has achieved impressive outcomes in terms of young people placed in work experience placements and subsequently progressing into full time employment or apprenticeships.

This approach adopted has assisted access to employment and training and is for the completed programmes has achieved positive outcomes for 75% participants. This is more than double the national average (ref. Scottish Enterprise figures for the positive outcome performance – 35% - of all Get Ready for Work programmes across Scotland).

Future Plans and Prospects

The TOIL Project is achieving increasing national recognition as a model of good practice for providing routes to employment and tackling social exclusion. Similar projects, drawing on the lessons from TOIL, are being established in Govan and Perth and there is also further interest from other housing associations in the south and west of Edinburgh. In addition, there are also similar projects being established in Sheffield and Sunderland with support and advice from the TOIL project team.

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Linthouse Housing Association: Linthouse Urban Village

Project Background and Objectives

Linthouse Housing Association operates within the Govan area of Glasgow. The organisation has around 1,200 houses for rent, mostly located around Sheildhall and West Drumoyne.

The Linthouse Urban Village Project (LUV) is helping to regenerate the area by restoring community spirit, raising aspirations of local people and improving the physical look of the area by using innovative approaches. The LUV Project takes a creative approach to regeneration involving local people in a series of projects to enhance the quality of life in the area and has been recognised as integral to the strategic regeneration of West Govan by key agencies such as: Communities Scotland; Govan Initiative; the Community Planning Partnership; Scottish Enterprise and Glasgow City Council.

The project aims to ensure the continued development of Linthouse as a community village and its economy by:

- giving local people ownership of their community by involving them in the development and implementation of LUV;
- developing a grass roots, cultural planning-based approach to the regeneration of Linthouse;
- re-branding Linthouse positively and creatively and encouraging more footfall and interest in the area;
- improving the physical environment through innovative environmental and artistic projects;
- increasing opportunities for local people to socialise;
- increasing job and training opportunities for local people; and
- improving opportunities for people and local businesses through an artistic programme.

Strategic Fit

The Linthouse Urban Village was established to contribute towards the Scottish Executive '*Closing the Opportunity Gap*' objective which is designed to bring about the regeneration of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods - in order that people living there can take advantage of job opportunities and improve their quality of life.

Delivery, Management and Resources

The first phase of the project began in September 2003 when five artists were employed to work with the local community and local shopkeepers to develop innovative designs for the exterior of their premises. The activity intensified with around £580,000 of Wider Role grant funding contributing to capital works and employing of the Urban Village Co-ordinator.

Communities Scotland resources of £93,000 contributed towards the costs of employing the Co-ordinator over a three year period. Additional funding was provided by: Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise Glasgow; Glasgow Key Fund; and Glasgow City Council.

The Urban Village Coordinator develops, supports, manages and co-ordinates the delivery of the Urban Village concept. However, due to the ongoing development and success, a new LUV Company is being established as a legal entity in its own right. This will allow the organisation to drive forward current activities and reinforce the benefits achieved by the LUV development.

Activity and Progress

A range of projects were identified and prioritised through the cultural planning process. These projects and activities, which have been established or are ongoing, include:

Creative Shops Front Project; five artists were commissioned to work with shopkeepers and local community groups across Govan to develop innovative artwork ideas and designs. The aim was to transform the neglected shop fronts in the Linthouse area. This concept, along with the resulting shop front designs has generated significant interest and support, both locally and nationally. As a result the project was selected, in the face of stiff competition from many other projects, to premiere at Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art. **Phase 2** renovated 14 shopfronts and **phase 3** aims to improve empty shop units for the development of business within the creative industries.

The Luv Café, the LUV Gallery and LUV Community Learning Zone - The gallery is a custom designed, bright and welcoming centre for the LUV Project. It epitomises the high value expectations LUV are aiming to generate in the community in terms of design, functionality and aesthetics. The LUV co-ordinator's workspace is located in the gallery and there is ample workshop space for local people to develop their creative skills. The LUV Café continues to thrive after 3 years trading. Employing local people in a healthy eating environment, the LUV Café has made a small surplus over the last 12 months making it sustainable. The LUV Café also serves as a venue for various community activities including the LUV Book Group and Cultural Evenings.

LUV Recycling Hub and the development of a recycling Social Firm- The LUV firm has been successful in securing £10,000 funding to develop the business plan for the proposed recycling/reuse business providing training and employment for vulnerable people. Work will on the project early in 2007 and thereafter the need for Investment Start up funding over a three year period to provide premises, material and staffing will be required.

Opportunities Programme have concentrated on: **Youth Development** with, for example, video/film training for young people; **Social Development** through the delivery of new activities such as specialised art/craft classes; **Health Development** with Healthy living initiatives such as Belly Dancing, Body Combat, Walks with a countryside ranger.

Market Day and Annual Events to create a sense of community has included summer street decoration and Christmas lighting. The involvement of local people and organisations in all aspects of decision making, planning, design and delivery has been a key feature of the progress and success of the project.

Emerging Outcomes

Each of the activities pursued is consistent with the overall aims and objectives for the area's regeneration.

As a result of the project the numbers of people and organisations participating in the regeneration of the community has increased, as have the perceptions of the area. Other identifiable impacts that have been achieved are the development and implementation of a Communications Plan.

A key element that clearly demonstrates the value of the project is the use of facilities being made by the local community. This includes: healthy living evenings; a book group; a film club for young people; theme evenings; and exhibitions and art workshops.

Future Plans and Prospects

The project is integral to Linthouse Housing Association's regeneration strategy. The organisation has learned a range of lessons in developing this approach and is committed to maintaining the continued delivery of the project. As such, the project will continue to deliver services from the premises and will seek funding to maintain a programme of events.

Projects currently under development include:

- working on a feasibility study for the former Fairfield Farmhouse in Elderpark as a space to house local social enterprise organisations which would benefit the community;
- development of the business plan for a LUV recycling business which will look primarily at recycling textiles employing volunteers from the local area;
- development of former Electrical Substations at Cressy Street into Recycling Hub;
- working with Refugees and Asylum seekers from Govan. To assist the development of LUV Food Cookbook; and
- development of the business plan for the LUV Company – and establishing a Development Trust with a dedicated board of directors encompassing all the LUV projects.

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Calvay Housing Association: Robert Bennie Centre

Project Background and Objectives

Calvay Housing Association operates in Barlanark, which is in the East End of Glasgow. The Association has around 480 properties and has been involved in a range of wider role activity. This included, for example, a streetscape project with the Wise Group that provided employment and training opportunities for young people.

The Association had been working with the local 'Social Action Group', effectively the management committee of the local community centre, to assist them to maintain activities in the Centre. These activities focussed on facilitating: a pensioner club; a disabled group; the youth club; and access to the IT facilities provided by John Wheatley College's Learning Network.

The need for dedicated support, and the type of support, was identified through consultation with the Social Action Group. This support would allow the group to concentrate its efforts on the delivery of services without being distracted by fundraising issues. Calvay's intention was to establish a focus for this type of work and enhance access to opportunities for local people through the further development of activities in the community centre.

Strategic Fit

The Robert Bennie Centre, now The Calvay Centre, project contributes towards the Scottish Executive '*Closing the Opportunity Gap*' objective which aims to bring about the regeneration of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods - in order that people living there can take advantage of job opportunities and improve their quality of life.

Delivery, Management and Resources

The proposal centred on recruiting a new manager to develop the capacity of the volunteers and management committee and assist them to enhance the scale, regularity and range of activities pursued in the Centre.

The total cost for the three-year period was approximately £85,000. Of this, Communities Scotland contributed around £37,000 towards the revenue costs, with the shortfall being made up from: grant making trust funds; public grant funding; fundraising; and £9,000 of the Housing Association's own resources.

Priorities for the Centre Manager focussed on: increasing youth club attendance by 25%; increasing the usage of the IT suite; and identifying and capitalising on income generating opportunities.

Activity and Progress

With the Wider Role support grant a more effective management system for the Centre has been established. Additional youth provision, focussing on the general health and well being of young people, has also been implemented in partnership with the Glasgow City Council Youth Services, John Wheatley College Youth Access Programme, F.A.R.E. and Greater Easterhouse Arts Team.

The Association has secured funding of almost £1.3 million for a further major refurbishment and significant efforts will be focussed on strategic planning and partnership development beyond the local area. In addition, the Association has achieved five years revenue funding for staffing from The Big Lottery to support continued service development within the Centre.

A key factor in the success of this project has been the ability to build trust with the local community, including the members of the Social Action Group. This joint working has enabled the project to progress smoothly and deliver a greater impact.

Emerging Outcomes

The funding and development has been secured on the basis of lessons learnt and experience gained since the project manager came into post. In addition the housing association has reported: improved relations with young people; increased partnership working; and an increase in the number of individuals securing employment as a result of the work being carried out in the Centre.

Over the last year the Centre has enabled a number of community activities to proceed, including:

- 200 bookings for hall hires and meetings;
- 80 youth sessions provided by Glasgow City Council;
- 50 sessions for older people's activities;
- 48 Crèche sessions; and
- 30 tutor supported IT sessions provided by John Wheatley College.

These sessions have included provision of access to European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) support, Food Hygiene, First Aid and Basic Cookery Classes.

The Association is now aware of the opportunities that can emerge from wider role activity and is better equipped to incorporate this as part of its core activity.

Future Plans and Prospects

The continuation of service development and delivery, and securing resources to achieve this, are key priorities for the Centre management and Housing Association. A range of options is currently being investigated. One possible avenue is to secure Community Regeneration Funding to deliver projects that are consistent with the Glasgow *'Regeneration Outcome Agreement'*.

Activity to date places the project in a good position to deliver services related to addressing employability issues, particularly among young people.

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Hillhead Housing Association: Welfare Rights Service

Project Background and Objectives

Hillhead Housing Association 2000 is a community based housing association located in the Hillhead area of Kirkintilloch, East Dunbartonshire. The organisation grew out of a bid for 'New Housing Partnership' status and as a result 863 houses were transferred to Hillhead Housing Association in 2004. The Association has established working relationships with a range of local organisations and was interested in developing access to a broad range of welfare rights support.

The local Citizens Advice Bureau, East Dunbartonshire Housing Benefit Section and a social economy project (Project 101) have provided access to welfare rights advice in the local community for a number of years. However, the available level of service provision did not provide comprehensive coverage and, due to increasing levels of demand, the need for additional service provision was recognised as a priority in the East Dunbartonshire 'Regeneration Outcome Agreement'. The additional service provision was primarily designed to increase access to support to address financial exclusion and capability.

The project has provided the opportunity for Hillhead Housing Association, in partnership with Antonine Housing Co-operative, to provide a Welfare Rights Service for their tenants and other residents in the local area.

Strategic Fit

The Welfare Right Service will contribute towards the Scottish Executive 'Closing the Opportunity Gap' objective which aims to reduce the vulnerability of low income families to financial exclusion and multiple debts - in order to prevent them becoming over-indebted and/or to lift them out of poverty.

Delivery, Management and Resources

The project established a number of clear outcomes and associated indicators to identify the benefits of the service, as follows:

- increasing the use of welfare rights and related services;
- increasing the response time in dealing with welfare issues;
- increasing awareness and use of services among people who had not previously used this type of service;
- developing action plans for residents that help alleviate debt and poverty issues; and
- reducing the incidence of debt among residents in the area.

In order to achieve these aims the partnership required a full-time Welfare Rights worker, with associated costs for a two-year period, this totalled approximately £73,000. The project sought, and was granted £40,000 from the Wider Role Fund with a proportion of the remainder being provided by East Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership funding. Hillhead Housing Association and Antonine Housing Co-operative provided around £20,000 from their own resources.

Activity and Progress

A Welfare Rights Sub Group consisting of representation from Hillhead Housing Association and Antonine Housing Co-operative was created in order to ensure the effective delivery of the service. The project has subsequently exceeded all expectations and targets.

This has been achieved, by: ensuring the project recruited people with relevant expertise and experience in welfare rights support; establishing a working relationship with frontline housing staff; and establishing links between the service and other referral agencies.

Good results have allowed staff to prove the worth of the project and this, in turn, has reinforced the value of the project among local residents. It is this relationship and the quality of service provision that has ensured continued use of the service.

Emerging Outcomes

A clear set of aims and a monitoring framework were established to ensure that targets are being achieved and appropriate resources are in place to maintain the project.

The Sub Group has examined the number of people receiving assistance through the project. Also important, has been how the service was developing additional support, or facilitating access to additional support, from agencies, such as: the Department of Work and Pensions; Local Authority Social Work Department; and other specialist advice and counselling services.

In the first year of operation the Welfare Rights Worker established a caseload of around 200 people. This included people with existing and new benefit claimants.

This level of activity, in the first year of operations, has resulted in:

- tenants increasing weekly benefit entitlement;
- lump sum repayments of approximately £50,000 to tenants; and
- an overall increase of £2,500 in weekly benefits to tenants (an annual increase of £135,000 per year in the local community).

Requests for backdated housing benefit payments have also assisted a number of tenants to clear their rent arrears, placing them and the Housing Association on a firmer financial footing.

Future Plans and Prospects

The project has met, and exceeded targets and established the value of the service to the local community. As such, negotiations are underway to secure continuing support from Community Regeneration Fund.

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Fyne Homes: Extension of Bute Recycling Centre Activities

Project Background and Objectives

Fyne Homes is a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) managing in excess of 1,400 homes in Bute, Cowal, Mid Argyll and Kintyre. The Association has two subsidiary companies, Fyne Futures and Fyne Initiatives. Fyne Futures develops and delivers wider role projects on behalf of the Association. The project emerged from an ongoing working relationship with a local community recycling organisation, Bute Waste Watchers (BWW).

BWW was established to increase recycling and environmental awareness on the Island and had made some significant progress with its recycling efforts. With the help of Fyne Homes, this included the development of Bute Recycling Centre, which was successfully addressing issues associated with waste management.

With the potential for further developments evident, the organisation undertook a detailed study that aimed to investigate opportunities that would reinforce BWW's work.

The study looked at: the provision of recycling premises in central Rothesay; kerbside collection of cans, plastics and textiles; and the creation of two permanent posts and one New Deal post.

The research confirmed the feasibility of extending the activities of the Bute Recycling Centre and a business plan was developed.

Strategic Fit

The extension of the Bute Recycling Centre activities will contribute towards the Scottish Executive '*Closing the Opportunity Gap*' objective which aims to improve access to high quality services for the most disadvantaged groups and individuals in rural communities – in order to improve their access to opportunity.

The recycling activities also fit closely with the Argyll and Bute Community Planning priorities that aim to: '*Create employment opportunities and on-going local business support*'; and '*Sustain and develop our communities, culture and environment*'.

Delivery, Management and Resources

Fyne Homes, as lead partner, assumed responsibility for funding applications and benefited greatly from BWW's knowledge of the recycling sector. The funding application centred on revenue costs associated with the Bute Recycling Centre, allowing it to extend its activities to Dunoon.

The total cost of the project was approximately £142,000. This included the costs for establishing a fully equipped recycling base. Communities Scotland provided £47,000 towards the cost, with the remainder coming from a range of sources, including income generation of £23,000.

With this level of investment it was anticipated that waste material could be diverted from landfill. It was anticipated that ten tonnes of aluminium and steel and 4 tonnes of plastics would be diverted landfill. In addition, five tonnes of textiles and 19 tonnes of cardboard and paper would also be diverted.

Activity and Progress

The initial success of the Bute Recycling Centre has been consolidated and has resulted in an expansion of services to cover a broader geographical area. This extension, which has created additional employment opportunities, has also increased the potential for income generation.

The recycling operation is now supported by Fyne Futures, a subsidiary of Fyne Homes that supports social enterprise and community development activities.

In addition, the partners have also identified additional activity focusing on the recycling of glass and bio diesel. This requires a new approach and the development of a new strategy, which will be developed in partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University as part of a knowledge Transfer Project.

Other additional activity includes the re-use of furniture. This activity has been supported by the Scottish Executive INCREASE programme. A marketing programme with local young people, to increase recycling participation is also being developed and this has also been supported by Scottish Executive INCREASE funding.

The project has had to review its activities, to enable it to develop as a sustainable social enterprise, and an improved business model has been developed as a result. This has resulted in more efficient use of resources and the organisation now has purpose built recycling collection vehicles which are used to maximise resources and improve efficiency.

Initial expectations for the project have been exceeded. This has been achieved by working with the individuals and organisations in the community, including 75 commercial premises, four local schools and 1,000 households.

Emerging Outcomes

The project has surpassed the initial target of diverting waste from landfill sites. This included:

- 160 tonnes of cardboard and paper;
- 5 tonnes of aluminium and 11 tonnes of steel;
- 29 tonnes of plastics and 24 tonnes of textiles; and
- 18 tonnes of furniture.

In the last financial year the organisation has collected around 250 tonnes of material and is on course to recycle 300 tonnes this year. Importantly, the project is now a source of employment for seven people five of which are full-time and two are part time posts.

The project has been of significant benefit to Fyne Homes, generating good publicity and increased interest in its activity within the local communities where they operate. In addition to formal employment opportunities, the project also provides access to voluntary work.

Future Plans and Prospects

Despite ongoing challenges in establishing a financially viable recycling operation in a rural area where access to markets and increased costs for collection and transportation are a significant factor, Fyne Futures has established an agreement between the partners to support the recycling work for a further two to three years. A business plan has been developed and regular monitoring and evaluation is undertaken to identify and capitalise on further opportunities and ensure that the business develops as a sustainable social enterprise.

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Cunninghame Housing Association: North Ayrshire Fab Pad

Project Background and Objectives

Cunninghame Housing Association Ltd (CHA) was founded in 1984, and with over 2,000 properties is the largest housing association in Ayrshire. The Housing Association has headquarters in Ardrossan and an operational remit that extends to North and East Ayrshire. Cunninghame Housing Association entered into a funding partnership with Moffat Charitable Trust creating the 'Working Together for the Community' initiative. The Partnership established a Community Regeneration Unit and established a number of key priorities, including the aim to:

- create labour market opportunities for excluded individuals and communities;
- develop a community infrastructure to address barriers to economic and social inclusion;
- develop the social economy; and
- increase the capacity within communities to engage in regeneration and neighbourhood management activity.

The North Ayrshire Fab Pad project emerged from these objectives. This centred on the provision training and support that will enhance home design and maintenance skills. This is complemented with support to develop the employability of participants.

Strategic Fit

The North Ayrshire Fab Pad project was set up to contribute towards the Scottish Executive 'Closing the Opportunity Gap' objective which is aimed at increasing the chances of sustained employment for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups - in order to lift them permanently out of poverty.

Delivery, Management and Resources

Impact Arts had already developed this model and, as such, has created a reputation for delivering good quality services to young people throughout the West of Scotland. The model centres around creativity such as interior design and techniques. This includes, for example, decorating and creating soft furnishings and pieces of furniture.

The project's aim is to create stability primarily for those who have been, or at the risk of becoming homeless. This activity complemented Cunninghame HA's objectives and a partnership between Cunninghame Housing Association and North Ayrshire Council commissioned Impact Arts to deliver this specifically in North Ayrshire.

The project aimed to provide support to 30 people per year over a three-year period. Client support would be provided by range of agencies and a referral system was established between the project and organisations such as: Quarriers (supported accommodation provider); CHA's Homeless Persons Unit; and North Ayrshire Council's Homeless Persons Unit.

The total cost of the project, over three years, was £216,439. Wider Role funding contributed £90,951 which provided resources for management of the programme, group training sessions, workshop materials and a budget for participant travel costs.

Activity and Progress

The project aimed to provide support to 90 people, of which:

- 80% would sustain their tenancy beyond 6 months; and
- 60% would secure education, training or employment.

This would be achieved through the provision of skill development, confidence building and job search activities.

In order to achieve this and maintain momentum a steering group was formed. This included representation from North Ayrshire Council (Property Services and Social Services), Communities Scotland, Impact Arts and Cunninghame Housing Association.

In addition the Housing Association 'Community Regeneration Unit' managed the project and Impact Arts delivered the training and employability support programme.

The Steering Group met quarterly to report on progress and deal with any issues arising as result of delivering the project. This has been a very productive process, ensuring that required resources for delivery of the project are provided and referrals procedures maintained, or adapted as required.

Emerging Outcomes

The project has exceeded expectations in the number of referrals and by October 2006 it had achieved 45 positive outcomes. In addition, 72 participants (80%) had sustained their tenancy for 6 months or more.

The project is providing access to taster sessions for a broader range of groups and individuals. This has included skill development sessions with organisations such as Kilwinning Social Services Family Support Unit and Kilbirnie Women's Aid.

The project has established a tracking procedure that will allow previous referrals to participate on the project. In addition, home visits have been established to provide support that addresses practical issues facing participants. As a result tutors are working alongside clients in their homes to ensure that tasks are completed to a high standard.

The Housing Association has developed a range of working partnerships and increased its wider role activity and as a result has a greater understanding of the issues facing young people attempting to establish a new tenancy and participate in the labour market.

Future Plans and Prospects

Negotiations are underway with a range of organisations to maintain and extend the programme's geographical coverage in North Ayrshire. The project has been successful in securing funding support from the North Ayrshire Community Regeneration Fund for 2007/2008.

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Hillcrest Housing Association: Dundee Wider Role Alliance Website (DWRA)

Project Background and Objectives

Led by Hillcrest Housing Association, the project was designed to promote joint activity between the six Registered Social Landlords's (RSL) that comprise the Dundee Wider Role Alliance (DWRA). These organisations include: Abertay Housing Association; Angus Housing Association; Hillcrest Housing Association; Home in Scotland; Sanctuary Housing Association; and Servite Housing Association. The Website formed just one part of a range of projects that were designed to develop the DWRA wider role activities and contribute towards joint working between RSL's operating in Dundee.

The project aimed to promote their joint working and increase the respective organisations' web presence through a collaborative website that would promote service provision and provide information and advice for tenants. The Website would be updated regularly to publicise a range of activities and promote access to community activities such as literacy classes, sports activities and youth events.

Key issues identified by the DWRA, that lay behind the project, were the perceived need to develop a joint approach to the provision of information and additional ways for facilitating communication between tenants and the partner RSLs.

Strategic Fit

The DWRA Web Site project is designed to contribute towards the Scottish Executive '*Closing the Opportunity Gap*' objective that aims to bring about the regeneration of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods - in order that people living there can take advantage of job opportunities and improve their quality of life.

Delivery, Management and Resources

A clear project delivery timetable was established that took the project through four key development stages:

- preliminaries: agreeing domain name and content approval procedures;
- design and development Phase;
- going live; and
- maintenance.

It was anticipated that it would take 13 weeks to progress the project from stage one to completion and the total cost of the project was approximately £4,400. The project was awarded a grant of around £3,200, with the remainder of the funding required being provided by the organisations comprising the Dundee Wider Role Alliance.

It was recognised that the development of the Website and managing the process of securing appropriate content from each of the organisations would be difficult to keep on track. The Wider Role Outcomes Officer (WROO) had a key role to play in co-ordinating this effort and ensuring that the project achieved key milestones.

Activity and Progress

During the process there were, however, some delays in securing information and in hindsight the web design team would have broadened the consultation on content to a wider group in order to encourage ownership of the process.

The project suffered further setbacks when the WROO post was vacated. However, with the dedication and flexibility of the web design company and RSL partners, the web pages have been developed and ready to go live.

The project's success rested on securing the appropriate expertise for the design and development of the Website. Progress was also dependent on having a single point of contact to co-ordinate the submission of appropriate content.

Emerging Outcomes

The Website has been developed and is ready to go live. This will provide a focus for coherent co-ordination and presentation of joint RSL wider role activity.

The project partners highlight the following factors as key issues that have to be taken into consideration when developing a project of this nature:

- ensure appropriate technical expertise is available;
- establish a single point of contact for co-ordinating information regarding content;
- encourage ownership of, and engagement with, the development of various facets of the web site among all partners;
- be flexible about the development of content and issues to be addressed but maintain focus to avoid continual changes; and
- ensure all development costs are included in the development.

Future Plans and Prospects

The loss of the co-ordinator resulted in a subsequent loss of momentum, which delayed progress somewhat. Despite this, the Website is due to go live shortly.

Responsibility for the maintenance and information update has yet to be established, though the Web Design Team suggest this, while not a resource intensive task, will require the co-ordination of input from all partners.

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Pentland Housing Association: Pulteneytown Family Centre, Wick

Project Background and Objectives

Pentland Housing Association was formed in 1993 as a result of the purchase of housing stock from United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA). The Association has around 400 properties throughout Caithness.

The Association has close working links with a range of community groups and following a survey of residents through the 'Pulteneytown People's Project, also funded by Wider Role, they became involved in the Family Centre.

The aim of this project was to refurbish a building in order to create a multi-purpose family and community resource centre. It was anticipated that the centre would be managed by the local community and provide a venue for social activities, training and 'capacity building' initiatives, childcare provision and community services.

The Family Centre forms part of a broader £1.6million re-development of the town, which has included the construction of 16 homes for rent.

Strategic Fit

The Pulteneytown Family Centre project contributes towards the Scottish Executive '*Closing the Opportunity Gap*' objective that aims to increase access to high quality services for the most disadvantaged groups and individuals in rural communities – in order to improve their access to opportunity.

Delivery, Management and Resources

Following public consultation and market appraisals to assess the area's childcare requirements, a Board of Management was established for the Centre. Wider Role support of £30,700 was provided towards the employment of a part time Development Officer for three years, and for the purchase of IT equipment and equipment for the childcare element of the centre.

The total cost of the project over three years totals £303,000 and the remainder of the required funding has been secured from a combination of grant making trust funds and income generation.

The Development Officer has a number of specific duties. These include developing partnerships with user organisations; controlling budgets; securing income from lettings, and overseeing service implementation.

The Board has also been assisted by the Development Officer and members have been offered the opportunity to attend training courses in responsibilities, fundraising and finance.

Activity and Progress

Following some minor delays, the building work was completed in early January 2006. The Wick Family Centre Board of Management is responsible for the delivery and management of the facility. Further activities will be developed on the basis of regular consultation and customer satisfaction surveys. Childcare groups, for all ages, have been established within the centre. This includes the playgroup, which has 37 registered childcare places and an After School Club. A Breakfast Club and Holiday Playscheme, plus 'wrap around care' are available on the basis of demand.

In addition, a number of summer activities for local children have been delivered with support from organisations such as the local council.

Working with local agencies, the Centre is developing as a venue for a range of services aimed at improving the social, economic and environmental circumstances of residents and community organisations.

These include: a meeting space; training courses; night classes; specialist clubs for children; interview rooms; plus a range of social events.

It is anticipated that within three years of opening the family centre will:

- attract an increasing number of regular users;
- offer social and educational opportunities to local people;
- improve access to volunteering opportunities; and
- secure income to ensure financial sustainability.

Emerging Outcomes

The centre is already providing access to good quality 'wrap around childcare' for children aged 2½ - 12 years, and facilities for groups of young teenagers. The centre works with other agencies to provide support for parents with emphasis on confidence building, healthy living and basic parenting skills. Currently the centre is working towards providing opportunities for older family members such as a senior citizens lunch and social club. All of these activities are contributing towards the further regeneration of Wick.

Future Plans and Prospects

The Board's intention for the Family Centre is to move towards financial sustainability. It is anticipated that by the end of 2007 the Centre will be generating sufficient income to cover some of the cost of the Development Officer and reduce their grant dependency.

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Grampian Housing Association: Solstice Phase II

Project Background and Objectives

Grampian Housing Association is based in the North East of Scotland and was established in 1975. The Association provides services to over 3,000 households and has established working relationships with local organisations to pursue a range of wider role initiatives.

One such initiative aimed to support an organisation to establish a wholesale nursery (horticulture) which would compliment garden maintenance work already being undertaken. The establishment of the nursery involved the development of an eight-acre site along with the infrastructure for cultivating a range of plants for sale to local nurseries and garden centres.

Working with 'Solstice', a social firm supporting people with mental health issues and using the model of a 'social firm', the business provides access to training and employment opportunities for 10 people each year. The project also provides employment support to assist those who wished to make the transition into the mainstream labour market.

Strategic Fit

The Solstice Phase II project contributes towards the Scottish Executive '*Closing the Opportunity Gap*' objective that aims to increase the chances of sustained employment for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups - in order to lift them permanently out of poverty.

Delivery, Management and Resources

Grampian Housing Association became involved during a transition period of restructuring at Solstice. This involved moving from a protected service to becoming a social firm. Social Firms Scotland, a national support agency, was a key partner in providing development support.

Grampian Housing Association's 'New Initiatives Manager' had a key role to play in ensuring that the new organisation had appropriate management procedures and was able to make the connection to a range of additional support to progress the project plans.

The total project costs were approximately £320,000, with £160,000 being provided through Wider Role Funds over a three-year period. This funding was directed in the first instance to the development of a business plan. Once it was established that there was a viable business proposition, wider role funding resources were used for the purchase of equipment required to establish the horticultural nursery. This included, for example, the purchase of polytunnels and horticultural equipment and upgrading amenities.

Additional resources were secured from, the Scottish Executive Rural Challenge Fund in the first year and Future builders Investment Fund and Esmee Fairbairn in subsequent years. Solstice also continued to generate income from garden maintenance activity.

Activity and Progress

The Nursery site was complete by June 2005 and delivery of the plant stock was completed by the end of July. With this complete the official opening took place in October 2005.

The commitment of partners towards establishing the proper legal framework and appropriate monitoring and reporting structures has ensured the effective progress of the project towards its goals.

Critical success factors for the delivery of the project included: having a clear vision; strong Board members that were proactive in their approach to the project development; maintaining effective financial procedures; and a commitment to resolving issues that emerged surrounding the development of a social firm.

Securing advice and guidance from appropriate organisations such as Social Firms Scotland was also critical to the successful implementation of this project.

Emerging Outcomes

The project aimed to increase the chances of sustained employment for eight people in the first year of operations. Solstice ensured that people recruited to work in the nursery received comprehensive support to allow them to contribute towards the development of the business.

The development of the organisation and service delivery rests on two main strands of activity; along with plant sales this includes a programme of garden maintenance. Solstice has secured the Grampian Housing Association garden maintenance three-year contract, in open competition, for garden maintenance, and projections for plant sales suggest that the facility will be viable next year (2008/09).

The project has established working relationships with social economy organisations and afforded the opportunity for Grampian Housing Association to learn about the development and implementation of wider role activity. In addition the Association is working with Social Firms Scotland to produce a guide to community benefits procurement.

Future Plans and Prospects

The aim, from the beginning of the project development, was to establish a project that would be sustainable and not reliant on grant funding within three years. A Business Plan has established key milestones and an assessment of progress suggests this target will be met.

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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE