



---

**NATIONAL YOUTH  
COUNCIL OF IRELAND**

---

---

**STRATEGIC PLAN  
2014 TO 2016**

---

# NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is the representative body for national voluntary youth work organisations in Ireland. It represents and supports the interests of voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people.

[www.youth.ie](http://www.youth.ie)

First published in 2014 by:  
© National Youth Council of Ireland 2014.  
All rights reserved.

NYCI is a signatory of the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages (see [www.youth.ie](http://www.youth.ie) for more).

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
The National Youth Council of Ireland .....	4
Background context for the voluntary youth sector.....	4
OUR VALUES AND BELIEFS.....	7
HOW WE DEVELOPED OUR STRATEGY .....	9
THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND’S STRATEGY: 2014 to 2016 .....	11
1. Our Vision .....	12
2. Our Mission.....	12
3. Strategic Priority Themes.....	14
4. Strategic Outcomes.....	16
MAKING IT HAPPEN: IMPLEMENTATION .....	19
1. Outcomes and Key Actions .....	20
2. Critical Success Factors .....	32
APPENDIX 1: Analysis of the Key Messages from the Consultation Phase .....	34
APPENDIX 2: The National Youth Council of Ireland’s Application of the ‘Theory of Change Model’ .....	37

# INTRODUCTION

## THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND

The National Youth Council of Ireland is a national organisation which represents and supports community, voluntary and not for profit youth organisations in Ireland. Founded in 1967, we currently have 50 members across Ireland which represents the scope, scale and diversity of the youth sector. At a conservative estimate, these organisations touch the lives of almost 400,000 young people in Ireland.

We help our members so that they, in turn, can change lives for the better; we represent their shared interests to Government and other decision-makers; and we promote a better understanding of youth work and young people to a variety of audiences. We are an independently governed membership based organisation, operating nationwide and our office is based in Dublin.

## BACKGROUND CONTEXT FOR THE VOLUNTARY YOUTH SECTOR

The National Youth Council Strategic Plan 2014 – 2016 – Rising to the Challenge, Delivering Outcomes will continue with the direction established by the Strategic Plan 2008-2012 but has taken into account the evolving Irish economic and policy context not least in the youth sector. In 2014 fresh and innovative approaches to supporting and developing the youth sector are needed as organisations face unprecedented financial challenges along with increasing needs and demands on services underpinning why ‘Rising to the Challenge, Delivering Outcomes’ is now more important than ever.

The voluntary youth sector in Ireland is large and dynamic comprising over 40 national organisations who in turn oversee a much larger number of local community-based projects, services and clubs that deliver services to young people on the ground. Volunteering represents a key component of the youth sector in Ireland and voluntary youth work organisations are the sole providers of youth work services. The youth sector employs about 1400 people and benefits from the voluntary contribution of more than 40,000+ people.

The sector is extremely diverse – from small local youth clubs to large national organisations. In the middle is a vast array of small and medium-sized organisations/groups that are specialist in nature.

The specialisms are wide ranging from environment and youth exchanges to faith based equality and minority issues. The unifying tie that binds all of these organisations together is that they exist to support young people to be the very best they can be.

The National Youth Council of Ireland's strategic plan expresses our determination to represent and strengthen the voluntary youth sector. It recognises that youth work is an educational and developmental process contributing positively to the development of confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens which in turn builds trust, active citizenship and strengthens communities.

We have remained responsive to the sector, acting to tackle emerging issues, developing expertise and ensuring credibility and integrity. Over the lifetime of NYCI's Strategic Plan 2008-2012 the sector delivered on a number of key achievements and initiatives namely:

- NYCI campaigned for a Youth Guarantee and contributed to the Youth Guarantee Plan participating in the Youth Guarantee pilot in Ballymun.
- NYCI commissioned the Assessment of the Economic Value of Youth Work.
- NYCI launched the Vote at 16 Campaign "A New Age in Voting". In January 2013 the Constitutional Convention following NYCI's presentation voted to recommend the voting age be reduced to 16.
- Launched the NYCI research report 'Time to Go'.
- Continued professional development and the development of best practice in youth health, youth arts, development education, child protection and interculturalism supported through resource development, capacity building, advocacy and evidence based and informed practice working collaboratively internally and externally.

We have aligned, and will continue to align our resources to the services where we can make the biggest impact in improving the capacity and capability of our sector to strengthen its ability to effect real change in the lives of the young people we work with. 'Rising to the Challenge, Delivering Outcomes' identifies our strategic position and vision and how we will continue to work to identify and address the needs of the sector. This strategic plan recognises the ever changing landscape where increased demands on the capacity of the sector coupled with reduced funding have significantly influenced service delivery. It also considers the external factors which will impact on the sector over the coming years and which this new strategy must take into account including:

- The increasing focus on transparency, good governance, and quality standards in the voluntary youth sector.

- The changed architecture for engagement with the state: the establishment of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the amalgamation of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs into the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and the end of the formal 'Social partnership' approach at national level.,
- Changing trends in the wider community and voluntary sector, where we are seeing more cross-organisational working, joint programming and collaborative initiatives as well as a continuing shift towards more commercially minded management teams and professional fundraisers.
- The requirement from all types of funders for impact assessment and the resulting challenge this poses for voluntary youth organisations.

'Rising To the Challenge, Delivering Outcomes' recognises the commitment, knowledge and skills set of the youth sector and will work to build, develop, enhance and represent the youth sector. The Action Plan sets out actions to support the continued development, growth and success of the sector. Some of the work is well defined while other aspects will require further research and development.

Moving forward the voluntary youth sector is experiencing one of the most difficult and turbulent periods in recent decades. The voluntary youth sector will have many challenges to face in the next three years as they continue to change lives and communities for the better. The National Youth Council of Ireland has a crucial role to play in representing and strengthening the sector throughout this difficult period and will work to achieve our Vision and Mission in conjunction with our partners through the implementation of 'Rising to the Challenge, Delivering Outcomes'.

# OUR VALUES

---

# AND BELIEFS

---

IN THIS SECTION, WE STATE OUR VALUES AND BELIEFS IN THREE DISTINCT CATEGORIES: THE THINKING THAT UNDERPINS WHY WE EXIST; THE WAY THAT WE DO OUR WORK WITHIN THE SECTOR; AND THE WAY THAT WE WORK WITHIN THE STAFF TEAM.

## IN WHAT WE STAND FOR:

- We believe that all young people have a right to be supported to develop a sense of belonging, competence, empowerment and usefulness.
- We believe that a strong and vibrant voluntary youth sector has a critical role to play in engaging all young people, especially those who are disconnected from the mainstream, and to work alongside them in building lives that are active, productive and resilient.
- We believe better outcomes are achieved when young people are involved in making decisions that affect them.
- We believe in young people being active participants in their communities (active citizens). This is good for community and good for individuals.
- We value volunteering and the vital role it plays in a healthy vibrant community.
- We value the diversity of the voluntary youth sector and believe that is a key strength.
- We believe that a fair and just society is one where young people are valued; there is a commitment to justice; a belief in the interdependence of lives and a sense of solidarity that comes from people acting together; a strong commitment to freedom; and a strong engagement with the ecological values of harmony and balance with nature.

## IN HOW WE DO OUR WORK:

- We are evidence-informed and solutions-focused.
- We believe in and conduct authoritative and reliable advocacy.
- We are transparent in our decision-making.
- We take a problem-solving approach to our work.
- We are professional in our relationships (both internal and external).
- We believe in being proactive in identifying and addressing unmet needs.
- We are collaboration-seeking in our approach.
- We are facilitative not directive.

## IN HOW WE GIVE EFFECT TO THESE VALUES IN OUR DAY-TO-DAY WORK WITHIN THE STAFF TEAM:

- We take pride in providing a consistently high quality service.
- We thrive on and enjoy working in a high performance environment, proactively ensuring a healthy balance in the pace of work.
- We are confident in our ability to adapt to a constantly changing external environment.
- We welcome and encourage the ideas and input of all staff and we engage in robust debate and problem solving.
- There is freedom for everyone to contribute equally and have their views/voice respected and valued.
- We consistently communicate with each other in a respectful manner.
- We are open, transparent and honest.
- We are a flexible, family friendly team. We value fairness and flexibility from all our team members.

# HOW WE DEVELOPED OUR STRATEGY

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE STRATEGIC PLAN FROM 2014 – 2016 IS BASED ON EVIDENCE OF NEED, ANALYSIS OF THE FUTURE CHALLENGES FACING YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE YOUTH SECTOR THAT WORKS WITH AND FOR THEM AND DIRECT INPUT FROM OUR MEMBERS.

In NYCI we passionately believe that better outcomes are achieved when people are involved in the decisions that affect them. Therefore as a first step in developing our Strategic Plan we sought the input of our member organisations, non-member organisations, strategic stakeholders and NYCI's own Board and staff. All of these contributed to creating a clear picture of what our members and stakeholders think of The National Youth Council of Ireland and what the future needs of the young people and the youth sector in the coming years and of NYCI's role in contributing to meeting those needs.

Details of the feedback can be read in the accompanying 'Analysis of the Key Messages from the consultation phase' in Appendix 1.

During 2012 NYCI embarked on a process which led to the development of a 'Theory of Change Model' for the Council and this is the strategic planning framework that underpins the new strategy. The 'Theory of Change' was a rigorous but participatory process that helped NYCI to be clear on our long term goals, identify the measurable indicators of our success and formulate the actions we needed to take to achieve those goals. The approach requires a robust and iterative analysis of the problem we have identified followed by the identification of the potential solutions that might be applied to 'unlock' the solutions for that particular problem. By analysing what role the NYCI can play in providing those solutions a very clear rationale for the organisation's existence can be found.



Working within the framework we have identified the strategic outcomes that NYCI wants to achieve with all our work across the organisation and clarified what benefits our activities should deliver to for those we work with.

Further details of the 'Theory of Change Model' framework for The National Youth Council of Ireland can be read in Appendix 2.



NATIONAL  
YOUTH COUNCIL  
OF IRELAND

STRATEGY:  
2014 TO 2016

IN THIS SECTION WE OUTLINE OUR COMPLETE STRATEGY FOR THE PERIOD 2014 TO 2016 AS DEVELOPED USING THE 'THEORY OF CHANGE MODEL'.

We start with an updated statement of our vision and mission; and then the five strategic priority areas which were identified. A total of ten strategic objectives have been identified across the five strategic priority areas and the final section goes into the detail on what we will deliver over the next three years in each of the ten objectives.

## 1 OUR VISION

ARTICULATES THE WORLD WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE LONG TERM

*Our vision is of an Ireland where all young people are empowered to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to realise their potential and to actively participate in an inclusive society that values and respects them.*

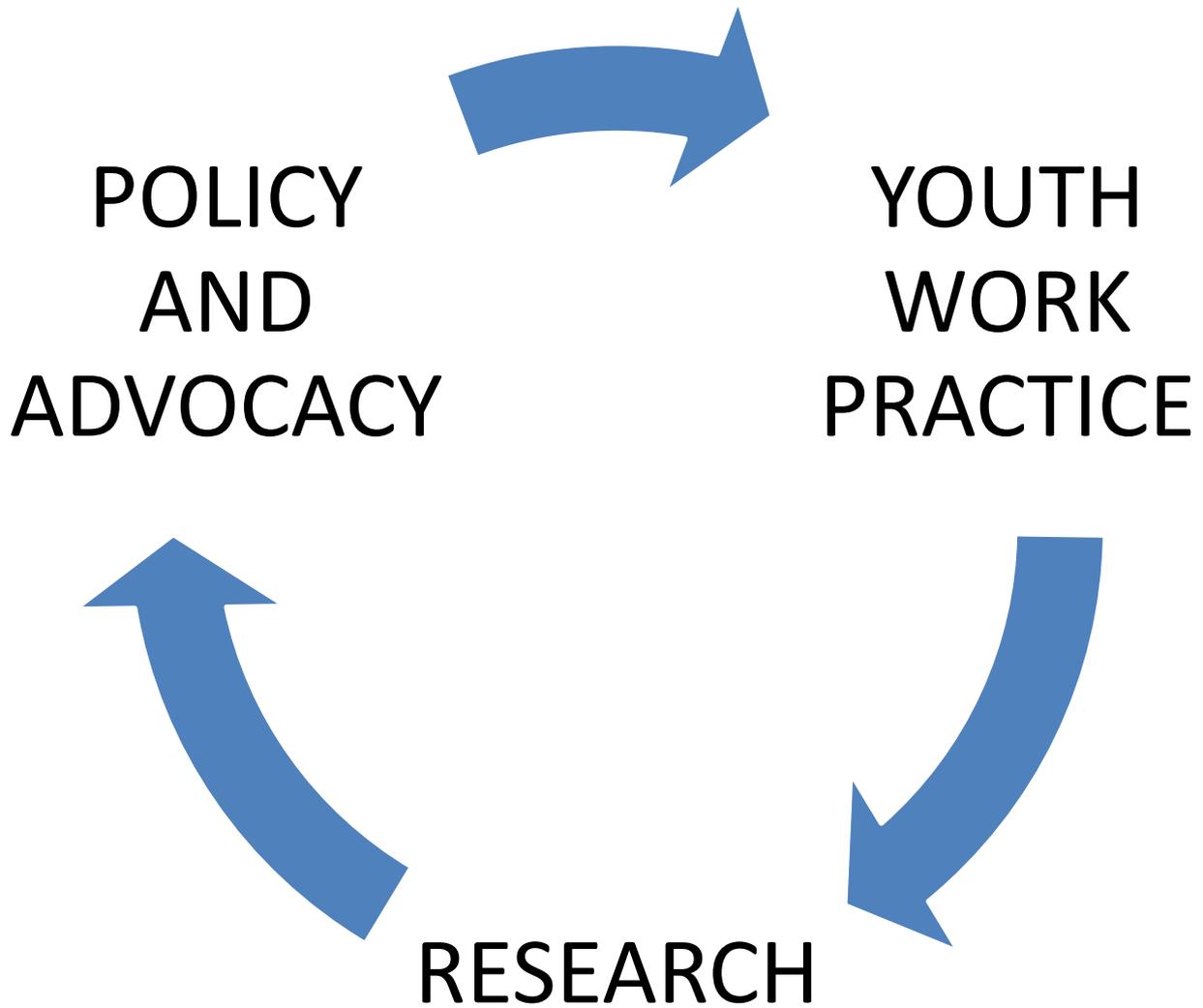
## 2 OUR MISSION

SETS OUT OUR FUNDAMENTAL PURPOSE AS AN ORGANISATION, WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

*NYCI is a membership led umbrella organisation that represents the shared interests of voluntary youth organisations and uses our collective expertise to act on issues that impact on young people*

*We do this by:*

- *Representing the shared interests of voluntary youth organisations;*
- *Advocating on issues that impact on the lives of young people;*
- *Promoting the development of evidence informed high quality specialist youth work practice;*
- *Capacity building and professional development.*



### 3. STRATEGIC PRIORITY THEMES

Five strategic priority themes have been identified which, when effectively implemented will lead us towards achievement of our vision.

OUR VISION  
IS OF AN IRELAND WHERE ALL  
YOUNG PEOPLE ARE EMPOWERED TO DEVELOP  
THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE TO REALISE  
THEIR POTENTIAL AND TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN AN  
INCLUSIVE SOCIETY THAT VALUES AND RESPECTS THEM.

I. INFORM  
AND  
INFLUENCE  
PUBLIC  
POLICY

II. RECOGNISE  
AND VALUE  
YOUTH WORK  
AND THE  
VOLUNTARY  
YOUTH  
SECTOR

III. BUILD  
KNOWLEDGE,  
SKILLS AND  
CAPACITY

IV. CREATE  
EXCELLENT  
RESEARCH

V. DEVELOP THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND'S ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

## I. INFORM AND INFLUENCE PUBLIC POLICY

We are committed to playing a leadership role in ensuring that the policy agenda responds to and addresses the needs of children and young people and that public policy affecting young people is improved. We will ensure that our policy agenda is rooted in the lived experience of young people, that young people's voices are heard and that the views of our members' voices are reflected in the development and implementation of public policy.

## II. RECOGNISE AND VALUE YOUTH WORK AND THE VOLUNTARY YOUTH SECTOR

Here we will work to ensure that the work done by voluntary youth organisations to improve young people's lives is properly understood and appreciated by key stakeholders and decision-makers; that the policy and operational environment is supportive of voluntary youth work; and that the voluntary youth sector is appropriately represented in discussions directly impacting it.

## III. BUILD KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND CAPACITY

We will seek to support voluntary and community youth organisations to be as effective as possible in their work and to deliver positive, high-quality outcomes for the young people and the communities they serve. We will emphasise the importance of taking a collaborative approach to delivering better outcomes for young people, the importance of developing and supporting excellent specialist youth work practice and the need to focus increasingly on demonstrating the impact of the work.

## IV. CREATE AND CONTRIBUTE TO EXCELLENT RESEARCH

NYCI has a growing reputation for high quality research. Our credibility in this role is critical to the development of innovative, high quality research on issues impacting on young people in Ireland. In recent years research has improved our knowledge of the value of youth work and has deepened our understanding of a range of issues impacting on the lives of young people. NYCI believes that the quality of the policy making and the practice depends on the quality of the research that informs it. We believe that excellent research will lead to improved responses to the needs of young people and better outcomes.

## V. ENHANCING THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND'S EFFECTIVENESS

In order to achieve any of the objectives in this plan, and to meet the needs of our members, The National Youth Council of Ireland must have the necessary organisational capability and capacity to do so. We will ensure that we continuously increase our effectiveness and efficiency in delivering on this plan.

In order to deliver on our mission, we have identified ten specific Strategic Outcomes grouped across the five identified Strategic Priority Themes. These objectives will define the focus of the organisation until the end of 2016 and are distinct, yet mutually reinforcing.

I. INFORM  
AND  
INFLUENCE  
PUBLIC  
POLICY

1. BUILD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH WORK AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

The National Youth Council of Ireland will articulate and promote a common understanding of the value and importance of youth work and how we can continue to enhance the assets of young people through youth work in Ireland.

2. BUILD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUES THAT IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Every day Government Departments and state agencies make important decisions about policies and resources that affect the lives of young people.

Advocacy is one of NYCI's most essential and important tools and being the informed voice on issues impacting on young people and the youth sector is fundamental to who we are. We will promote young people's participation in all aspects of Irish society, and in particular the principle of involving young people in the public decision making process that affects their daily lives.

The National Youth Council of Ireland will work with others to help our members and the voluntary youth sector speak out in a credible and informed way, providing and supporting effective and accessible forums for this kind of engagement as appropriate.

II. RECOGNISE  
AND VALUE  
YOUTH WORK  
AND THE  
VOLUNTARY  
YOUTH  
SECTOR

3. ENSURE POLICY MAKERS AND ORGANISATIONS RECOGNISE, VALUE AND SUPPORT YOUTH WORK PRACTICE

NYCI will articulate and promote a position that youth work has a vital and distinctive role to play in the lives of young people in contemporary Ireland. One that may in fact have few parallels given the voluntary nature of young people's involvement. We will demonstrate that youth work and non-formal and informal learning have a distinct relevance in terms of young people's preparedness, participation and progression in education, training and employment as well as in

II. RECOGNISE  
AND VALUE  
YOUTH WORK  
AND THE  
VOLUNTARY  
YOUTH  
SECTOR

the areas of health and Theory of inclusion. We will promote the youth sector's particular expertise in engaging and empowering young people and in particular those young people with fewer opportunities.

4. ENSURE THE REPRESENTATIVE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL IS RECOGNISED AND THAT THE VOLUNTARY YOUTH SECTOR HAS AN EFFECTIVE VOICE AND ITS IMPORTANCE IS ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE STATE, THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND OTHER SECTORS

In order for the voluntary youth sector to play its full part in improving Irish society for the better, it is critical that it be informed about and present at the centre of decision making processes that affect the sector and the young people and communities that are served by organisations in it.

5. ENSURE THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND INVOLVES, ADDS VALUE, AND IS RESPONSIVE TO OUR MEMBERS

Our members are the lifeblood of our organisation. We are committed to ensuring that we remain relevant to our member's needs and that we address those needs thoroughly, effectively and in a timely manner.

III. BUILD  
KNOWLEDGE,  
SKILLS AND  
CAPACITY

6. ENSURE ORGANISATIONS POLICIES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE IMPROVED

In order to ensure our sector and the organisations in it do the right things in the right way, we believe it is imperative that the best policies for working with young people are in place and implemented in all youth organisations. For this to happen, the appropriate opportunities, supports, and resources need to be available. We commit to facilitating and leading this work.

7. SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS TO IMPLEMENT BEST PRACTICE FOR WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, ENSURING THAT QUALITY AND EXCELLENCE IN PRACTICE IN THE VOLUNTARY YOUTH SECTOR DELIVERS BETTER OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

We will seek to support our member organisations to build their organisational capacity so they are as effective as possible in their work to deliver positive outcomes for the young people they work with. The development and implementation of high quality standards in everyday practice in youth

III. BUILD  
KNOWLEDGE,  
SKILLS AND  
CAPACITY

organisations is crucial to the sustainability, development and progression of their services. The National Youth Council of Ireland's drive for quality will reinforce the move towards an increased emphasis on outcome-focused working within the sector and the need to focus increasingly on showing others the impact of their work.

8. MAXIMISE COLLABORATIVE WORKING IN THE SECTOR

We believe that better outcomes for the young people we serve will be achieved by more collaborative working between organisations and across the sector in general. We will develop and deliver solutions to enable youth workers and organisations to share ideas and knowledge and to promote and support the further development of partnerships between organizations.

IV. CREATE  
EXCELLENT  
RESEARCH

9. CREATE AND CONTRIBUTE TO EXCELLENT RESEARCH

A close relationship between research, policy and practice is an important way of raising the standards of all. To get the best results, we intend to develop the most extensive possible collaboration among those involved in youth work and youth policy in Ireland. We believe that collaboration across organisations and institutions and across research disciplines can help to stimulate the kinds of excellent research into such matters as youth policy, youth culture and youth work; and into the impact of Theory of, economic, social and cultural change on the lives and lifestyles of young people.

V. DEVELOP THE  
NYCI'S  
ORGANISATIONAL  
EFFECTIVENESS

10. ENSURE THAT THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND HAS THE SYSTEMS, STRUCTURES, PROCESSES, PROCEDURES AND RESOURCES TO DELIVER ON OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES.

We will strengthen our organisational structures and practices, optimising the deployment of our resources to make the plan a reality. We will analyse our internal operations with a view to making sure that we are as efficient and effective as possible in our work.



# MAKING IT

---

# HAPPEN:

---

# IMPLEMENTATION

---

IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT OUR STRATEGY IS IMPLEMENTED BETWEEN 2014 AND 2016, AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN WILL BE DEVELOPED. THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN'S STARTING POINT IS THE SET OF OUTCOMES THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO OBSERVE AS A RESULT OF THE ACTIONS WE UNDERTAKE.

As some of the outcomes may take longer to become reality than the span of this strategic plan, we differentiate the outcomes into 'Intermediate Outcomes' which we will be able to measure over the span of this plan, and 'Strategic Outcomes' which are longer term in nature.

Any objective assessment of the desired outcomes will swiftly reveal that they cannot be achieved solely by The National Youth Council of Ireland. Therefore it is important to state clearly and up front that we believe we can only achieve success in the implementation of this ambitious plan if we work collaboratively with others. Therefore, the initial part of the work of the plan's implementation will be to invite any potential collaborators who want to work with us to achieve these objectives to engage with us so that we can then build collaborative work programmes into our annual operations plans for each objective.

This section of the plan provides a top-line breakdown of each strategic objective relevant to a strategy document, including planned outcomes and the types of actions that will help us achieve them.

## 1 OUTCOMES AND KEY ACTIONS

### 1. BUILD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH WORK AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

#### Overview

The National Youth Council of Ireland will articulate and promote a common understanding of the value and importance of youth work and non-formal learning for all young people, and how we can continue to develop youth work in Ireland. We will promote the contribution of youth work to inclusion, cohesion and active citizenship in a changing national and global context.

**When this strategic objective is achieved, we will be able to see the following outcomes:**

#### INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- Policy makers, funders and the public recognises the value of youth work and non-formal learning.
- Policy-makers, funders and the public recognise the contribution of youth work to Theory of inclusion, Theory of cohesion and active citizenship, as practised by voluntary youth organisations.

#### STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

- The national policy agenda affecting youth work is improved.

**To achieve the strategic objective and the desired outcomes, the actions we will take will include:**

- **Publishing** a shared understanding of the importance and value of youth work in 21st century Ireland;
- **Advocating** for further development of youth work and non-formal learning opportunities for all young people;
- **Showing** the contribution of youth work to inclusion, cohesion and active citizenship and by **recognising** where and how it works in real life.

## 2. BUILD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUES THAT IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

### Overview

A society that respects and values young people can only be realised if the key stakeholders in all sectors are developing a shared understanding of the issues impacting on young people's lives, as well as being committed to developing possible solutions to addressing those and seeing those solutions realised in practice. The National Youth Council of Ireland will work with others to help build that understanding, providing and supporting effective and accessible forums for this kind of engagement as appropriate.

**When this strategic objective is achieved, we will be able to see the following outcomes:**

#### INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- Policy makers, funders and the public are well informed on issues impacting on the lives of young people and possible solutions to addressing those and the role voluntary youth organisations can play in achieving those solutions.
- The public, policy makers and other organisations and agencies see the need for change.

#### STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

- The policy agenda responds to and addresses the needs of children and young people.

**To achieve the strategic objective and the desired outcomes, the actions we will take will include:**

- **Developing** a policy agenda that is rooted in the lived experience of young people;
- **Articulating** and publishing The National Youth Council of Ireland's view of the key issues impacting on the lives of young people and the role of the voluntary youth sector organisations in addressing them;
- **Foster** understanding at a national policy level of the issues impacting on young people's lives;
- **Informing and influencing** the development of a new National Youth Strategy;
- **Using** relevant and influential communication channels and messages to harness support at public policy level to ensure the lives of young people are improved.

### 3. ENSURE POLICY MAKERS AND ORGANISATIONS RECOGNISE, VALUE AND SUPPORT YOUTH WORK PRACTICE

#### Overview

In order for youth work and non-formal learning to play its full part in enhancing the lives of young people for the better, it is critical that the youth sector be informed about and present at the centre of decision making processes that affect youth work, the youth sector and the young people and communities that are served by the organisations in it. The National Youth Council of Ireland will be a strong voice for the value of youth work and the shared interests of our members, and we will work collaboratively with others to ensure the strongest possible voice for the youth sector and youth work is presented on all matters of concern to the state, the political system and other sectors.

**When this strategic objective is achieved, we will be able to see the following outcomes:**

#### INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES:

- Policy-makers, funders, other sectors and the media recognise the value of youth work practice and the voluntary youth sector.
- Policy-makers, funders, other sectors and the media are well-informed on issues and possible solutions affecting the youth sector.

#### STRATEGIC OUTCOMES:

- The national policy agenda responds to and addresses the needs of children and young people and the voluntary youth sector.
- Increased funding is available to address the needs of children and young people.

**To achieve the strategic objective and the desired outcomes, the actions we will take will include:**

- **Publishing** research to present the facts in relation to the nature, scale and significance of the voluntary youth sector;
- **Promoting** an understanding of the impact of youth work on the lives of young people;
- **Advocating** on the developmental needs of youth work practitioners and the needs of voluntary youth organisations in order for them to play their part in supporting young people to be the best they can be;
- **Identifying** and **facilitating** any new collaborative structures and processes that will maximise the effectiveness of the sector's voice;

- **Being** a strong voice for the shared interests of our members;
- **Promoting** NYCI as a recognised communication channels to government and media organisations.

#### 4. ENSURE THE REPRESENTATIVE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL IS RECOGNISED AND THAT THE VOLUNTARY YOUTH SECTOR HAS AN EFFECTIVE VOICE AND ITS IMPORTANCE IS ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE STATE, THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND OTHER SECTORS

##### Overview

In order for the voluntary youth sector to play its full part in influencing policy making that affects children and young people, youth work and the youth sector, decision makers at all levels should recognise the representative role of the National Youth Council. Mechanisms should be established through which our independence and involvement in decision making processes will be ensured.

**When this strategic objective is achieved, we will be able to see the following outcomes:**

##### INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- Policy makers and organisations see the need for change.
- Policy makers and organisations recognise the value of the National Youth Council as a representative body.

##### STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

- The national policy agenda responds to and addresses the needs of children and young people and the voluntary youth sector that supports them.

**To achieve the strategic objective and the desired outcomes, the actions we will take will include:**

- **Articulating** the role of the National Youth Council;
- **Ensuring** that the representative role of NYCI is informed and influenced by our members;
- **Increasing** the membership of the National Youth Council to enhance its representative role;
- **Facilitating** quality co-operation among our member organisations based on mutual interest and the exchange of information while guaranteeing member participation in decision making and policy making processes within the NYCI.

## 5. ENSURE ORGANISATIONS POLICIES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE IMPROVED

### Overview

The development and implementation of high quality policies in youth organisations is crucial to the young people they work with and the staff and volunteers who support their work as well as to the sustainability and progression of their services. The National Youth Council of Ireland's drive for quality will reinforce the move towards an increased emphasis on continuous improvement within the sector.

**If this strategic objective is achieved, we will be able to see the following outcomes:**

#### INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES:

- Community and voluntary youth organisations demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Organisations have greater capacity and feel supported to improve policy.

#### STRATEGIC OUTCOMES:

- Organisations policies for working with children and young people are in place / improved.

**To achieve the strategic objective and the desired outcomes, the actions we will take will include:**

- **Supporting** organisations in the sector to develop and implement high quality policies to underpin their work;
- **Creating** a programme of training, information provision and support including quality resources and processes to enable organisations make this change;
- **Developing** relationships with funders to build appreciation of the tools and challenges needed to focus effectively on developing and implementing high quality policies;
- **Facilitating** inter-sectoral shared learning on policy development.

## 6. SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS TO IMPLEMENT BEST PRACTICE FOR WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, ENSURING THAT QUALITY AND EXCELLENCE IN PRACTICE DELIVERS BETTER OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

### Overview

Voluntary youth organisations need to build their organisational capacity so they are as effective as possible in their work to deliver positive outcomes for the young people they work with. We recognise that sound organisational management and development are the foundations on which success is built. Good strategic and operational planning, governance, human resource management together with robust monitoring and evaluation are essential building blocks in effective, efficient and sustainable organisations. The development and implementation of high quality standards in everyday practice in youth organisations is crucial to the delivery of better outcomes for young people and the sustainability and progression of youth services. The National Youth Council of Ireland's drive for quality will reinforce the move towards an increased emphasis on outcome-focused working within the sector.

### If this strategic objective is achieved, we will be able to see the following outcomes:

#### INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES:

- Community and voluntary youth organisations demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Policies for delivering better outcomes for the young people served by community and voluntary youth organisations are in place / improved.
- People working in community and voluntary youth organisations have an increased awareness of current best practice, outcomes-focused planning and measurement tools.
- People working in community and voluntary youth organisations have increased confidence to act.

#### STRATEGIC OUTCOMES:

- Best practice in delivering better outcomes for the young people served by community and voluntary youth organisations is mainstreamed, sustained and supported.

### To achieve the strategic objective and the desired outcomes, the actions we will take will include:

- **Encouraging** organisations in the sector to implementing best practice for working with young people;
-

- **Contributing** to the availability of necessary supports, training and resources to improve organisations effectiveness;
- **Supporting** youth organisations to adopt outcomes-focused planning and measurement in their work;
- **Creating** a programme of training, information provision and support to enable organisations make this change;
- **Developing** relationships with funders to build appreciation of the tools and challenges needed to focus effectively on impact reporting;
- **Facilitating** inter-sectoral shared learning on best outcomes-focused practice.

## 7. MAXIMISE COLLABORATIVE WORKING IN THE YOUTH SECTOR

### Overview

We believe that to get the best results, enhance mutual learning and make the most effective use of the resources available to us that we need to develop the most extensive possible collaboration among all those involved in the lives of young people in Ireland and between Ireland and the UK and the EU.

**When this strategic objective is achieved, we will be able to see the following outcomes:**

### INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- NYCI works collaboratively internally and externally.
- NYCI has a commitment to continuous improvement.
- NYCI demonstrates excellence in its collaborative practice.

### STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

- The National Youth Council of Ireland working in partnership with others generates innovative responses to new challenges.

**To achieve the strategic objective and the desired outcomes, the actions we will take will include:**

- **Developing** strong collaborative relationships with other key strategic organisations;

- **Developing** a better understanding of the need for collaborative working in delivering better outcomes for young people;
- **Enhancing** the reputation of the youth sector for delivering high quality, outcomes focused projects in co-operation with others;
- **Facilitating** member organisations and others to identify areas for collaboration and potential partners;
- **Encourage**, facilitate and support collaborative working to increase the sustainability of the youth sector.

## 8. CREATE AND CONTRIBUTE TO EXCELLENT RESEARCH

### Overview

NYCI's experience of both conducting and commissioning research plays an important role in improving our knowledge of the issues that impact on young people's lives and has deepened our understanding of the value of youth work. A close relationship between research, policy and practice is important to ensure the credibility of the research and to enable the effective use of the research findings as well as supporting the translation of those findings into 'practice-relevant' messages. To get the best results, we intend to develop the best possible collaboration among those involved in youth work in Ireland.

**When this strategic objective is achieved, we will be able to see the following outcomes:**

### INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- NYCI's work is evidence informed and strategic.
- NYCI works collaboratively internally and externally.
- NYCI has a commitment to continuous improvement.
- NYCI demonstrates excellence in its collaborative practice.
- Organisations are well informed on relevant issues.
- The media report on issues important to children and young people.
- The media report on issues important to NYCI members.

## STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

- Government health, welfare and Theory of policy reflect the needs of children and young people and the adults who work with and for them.
- Government recognises and values the contribution of youth work in meeting its priorities and invests accordingly.

### To achieve the strategic objective and the desired outcomes, the actions we will take will include:

- **Developing** strong collaborative relationships with other key strategic organisations;
- **Initiating** research to inform our policy and advocacy work, our programmes and the direction of NYCI;
- **Disseminating** our research widely to assist in informing the work of others;
- **Contributing** to the development of a youth research strategy for Ireland;
- **Enhancing** the reputation of the youth sector for delivering high quality, research projects in co-operation with others.

## 9. ENSURE THAT THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND HAS THE SYSTEMS, STRUCTURES, PROCESSES, PROCEDURES AND RESOURCES TO DELIVER ON OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

### Overview

In order for us to deliver on this strategy, we will ensure that NYCI is an adaptable, flexible and innovative organisation, equipped with robust corporate governance, management controls and financial controls that will help us to achieve the highest standards of transparency and accountability with maximum cost effectiveness.

### When this strategic objective is achieved, we will be able to see the following outcomes:

## INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- NYCI works collaboratively internally and externally.
- NYCI has a commitment to continuous improvement.
- NYCI demonstrates excellence in its practice.

## STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

- The National Youth Council of Ireland has sufficient capacity and capability to effect positive change for young people and the youth sector.

## INTERNAL OUTCOMES (RELATING PURELY TO THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND):

- The National Youth Council of Ireland is recognised as a key national advocate for the youth sector.
- The National Youth Council of Ireland has influence.
- The National Youth Council of Ireland's work is relevant to, and reflects, the voice of its members.
- The National Youth Council of Ireland's work is evidence-informed and strategic.
- The National Youth Council of Ireland's work is informed by best-practice
- People are aware of The National Youth Council of Ireland.

## To achieve the strategic objective and the desired outcomes, the actions we will take will include:

- **Conducting** a skills and competency audit for The National Youth Council of Ireland's staff;
- **Reviewing** Board composition to ensure the appropriate skills set – developing both according to the findings;
- **Examining** the systems and processes for doing our work that are currently in place and improving;
- **Reviewing** The National Youth Council of Ireland's branding and positioning;
- **Developing** an *Income Diversification Strategy* as per timeline;
- **Adopting** the Governance Code, the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising and the Statement Of Recommended Practice (SORP);
- **Developing and implementing** the required range of indicators and associated tools to track and communicate progress at implementing this plan.

## 10. ENSURE THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND INVOLVES, ADDS VALUE, AND IS RESPONSIVE TO OUR MEMBERS

### Overview

Our members are the lifeblood of our organisation. This objective will ensure that we remain relevant to our member's needs, and that we address them thoroughly, effectively and in a timely manner.

**When this strategic objective is achieved, we will be able to see the following outcomes:**

### INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

- NYCI works collaboratively with our member organisations.
- NYCI has a commitment to continuous improvement in meeting the needs of our member organisations.
- NYCI demonstrates excellence in its role as a representative body.

### STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

- The National Youth Council of Ireland remains relevant to our member organisation's needs.

### INTERNAL OUTCOMES:

- Collaborative working, both internally and externally, is the norm for The National Youth Council of Ireland.
- The National Youth Council of Ireland's work responds to and adds value to its members.
- The National Youth Council of Ireland's work is relevant and reflects the voice of members.
- The National Youth Council of Ireland is sustainable and viable as a membership organisation.

**To achieve the strategic objective and the desired outcomes, the actions we will take will include:**

- **Conducting** an annual membership survey of services and general feedback;
- **Ensuring** members are centrally involved in the development of The National Youth Council of Ireland's policy and advocacy positions;
- **Developing** and implementing a two-way communication strategy for members that is online, face-to-face and national;
- **Providing** members with a range of services based on the strategy and informed by periodic and annual feedback;
- **Growing** member numbers, ensuring that the membership profile reflects the broad profile of the youth sector.

## 2 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

This Strategic Plan outlines the direction that The National Youth Council of Ireland plans to take over the next four years. The plan is specifically designed to give focus to what needs to happen in the immediate future, but also to serve as a practical stepping-stone towards The National Youth Council of Ireland's longer-term ambition of realising our vision. Successful implementation of this Strategic Plan will be contingent on building on the positive momentum established during the strategy development process, in addition to ensuring that the appropriate systems, resources and supports are developed and in place. Some of the specific factors that need to be considered to support the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan are identified below.

### 2.1 STRONG OPERATIONAL PLANNING AND ONGOING MEASUREMENT OF OUR IMPACT

There is the need to support the achievement of this strategy through a robust operational planning and monitoring process. Many specific actions and measurement indicators with targets are identified. These will be brought forward into a detailed annual Operations Planning process. The annual Operations Plan will break down the strategic objectives and actions into more detailed operational activity, and will be reviewed and reported on quarterly, updated and new objectives implemented as appropriate. It is important these are constantly reviewed to ensure they remain relevant to the needs of our stakeholders.

Strategically, it is the Board of Directors that is responsible for ensuring that this plan is implemented and it will be reported on annually through the annual review and the Annual General Meeting.

### 2.2 COMPELLING COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communication and engagement, both internally and externally, are vital to the success of The National Youth Council of Ireland. Communication and engagement are highlighted as being critical success factors for implementation, and excellent communications to enable the activities of the organisation to be understood has to be ensured. Positive engagement was established with a wide range of stakeholders during the development of this strategic plan, including staff, the Board of Directors, members, non-members, Government, and other influential stakeholders in this area. It is important that appropriate time and attention is given to communicating our strategy to all relevant stakeholders and that this continues throughout the lifetime of our strategy.

### 2.3 ORGANISATION AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

In order to most effectively implement our strategic plan, it is important that The National Youth Council of Ireland's organisation structures are fit for purpose. This will include ensuring that the number and mix of staff and allocation of responsibilities is best suited to the activities taking place within the organisation, including policy and advocacy and research, practice development/support services/training, communications and finance and administration. Furthermore, as the different services provided by The National Youth Council of Ireland evolve over time, it will be important that organisational structures are reviewed to ensure that they remain appropriate. The same applies to our governance structures and how they conduct their business.

### 2.4 APPROPRIATE RESOURCING

Given the National Youth Council of Ireland's reliance on exchequer funding and the current challenges being faced on this front, financial sustainability is a key focus for the organisation, and consequently the resources required for implementation must be closely managed. Development of an Income Diversification Strategy will begin the process of ensuring that the National Youth Council of Ireland has the resources required for implementation, throughout this strategic plan.

### 2.5 COLLABORATIVE WORKING PARTNERS

The outcomes The National Youth Council of Ireland wishes to see happen as a result of this plan's implementation cannot be achieved solely as a consequence of the work done by the National Youth Council of Ireland. We will need to attract and be able to manage the consequences of having a wide variety of collaborative partners. Establishing this way of working as the norm for the National Youth Council of Ireland, so that shared work programmes can be developed and implemented will create new pressures on resources and staff skills, which will need to be planned for.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: ANALYSIS OF THE KEY MESSAGES FROM THE CONSULTATION PHASE

The consultation phase for the strategy development process was carried out by New Philanthropy Capital. A wide range and type of stakeholders were consulted in order to gain a representative sample of views and opinions. The stakeholders that we consulted included our members, non-members, staff, Board members and statutory officials. A summary of our analysis is provided below under a number of key themes.

### 1. The National Youth Council of Ireland's Key Strengths

It was noted that The National Youth Council of Ireland has 'a willingness to continually look at things, to see how they can be improved, and sets an example to the sector in that respect'. All the stakeholders consulted said that 'NYCI provided a very valuable service'. Specifically the feedback from the consultations demonstrated that the practice development and training services that NYCI provides are widely liked, it was noted that NYCI was seen as 'very responsive' to the needs of its members. NYCI is also seen as a 'top class research and policy and advocacy organisation with excellent knowledge of the sector and in particular the main issues faced by organisations within the sector'. Related to that was the view that the National Youth Council of Ireland's staff members are highly respected by stakeholders and are seen as highly experienced, professional and responsive to the needs of members, well informed and expert in relevant areas.

NPC also noted that the investment in our results measurement counts NYCI among the leaders in the sector and that our services are considered to be both 'high quality and very useful'.

During the course of our consultation members and non-members alike commented on The National Youth Council of Ireland's excellent governance. The Board of Directors is highly respected by stakeholders who see the investment that has gone into developing an effective organisation that advocates on behalf of the youth sector and young people. NPC stated 'The governance at NYCI is among the best that NPC has seen in its experience of looking at charities – which is to be particularly recommended in a membership charity'.

The National Youth Council of Ireland was recognised as being a leader in results measurement. The investment in developing an impact framework which has been heavily supported by the Board and staff should enable NYCI to gather new information and use that to become more effective.

NPC concluded that NYCI is 'a highly ambitious organisation that wants to improve the lot of young people living in Ireland'.

### 2. Areas for improvement

Throughout the consultation stakeholders were also asked how they thought The National Youth Council of Ireland could improve its services. Given the diverse nature of the membership and its needs, it is inevitable there would be some level of contradiction. The feedback received can be grouped into three broad categories i.e. communications, training and membership.

#### *Communication*

It was suggested The National Youth Council of Ireland should increase its media visibility to garner popular support behind youth work and make it 'harder for Government to ignore'.

## *Training*

It was noted that the different training programmes have been quite 'siloed'. The new strategic plan should address how best to share the learning and good practice between the programmes and to enable the programmes to make sure that NYCI is more than the sum of its parts. It is also important that the programmes are clearly branded as NYCI so that members and potential members are clear about the value they are getting from NYCI. It was also suggested that given that funding will probably continue to be cut, NYCI has to find other ways of supporting its work. Therefore it needs to look into whether or not it is possible to charge for services that were previously free. In particular it could sell the expertise it has built up to other sectors.

## *Membership*

Stakeholders recommended that The National Youth Council of Ireland should broaden its membership base to ensure that it has the authority to speak on behalf of the wider youth work sector. It was also noted that NYCI needs to raise its own profile amongst the sector to articulate its offer and the value it brings to members. It was also noted that whilst there is a lot of contact with the membership there is not a forum or system for regularly visiting members and ensuring that their concerns are properly reflected.

### **3. Key challenges facing the sector**

In determining the future direction of The National Youth Council of Ireland it is essential we were clearly aware of what they considered to be the key challenges facing the sector in the coming years. By far the biggest challenge identified was the lack of funding and the associated challenges that organisations are facing at present, and anticipate facing over the medium term. In particular there are significant difficulties in diversifying income streams given the increased competition for resources in recent years.

With public spending under immense pressure, it is vital that the youth sector can actively demonstrate the value it achieves for young people and society as a whole. Very much related to this is the challenge for organisations to commit to a focus on continuous improvement and increasingly a need to demonstrate the impact of their work and deliver on evidence based outcomes.

Increasing demand, coupled with a reduction in funding may lead to a Government requirement for further consolidation across the sector, and the challenges that this will entail. It was suggested this could strategically lead to a reduction in the diversity and richness of the sector.

Against this backdrop the youth sector is trying to meet the needs of growing numbers of young people. Young people that have been most impacted by the crisis in Ireland. Informing future investment in youth work means the youth sector having a strong story to tell about its impact and value; it also means funders listening seriously to that story. A level of investment is needed to help the youth sector develop strong evidence to build the case.

Also of concern are the increased regulatory requirements being placed on organisations, such as Children First and vetting legislation and the charities regulation. Whilst acknowledging the importance of improving our practice in safeguarding children and young people, together with proper governance and regulation it will be a challenge to fulfil these obligations due to resourcing pressures and increasing service demand in a time of reduced funding.

**4. Key challenges facing young people** The last five years have been very challenging for young people with limited employment opportunities, reduced social welfare and educational support and the return of forced emigration. Services such as youth work which work to support and empower young people have likewise been hard hit by funding cuts. It is likely that the worst is over, but we are entering a long slow recovery phase. That means that badly needed investment in education, employment, health and housing for young people will be in competition with a range of other demands and needs. This will be exacerbated

by the increase in the population of young people with CSO figures showing that the number of 10-18 year olds increased from 503,783 to 528,428 between 2006 and 2011.

Despite the challenging economic circumstances, the vast majority of young people continue to be optimistic and resilient. The numbers of young people voting in the General Election rose from 50% in 2002 to 62% in 2011. We have the second highest number of young people in the EU active in at least one organisation and the highest number active in a youth organisation. The passing of the referendum on Children's Rights and the upcoming referendum on extending voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds represents an opportunity to advance the rights and voice of young people in Irish society. Likewise the proposal for a Youth Guarantee represents an opportunity to develop a more sophisticated model of support for young people as they move from education and training to employment.

More than ever we are in an age of uncertainty and fragility and therefore young people need the skills and supports to navigate the choppy waters of life. That requires NYCI to work on issues such as employability, decent work and pay so they have sufficient income and security for the essentials in life such as accommodation. We need to ensure that key services, such as public employment services meet and respond to the needs of young people. Likewise we need to ensure public policy supports healthy choices and lifestyles and promotes positive mental health. We need to ensure that young people can maximise the benefits of information technology and social media and be aware and able to cope with the negatives. It is also vital that we support young people to volunteer, to participate, to be active citizens in democratic life and to inform and shape decisions and actions which affect them and their community.

## **5. Priorities for the National Youth Council of Ireland**

In order to inform our strategy development process, we asked those consulted i.e. members and non-members, what they thought The National Youth Council of Ireland should focus on for the life of the Strategic Plan. The recommendations are categorised into outward facing steps and inward facing steps: -

### *Outward facing steps*

- NYCI develops and publishes a shared vision of what it wants to achieve for the youth sector and for young people in Ireland;
- NYCI should increase its own profile to strengthen its policy and advocacy work and ensure that our members understand the benefits of being members;
- NYCI should actively seek to broaden its membership to ensure that it keeps its authority in advocating for the youth sector;
- NYCI should ensure that each area of work is adding to NYCI's brand by cross promoting with NYCI's other work.

### *Inward facing steps*

- NYCI should increase collaboration between the various programmes and ensure that information about different models of working are shared;
- A formal process should be put in place to review the strategy of NYCI depending on the information gained from the results measurement. This should be combined with regular feedback from members to see what the current priorities are. The annual review should include looking at gaps in services and assessing whether the services are still the right ones;
- NYCI should develop an income diversification strategy and enhance financial capacity at Board level.

## Conclusions

The feedback NYCI has had on its work is a testament to the difference we are making for our members and others we work with. It confirmed that the National Youth Council of Ireland should not cease any of our current services, this strongly suggests that both research, policy and advocacy and good practice development should remain core to the future strategic direction of The National Youth Council of Ireland, albeit with some shifts in emphasis to reflect the very different operating environment that our members now face. Notwithstanding this affirmation of our core offer we believe through our impact measurement framework we will identify opportunities to continue to develop and improve the range and manner of the services we provide.

## APPENDIX 2: THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF IRELAND'S APPLICATION OF THE 'THEORY OF CHANGE MODEL'

The 'Theory of Change Model' framework for strategic planning requires the organisation to start with an analysis of the problem that it sees in the world that it is trying to address. The approach requires a robust and iterative analysis of the root causes of that problem followed by identification of the potential solutions that might be applied that would 'unlock' the solutions for that particular problem. By then analysing what role the organisation can play in providing those solutions, usually with others, a very clear rationale for an organisation's existence can be found.

In applying the 'Theory of Change Model' framework for the development of this Strategy Plan in The National Youth Council of Ireland, we worked with New Philanthropy Capital Consultants (NPC). The Board of Directors and a subgroup of staff were tasked with the more detailed work. The full staff team informed the development of the outcomes and the measurement framework was co-created by NYCI staff and NPC.

The consultations which were conducted provide the evidence for the analysis of the issues facing the sector. These fed directly into the development of the Theory of Change Model for The National Youth Council of Ireland as follows.

The Theory of Change will help NYCI to clarify:

- What benefits our activities should deliver for our beneficiaries;
- How our activities achieve that change.

Barriers to potential solutions which prevent these issues from being addressed include:

- Lack of perceived value of youth work;
- Lack of perceived value of the youth sector as a whole;
- There are no systems or 'architecture' through which sectoral improvements can be addressed;
- There is a lack of cohesion within the sector;
- There is, in some places, a reluctance to professionalise (which is distinct from the issue of replacing volunteer work by paid staff). Being a professional in any sector today means constantly updating your skills, seeking out new ways of doing things, finding new networks and new contacts, redeveloping your approach as required and communicating and enabling those you work with to do likewise;
- Ideological differences can serve as a barrier to sectoral progression;
- Lack of meaningful processes for voluntary youth organisations to influence decision-making where they or the people they serve are impacted by the decision.

When all of the barriers were grouped according to common themes/areas, the following areas of priority for the National Youth Council of Ireland to work on in order to address the fundamental problem emerged as follows:

1. The need to contribute to building a shared vision for the youth sector and for young people in Ireland, and to articulate the valuable role of the youth sector in achieving it.
2. The need to achieve recognition for youth work and the youth sector from the state and other sectors.
3. The need to ensure that young people have the services and supports that they require to achieve their full potential.
4. The need to ensure the youth sector has the services and supports it requires to do its work.

In addition is the need to make sure The National Youth Council of Ireland is as effective as possible in its work.

The diagrams overleaf show in graphical form the underpinning logic and rationale for the new strategy.

NYCI's measurement framework is based on a theory of change which lays out how NYCI expects to achieve an impact. Below is the theory of change for NYCI. It shows the progress from NYCI's activities to intermediate outcomes and then, longer-term outcomes.

Figure 1: key to theory of change

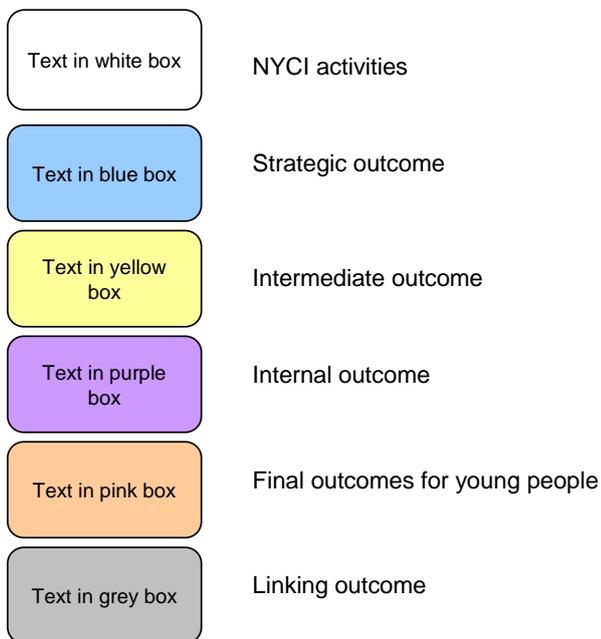


Figure 2: Internal outcomes

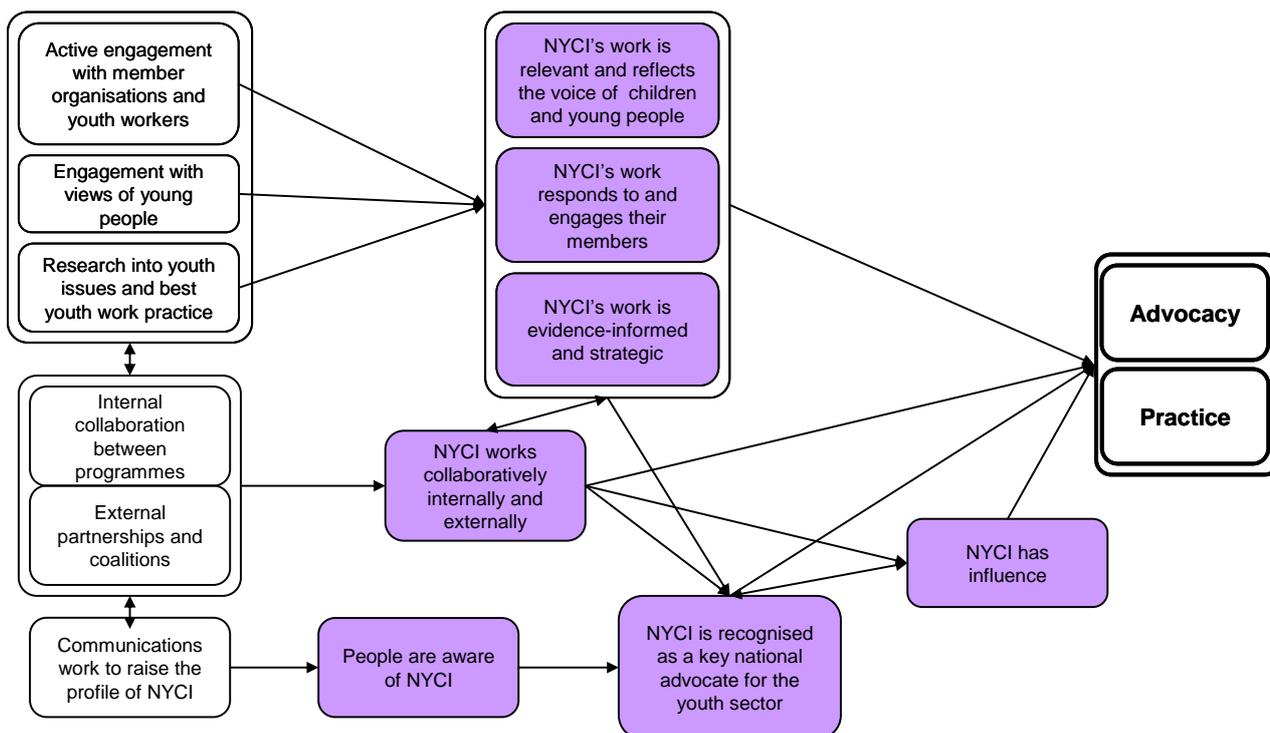


Figure 3: Policy outcomes

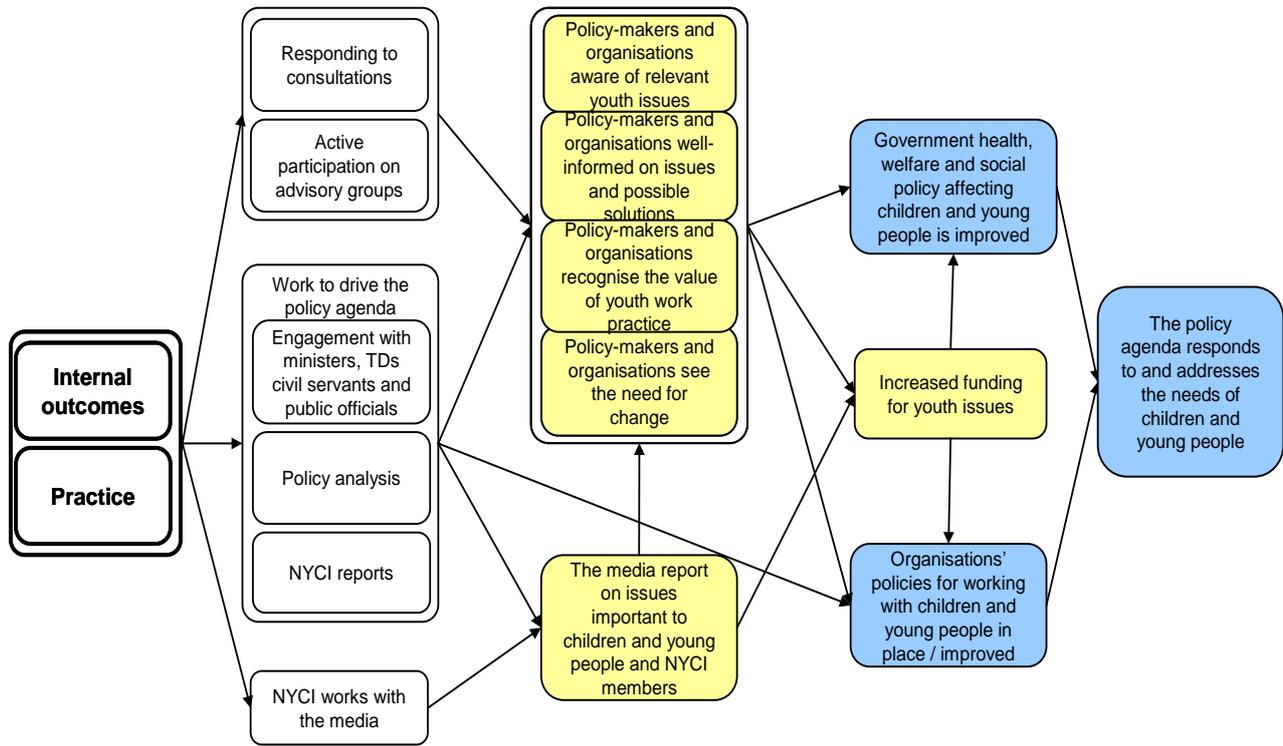


Figure 4: Practice outcomes

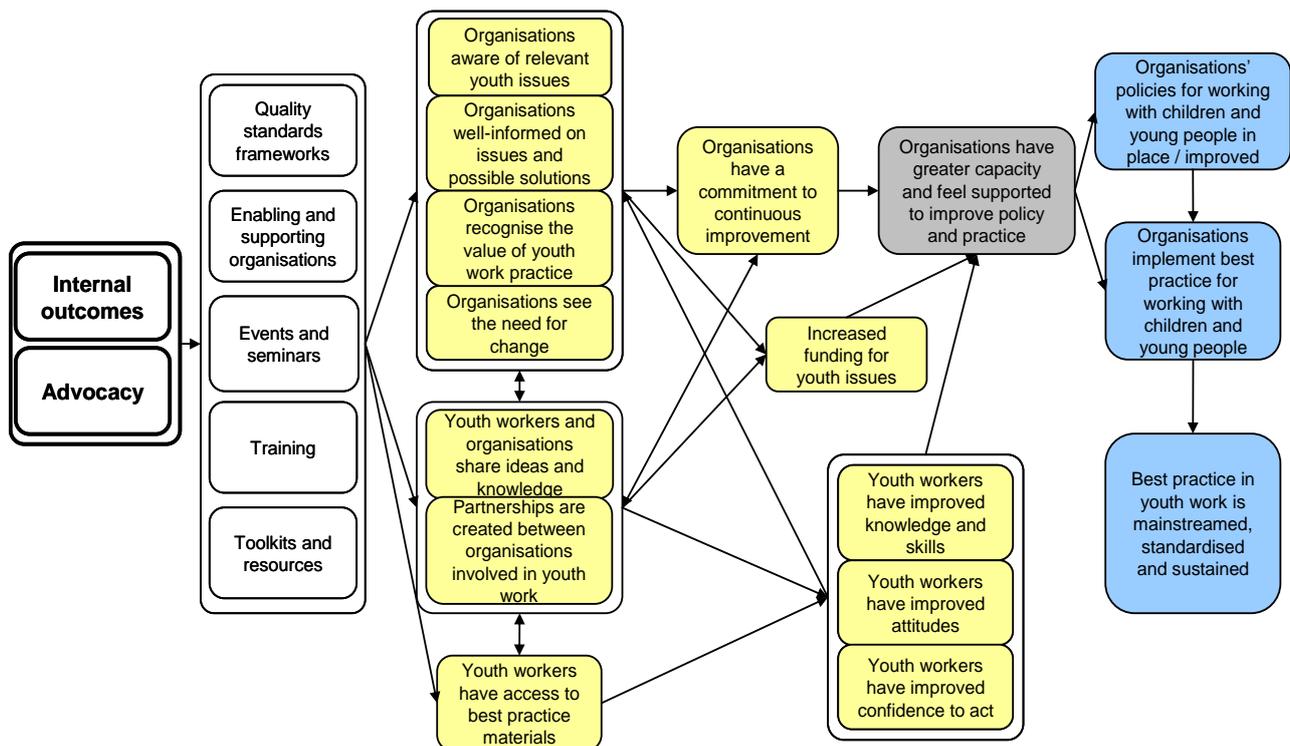
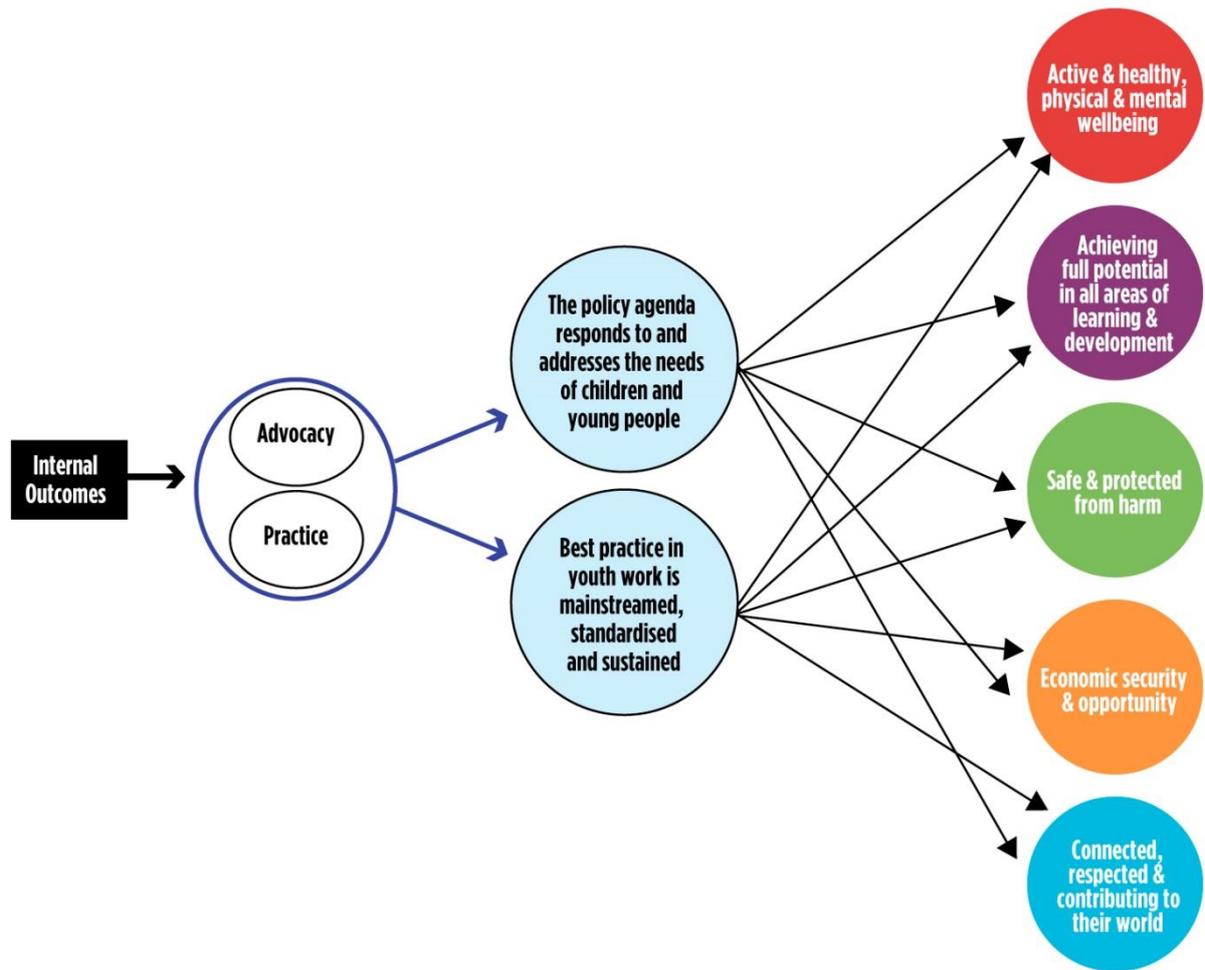


Figure 5: Longer-term impact





National Youth Council of Ireland  
3 Montague Street  
Dublin 2  
Ireland

Email: [info@nyci.ie](mailto:info@nyci.ie)  
Tel: +353 (0)1 478 4122  
Fax: +353 (0)1 478 3974  
Web: [www.youth.ie](http://www.youth.ie)