

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Our strategy for 2009 - 11

Our vision	an ever more effective third sector achieving positive change for individuals and communities.
Our mission	We work to increase the effectiveness of the third sector by developing its use of evaluation and quality systems.
Our four specific aims	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to improve the effectiveness of the sector through better use of planning, evaluation and quality; 2. to enable infrastructure networks to support frontline voluntary organisations on planning, evaluation and quality; 3. to provide an informed national policy voice on improving effectiveness to help create a supportive policy, regulatory and funding environment promoting both accountability and learning; and 4. to improve the effectiveness of funding practice through strategic engagement and consultancy support to statutory commissioners and sector funders.
Our values	<p>CES believes in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the power of evaluation and quality to make the sector more effective • evaluation for learning as well as accountability • respecting diversity • working sustainably and minimising our environmental footprint • sharing knowledge • learning from those with whom we work.

Charities Evaluation Services has been second to none in raising awareness of the potential of evaluation and quality and in creating services to support their use. Since 1990, around 25,000 voluntary organisations have benefited from CES' training, consultancy and information, going on to strengthen the effectiveness of their organisations, services and campaigns as a result. We have created or popularised practical and user-friendly approaches to improving effectiveness and built a positive profile as providers of expertise combined with a firm grip on the everyday dilemmas facing organisations at all stages of development. This in turn has given us a unique position from which to gauge voluntary organisations' support needs in relation to effectiveness and quality, and to disseminate what we learn.

Due in part to CES' own efforts, there has been a growing acceptance within the third sector of the importance of evaluation and quality, and one effect has been to attract other players into the terrain.

There are a number of challenges which we need to take account of in pursuing our mission over the coming years (no widespread acceptance of one authoritative voice; competition; plethora of frameworks and adaptations; other policy voices; policy initiatives; debates over regulation and independence). Monitoring and evaluation and quality assurance are growing but there are different views on the forms they will take, and some key audiences may not even engage with these terms.

This summary sets out our strategic priorities for the next three years.

Our strategic direction 2009 - 11

We will prioritise two strategic directions:

1. Being an influential policy voice
2. Asserting our expertise.

We will also sustain four existing commitments:

3. Being the leading service provider
4. Supporting the supporters
5. Leading innovation
6. Being a specialist provider

1. Being an influential policy voice
Even without dedicated staff, CES has worked hard to influence policy makers. Our voice is respected but much of this work has been behind the scenes and hence invisible (and unpaid other than through our OTS core grant). We have lacked the capacity to capitalise upon it and develop a striking policy profile. We will work to expand our profile in policy discussions, to set agendas rather than just respond to them, and to expand our communications and promotional activities so that we establish CES as a recognised voice.
2. Asserting our expertise
Historically we have relied on the high quality of our consultancy work to speak for itself and have received positive word of mouth and repeat business this way. Individual organisations and networks have benefited but broader impact of this work across subsectors or the whole sector has been limited. In the current environment the time is right for us to assert our position as the expert consultancy provider and the leader in the field. Some know our position as best in class but with so much choice around we need to brand ourselves as such more boldly.

3. Being the leading service provider
Being the market leader with a greater and <i>broader</i> market reach than any other provider.
4. Supporting the supporters
We currently deliver significant support to infrastructure audiences through the National Outcomes Programme, National Performance Programme and the PQASSO mentor programme. We will continue this work as far as resources and demand allow (more so if grant opportunities arise). We will 'test the waters' with a small-scale continuation programme for National Outcomes Programme after the end of the grant period.
5. Leading innovation
We are keen to avoid any misperception that CES is a conservative organisation or is exclusively focused on a narrow range of tools and resources. At the same time, our strength lies in the extent to which our technical expertise is based on evidence of what works, so we don't want to innovate for innovation's sake. We will make some progress with this direction, with the possibility that it could be a stronger priority in the future.
6. Being a specialist provider
We will sustain current levels of work in this area, but we will not define ourselves primarily in this way. This option provides a good source of new learning for the organisation.