

# Solid Foundations

**Solid Foundations is a unique publication for anyone working in community / voluntary / charitable organisations that very simply explains between what you must do by law, what you ought to do, and what you could aspire to do, in terms of good practice, when setting up and running your group or organisation.**

*Speech by Noel Ahern T.D. at the launch of 'Solid Foundations' 1st March 2007*

I am very pleased to be here today to formally launch this new publication Solid Foundations and would like to thank Ms. Deirdre Garvey and the team at The Wheel for their kind invitation to attend.

I am glad to know that the starting point for this publication was a series of good practice principles for community and voluntary organisations contained in the Government White Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity published in 2000.  
<http://www.cnm.tcd.ie/PDF%20Files/Voluntary.pdf>

Following extensive research of resources available to groups and through direct consultation with the sector The Wheel has produced a publication that will be helpful to community and voluntary groups all across Ireland in how they manage their organisations.

The governing body of most voluntary and community organisations be it a Board of Directors or a Management Committee is ultimately in control of, and responsible for, the work of the organisation. In the community and voluntary sector the vast majority of the members are volunteers. As a group they are faced with internal challenges on a day-to-day basis as well as increasing external demands including a changing regulatory and legislative framework.

Solid Foundations is a valuable tool in equipping them with the necessary factual information about their legal obligations and practical advice on how to run their organisation in line with good practice principles.

It is a very easy to read, informative document, which is full of useful advice and follow-up material for new and existing community and voluntary groups. The guide allows groups to identify their strengths and weaknesses as an organisation and where gaps are identified it points them in the direction of further sources of information. I am sure that it will become an essential resource for all community and voluntary groups.

I would like to take the opportunity here today to highlight the value, which is placed on the work of the community and voluntary sector both in Ireland and abroad, by the Government and by the Irish people generally. It is good to remind ourselves of the many and varied contributions the sector can bring to making a difference to people's lives.

As the Minister with responsibility for the community and voluntary sector I am very aware of the huge level of work that is carried out by groups throughout the country. The development of the sector is central to my Department's strategy and that is why my Department provides significant funding for the sector through a wide range

of Programmes and Grants Schemes. Our new Social Partnership Agreement, Towards 2016 makes explicit reference to the importance of this support and commits the Government to providing an additional €10 million per annum for the sector, plus €5 million per annum to support volunteering.

Currently the Community and Voluntary sector provides over €2 billion worth of services on a not-for-profit basis to Irish society. These services include social care, childcare, eldercare, health services, education, environmental, cultural, artistic, sporting and numerous other activities. Without volunteer managements many of these activities, which are so essential to a healthy vibrant society, would simply not exist.

We know in Government that in a changing society, we need to find new ways to encourage and support voluntary activity and unlock the social benefits, such as strengthening citizenship, that volunteering brings.

Our emphasis is towards local and practical, rather than grand institutional measures. Our approach is that volunteering finds meaning and expression at local level and that supports and funding should to the greatest extent seek to reflect and respect this reality.

I know that the forthcoming charities legislation will have implications for all of you and I note that the workshop here today has a particular focus on the emerging legislation. A lot of consultation has taken place with the community and voluntary sector and I am confident that the Charities Bill will be published during the current Dáil session.

I hope that you all enjoy the workshop later today and will now officially launch the Solid Foundations publication.'

### **Solid Foundations - a comprehensive good practice resource guide for community and voluntary groups available :-**

Launched by Minister of State Noel Ahern on March 1st 2007, Solid Foundations is a new publication that will help thousands of community and voluntary groups all across Ireland in how they manage their organisations. It can be used by any community, voluntary and nonprofit organisation, any NGO, and any charity in Ireland, regardless of age, size, location, and area of focus. It is written so that it provides factual information about the legal obligations that organisations in the sector face, as well as practical advice on how they can run their organisations in line with good practice standards.

In order to do their work well, it is essential that organisations get the basic building blocks right. These basic building blocks are structure, governance, direction, accountability, resources and equality; together they provide the 'solid foundations' of the title.

Solid Foundations is available in hard copy from The Wheel at a cost of €20 + €1.50 postage and packaging.

If you would like to order a copy, please download an order form:

<http://www.wheel.ie/user/content/download/3116/11227/file/SolidFoundationsOrderForm.doc>

*Please forward the order form, together with payment, to:*

**Solid Foundations Orders,  
The Wheel,  
ISFC,  
10 Grattan Crescent,  
Inchicore,  
Dublin 8.**

*Or you can fax this order form to Danielle at fax no: 01-4548649 or email it to [danielle@wheel.ie](mailto:danielle@wheel.ie)*

*Your copy of Solid Foundations will be posted along with a receipt when payment has been received.*

## **The Wheel**

The Wheel is a support and representative body connecting Community and Voluntary organisations across Ireland. Established six years ago with a mandate from over 200 organisations and individuals, The Wheel has evolved to become a resource centre and forum for the Community and Voluntary sector.

### **Support...**

The Wheel, in its capacity as a resource centre, provides high quality support programmes to Community and Voluntary organisations. Our aim is to go forward with you to achieve the highest standards of practice and effectiveness.

### **Advocacy...**

We recognize that a vibrant Community and Voluntary sector is vital to a healthy society and democracy. Therefore we act as an advocate for Community and Voluntary activity in whatever forum we engage in - making sure your interests are heard wherever we are.

### **Leadership...**

We play a leadership role by listening to and responding to the unmet needs of Community and Voluntary organisations. We recognise the intrinsic value that each individual and organisation contributes to creating an environment where Community and Voluntary activity can flourish. We pursue our leadership commitments in accordance with the highest standards of openness, accountability and effectiveness.

The Wheel's vision is one of a society characterised by the active participation of people in communities all over Ireland who are connected to each other on a local and national level.

Our mission is to enable Community and Voluntary organisations achieve their maximum potential, increase benefit to the public and in the process create a better Ireland.

### **Services**

- Peer support networks for fundraisers, chief officers and information officers
- Issue networks in areas such as health and social partnership
- Social Partnership: providing a voice in the Government's mechanism through our presence on the local/voluntary strand of the Community and Voluntary Pillar
- Advocacy for Community and Voluntary activity in whatever policy arena we find ourselves
- Newsletters, e-bulletins, targeted communications and information 'one-stop-shop' –  
comprising of this website, and one-to-one responses to e-mail and phone queries
- National seminars and conferences on key developments and issues of future concern for Community and Voluntary organisations

### **Membership**

Having established ourselves as the independent, non-profit resource for the Community and Voluntary sector, The Wheel has launched a membership programme to strengthen our voice and remit. More than 500 organisations and individuals have joined The Wheel since the membership programme began in November 2003.

### **Staff**

The Wheel's fulltime office staff is based in Inchicore, Dublin 8

### **Core Group (Board of Directors)**

The Wheel is governed by a voluntary grouping of up to 18 individuals representing a broad cross-section of interests from across the Community and Voluntary sector who contribute strategic direction on behalf of the wider Wheel network.

### **Funding**

We are a non-profit organisation and are independent of any political, religious or commercial affiliation. To date, The Wheel has been funded by a mixture of service fees, philanthropic donations, project grants, corporate sponsorships and state support for specific projects.

**Rotha Teoranta**, trading as The Wheel, is a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital, registered in Dublin, Ireland with registered company number 302282.

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