



ONE COMMUNITY STRONGER TOGETHER

ACT
CHAMPION
EMPOWER
INCLUDE
INFLUENCE
INSPIRE
CONNECT

Introduction

4

Core Foundations

8

How We Create Social Value

12

Our Strategic Aims

14

Achievements

24

Summary

30



TO DAY



BeLonG To, members since 2009



Pieta House, members since 2007

A nation thrives when it has an active civil society. It's what makes Ireland so much more than just an economy.

It's what binds otherwise-isolated people, interests and entities into a human system working for the common good.

A vibrant civil society is at the core of a healthy society and democracy; it is both the heart and the conscience of a nation. It's the driver of positive values and transformative actions. It accelerates social progress and puts the brakes on excesses of greed and individualism. And it rebalances the tensions between the influential and the marginalised, the insiders and the outsiders, the powerful and the weak.

People have always come together to tackle issues they care about and they will continue to do so. These groupings of people come in many different shapes and sizes. They are known as charities, community groups, NGOs, social enterprises, voluntary organisations, clubs and associations. We call this diverse collective of change-makers the charity and community sector... our sector.

The people driving our sector are Ireland's 'secret treasure'. More than 560,000 people regularly volunteer their time with upwards of 12,000 registered charities and a further 20,000 community organisations. These organisations also employ over 186,000 people.

Our sector undoubtedly continues to face many challenges, but there is cause for optimism. A new generation of volunteers is coming to the fore. Accessible technology is providing opportunities for organisations to reach more people and serve them more effectively. Collaboration has increased and strengthened. More and more, policymakers and others are recognising the enormous size of our sector and its importance, not just in supporting our country's social fabric and providing essential services, but also in its significant economic contribution.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to demonstrate just how vital our community networks are and the government acknowledged this contribution through a sector rescue package. The relationship between our sector and the state is arguably better than at any point in the recent past, and there are welcome signs of greater partnership-working between statutory bodies and our sector.

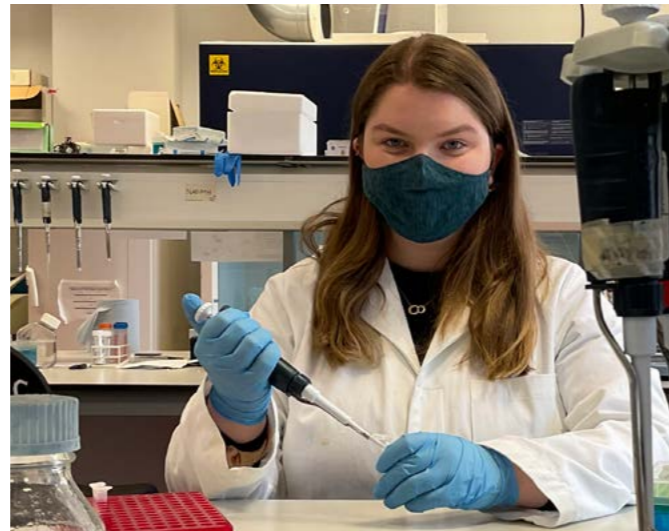
'The Wheel has been a hugely important voice in the not-for-profit sector and an advocate for all of the organisations in our vibrant sector.'

SpunOut.ie (members since 2007)

TO MORROW



Spraioi Agus Spóirt, members since 2017



Irish Cancer Society, members since 2006

As we begin our third decade serving the sector, we are excited to present our strategy for the next five years.

In many ways, we will carry on doing what we know we do well. We will continue representing and championing the interests of charities and community organisations to everyone that needs to hear about them, including public representatives, civil and public servants, the private sector, the media and the general public. We will remain the go-to source for anyone who wants to know anything about Ireland’s charity and community sector.

And, naturally, we will keep serving our members and other organisations in the sector as well as we possibly can on the practical issues that enable them to do their work with impact. But we will also do new things, and old things in new ways.

For instance, to be a more authoritative voice for the sector (*Strategic Aim 1*), we are prioritising this area with further capacity to enhance campaigning and we will place a greater emphasis on research that will help us to evidence the role of our sector.

We will intensify our work of upskilling paid staff and volunteers so that they can be even more effective leaders in our diverse sector (*Strategic Aim 2*). We will double our membership numbers and will provide new opportunities for meaningful member engagement (*Strategic Aim 3*). Internally, we will do everything possible to make a hybrid workplace work and we will share any lessons learnt with our members (*Strategic Aim 4*).

CORE FOUNDATIONS

Our Beliefs

We believe that people’s lives are interdependent, therefore we value approaches that focus on communities, solidarity and public benefit. We cherish people’s freedom to organise and are committed to the principle that active participation in society is an essential part of a healthy democracy.

We believe that people’s freedom to organise is an essential part of a healthy society and democracy and we value approaches that focus on communities, solidarity and public benefit. Society benefits from the strong sense of engagement facilitated by a charity and community sector that deepens empathy and strengthens communal solidarity.

We believe that the wellbeing of people is linked to the health of our planet and know that our sector must play a major role in ensuring a just transition in tackling the climate emergency, biodiversity crisis and other environmental challenges.

We believe that the time, talents and energy of the volunteers and staff of charities and community organisations are a valuable resource for Ireland. Charities and community organisations bring particular strengths to addressing social needs, both through innovative responses to new needs, and through the deep insights they acquire through long engagement with particular needs and communities. The focus, passion and sense of mission within these organisations add social capital to the stock of financial capital to help address societal challenges holistically.

We believe that the role of our sector is complex, frequently misunderstood and often underappreciated. We acknowledge that as a result of factors both outside as well as inside its control, the sector as a whole does not yet have sufficient capacity and capability to act as effectively as it could on the multiple social, economic and environmental problems that it seeks to address. And we recognise that by working collectively, charities, community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises make a bigger difference than they do by working alone.

‘The Wheel is an invaluable resource for the sector.’

National Youth Council of Ireland
(members since 2009)

Our Vision

A thriving charity and community sector at the heart of a fair, just and inclusive Ireland.



We stand up for what is right

Our Mission

We champion the role of Irish charities and community organisations in building a flourishing society and support them to do work that has a positive impact.



We work in a collegial manner

Our Values



Courageous

We are confident in standing up for what is right, we are not afraid to challenge the *status quo* and we dream big.



Inclusive

We work hard to be truly inclusive in all aspects of our work, with a particular emphasis on listening to and acting on those voices that have previously not been heard.



Accountable

We recognise that we are accountable to those we serve, the public and anybody else with an interest in our work.

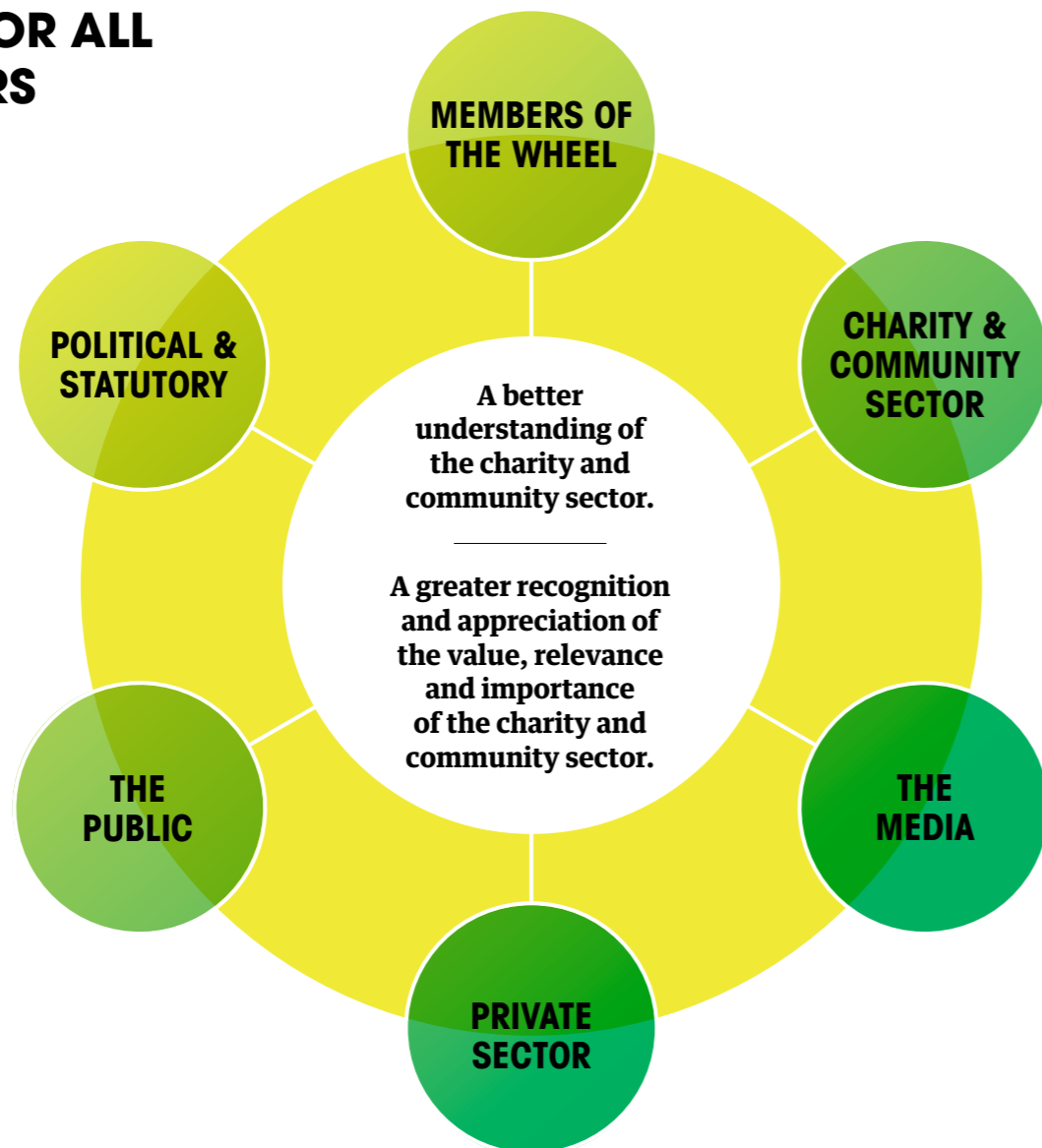


Collaborative

We work in a collegial manner with our members and everyone else who wants our sector to succeed.

HOW WE CREATE SOCIAL VALUE

OUTCOMES FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS



These diagrams show how we generate positive social change, or to put it another way, how we create social value. They identify the range of outcomes that we would like to achieve with six different stakeholder groupings. Two outcomes are overarching and shared across all six groupings and others are stakeholder-specific.

The actions that we will take over the next five years to achieve these outcomes are listed in the four strategic aims and 20 objectives over the remaining pages of this document.

ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDER-SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

MEMBERS OF THE WHEEL

- A sense of belonging to a connected and supportive community.
- Ability to influence policy that affects the sector.

CHARITY & COMMUNITY SECTOR

- Better results for people who engage with these organisations.
- Enhanced confidence for governance, management and operations.
- Greater capacity (knowledge and skills).
- Improved practice.

THE MEDIA

- Reporting that has a greater focus on the positive impact of the charity and community sector.

PRIVATE SECTOR

- Policies and practices affecting the charity and community sector are developed and implemented in partnership with the sector, including greater and better resourcing.

THE PUBLIC

- Increased contribution of time and/or money to the charity and community sector.

POLITICAL & STATUTORY

- Public policy is developed in partnership with the charity and community sector.
- Policy implementation and practice is supportive of the charity and community sector, including greater and better resourcing.
- Recognition of the ‘social capital’ role the sector plays.



OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

1

Being an authoritative voice for the sector.

Supporting a diverse sector.

2

3

Building a vibrant community of members.

4

Performing well to deliver success.

Pieta House, members since 2007



Irish Kidney Association, members since 2004



Strategic Aim

1

BEING AN AUTHORITATIVE VOICE FOR THE SECTOR

Rationale

There are many obstacles to achieving the type of society we dream of. Charities and community groups face these obstacles daily. Individual organisations have less power than coalitions. The Wheel has developed an effective advocacy role, and the time has come to expand this further. We have a responsibility to positively influence the national conversation about the role of our sector and to build trust. We will continue to raise awareness of, and champion, charities and community organisations.

We will speak confidently on behalf of our sector and its needs (including issues such as the need for multi-annual funding arrangements, sensitive regulation, affordable insurance, and so on). As our sector cannot be divorced from the issues that it deals with, we will also take a credible stance on broader topics (for example, the Sustainable Development Goals) through the lens of the charity and community sector.



Purple House Cancer Support, members since 2007
Irish Kidney Association, members since 2004

Objectives

- 1.1 Engage with public representatives and policy makers to ensure policy is developed collaboratively and implemented in a way that better supports our sector.
- 1.2 Engage with other stakeholders, including the private sector, to ensure our sector is regarded as a respected peer and its role in national life is better supported.
- 1.3 Engage proactively and frequently with key media contacts to increase their understanding of the complexities of charities: why they exist and how they achieve impact.
- 1.4 Roll out high visibility campaigns to positively shape public opinion about our sector and encourage active citizenship.
- 1.5 Secure high-quality research evidence to inform, stimulate thinking and underpin public policy goals.

Strategic Aim

2

SUPPORTING A DIVERSE SECTOR

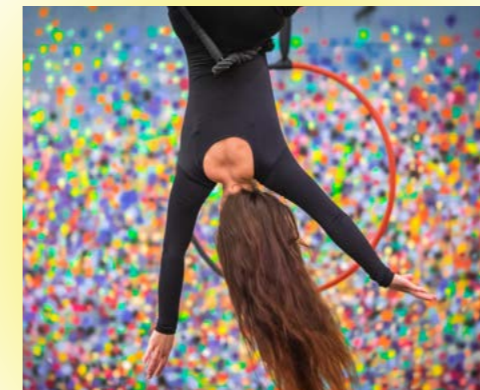


Irish Kidney Association, members since 2004

Rationale

The challenges facing our sector and wider society are both substantial and urgent. The organisations that make up the sector must be equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to tackle these challenges head-on. In particular, we recognise that leaders in the sector must be trained and otherwise supported so that they can ensure their organisations are the best they can be, and that their beneficiaries reap the rewards of the highest standards of practice.

Furthermore, we know that, given the opportunity, our sector is capable of tremendous things - its response to the COVID-19 pandemic being a recent example. We will identify opportunities for our sector to make the most of the unique role that it occupies in our society. This means regularly bringing organisations together and generating opportunities for them to add further value to their work.



Galway Community Circus, members since 2017

Objectives

- 2.1 Offer quality information, advice and other support services tailored to the needs of the different types of organisations in our sector.
- 2.2 Provide a comprehensive and affordable training service to our sector, which covers all the relevant organisational development topics.
- 2.3 Grow our executive leadership programmes, ensuring sector leaders are upskilled, networked, nourished and recognised.
- 2.4 Create and join spaces to explore the complex challenges we face, and collectively discuss and start to make the changes we would like to see in the world.
- 2.5 Seek opportunities on an ongoing basis for our sector to play a proactive role in the further development of our society, economy and environment.

Strategic Aim

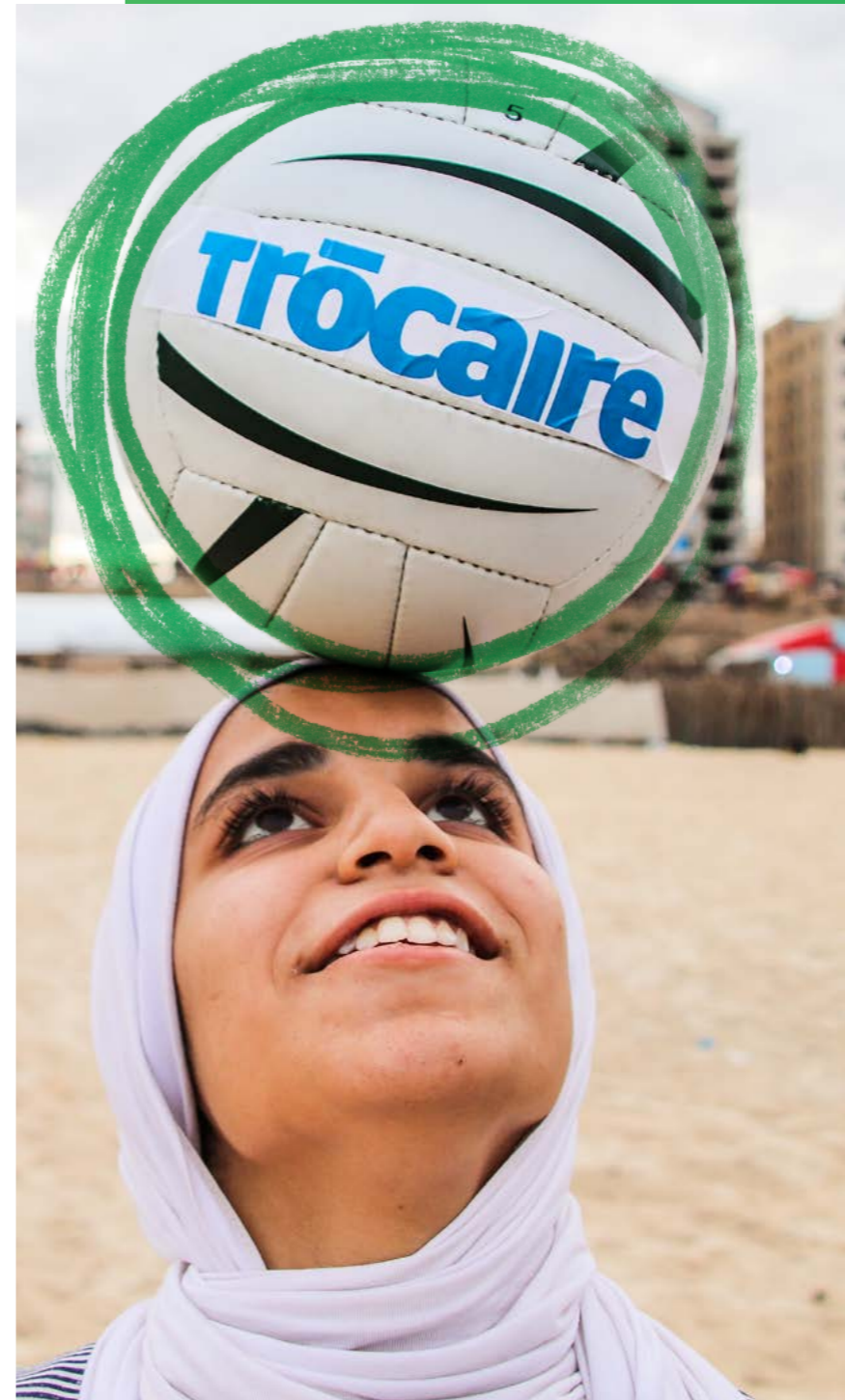
3

BUILDING A VIBRANT COMMUNITY

Rationale

Our members are the reason we exist and our lifeblood, so they will continue to be at the heart of everything we do. They mandate us to work on their behalf. The more members we have, the stronger our collective voice will be on issues that affect the entire sector. Continuing to have a membership that is representative of Ireland's charity and community sector will inform what we do, and how we do it, so that we can serve the entire sector to the best of our ability.

Providing our members with constant opportunities to be actively involved in our work will also help to engender a sense of community and shared identity. And generating ongoing networking opportunities will allow for our members to learn from and support each other, and work together to address our shared goals.



Trócaire, members since 2014

Objectives

- 3.1 Implement a comprehensive engagement strategy that deepens our connections with members throughout the country and mobilises them around our public policy work.
- 3.2 Provide ongoing opportunities for our members to connect, enabling peer support, facilitating learning, solving common problems, developing new ideas and fostering collaboration.
- 3.3 Provide a range of specific member services that are informed by ongoing feedback from our members.
- 3.4 Showcase and amplify the stories and impact of our members' work in a variety of innovative ways.
- 3.5 Double our membership and ensure that this growth continues to reflect the broad profile of the sector.

'The Wheel keeps us connected and focused on the big picture.'

County Roscommon Disability Support Group (members since 2017)

Strategic Aim

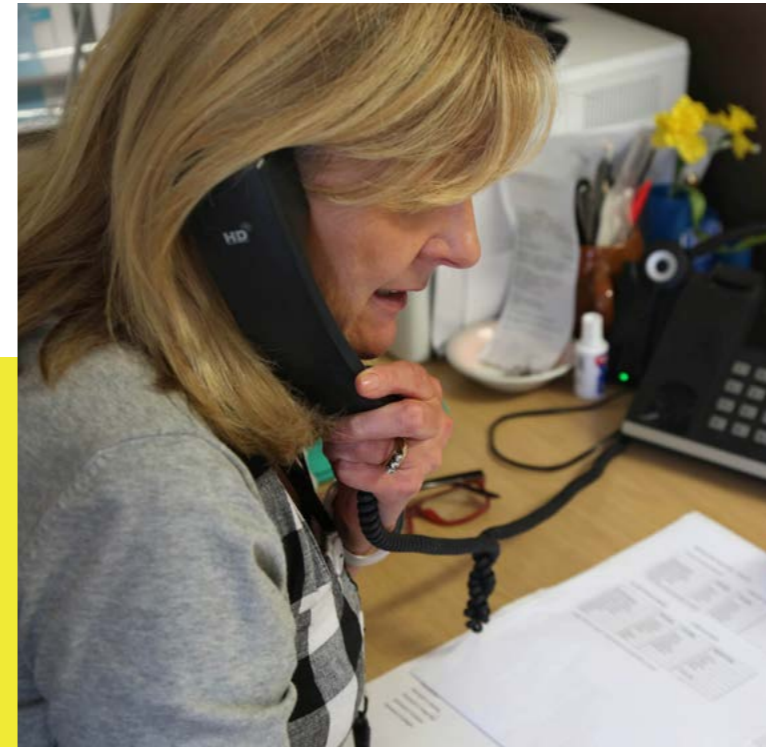
4

PERFORMING WELL TO DELIVER SUCCESS

Rationale

As a lead infrastructure organisation for the sector, it is our duty to keep abreast of good practice and to model it across all of our functions, from the way that we govern to the way we deal with administrative tasks. To be the best we can be, we will go beyond the minimum legal and regulatory requirements. We must focus on quality, secure diverse income streams, balance our books, be an excellent employer and assess our impact. We cannot stand still, so we commit to being creative and innovative, and to taking calculated risks.

There are two areas in particular to which we will bring new focus: namely, actively moving towards a hybrid workplace and adjusting how we do our work in response to the climate emergency. We will learn from our successes as well as our inevitable failures, and we will act on what we learn by constantly improving how we work. We will actively promote how we work so that it can be both acknowledged and emulated by others. In this way, not only does The Wheel improve, but so does the sector more broadly.



Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, members since 2007

WE CANNOT STAND STILL, SO WE COMMIT TO BEING CREATIVE, BEING INNOVATIVE, AND TO TAKING CALCULATED RISKS.

Objectives

- 4.1** Nurture an internal culture that is rooted in our values and that prioritises wellbeing, curiosity, experimentation and learning.
- 4.2** Develop, deliver and monitor critical implementation plans to underpin the strategy in the areas of people, funding and tracking progress.
- 4.3** Review and enhance key processes, with a particular emphasis on delivering effective communications, building relationships of trust and optimising the use of digital technology.
- 4.4** Ensure our internal policies and procedures are models of good practice and share these openly with members to stimulate good practice and resource-sharing.
- 4.5** Create meaningful linkages and build fruitful partnerships within our sector and to other sectors, working together on things that matter.

SUMMARY OF OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

2022 2026



‘The Wheel is an essential guardian of civil society space in Ireland.’

Trócaire (members since 2014)

Our Vision

A thriving charity and community sector at the heart of a fair, just and inclusive Ireland.

Our Mission

We champion the role of Irish charities and community organisations in building a flourishing society and support them to do work that has a positive impact.

Our Values

Courageous

We are confident in standing up for what is right, we are not afraid to challenge the *status quo* and we dream big.

Inclusive

We work hard to be truly inclusive in all aspects of our work, with a particular emphasis on listening to and acting on those voices that have previously not been heard.

Accountable

We recognise that we are accountable to those we serve, the public and anybody else with an interest in our work.

Collaborative

We work in a collegial manner with our members and everyone else who wants our sector to succeed.

Our Strategic Aims

Aim 1

Being an authoritative voice for the sector.

Aim 2

Supporting a diverse sector.

Aim 3

Building a vibrant community of members.

Aim 4

Performing well to deliver success.

Our Objectives

1.1 Ensure public policy better supports our sector.

1.2 Make sure other sectors regard our sector as a peer.

1.3 Increase the media's understanding of charities.

1.4 Campaign visibly to shape public opinion positively.

1.5 Secure research to underpin public policy goals.

2.1 Offer quality information and advice.

2.2 Provide a comprehensive training service.

2.3 Grow executive leadership programmes.

2.4 Create and join spaces to explore complex challenges.

2.5 Seek opportunities to develop further services.

3.1 Mobilise and deepen connections with members.

3.2 Facilitate members to connect, learn and collaborate.

3.3 Shape member supports from feedback provided.

3.4 Showcase our members' stories and impact.

3.5 Double our membership to 4,000.

4.1 Foster a culture of wellbeing, curiosity, experimentation and learning.

4.2 Develop implementation plans for this strategy.

4.3 Review and enhance key core processes.

4.4 Ensure policies are models of good practice.

4.5 Build fruitful partnerships with others.

ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE OUR LAST STRATEGY



Since we were established in 1999, The Wheel has grown from strength to strength. Our previous strategic plan, *Stronger Charities, Stronger Communities* spanned the period 2017-2021.

Here are just a few achievements from those five years.



Top: We've hosted an international Women's Day celebration since 2017

Bottom: Our annual pre-budget submission has secured key funding for our sector

2017

- MAR** *Joined Consultative Panel On The Governance Of Charitable Organisations*

We represented the sector on this key panel which resulted in the decision to develop a statutory Charities Governance Code for the sector (published in 2018).
- OCT** *VAT Compensation Scheme*

Engaged directly with relevant Ministers and officials right up to Budget Day to secure a €5 million VAT compensation scheme for the sector.
- NOV** *Inaugural Charity Trustees' Week*

At the request of the Charities Regulator, and in collaboration with other support organisations in the sector, we created Ireland's inaugural Charity Trustees' Week.
- DEC** *Inaugural Charity Impact Awards*

We launched the largest annual showcase of Ireland's charity and community sector.

Children in Hospital, members since 2003



2018

FEB *Sustainable Communities Toolkit Launched*

This toolkit supported local communities across Ireland to awaken awareness, deepen understanding and activate participation in sustainable development with a view to living better by using less.

MAR *First Gender Pay Gap Analysis For Nonprofits*

Held our inaugural annual International Women’s Day event to mark publication of Ireland’s first Gender Pay Gap Report for Nonprofits, the result of a successful collaboration with the Community Foundation of Ireland.

APR *Thought Leadership Reports Published*

Published three new reports *Powering Civil Society*, *Money Matters* and *A Two-way Street in the Enabling Citizens* series.

NOV *Study Trip To Brussels For Members Of The Wheel*

Led our first delegation of 25 members on a two-day study trip to Brussels during which they explored ways to access EU funds and to influence policy.

‘Without The Wheel, it would be impossible for individual charities to organise the breadth of training [we need].’

The Irish Cancer Society
(members since 2014)

2019

JAN *Free Membership For Small Organisations*

We realised a long-held ambition of offering free membership to all of Ireland’s small community organisations forever.

APR *Ran Our First Election Campaign*

In order to represent our members’ interests and as a result of investment in additional staff with relevant skills, we launched and ran our first member-mobilising campaign for local and EU elections.

MAY *Our 20th Anniversary*

We celebrated our first 20 years with a special Summit at Croke Park. Taoiseach Leo Varadkar delivered the keynote address.

JUL & AUG *Two National Strategies For Our Sector*

The government published Ireland’s first social enterprise policy (July) and a five-year strategy for our sector (August), with the content of each reflecting most of our public policy asks for the sector.

DEC *Charity Finance Managers Network*

Our member network for Charity Finance Managers held its first quarterly meeting. This is an important membership benefit – particularly for larger charities that fundraise.



Irish Wildlife Trust, members since 2008

Jigsaw, members since 2008

2020

FEB **President Hosts Reception At The Áras**
 President Michael D. Higgins hosted a special reception for our members, at which he praised The Wheel as “a force for good in Irish society”.

Formal Partnership Agreed Between The Wheel And Northern Irish Council Of Voluntary Action (Nicva)
 This was agreed at a joint board meeting in Belfast between the boards of The Wheel and NICVA (our counterpart in Northern Ireland).

APR **COVID-19 Community Outreach Programme**
 The Wheel and Irish Rural Link launched a nationwide programme to address the social impact of the pandemic. Over three months it mobilised over 14,000 charities and community organisations, involved over 36,000 volunteers and reached over 130,000 people.

MAY **COVID-19 Stability Fund Announced**
 The Wheel successfully led a coalition of organisations to campaign for a state-funded package of €50m+ emergency supports for charities.

NOV **Access Europe Programme Launched**
 After successful campaigning, we launched this new advice and capacity-building programme to help Irish civil society access EU funds and engage in EU policy.



Trócaire, members since 2014
 DEBRA Ireland, members since 2004

2021

JAN **Investment Appraisal Of Upskilling Report Published**
 This landmark study, carried out by Indecon on behalf of The Wheel, quantifies for the first time the levels of training and upskilling undertaken by people in the nonprofit sector.

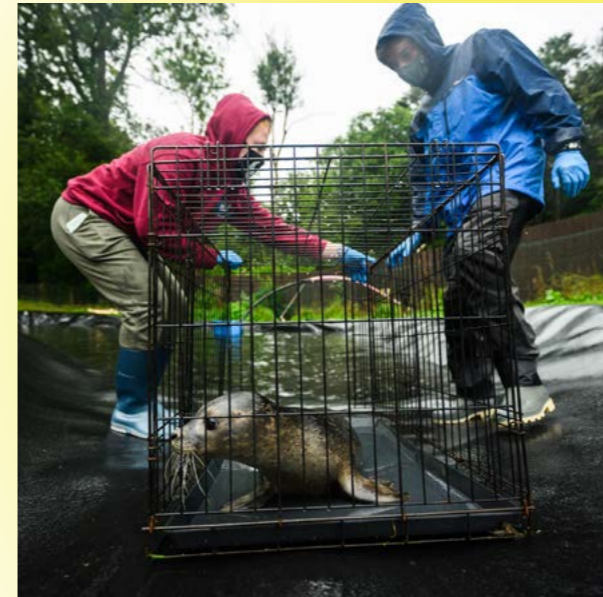
MAR **Consultation Report On Support Needs Of The Nonprofit Sector Published**
 The Wheel and Carmichael published a major report on the types of training and supports that nonprofit organisations need and want.

APR **Europe For Citizens Programme Completed**
 After six successful years, this important programme concluded and was replaced by a new EU programme. The Wheel was highly commended for putting Ireland on the map by successfully delivering this programme.

SEPT **Our Membership Exceeds 2,000**
 The Wheel is the largest representative organisation for the charity and community sector in Ireland.

OCT **We Act Campaign Launched**
 The Wheel partnered with six other infrastructure and support bodies to launch the first pan-sector public awareness campaign. This campaign aims to highlight impact stories from the sector.

DEC **iCommunity Programme Launched**
 The Wheel and our sister organisation NICVA launched a landmark new all-island communications and engagement programme to highlight the work of civil society organisations addressing shared societal and economic challenges.



Seal Rescue Ireland, members since 2015

The Wheel is Ireland's national association of charities, community groups and social enterprises.

As a representative voice, we provide leadership to the sector and we advocate on behalf of our growing community of members.

As a supportive resource, we offer advice, training and other opportunities to people working or volunteering in the sector.



Stronger Charities.
Stronger Communities.

The Wheel
48 Fleet Street, Dublin 2, D02 T883

+353 (0) 1 454 8727
info@wheel.ie
www.wheel.ie



Registered Charity Number: 20040963
CHY Number: 13288
Company Number: 302282

