

**A Proposal for Investment in Dublin's Inner City
Information Society Initiative**

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FINAL DRAFT

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1. Summary

The Dublin Inner City Information Society Initiative (DICISI) is a pilot initiative of the Dublin Inner City Partnership and Dublin City University to develop the information technology (IT) capacity of community groups and organisations. The rationale for the initiative is the identified need for community organisations to become self-sufficient in all aspects of their use and development of IT if they are to effectively engage with the policies and practices of the emerging 'information society'. The initiative proposes the establishment of an independent information technology support unit to provide technical and strategic support to community groups wishing to develop or extend their IT capacities. The unit will essentially constitute a one-stop-shop for community organisations wishing to develop or expand their use of IT.

The target group of the DICISI is community organisations in Dublin's inner city, including Community Training Workshops, Community Employment Schemes and Inner City Employment Service (ICES) centres and contact points. Through a variety of schemes and initiatives, many of these organisations and groups have already been equipped with computer hardware and software, trained in its use, and some are now online. However, a range of obstacles, including lack of ongoing support, inadequate advice and costly training continue to hamper the best efforts of many of these organisations in their attempts to maximise returns on the already substantial investment in IT to date.

The one-stop-shop will prioritise ensuring that community organisations have a basic knowledge and understanding of IT equipment and IT skills. The documented experiences of other similar local and international initiatives demonstrate that without basic IT knowledge and skills, the efforts of community organisations to adopt and apply new technologies will largely be dissipated.

The one-stop-shop will endeavour to foster a climate of self-support and learning within community organisations, and will demonstrate specifically and practically how community organisations can set about supporting themselves.

Specific activities of the one-stop-shop will include telephone support, on-site technical support, advice on a broad range of IT related issues, basic IT training, Internet demonstrations and other web services. The one-stop-shop will function by providing a combination of direct support as well as an advice and referral service. i.e. where the shop's staff are unable to provide hands-on services to a client organisation, they will identify other potential service providers that can effectively meet their client's needs.

Some basic services will be provided free of charge to client organisations including telephone support, and referral services. Other services will however be charged to the client organisations on a low cost basis.

The development of the one-stop-shop is proposed as a three-year pilot project. Funding is now being sought to cover the core costs of running the project during this time. Core costs will include the salaries of three full time staff plus office overheads. Income generated from fees for services provided will cover ancillary costs and permit expansion. This proposal is presented for consideration by potential investors.

2. Context

The target group of the proposed initiative is community organisations in Dublin's inner city that wish to develop or expand their use of IT. Many community organisations have in recent years acquired, through grants, donations or otherwise, computer hardware and software. Some of these have successfully integrated IT into the culture of their groups and organisations and are using IT in ways that improves many of their operational functions. Other community groups, however, are still struggling to make effective use of IT in the face of skills shortages, staff shortages, outdated equipment, lack of time and money for training, inadequate advice and lack of ongoing support.

With the advent of the information society and the development of new internet technologies, community organisations have become increasingly aware of the benefits that can be derived from applying new information and communication technologies to their work. As a consequence of this, there is a growing number of community organisations now seeking to develop their IT capacities so that they can begin to take advantage of these newer technologies.

The proposed one-stop-shop will act as an initial point of contact in providing independent, reliable, affordable advice and support for those community groups and organisations wishing to develop their IT capacities. For community groups and organisations planning to go online, the one-stop-shop will first conduct an audit of the equipment and skills of the group or organisation. It will then identify ways in which, the shortfall between where the organisation is currently at and where it would like to be in terms of its IT capabilities, can be addressed.

Community organisations that have succeeded in getting online also experience difficulties, and research into internet usage by the community and voluntary sector in Ireland, shows that levels of usage of the Internet remain low. In a recent report by Dublin City University and the Dublin Inner City Partnership that presents the findings from major research in this area, the following were among the reasons cited for infrequent use of the Internet by community and voluntary organisations. (O'Donnell, S., et al., 1998)

- (1) Ongoing hardware and software problems - specific examples cited include trying to keep up with software updates, especially Internet software like web browsers and email packages, and frequent computer crashes, especially when searching the World Wide Web for information.
- (2) No access to reliable and affordable technical advice and support. The help-lines of computer manufacturers and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) were criticised for being too busy and understaffed and not sensitive to the needs of the sector. The research found that overworked staff and volunteers simply do not often have the time required for the long waits on telephone support lines.
- (3) Costly and /or irrelevant Internet training - community organisations reported that they found many training courses to be prohibitively expensive and not relevant to their needs. The research suggested that many community organisations and groups do not have the expertise to identify their IT and internet training needs.

For community organisations and groups experiencing these difficulties, the proposed one-stop-shop will act as a reliable, affordable, independent source of ongoing advice and support in all matters relating to the internet, including: - the installation of internet software; training in the effective retrieval of information from the World Wide Web; advice on mailing lists and newsgroups; consultancy around publishing information on the Web, developing a website; training in the maintenance and management of a website; advice and domain registration, search engine registration, promoting a website etc.

While the level of support provided by the one-stop-shop will be tailored to the particular needs of each community group or organisation, the focus will be on ensuring that community organisations have a basic knowledge and understanding of IT equipment and IT skills. In order to engage with new internet technologies, community groups and organisations first need to have attained a basic knowledge of IT systems and skills. Without a good, basic, broad knowledge of IT and its potential, community organisations will find it difficult to realise the potential benefits of the newer technologies.

The overarching emphasis however of the one-stop-shop will be on engendering self-sufficiency within the community sector. Community groups and organisations need to learn *how they can help themselves* in seeking to exploit IT and the internet to further their objectives.

Support activities and agencies, funded from government and other sources, should focus on building up a capacity with the community voluntary sector to develop and promote their own approach to Internet use. While external and other funding will be essential, the skills for effective use of the Internet must be developed by, and disseminated within, the community/ voluntary sector itself. Such an approach sits well within the empowerment ethos that is dominant in the community voluntary sector today...The real benefits of the Internet can be gained only through experimentation and learning within the sector itself. (O' Siochru, S., 1996)

Policy Context

The growing awareness of IT and the internet on the part of community organisations is being fuelled by intense national and European debate on the arrival of the so-called 'information society'. A key assumption underlying these debates is that digital integration will automatically lead to social integration, and that social cohesion and a more democratic society will result.

To ensure a more democratic information society in Ireland - every effort should be made by the government to encourage adoption of the Internet by the voluntary and community sector. In this way the sector can participate actively in emerging information networks. If the promise of this major new technology is to be realised, then all sectors in society must be geared up to harness its potential. (O'Donnell, S. et al, 1998)

The role of community and voluntary organisations in Ireland was described in the Irish Government Green Paper on Community and Voluntary activity in the following way:

An active voluntary and community sector contributes to a democratic, pluralist society, provides opportunities for the development of decentralised institutional administrative structures and fosters a climate in which innovative solutions to complex social problems and enhancement of quality of life can be pursued and realised. Department of Social Welfare (1997)

These recent statements and viewpoints, lend considerable weight to the argument that resources to support this initiative should be provided by the State as part of its 'information society' programme. In the same way, the State has provided resources to equip schools with computers and Internet access and to support their effective use.

The current proposal is the culmination of repeated calls for the development of an IT support structure indigenous to the community sector to provide training, technical support, and advice to community groups and organisations. See for example Trench B. and O'Donnell S., 1997 and O'Siochru, S and Trench B., 1997).

2. Background to the Initiative

The principles and workings of the proposed one-stop-shop have been developed following a significant investment of time and money on the part of DCU and the DICP into the community sector and IT in Ireland in a project that began almost four years ago. The project had four components: action research, survey research, outreach, and policy.

The project – The Voluntary Sector in the Information Age - grew from an awareness among community organisations in Dublin's inner city that there were organisational and political benefits to be derived from applying information and communication technologies (ICTs) more effectively to their work. It grew also from an interest among researchers at DCU in establishing how these benefits could be realised and what obstacles stood in the way of the adoption of ICTs in the community sector. The two stands came together through DICP which supported the efforts at developing a computer communications network for community organisations and at evaluating these efforts in a wider research context.

The Inner City Computer Network (ICCN)

The development of the Inner City Computer Network (ICCN) represented one aspect of the action research component of the project. The overall aim of the ICCN was to introduce community organisations to electronic communication and information methods. This was to be achieved through the development of a computer network comprising bulletin boards and email. Six inner city community organisations were supported to go on-line and engage with the new technologies.

The ICCN project demonstrated the challenges which applying new technologies can present. Some organisations had difficulty in identifying how the technologies could benefit them; some lacked the resources to make the best use of the technologies; some saw no strong reason to use computer-based means, or any other means, to exchange information with similar organisations. Other difficulties included a lack of resources for staff training, computer viruses, incompatible systems and upgrading difficulties.

The ICCN project demonstrated an ongoing need for advice, training and technical support services geared to the needs, resources and organisational culture of community organisations. A shift in the focus of the project from its overall aim of develop a network for inner city community groups to acting more as a support to those organisations that were going on-line further demonstrated this need.

The ICCN project helped to develop many community organisations' awareness of the possible uses of ICTs in their work, and the project co-ordinator became a point of reference for city centre and community organisations wishing to find out more about on-line technologies. Although the project co-ordinator is no longer working with the ICCN, she remains in contact with a range of community organisations through her role as press officer with the INOU, and through her participation on the steering group for this project.

EMPLOYMENT ICT Strategy

The specific needs of community organisations have also been identified through other research undertaken in Ireland in the last couple of years. Within the framework of the EMPLOYMENT Initiative, over 100 organisations were facilitated to connect to the Internet, trained in the usage of ICTs and encouraged to enhance their organisational practice and capacity through effective interaction with ICTs. A survey of the organisations was undertaken a year after the support programme began to see how they were getting on. Many of the same obstacles or factors discouraging the use of ICTs as were identified in the DCU/ DICP research can be seen here. In the EMPLOYMENT research, a combination of technical problems with computer equipment and the unavailability of technical knowledge and skills to address these problems were the factors found to most discourage organisations' use of ICTs. In terms of their needs, organisations stated that access to on-going technical support and training in how to more effectively use the new technologies were the two key factors that would encourage them to use ICTs more. (See WRC Social and Economic Consultants, 1998)

One-stop-shop Survey of Interest

An outline proposal for the one-stop shop was sent in spring 1998, with a questionnaire, to 240 inner city organisations in Dublin. The survey questionnaire asked the organisations about their present technology arrangements, any planned changes in these arrangements any difficulties encountered in the use of information and communications technologies and the services of DICISI which the organisations might use. A report to DICP was prepared on the basis of the first 40 responses received. As might be expected, these came from organisations with a higher level of activity and interest in the use of information and communications technologies.

Thirty-three of the organisations indicated they would make use of the one stop shop. The other organisations were mainly those with their own training of computer support units; they expressed interest in and support for the proposed shop, although they did not envisage using its services. All but one of the initial 40 respondents used computer technology.

Twenty-five of the 40 respondents reported they had experienced difficulties in using their computers; these divided almost evenly between those who had encountered training problems and those who had technical difficulties. Most technical difficulties related to incompatibilities between software applications and breakdown of networks.

Twenty-five of the organisations have email addresses and Internet access and a further six said they planned to 'go online'. Twenty-one respondents reported they had experienced difficulties in using the Internet, with 13 stating that the problems were technical, that is, they related to access to the networks or deficiencies in the services of the Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

Many respondents had received training in Internet usage but the answers indicated that Internet facilities were not being used to their full potential. Very few respondents identified problems relating to information access and sharing, suggesting they were not using, or not much using, services such as mailing lists, newsgroups, Web searching, etc.

The response from 33 of the initial 40 respondents that they would make use of the proposed one-stop-shop is taken as indicating an awareness among community organisations that they can derive greater benefits than heretofore from the use of information and communications technologies. Thirty organisations stated they would use the shop's training services, 24 organisations identified their need for advice. Fourteen said they needed information, e.g. to guide equipment purchases, and 12 wanted technology demonstrations and consultancy.

While the evaluation is based on a part of what was, overall, a low level of response, it provides some indications that information and communications technologies are firmly embedded in many community organisations of the inner city. Many of these organisations, however, face technical as well as organisational difficulties in making the technologies work to their full potential and to the greatest benefit of the organisations concerned.

The survey tends to support the case for the one-stop-shop, indicating the community sector's need for technical support, training and advice on information and communications technologies. The requirements of community organisations are particular; they also need to be able to trust and rely on the services provided.

3. Overview of the One-Stop-Shop Concept

The overall aim of the initiative is to develop the capacity of community organisations to become self-sufficient in all aspects of their use and development of IT. This aim will be realised through the establishment of an IT support unit that will effectively function as a one-stop-shop to which community organisations and groups can refer for practical advice and support.

Free telephone support, advice and other services will be provided by the shop's staff to community organisations. Where the shop's staff are unable to provide hands-on services to a client organisation, they will provide an advice and referral service, identifying other service providers that can effectively meet their client's needs. In this way, the one stop shop will work in partnership, not in competition with existing providers of low cost IT services.

The one-stop shop will be located in the inner city. In terms of identifying a suitable premises for the shop, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

It is envisaged that many of the proposed services will, by their nature, have to be provided to community organisations and groups on their own premises, including audits of IT equipment, software and hardware installation, troubleshooting, and networking PC's. Other services like advice and referral can be provided via the telephone, or where organisations are already on-line, via email. Thus, the only requirement in terms of office space for the one-stop-shop is that there would be sufficient space to accommodate at least two of the recommended three shop staff at any one time. Further details on the required staffing of the one-stop-shop are provided later in this proposal.

There are particular issues around training to be taken into consideration. While one-to-one training or very small group training sessions could be carried out in the offices of the one-stop-shop, training for larger groups would be facilitated more efficiently and effectively in a dedicated training suite. Indeed, the research has shown that many community organisations do not have any spare capacity in terms of freeing up a computer for training purposes during regular working hours. Furthermore, the experience of the DCU/ DIT project co-ordinator in providing training to the pilot members of the ICCN, and the ICES centres, was that training on-site was often disrupted due to demands on the individuals being trained from colleagues, clients, callers etc.

These considerations contribute to the preferred option of locating the one-stop-shop within an existing community centre, or offices of a well-established and resourced community organisation. It is important to stress that although the one-stop-shop, in this scenario, would be located within an existing community organisation, it would remain independent of any particular community organisation. A number of community groups, and community training workshops have IT training suites and could potentially house the one-stop-shop. The other main benefit of locating the one-stop shop within an existing community setting is an increased sense of ownership of the initiative by the community sector.

This overall thrust of this approach is not dissimilar to the highly successful approach adopted in the Primary Schools Initiative project described earlier, whereby the project office space is provided to the project by Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), the equipment is provided by Siemens and the DIT, and the project staffing is resourced by DICP.

The specific DICISI objectives are summarised as follows:

- ? to promote greater self-reliance and build capacity among Dublin inner city organisations in using IT to the organisations' benefit;
- ? to provide strategic advice to Dublin inner city organisations in 'going online' and in making effective use of Internet technologies, including electronic mail, mailing lists, World Wide Web searching, World Wide Web publishing;
- ? to provide independent pre-purchase advice on acquiring software and hardware, particularly those related to Internet usage;
- ? to facilitate training for staff in the use of software applications;
- ? to develop Internet-based facilities, e.g. World Wide Web sites, as a support for the inner city's use of information and communications technologies;
- ? to promote on-line information exchange, sharing and retrieval within the community sector and between the community sector and other sectors by providing relevant training;
- ? to work in partnership with other community-based or -oriented organisations providing training in information and communications technologies, selling hardware or software, or providing repair, maintenance or recycling services.

4. Target Group

The target group for the proposed one-stop-shop is community organisation's in Dublin's inner city that wish to develop or extend their IT capacities. Through the research undertaken to date, and the outreach activities of the DCU/ DICP IT project, the particular needs of the following types of community organisations and groups have been identified.

- ✍ Community Training Workshops
- ✍ Community Employment Schemes
- ✍ Community Development Schemes
- ✍ Inner City Projects
- ✍ ICES Employment and Contact Points

Annex II to this proposal contains a list of community organisations and groups that will be targeted initially as service users of the one-stop-shop under this pilot initiative.

6. Core Services

Community organisations and groups will be able to avail of the following services through the one-stop-shop. Many of these services will be provided directly by the shop's staff themselves. Where the shop's staff are unable to provide services directly to a client organisation, they will provide an advice and referral service, identifying other potential service providers that can effectively meet the client's needs. For more detailed information on this approach to the delivery of services, see section 7.

The focus of these services will be on ensuring that community organisations have a sufficient knowledge and understanding of IT equipment and basic IT skills. Without this knowledge and skills, community organisations will find it difficult to effectively adopt and apply Internet technologies.

Advisory Services:

The one-stop-shop will provide independent pre-purchase advice to community organisations on their software and hardware requirements. It will provide advice on computer anti-virus software, health and safety issues, advice on how to go online, advice on whether to develop a website or not etc.

Technical Support:

The one-stop-shop will provide technical support to inner city community organisations. It will do this in two ways – through a free telephone technical support line and through on-site visits to community organisations. On site visits will incur a fee and this will depend on the size of the organisation and the nature of the technical support required.

Training:

Training will be provided by both the shop's staff and other service providers. Basic and advanced IT training will be offered to organisations wishing to develop their knowledge and skills in the use of software applications, like Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint etc. Training will also be offered in the maintenance of hardware, disk and file management, basic troubleshooting skills etc. For organisations that have been assisted to go-online, training on the Internet and email will be offered. Tailored on-site training will incur a fee according to the size of the organisation and the nature of the training to be provided.

Demonstration:

The one-stop-shop will endeavour to provide free Internet facilities demonstrations when necessary. Demonstrations can be carried out on lap top computers during visits to clients.

Web Services:

The one-stop-shop will:

- ✍ assess an organisation's need for a website;
- ✍ review commercial quotes for website development and maintenance;
- ✍ provide independent, impartial advice on Internet Service Providers;
- ✍ provide training in website maintenance;

It is unlikely that the one-stop-shop will itself create web sites for community organisations, at least not initially. The experiences of similar initiatives and projects have shown that although there is a growing demand for this service, the resource implications for the staff providing this service are huge. One of the suggestions put forward by the UK-based ITSUVO is to provide an initial website creation service with training for staff in how to update site and manage the site. See Annex 2 for a more detailed description of this organisation.

7. Delivery of Services

While the proposed one-stop-shop will directly provide a number of these services, it will also act as a referral point, providing information to community organisations on other services and providers. The rationale for this approach is the desire to avoid duplication of services and potential displacement of existing low-cost service providers.

Specifically, the one-stop-shop will be responsible for the delivery of the following services:

- ✍ maintaining a free telephone support line for community organisations;
- ✍ providing advice on a broad range of IT related issues including pre-purchase advice on hard & safety issues etc.;
- ✍ conducting on-site visits to community organisation to assess their IT needs;
- ✍ providing on-site technical support in getting on-line;
- ✍ providing basic IT training;
- ✍ arranging Internet demonstrations;
- ✍ supporting and advising organisations in the planning, development and upkeep of web sites.

The services that will *not* be directly or *exclusively* provided by the one-stop-shop include:

- ✍ Training;
- ✍ Local Dial Up Access to the Internet;
- ✍ Web Design and Maintenance;
- ✍ Domain Registration.

Key potential providers of IT training include organisations and community groups based in the inner city that have already become proficient in the use of IT. The Community Training Workshops for example have been identified as potential providers of IT training as well as a number of European-funded pilot projects that included substantial IT training dimensions.

Gateway Project

One example of the latter is the Gateway Project (Gaining Access to Training and Education). The overall aim of this project, which is promoted by the North West, Inner City Women's Network is to improve the ability of disadvantaged women to access quality employment or self employment. A substantial element of the pre-enterprise / self-employment training includes IT training. In recognition of the demand from the community for flexible IT training, the project is now providing informal IT training to individuals from community groups and organisations as well professional community development workers from the Eastern Health Board. It is also planning a more structured 14-week computer course to cater for 4-5 individuals at a time. One-hour introductory sessions on the Internet are also provided on request.

The one-stop-shop will work with potential training providers, like the Gateway project, to ensure that the maximum diffusion of skills throughout the sector occurs at a minimum cost.

Partnerships will actively be developed with other service providers that share the ethos and underlying philosophy of the DICISI initiative – namely to develop self-sufficiency among community organisations in their use of ICTs. There are a number of existing Irish service providers, either indigenous to the sector or operating primarily within the sector, with whom active partnerships could be pursued. These include:

- ✍ Public Communications Centre (PCC)
- ✍ Technofutures
- ✍ Community Media Network (CMN)
- ✍ No One's Daughter
- ✍ Connect Ireland
- ✍ Eire.Og

The basis for a partnership with any other service provider will vary according to the needs of the client organisations.

Partnerships will also be developed with other similar initiatives from further afield, including:

- ✍ Newtel, a London-based project that has been established for a number of years with wide ranging experience and expertise in supporting community groups in their use of IT. Newtel have developed a highly successful model of training - thePeer2Peer training programme, which they now make available to other organisations and initiatives sharing their ethos and objectives. Newtel also provide an IT consultancy service and have experience of providing consultancy in Ireland to community-based organisations. For more information on Newtel, see Annex III.

- ✍ Farndon House Information Trust was established to assist voluntary organisations exploit the potential of online technology. Since 1990, FHIT has been supported by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT). Consequently, the bulk of their clients are in fact JRCT grantees, as a result of an innovative scheme whereby grantees are eligible for vouchers which allow them to avail of the services of Farndon House at heavily subsidised rates. There are a number of JRCT grantees in Dublin, and in Northern Ireland, and FHIT employees therefore have to travel from the UK to Ireland to provide IT support and assistance to those that avail of the voucher scheme. FHIT are looking for partners in Ireland that could potentially provide the same support and technical services as it currently does. For more information on FHIT see Annex IV.

- ✍ There are a number of similar projects and initiatives in Northern Ireland, including Community Information Network Northern Ireland (CINNI) and IT In Action. Initial research would suggest that there is potential for complementary activities between the north and south of Ireland.

In summary, the DICISI initiative aims to foster creative partnerships within the community sector, and between the community sector and the public and private sectors. The one-stop-shop will act as a conduit for the sharing of resources and information, and will value contributions from all parts of the community.

8. Promotion

A programme of introductory workshop/ seminars will be organised, drawing upon the skills and resources of project staff and existing project supporters. The events will be provided for free and targeted at representatives of local groups and organisations. Attendance at the workshops/ seminars will be confined to two persons per organisations, and a maximum number of attendees will be permitted (50 places). This is intended to generate interest in the project as well as providing a positive means of liaising more closely with local community organisations. It is anticipated that through in-kind contributions and sponsorship from project supporters, the costs of running these workshops/ seminars can be kept at a minimum. Following the initial series of workshops however, the programme of events can be repeated for as long as the demand exists, but at a cost. This cost will be kept to a minimum to ensure that community and voluntary organisations can afford to attend.

Different workshops will be organised for different levels of IT awareness and use. Organisations with no Internet experience, for example, will benefit from an introduction to the Internet, and a demonstration of what it can do and how it can help their group or community. A more advanced workshop will be organised for organisations already familiar with the Internet and who want to know more about how it can be used to further their organisational aims and objectives. Depending on the level of demand, a workshop could also be organised for community organisations wishing to build a website. This workshop would focus on the tools required, the benefits of a website, the pitfalls etc.

A key lesson from our research into similar projects is that sustained marketing and promotion will be critical to the success of the project. And that while marketing expenditure will of necessity have to be kept to a minimum, creative marketing is still possible through existing networks and channels of communication, and through the organisation of low cost or free, awareness and training events when funding is available.

For those community organisations and groups that already have access to Internet facilities, on-line promotion and marketing will be important. A project website will be developed with a description of the available services and costs, and a listing of the organisations that have availed of these services so that potential clients can contact these organisations for recommendations. A local index of email users will be developed and maintained, so that frequent mail shots to potential clients can be posted reminding them of the services and reporting on new developments.

9. Staffing

It is estimated that three full time staff will be required to implement the project. This is in line with the levels of staffing in other similar projects and initiatives. See annexes 1-5. The proposed staffing of the one-stop-shop is as follows:

- ✍ *Executive Director:* responsible for the overall direction and co-ordination of the initiative.
- ✍ *Technology Director:* responsible for maintaining and developing the IT infrastructure and services of the one-stop-shop.
- ✍ *Administrator:* responsible for office management, promotion of the initiative, and IT support functions.
- ✍ *Volunteers*
- ✍ *Student Placements*

Drawing on the experiences of other similar initiatives and projects, the composition of the core staff will include at least two staff members with excellent IT skills. These staff will be responsible for developing the IT infrastructure of the project, as well as providing on-site practical assistance and support to community organisations requiring a broad range of IT skills. One staff member will have responsibility for marketing and promoting the project and fulfilling administrative functions including managing the financial aspects of the project.

For all potential candidates, a community development background or experience of the non-profit sector should be considered highly desirable if not essential. A feature of the initiative is the promotion of new ways of communication and information exchange within the community sector, rather than a focus on technology for the sake of technology. Experience in IT training would also be considered an advantage.

10. Legal Structure and Management

Structures will need to be put in place to facilitate the legal and financial aspects of the initiative. There are a number of options that are being pursued in terms of providing a vehicle for employing the shop's staff, purchasing equipment etc. These include:

- ✍ adopting a formal legal structure - establishing the one-stop-shop as a company limited by guarantee, and/ or;
- ✍ seeking charitable status;
- ✍ contracting the services of the proposed one-stop-shop to an existing community-based organisation with experience of providing training and other IT related services, and with existing facilities (i.e. equipment, space, central location, spare capacity)
- ✍ giving financial and legal responsibility for the initiative to DCU or some other institution/ agency.

The experiences of other similar initiatives documented in the annexes to this report would tend to favour the approach of subsuming the one-stop-shop as an initiative or programme of some larger established institute. The main advantage of this approach is that the work undertaken by the shop's staff would not include the administration of payroll and other ongoing responsibilities arising from having a formal legal structure. These activities are deemed to have a significant drain on the available resources to the pilot initiative, including staff time.

Notwithstanding this issue, there are a number of community-based organisations operating in Dublin's inner city that are likely candidates for delivering the services of the proposed one-stop-shop. Some of these organisations have already been identified as potential providers of services. See section 7.

The nature of this type of initiative is that it may have a finite life span, given that one of its key objectives is to develop the capacity of community organisations to support themselves. At the end of three years, an assessment of the extent to which the pilot initiative has achieved its objectives will be undertaken.

The outcome from this assessment might be any one of the following (a) the establishment of the one-stop-shop as a self-financing charitable company (b) continued core funding for the shop, or (c) the winding-up of the shop. Such is the pace of technological change that the IT needs of community groups and organisations cannot be predicted with any great certainty much beyond a two year planning cycle. The key issue then is to build flexibility into the planning of all aspects of the one-stop-shop including its legal structure.

Regarding the strategic management of the initiative, a partnership approach is envisaged, whereby a team of people will be drawn together from various organisations and agencies to manage the one-stop-shop voluntarily. A similar approach has been successfully adopted in the management of the Primary Schools Initiative, whereby the different partners have responsibility for managing different aspects of the initiative.

A management committee will be established comprising of representatives from the community organisations, providers of the shop's services, funding agencies and the staff. The primary responsibility of the management committee will be to direct the initiative.

11. Evaluation

The one-stop-shop is proposed as a three-year pilot project. The project is clearly focused at testing out new approaches to developing the capacity of community organisations through their effective usage of IT. One of the key outcomes from the project will be the availability of a tried and tested model of practice that can be replicated in other domains. To this end, there will be an emphasis on documenting and disseminating the process and outcomes of the project that will help to ensure that the learning generated can easily be transferred.

12. Summary of Core Values

- ✍ The project will be led by people and not technology;
- ✍ The project will be run at a minimum cost;
- ✍ The project will value contributions from all parts of the community;
- ✍ The project will work in partnership, not in competition with existing low cost Internet service providers;
- ✍ The project will at all times endeavour to develop self-sufficiency among community organisations and groups in their use of IT;
- ✍ The project will share its experiences and skills with others.

13. Project Funding

The development of the one-stop-shop is proposed as a three-year pilot project. Funding is now being sought to cover the core costs of running the project during this time. Core costs will include the salaries of three full-time staff plus office overheads.

Income generated from fees for services provided will cover ancillary costs and permit expansion. The income projections are based on a detailed review of the services and pricing structures of similar initiatives and projects. In Year 1, it is estimated that £25,000 will be taken in fees from client groups – i.e. £500 each from 50 clients or £1,000 each from 25 clients. In reality, the number of clients in the first year is likely to fall somewhere between 25 and 50, and the average total fee intake per client between £500 and £1000.

A summary of projected expenditure against income is provided in Table 1. A more detailed breakdown is provided in Annex I.

**Table 1
Summary Income & Expenditure**

	Year 1 IR£	Year 2 IR£	Year 3 IR£	Total IR£
Total Income	125,000	130,000	135,000	390,000
Total Expenditure	126,025	119,775	119,775	365,575
Surplus/ (Deficit)	(1,025)	10,225	15,225	24,425

14. Proposed Sources of Funding

In assessing the level of investment required for this initiative, potential investors are invited to reflect upon the resources needed to implement this initiative and to note that there are substantial resources already in place. The necessary resources include a physical location, equipment, staff, a management committee and commitment. A number of these elements are already in place. A location for the one-stop-shop can readily be identified, the foundations of a management committee are already in place, and a substantial level of commitment to the initiative, and indeed a certain degree of expectation, are the fruits of a long process of research and consultation. The multi-faceted nature of this initiative, which addresses issues such as life long learning, democratic participation and social inclusion, lends itself to support from a range of funding sources, some of which are identified below.

Private Sector

There are a number of large private sector computer manufacturers and suppliers with strong community links and outreach programmes. Siemens Nixdorf are a good example of a private company involved in a cross-sectoral approach to tackling educational disadvantage and supporting new learning opportunities under the Primary Schools Initiative. Equipment and technical expertise will be sought for the DICISI initiative from a range of potential providers in this sector including Siemens, Microsoft and Gateway 2000.

Public Sector

The Department of An Taoiseach has special responsibility for overseeing the development of the "information society" in Ireland. It is the parent department of the Information Society Commission, which is responsible for promoting, co-ordinating and monitoring the implementation of actions required in the development of the information society. The purpose and nature of the DICISI initiative make it an ideal candidate for funding as a flagship "information society" project.

Charitable Funding

Many of the most successful initiatives in this area received core funding from charitable trusts. Of those initiatives included in our research, Newtel is funded by Aston Charities Trust Ltd., and Farndon House Information Trust by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. While these trusts are predominantly UK-based, a limited amount of funding is granted to non UK-based groups and organisations.

EU Initiatives

There are a range of initiatives at European level under which the DICISI initiative might seek support. Of particular interest at this time, is the European Information Society Technologies (IST) Programme under the EU Fifth Framework. The first call for proposals was in March of this year, with a second call planned for September. One of the themes under which tenders may be offered is the 'User Friendly Information Society', which includes measures such as on-line support to democratic processes, new perspectives for work and business, and new models for providing services to citizens.

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