

Summary of the Community Economic Development Conference Survey 2010

Background

A survey of the participants at the Community Economic Development Conference was undertaken by an independent researcher¹ to obtain data that would inform the conference organisers about:

- How financially independent the participants organisations are.
- What the conference participants saw as the most relevant ideas for development of New Zealand's social economy and the main challenges in applying these ideas.
- The interest in a network for social entrepreneurs and what its functions should be.

A statistically significant percentage of conference participants completed a questionnaire and results of the survey are intended to be available on the conference website. Some of the results are set out below, a few of which are indicative (where there is slightly less than 30% response rate). Note that social services providers are separated out from general community development organisations (CDOs) which include arts/culture/environmental functions.

Results

- More CDOs described themselves as social enterprises than as non-profit organisations, but more social services providers saw themselves as non-profit organisations than as social enterprises (22% of respondents were social services providers).
- Of the mature organisations (operating for 11- 20 years), over a third were non-profits compared with a fifth being social enterprises. While the results are indicative, there appears to be a steady increase in the number of social enterprises over the last 20 years. Few of the private company respondents were over six years old.
- The range of financial independence of all organisations was fairly evenly spread. A third of CDOs were less than 25% independent, but a third were between 50% and 75% independent. Of the organisations that were financially independent, CDOs were less than 8%, but social services providers were less than 4%. It may be inferred that CDO activities lend themselves more to the social enterprise model than would the activities of social service providers.
- The least likely source of funding for all organisations is social loans. More organisations receive funding from trading in services than from trading in goods. Most organisations use a mix of funding sources but around half of all organisations receive at least some funding from grants, bequests and donations. This is more likely to be the case for mature organisations (11- 20 years old).
- The social enterprise model was considered most relevant to respondents, with community anchor organisations and community economic development being other close choices. The predominant challenge in applying all of the models was seen as "developing a robust internal capacity and capability to implement the vision". For

¹ Survey carried out by Phyllis Anscombe, survey design and data input by Phyllis Anscombe & Tony Stones-Havas.
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CDOs, the most significant challenge was seen as “collaboration with government, businesses and other organisations/persuading/removing obstacles”. Social enterprise and social lending models were of most interest for further information.

- Most respondents (88%) were interested in being part of a ‘social entrepreneurs network’, with the most preferred network functions being mentoring/peer support and coordination and communication (preferably organised on-line).

Next Steps

These results can be used to inform further research and action that would assist the development of New Zealand’s fledgling social economy. A review of community economic development in New Zealand (Trotman & Courtney, 2008) indicated that insufficient research is hindering wider understanding of the opportunities and challenges in this sector.

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