



**DUBLIN CITY
COMMUNITY CO-OP**

**Strategic Plan
(Summary)
2023-2027**



Foreword

Over the course of our previous Strategic Plan the Co-op has come a long way and has become an important and influential organisation supporting and serving disadvantaged communities and groups in the inner city

IN THIS, THE DUBLIN CITY COMMUNITY COOPERATIVE'S (CO-OP'S) SECOND STRATEGIC PLAN, WE SET OUT OUR GOALS AND AMBITIONS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS AND SPELL OUT HOW WE INTEND TO BUILD ON AND CONSOLIDATE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE LAST FOUR YEARS. The Co-op was established in 2014 to fill a gap – inner city Dublin was the only region in Ireland that lacked a local development company. Thus, community development organisations across Dublin's inner city came together to form an organisation that would fill this void. The intention was to strengthen cooperation, coordination and collaboration between organisations sharing a common vision and working to combat poverty, inequality and social exclusion in their communities and to attract additional resources for community development activity. The structure adopted was a co-operative as this would allow members both to retain their independent status and identity and to cooperate on issues of common interest.

Over the course of our previous Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the Co-op has come a long way and has become an important and influential organisation supporting and serving disadvantaged communities and groups in the inner city. Adopting the model of a co-op has proved to be an inspired and successful innovation. It has ensured that the Co-op has become an important support and resource for community development in the inner city. It has both successfully supported the ongoing work of its member organisations and developed new and pioneering initiatives in response to emerging needs. It has also increasingly drawn on the collective knowledge and experience of its members to advocate authoritatively and effectively on issues of poverty and social exclusion in the inner city and to propose concrete proposals to improve policies and programmes in this regard.

A key task of the Co-op has been to foster effective and constructive relations with other organisations working in the inner city, especially the different statutory agencies. One of the key lessons that emerged during the Covid pandemic was the importance of effective partnership and cooperation between all the different bodies, statutory and civil society, working to tackle the challenges of poverty and social exclusion and to build stronger and more sustainable and inclusive communities. To this end we have devoted considerable efforts to fostering a constructive working relationship with a wider range of organisations based on mutual respect and cooperation. In the coming period we will continue to foster a partnership approach and ensure that the voice and expertise of local community organisations is at the heart of all developments affecting their communities.

An important role of the Co-op has been to ensure that there is adequate funding to support the work of its members and the development of community development initiatives in the inner city. In this regard we have been fortunate to receive substantial public funding that has supported a wide range of community development programmes. In particular, the Co-op holds the contract to implement the Government's Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) in the inner city. This is complemented by an additional combined grant from Dublin City Council and the Department of Rural and Community Development. These resources are used to support the work of our member organisations in delivering a wide range of essential social, economic

and cultural services in disadvantaged communities and supporting the core work of the Co-op. The current SICAP programme comes to end in 2023 and it is vital that this key source of funding for the community development sector is continued into the future. As well as providing essential funding these programmes have enabled us to build very good working relationships with the organisations responsible for them: the Department of Rural and Community Development, Dublin City Council and Pobal. In addition to this important core funding the Co-op has increasingly been able to attract funding for specific initiatives in areas such as migrant inclusion, healthy community initiatives, Roma employment and training, community festivals, social enterprises and integration of Ukrainian and other refugees. This has enabled us to develop constructive relationships with a wider range of funding agencies such as the HSE. Looking to the future we hope to build on this and we will work to attract additional funding for a broader range of initiatives in disadvantaged communities.

Over the course of the last Strategic Plan issues of poverty, inequality and social exclusion in the inner city became ever more evident. They have been exacerbated by a number of factors: the impact of the Covid pandemic particularly on children and vulnerable older persons; the accelerating cost of living crisis; the impact of the increasing number of Ukrainian and Non-Ukrainian refugees living in Dublin's inner city which has added to the challenge of ensuring integration and diversity of a growing ethnic minority population; and the growing impact of climate change and the need to transition to a more sustainable future. All these issues add to the demands on the Co-op and its member organisations. However, responding to them also creates exciting opportunities to develop new initiatives and to develop new and constructive partnerships with all the agencies working to build more inclusive and sustainable communities in Dublin's inner city. Thus, in this Strategic Plan we set out how we plan to do this through: continuing to support the work of our member organisations; further strengthening the Co-op and ensuring that we sustain a culture of equity and transparency in all our work; constantly reviewing all our work to ensure that all our efforts have a real social impact; and continuing to advocate for increased social, economic, cultural, climate and environmental justice for disadvantaged communities in the inner city.

Finally, on behalf of the Board of the Co-op I would like to record our thanks to all the stakeholders, internal and external, who have contributed to the development of the Plan. A special word of thanks is due to zinto3 who assisted us so efficiently and sensitively in developing the plan. As the independent chairperson of the Co-op I would also like to pay tribute to the extraordinary commitment and dedication of our core staff team led so ably by our CEO, Noel Wardick. They have responded in a remarkable way to each new challenge that has faced the Co-op, especially during the Covid pandemic. They are a key reason why I am confident that the ambitious goals set out in this Strategic Plan can be achieved. Lastly, I would like to thank my fellow Board Members who represent each of the Co-op's member organisations. Their commitment to the Co-op and hard work on its behalf has been essential in ensuring the development of the Co-op as an effective and well-governed agency. It is a privilege to work with them.



HUGH FRAZER
Chairperson

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Executive Summary

This new Strategic Plan for 2023–2027, developed over a twelve-month period that involved extensive consultation with Co-op members and other stakeholders, builds on the organisation’s successes and learnings to date

Since its legal establishment in 2014, Dublin City Community Co-operative (‘the Co-op’) has become a recognised and respected actor in community development and social inclusion. It has proven that it is possible for community development organisations to work together to address some of the most persistent economic and social challenges facing individuals and communities in Inner City Dublin.

In addition to two successful cycles of jointly tendering for and winning the Government’s Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), the Co-op has grown to deliver a diverse range of other targeted interventions including: Inner City Community Support Programme (ICCSP), Strength-in-Diversity (SiD) Project, focusing on migrant inclusion; Healthy Communities and Social Prescribing Project in the north east inner city Dublin; Roma Employment & Training (REaT) Project; and is a consortium member on two Social Enterprise Projects and the Ability Programme for Dublin South City. Moreover, Co-op members have also conducted joint research and policy work highlighting, for example, the needs of deprived children across their respective constituencies and the inequalities exacerbated by COVID-19. Importantly, the Co-op has been able to create an internal working culture true to its values and principles, one that is based on trust, transparency and mutual respect.

This new Strategic Plan for 2023–2027, developed over a twelve-month period that involved extensive consultation with Co-op members and other stakeholders, builds on the organisation’s successes and learnings to date. It recognises that the social and economic needs in the communities are as complex and acute as ever. It also recognizes that climate change and the transition to a greener economy has the potential to deepen existing inequalities if that transition is not equitable and just.

This Strategic Plan re-affirms the three key roles of the Co-op.

- **LEADERSHIP:** Under this Strategic Plan, the Co-op will build on its authority, reputation and collective expertise in order to be more vocal about the causes and solutions to inequality, and the impact of poverty and social injustice on communities.

- **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:** To a greater extent, the Co-op will set its own Community Development agenda in the course of this Strategic Plan, delivering more joint projects with member and non-member organisations and implement Co-op office-led projects that align with identified community needs, that address root causes, and demonstrate best practice.
- **ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Under this Strategic Plan, the Co-op will provide greater value-add to members by delivering efficiencies, protecting existing funding, securing new funding, providing capacity building, supporting greater coordination and by being a collective voice on advocacy, policy and research.

Aligned with these roles, the Co-op has agreed four strategic priorities

1. Advocate For Social, Economic, Cultural, Climate and Environmental Justice
2. Deliver Social Impact
3. Support Our Members and Strengthen the Co-op
4. Sustain a Culture of Equity and Transparency

Our strategic 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 approach and plan how to best secure our future – both as an entity in our own right, and as a collective of local organisations who mutually share a common purpose, vision and mission. As a framework this plan allows us the necessary flexibility required in a changing political, social and economic environment and takes account of local circumstances that we face both externally and internally. By using this approach in pursuit of our strategic priorities against our roles, we will be better positioned in the future to achieve our mission as set forth in what is our second strategic plan.



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*Our Community,
Our Place,
Our Inner City*
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Strategic Plan 2023-2027

This Strategic Plan encompasses: the Co-op's Vision, Mission, Values, and Principles; a set of Strategic Priorities and Goals; and the strategic actions that will enable the achievement of each Priority.

VISION, MISSION, VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The Co-op's Vision, Mission, Values, and Principles were developed during the development phase of the organisation's inaugural Strategic Plan 2018-2021. As part of the consultations for the Strategic Plan 2023-2027, stakeholders were asked to reflect on whether the Co-op's Vision, Mission, Values and Principles were still relevant and valid, and there was broad agreement that they remain so.

VISION

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

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

VALUES

We operate from a community development and social inclusion ethos which forms the basis of our Values and how we conduct our work with all stakeholders. Our four Values are:

PROMOTE AND MAINTAIN A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHOS

focusing on:

- Empowerment
- Justice
- Social Inclusion
- Participatory Democracy
- Collaboration

PROTECT AND SUSTAIN GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- Built up over decades by local people for local people
- Grassroots approach
- Working with 'hard to reach/seldom heard/rarely listened to' groups and individuals
- Strengthening communities
- Creating and sustaining 'active citizens'¹ i.e. people being active, engaged and involved in their communities and with the issues that affect their lives

CREATE SOCIAL VALUE

- Social value is about understanding the relative importance of changes that people experience because of what we do, and how important these different changes are to them and using the insights we gain from this understanding to make better decisions. Social value is about quantifying not only the things that have a market value, but also those that are more difficult to place a value on, such as increased confidence, improved health or the benefits of living near to a park. By taking this relative importance into account we can ensure that the decisions we make focus on what is valuable to people, and ultimately increase the overall value of our work. Social value is about being more accountable to those people whose lives are affected; and about making better decisions on how we allocate our financial and non-financial resource.
- In creating societal value we demonstrate transparency through five dimensions: accountability, quality, responsiveness, equity and efficiency (which includes financial). The Co-op's approach is valuable because it empowers people, improves communities and benefits society.

SOLIDARITY IN SUPPORTING EACH OTHER'S WORK

- Shared history of combating poverty
- United voice of disadvantaged communities
- Combat fragmentation and competition
- Promote integrated solutions to problems
- Share information / resources / ideas

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 and has a right to 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.

¹ Citizens in this context are understood to include all people living in Ireland regardless of their technical legal status

THE CO-OP'S KEY ROLES, STRATEGIC AIMS, GOALS AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS

KEY ROLE	LEADERSHIP	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
STRATEGIC AIM	1. ADVOCATE FOR SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE	2. DELIVER SOCIAL IMPACT	3. SUPPORT OUR MEMBERS AND STRENGTHEN THE CO-OP	4. SUSTAIN A CULTURE OF EQUITY, INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY
GOALS	<p>We influence policy and legislation on social, economic, cultural, environmental and climate justice</p> <p>We influence local, regional and national policy and ideology on inequality and community development</p> <p>Our research is picked up by policymakers and media</p> <p>Our policy and research agenda is shaped with and by our members</p> <p>We convene and are active participants in strategic networks</p> <p>We have strong relationships with policymakers, decisionmakers and local politicians</p>	<p>We secure and deliver impact through our programmes including those implemented via our members and those directly implemented by the Co-op</p> <p>Collective action by our members addresses structural inequality, pressing community needs and their root causes</p> <p>We spark innovative pilot projects that address community needs</p> <p>We support an agile and flexible coordinated response to emerging community needs and emergencies</p> <p>Our stakeholders recognise the impact of the Co-op and its members</p> <p>We demonstrate best practice in community development, engagement and empowerment</p>	<p>Our members' capacity is supported</p> <p>We facilitate learning, information-sharing and communities of practice between members</p> <p>We support a coordinated response from members on key issues and crises</p> <p>We deliver efficiencies for members through shared services, systems and spaces</p> <p>We increase and diversify our funding (especially from foundations, philanthropy, EU)</p>	<p>Members are consulted on strategic decisions</p> <p>We demonstrate high standards of governance and financial management</p> <p>Financial and non-financial resources and opportunities are equitably distributed among members</p>
STRATEGIC ACTIONS	<p>COMMUNICATIONS CAPACITY, PLANNING AND OUTPUTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop communications and PR strategy and workplan Provide communications training for staff and members Develop communications and advocacy calendar of key dates/weeks, 'hooks', spotlighting members' work and impact, and communities lived experience Develop bitesize communications materials – including based on previous reports Bring in external communications and PR support to maximise impact of big reports and research papers Review previous reports to maximise their communications and policy impact <p>POLICY AND RESEARCH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish strategic collaborations to support research and policy, e.g. with third level institutions, think tanks, networks Hold regular briefings with policymakers and politicians on Co-op work and research Develop guidelines for how the Co-op goes into partnerships / collaborates with other institutions (e.g. proprietary rights over research, acknowledgements, use of findings etc) Strengthen link between the Co-op and member programmes and research (to gather data, share learnings, identify policy priorities) Develop policy monitoring and evaluation framework to measure impact Develop climate & environmental justice strategy (map what members are already doing, develop coherent narrative around the work that is linked to social policy/inclusion, identify strategic partners and research/advocacy opportunities) Convene multi-stakeholder networks to advance specific causes, ensure coordinated responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure and administer SICAP 3 and ICCSP funding for 2024-2028 Secure and administer Co-op specific funding in the areas of Migrant Inclusion, Roma Employment & Training and Healthy Communities Seek out funding opportunities for Climate and Environmental Justice focused projects Improve data collection and impact monitoring, e.g. explore joint CRM system for non-SICAP programmes Increase collaborations and partnerships across all four quadrants of the Co-op's inner city catchment area Create spaces for members to suggest and collectively develop new ideas and innovations 	<p>CO-OP OFFICE CAPACITY AND RESOURCES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore options to increase Co-op office space and facilities, (bigger office space to accommodate team, availability of private spaces for sensitive conversations, drop-in clinics and individual client support) e.g. via DCC, CSR partnerships Scope fundraising opportunities and partnerships including from philanthropists, foundations, EU Increase Co-op team capacity to provide core support to members (priority: Finance, Admin, Research, Human Resources & Governance Compliance) <p>SUPPORT TO MEMBERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide capacity building training for members: diversity & inclusion, racial justice & tackling racism, communications, climate and environmental justice, governance compliance, narrative & financial reporting, IRIS CRM system Establish member working groups / fora on key themes (e.g. climate & environment, older persons, childhood education & development) Provide opportunities for members to network with each other e.g. Co-op AGM, internal practitioners' meetings, Co-op Mental Health & Wellbeing Working Group 	

OUR VISION

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