



The Power Of Narrative

The power of narrative or story telling as a way of sharing good practice in action was demonstrated at a seminar organised by the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector (OCVS).

The two keynote speakers were Gael Surgenor, Manager of the Family and Community Services'



Gael Surgenor, Manager of the Family and Community Services' SKIP (Strategies for Kids, Information for Parents) programme speaks at the first Good Practice in Action seminar.

SKIP (Strategies with Kids, Information for Parents) programme and Nicola Patrick, Manager of Conservation Awareness with the Department of Conservation (DoC).

Nicola focused on the way DoC integrates strategy, policy and practice when working with communities.

Gael talked about the importance of sharing the passion and vision of SKIP's volunteer partners and presented a video clip of its partners saying what they thought were the strengths of the relationship.

The seminar was the first in a Good Practice In Action series to strengthen relationships between government agencies and the community and voluntary sector.

Seminar Project Manager Hugh Lawrence says the seminar series is

not a warm and fuzzy exercise in which officials just sit down and talk to each other. "This is trying to bring information in front of officials in a way they find compelling and inspiring – through the power of the narrative."

In 2004, OCVS asked government agencies about their dealings with the community and voluntary sector. "It became apparent there were stories that could and should be told. These stories provided an opportunity to build evidence on what works, and why," Hugh says.

A second seminar on 24 June questions the need for collaboration and is presented by OCVS and the International Aid and Development Agency. In November a third seminar will focus on funding non-profit organisations.

Each presentation will be online at www.goodpracticeparticipate.govt.nz and www.goodpracticefunding.govt.nz

Helping Community Groups

Community and voluntary groups need ever-increasing skills to cope with the demands on them but it is not always easy for groups to find the help they need.

This is according to Stephen Blyth, who is managing a project working to improve access to information and advice for the non-profit sector.

The Building Capability in the Community Sector Project is being co-ordinated by the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector (OCVS) and Family and Community Services.

Stephen says his team is talking to about 50 to 60 organisations,

including government agencies, community organisations, education providers and national umbrella groups.

He is investigating what resources are available to the sector and attempting to identify any gaps. "There are lots of existing sources of information and support. But sometimes the biggest challenge is for groups to find it," Stephen says.

The sector is telling Stephen that it needs support for governance systems, development of policies and procedures, staff retention and recruitment.

"Volunteer committee members often don't have lots of time to invest in training in areas such as the governance role of board members, the legal liabilities of community organisations, or how to manage risks the organisation might be liable for," he says.

Stephen says this suggests that volunteer groups need improved access to resources that support organisational systems. This covers areas such as strategic planning, human resources management, business planning, monitoring, financial systems, research and knowledge management/IT systems.

For more information and a summary report of project data contact:
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New Charities Commission To Be Autonomous

The new Charities Commission, which starts on 1 July 2005, will be an autonomous Crown entity.

It will have the freedom to independently consider issues affecting charitable organisations without needing ministerial approval.

Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector Senior Analyst Sally Jackman says the Commission, which was established under the Charities Act, reflects changes made by the Social Services Select Committee following 753 submissions from interested parties.

Changes now include the Commission being set up as an autonomous Crown entity, an increased emphasis on the Commission's education and support function, and a commitment from the Government to fund the set-up of the Commission and the initial costs of registration for charities.

The register will be developed this year. Organisations will be able to register in 2006 at a yet to be confirmed date. Registration is voluntary but only registered charities qualify for income tax exemption.

Community and Voluntary Sector Minister Rick Barker, who takes ministerial responsibility for the Commission from 1 July, says being a registered charity will mean an organisation can assure the donating public they are carrying out legitimate charitable activities. The public will be able to check registration status online he says.

The work of the Commission has attracted a lot of interest with 378 applicants wanting to join its board as commissioners. The commissioners are being appointed this month (June) by the Minister.

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International Study On Non-Profit Sector

Information about community and voluntary organisations in New Zealand will feed into an international study on the non-profit sector following the signing of a collaboration agreement with American university researchers.

Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector (OCVS) Director Brenda Ratcliff has signed an agreement with Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore) that will include New Zealand in a research project which started in 1990 and now extends to more than 40 countries.

The Johns Hopkins Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project is measuring and describing the role these organisations play in society.

The project uses a team of local associates in the target countries, a common framework, a set of definitions and information-gathering strategies. It is also using a network of national and international advisory committees to oversee progress and to help disseminate results.

The statistical data needed for the Johns Hopkins project is being gathered in a separate but related exercise by Statistics NZ.

The collaboration with Johns Hopkins University forms one part of a major research project examining the range and impact of non-profit and volunteering activities in New Zealand. The Study of the New Zealand Non-Profit Sector is jointly funded by community trusts, the Government and the Tindall Foundation. It is being co-ordinated by OCVS.

A report on the New Zealand project's findings is expected in 2007.

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Managing Risk

More than 100 people recently took part in three workshops in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch on managing risk and legal liabilities for community and voluntary organisations. Seen here from left to right are Jazz Scott and Robin Cox (both Department of Conservation) and Ruth Gardner (Volunteering Canterbury – at back) evaluating a draft resource on managing legal liabilities. The resource is a joint project between the New Zealand Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations and the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector. It is expected to be available in hard copy form and online in July at www.msd.govt.nz