
CASE STUDY: Community Enterprise Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland

Background

CEiS is a development agency providing comprehensive, specialised services to social economy organisations in Scotland. These include creating local development companies and intermediate labour market initiatives. By having a team of experts available locally, social economy organisations can have access to specialist support, which would be beyond the means of any one organisation. This includes information on the latest developments in policy and practice, as well as strategic and practical advice about setting up and operating a social economy organisation.

CEiS has 36 staff and a budget of €2.4m. The agency has delivered local development companies and intermediate labour markets amongst other actions.

Activities

CEiS develops innovative and effective ways in which less prosperous communities can improve their economic potential - fostering enterprise, providing employment, and meeting local needs. They create and develop autonomous and locally rooted enterprises. Their organisational culture is based around the themes of empowerment, co-operation and a professional ethos.

The Development Services Team provides development of innovation and new ways of thinking and delivering practical projects, interventions and partnerships. Current developments include new areas of work such as environmental, sustainable development, new employment and community regeneration projects

The Client Services Team works with each client, delivering customised programmes of support services to effect change and growth within social economy organisations.

One of the main thrusts of CEiS' work is directed towards building the financial capacity and assets of individuals and organisations. Despite there being many private organisations like banks and investment companies who provide a wide range of financial services, there is still a large excluded group of organisations and people that find it difficult to access mainstream finance.

CEiS is developing projects and new ways of working in conjunction with partners that will build a range of financial services to meet the needs of the more excluded individuals and organisations. For example, Community Development Finance Initiatives (CDFI) that specialise in giving loans to social economy organisations or to organisations/businesses based in areas that are under-invested.

Successes

- Has created over 2,000 jobs since 1997.
- In 2002 CEiS created or sustained 284 jobs at a unit cost of €5,034.
- CEiS has helped set up 47 local childcare enterprises creating almost 200 jobs and access to employment for many more.
- Currently working with banks and the Scottish Executive to help a number of credit unions expand.
- Also working with Scottish Homes to help housing associations develop economic initiatives.

Lessons

- Effective programmes require credible organisations that can bear the ‘weight’ of policy
- It won’t happen overnight – avoid the ‘steroid fix’ approach
- Build assets and capacity, don’t just inject funds
- Not all needs can be turned into markets
- Finance drives long-term behavioural change
- Continuity and certainty – uncertainty destroys additionality
- Invest in people not in strategies
- Make your ‘back office’ someone else’s ‘front office’

Things that have gone well:

- Rich structure of ‘bottom up’ local developments funded by local authorities in existence (Strathclyde legacy).
- Effective partnerships at strategic/delivery levels (managing the relationship).
- Importance of knowing the terrain rather than having a map.
- Bringing together money, people and ideas.

Things that have gone badly:

- Often a bag of projects rather than a coherent programme
- Too many new initiatives
- Failure to kill off poor performers
- Short-term finance
- Failure to invest in organisations and people long-term.

Contacts

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