



DUBLIN CITY
COMMUNITY CO-OP

Strategic Plan (Summary) 2018-2021



Foreword

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DUBLIN CITY COMMUNITY COOPERATIVE, KNOWN AS ‘THE CO-OP’, IS DELIGHTED TO PRESENT OUR INAUGURAL STRATEGIC PLAN 2018–2021.

For a number of years before 2014 Dublin’s inner city had been in the anomalous position of being the only region in Ireland to have no local development company. This had contributed to Dublin’s inner city communities becoming increasingly less visible and without a voice at a time when the country was experiencing the depths of austerity, community development funding had been slashed and quality services were most needed.

In 2014 fifteen long established and well respected inner city community development organisations who serve disadvantaged communities in all or parts of Dublin 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 & 8 began a process of discussion and dialogue with a view to strengthening cooperation, coordination, collaboration and engagement with each other. It was recognised that there is immense power when a group of people and organisations with similar interests get together to work toward the same goals.

This pioneering and innovative initiative bore fruit and on 7th November 2014 Dublin City Community Cooperative was formally established as a legal entity with all 15 organisations party to the process as its original members. Establishing this new structure as a cooperative that fully maintains the independent status and existence of its member organisations was and remains a key philosophy of the Co-op.

In 2016 we undertook an internal review and consolidation process which led to a number of mergers amongst Co-op members resulting in the current membership of thirteen organisations.

During the years 2015–2017 the Co-op received substantial public funding that enabled us to implement a comprehensive range of community development programmes. Funding was allocated via the Co-op to our member organisations and activities were implemented across the inner city. The Co-op tendered for and won the contract to implement the Government’s Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) in the inner city for the years 2015–2017. In addition to SICAP funding the Co-op received a combined grant from Dublin City Council and the Department of Rural and Community Development in 2015, 2016 and 2017 for additional community services activities. It is important that funding of this magnitude and scale is continued and protected if long term inroads into social deprivation and inequality in the inner city are to be achieved.

In late 2017/early 2018 the Co-op tendered for and won the contract for the second SICAP Programme, again for the Dublin inner city area and this time covering the years 2018–2022. Funding of this nature will contribute to the Co-op’s efforts to safeguard the provision of much needed community development activities and the delivery of essential social, economic and cultural services to Dublin’s disadvantaged inner city communities.

Securing our future financial sustainability is critical to the successful implementation of the Co-op’s strategic plan. We aim to achieve this by maximising and diversifying our resources through accessing wider funding streams from government and statutory funders, trusts, foundations, collaborations, partnerships and exploring the potential for self-generating revenues.

In developing our Strategic Plan 2018–2021 we are keeping our member organisations and the individuals and communities they serve resolutely at the heart of everything we do. The title of our Strategic Plan 2018–2021, ***Building Inclusive and Thriving Inner City Communities*** and our Vision of ***a city where locally based community development organisations work together to eliminate poverty, inequality and social exclusion*** reflect the Co-op’s intentions, ambitions and aspirations for Dublin’s inner city. Underpinning all our programmes, activities and actions are a social inclusion ethos and the fundamental principles of community development, namely, collective action, empowerment, social justice, equality & anti-discrimination and participation.

The work that we are supporting in Dublin’s inner city is important not only for the well-being of our own communities but it is also essential for the well-being of the city as a whole. Flourishing inner city communities free from poverty and discrimination and with good quality local services are essential for a thriving and inclusive city. Our efforts and those of other community organisations around Ireland are also vital if the government is to achieve its national goals. For instance, they are an important input to the government achieving its official target to reduce consistent poverty amongst adults and children to 2% or less by 2020. Similarly community development initiatives such as those in the inner city are essential if Ireland is to meet its international commitments. They will be an important element in Ireland’s contribution to achieving the European Union’s target to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty or exclusion by 2020 (using 2008 as baseline year) and to meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in particular the target of reducing at least by half by 2030 the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

Constructively advocating and campaigning for an end to poverty and social exclusion and for social justice, equality and progressive change with and on behalf of inner city communities will be a priority for the Co-op during the four years of our strategic plan.

As an organisation committed to the elimination of poverty the Co-op wholeheartedly echoes the sentiments expressed by Nelson Mandela when he said “Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid it is man-made and can be removed by the actions of human beings”.

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HUGH FRAZER
Chairperson



Executive Summary

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Our existence and success in delivering the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is testament to the skills and expertise of our member organisations and staff.
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Although a relatively new organisation, and with a legal and governance structure that is largely unfamiliar to many, Dublin Inner City Community Co-operative Society Limited (hereafter ‘The Co-op’) has highlighted the potential for grassroots led community development to positively and sustainably impact on social exclusion, poverty and disadvantage. This we have collectively done within a context that is changing from being historically grant supported to one of more commissioned outcomes i.e. through contracted programme management without compromising our core values and principles. We are keen to build on our early successes and take a more proactive approach in pursuit of our mission and member organisations interests. To this end we have commissioned several pieces of work, of which this Strategic Plan forms a focal point for our future planning and delivery of social inclusion programmes and activities. However, unlike ‘traditional’ strategic plans, we have identified that having a more framework-led approach, rather than prescriptive targets and milestones, is a better fit in allowing us to remain more responsive to, and led by, the changing circumstances of our member organisations, and the changing needs of the local communities we collectively support. Thus, this plan has been developed through a co-production process that has sought to engage all our stakeholders (internally and externally), presenting our six strategic aims against our three principal roles:

- The Co-op as having a **Leadership** role, reflecting the shared vision and individual circumstances of its members.
- The Co-op as a focal point for **Community Development**, highlighting the impact and value of its members and using this to lobby for further change by policy makers and statutory funding agencies.
- The Co-op as a provider of **Organisational Development**, better sustaining itself in order to ensure a stronger offer of support in facilitating its members to not only access revenue opportunities, but also to further enhance their own capacity, social value and impact.

The plan is structured to reflect our history and current position; the changing context we operate within; ways in which we engage and communicate with different stakeholders; and how we start to approach and plan how to best secure our future – both as an entity in our own right, and as a collective of a number of local organisations who mutually share a common purpose, vision and mission. As a framework this allows us the necessary flexibility owing to a changing political and economic environment and local circumstances that we face both externally and internally. By using this approach in pursuit of our strategic aims against our roles, we will be better positioned in the future to achieve our mission as set forth in what is our inaugural strategic plan.

The Context

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*Our vision is a city
where thriving locally
based community
development
organisations work
together to eliminate
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and social exclusion.*
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INTRODUCTION

The Dublin Inner City Community Co-operative Society Limited (hereafter referred to as ‘the Co-op’) is a membership co-operative of 13 grassroots, Dublin inner city, community development organisations which have come together to promote sustainable communities in Dublin’s inner city through the services we provide. Our members are operational in all of or parts of Dublin 1,3,7,8 as well as disadvantaged city areas in Dublin 2 and 4. As a legal entity the Co-op was formally established in November 2014. The Co-op registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority in early 2016.

The community and voluntary sector in Ireland has undergone significant change in the past decade yet it remains resilient, dynamic and woven into the very fabric of Irish society. The sector comprises over 15,000 organisations, employing over 100,000 people and involving more than 560,000 volunteers representing a diverse peoples and communities¹. However, what bonds all community, voluntary and charitable organisations together is a common purpose to change people’s lives for the better.

The Co-op initiated a strategic planning process in October 2016 which resulted in the drafting of this framework-led plan for approval by both our Board and member organisations, respectively. We fundamentally believe that better outcomes are achieved when people are involved and engaged in making decisions that affect their lives. Therefore, as a first step in developing our Strategic Plan we sought the input of our members, peer organisations, key external stakeholders, Government agencies, and funders plus the Co-op’s own staff, chairperson and board.

PLANNING PROCESS

Developing any plan is based on evidence of need, analysing future challenges, prioritising and measuring organisational performance en route to achieving strategic aims. Input from our members was initially sought via both SWOT² and PESTLE³ analyses. This was followed by in-depth structured interviews with the Co-op’s Chairperson, CEO and staff.

A series of stakeholder engagements followed including semi-structured interviews with funders, commissioners and sector peers. An externally facilitated workshop was held in March 2017 with staff from the Co-op head office and member organisations and Co-op board members in attendance.

This workshop provided an opportunity for member organisations to reflect

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1 The Wheel www.wheel.ie
2 SWOT analysis is a study undertaken by an organisation to identify its internal Strengths and Weaknesses, as well as its external Opportunities and Threats
3 PESTLE (Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental) analysis is an audit of an organisation’s environmental influences, with the purpose of using this information to guide strategic decision-making and planning

and discuss the initial draft. Feedback from the workshop and subsequent follow-up activities were utilised in co-creating the strategic plan. Throughout 2017 a number of drafts of the strategic plan were shared with our board and member organisations’ staff. Feedback was sought and incorporated into the final version. In summary, the process involved engagement and consultation with a range of key external stakeholders and internally with both our board and member organisations towards:

- Agreeing a consensus as to our **vision, mission, values and principles**, as these will underpin all future activities.
- Ensuring there is a similar consensus amongst members as to the **strategic aims, outcomes and indicators** which have been drafted based on prior external stakeholder consultations, and internal consultation, research and analysis before specific actions were developed and approved against each.
- Making best use of members’ time and resources to ultimately achieve consensus through effective **consultation and engagement in our strategic planning process**.

The following framework sets out the vision, mission, values and guiding principles of the Co-op as well as our strategic aims. A broad set of indicators and actions as to how these will be pursued over the lifetime of the plan are described in detail in our full Strategic Plan document. The delivery of the plan section in the full document details specific tasks and activities which will be determined by available resources and upon agreement with member organisations by way of immediate actions (within the next year) and intermediate actions (within the next four years) linked to our strategic aims.

This Strategic Plan reflects our determination to represent our members and strengthen Dublin’s inner city communities so they can thrive and flourish in a fair and just society.



Building Inclusive and Thriving Inner City Communities

VISION

OUR VISION IS A CITY WHERE THRIVING LOCALLY BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS WORK TOGETHER TO ELIMINATE POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION.

The achievement of our vision will enable our members and the communities they serve, inform, shape and influence decisions, plans and policies affecting the lives of Dublin’s inner city residents so that current and future generations can live, thrive and prosper in an equal and inclusive society for all.

MISSION

OUR MISSION IS TO TACKLE POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN ALL ITS GUISES. WE WILL DO THIS BY BUILDING AND SUSTAINING AN ORGANISATION WHICH SUPPORTS ITS MEMBER ORGANISATIONS, THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE AND THE DIVERSITY THEY REPRESENT.

A core philosophy of the Co-op in carrying out our mission is that we operate to community development principles and ensure a social inclusion ethos forms the basis for all engagements with members, communities and stakeholders. Collective action with and on behalf of our members and the diverse communities of the inner city is fundamental to how we work. In everything we do we seek to improve the lives of people, to create an environment where they reach their full potential and to build flourishing vibrant communities to live in.

STRATEGIC AIMS

The following six strategic aims have been developed as a result of internal and external stakeholder consultation and engagement activities including SWOT and PESTLE analyses through the lens of our members and listening to the views of external funders, commissioners and peer organisations within the wider sector. In addition, a scanning of the political and economic environment and review of the key strategies and policies that may affect the Co-op has been conducted as part of the strategic planning process.

Note: Our strategic aims are set out below but are not listed by way of preferential order or by means of priority of one aim over another thus each aim is mutually interdependent.

1. TO ADVOCATE AND BE A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION, SOCIAL JUSTICE, POSITIVE SOCIETAL CHANGE AND THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

Our aim is to be a trusted voice on social inclusion and social justice issues. Through our collective unity we will strengthen and amplify the voice of our members and Dublin’s inner city communities. Through harnessing the knowledge and expertise of our member organisations and staff we aim to collectively contribute to, and affect, progressive change. We will constructively challenge public policy and advocate for legislative change as appropriate.

2. TO MAXIMISE THE SOCIAL IMPACT AND SOCIAL VALUE OF OUR WORK

Our aim is to evidence the outcomes of our work across Dublin's inner city to all our key stakeholders and report on the social value we and our members create based on agreed frameworks and measurement tools. We will at all times endeavour to be innovative in our work and seek opportunities to create and maximise the social value of what we do.

3. TO SUPPORT OUR MEMBERS FAIRLY AND EQUITABLY

Our aim is to always allocate resources and funding the Co-op receives for onward distribution to members in a fair, transparent and equitable manner.

We will use the resources of the Co-op to increase the capacity, reach and impact of our member organisations both individually and collectively.

4. TO STRENGTHEN OUR REPUTATION AND RAISE OUR PROFILE AND VISIBILITY

Our aim is to strengthen our reputation through the quality and impact of our work and in doing so to raise the visibility and profile of the Co-op and its member organisations as pioneers, innovators and leaders within the community development sector.

5. TO GOVERN WITH TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY AND MAINTAIN THE TRUST OF OUR STAKEHOLDERS

Our aim is to work to the highest standards of governance and adhere to all Charities Regulatory Authority, legal and funder requirements and obligations. We will be fully compliant with the Governance Code for the Community and Voluntary sector. We will apply our own internal governance, financial and operational rules with rigour, transparency, accuracy and robustness.

6. TO DEVELOP, STRENGTHEN AND GROW OUR WORK

Our aim is to secure the future sustainability of the Co-op by maximising and diversifying our resources through accessing wider funding streams from government and statutory funders, trusts, foundations, collaborations, partnerships and exploring the development of self-generating revenues.

We will ensure the Co-op has the right structure, capacity and human, technical and financial resources to deliver on these strategic objectives.

PRINCIPLES

A set of five principles guide the Co-op's way of working with all our stakeholders:

COLLECTIVE ACTION: Community work is based on working with and supporting groups of people. It enables them to develop knowledge, skills and confidence, so that they can analyse and identify priority needs and issues and address these through collective action.

EMPOWERMENT: Community work is about the empowerment of individuals and communities, and addressing the unequal distribution of power.

SOCIAL JUSTICE: Community work is based on a belief that every person and every community can play an active role in creating conditions for a just and equal society where human rights are promoted and all forms of oppression and discrimination are challenged.

EQUALITY & ANTI-DISCRIMINATION: Community work challenges the oppression and exclusion of individuals and groups by institutions and society that leads to discrimination against people based on ability, age, culture, gender, marital status, socioeconomic status, racial or ethnic group, nationality, skin colour, sexual orientation and political or religious beliefs.

PARTICIPATION: Participation is about the involvement of groups and individuals who experience social exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination in decision making, planning and action at all levels, from the local to the global. Participation can be viewed as a continuum of activity that can start from information sharing through capacity building and empowerment to active engagement and meaningful participation in democratic processes.

The Co-op is committed to the seven international principles of being a Co-operative:

- Voluntary and open membership
- Democratic member control
- Member economic participation
- Autonomy and independence
- Education, training and information
- Co-operation among co-operatives
- Concern for community

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OUR VISION

IS A CITY WHERE THRIVING LOCALLY
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