

A message from Pam William, the Director of Strategic Projects and Leonie Middleton, the Manager of the Community Sector Investment Fund.

As you know, the CSIF was established in partnership with the community sector, to invest in initiatives and infrastructure that would be of benefit.

An Evaluation of the CSIF was completed in July 2007. It found that there have been achievements in all of the CSIF project areas. The strong partnership between the community services sector and DHS has underpinned the CSIF's success.

CSO Information Portal – Helping the Sector Help Themselves

The new-look [CSO Information Portal](#) was launched in August 2007. There is lots of easy to access information about fleet management, work health, purchasing (including information on accessing whole of government contracts) and workforce strategies.

There are ongoing working groups supporting each of the CSIF project areas. If you have a hot tip or something to add or want to contribute information then contact the CSIF team and we can put you in touch with the working groups.

For further information, phone the FAC Helpdesk on 9096 2742, or email them at fac@dhs.vic.gov.au.

CSIF Evaluation – What you said

Thank you to everyone who participated in the CSIF Evaluation. The report is now finished and is available on the [CSIF website](#).

The Community Sector is a diverse and broad sector, encompassing a vast array of organisations, structures, communities and individuals. CSOs vary enormously in terms of their size, scope of activities and their client base. It was recognised early in the

planning stages of the CSIF that engagement of all parts of the Sector and Sector ownership of the initiative would be the key to both its success and future sustainability.

The evaluation found that the CSIF has tapped into the proven experience and commitment of the sector. The \$7 million provided by the Victorian State Government has been supplemented by contributions of time, energy and resources from across the sector.

The evaluation report makes a number of suggestions that would help the sector to continue the work started through the CSIF investment. You can download both the full report and the Executive Summary from the [CSIF website](#).

VCOSS CSIF projects

We are pleased to announce that the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) has been funded to undertake CSIF projects.

The Knowledge Sharing project aims to keep the sector informed about:

- access to cost saving opportunities;
- what has been learned from the CSIF projects and other examples of good practice;
- other opportunities and initiatives which can help with sustainability and improvements in efficiencies.

The [VCOSS](#) Showcasing the Sector aims to improve recruitment and retention in the sector. A marketing campaign is being planned that will raise awareness and interest, starting with a focus on students and mature age workers.

Want to know more? Contact Nicole Wiseman at VCOSS on 9654 5050 or email to nicole.wiseman@vcoss.org.au

WorkHealth

VCOSS has been funded to develop and deliver an integrated OHS education

strategy. This includes both generic training (to increase understanding of OHS issues) and sub-sector specific training. For further information contact Richard Duffy at VCOSS on 9654 5050 or via email Laura.Mondon@vcoss.org.au

CSO Networks News – What’s Next?

Most Networks are coming to the end of their project phase and are thinking about the next steps. Some Networks are thinking about expanding membership. If you want to share the benefits of your network activities contact Nicole Wiseman -9654 5050 or via email to nicole.wiseman@vcoss.org.au

The most frequently mentioned success factors for Networks in the Evaluation report were:

- Addressing well-identified common needs
- Achievements that were clearly of mutual benefit
- Access to a dedicated project officer to coordinate activity.
- Strong collaboration at senior levels of management to ensure increased staff participation.

The case studies highlight that tangible products have been developed in the Networks that may benefit a larger number of organisations. These include:

- An OHS manual produced for pre-school boards;
- ‘CrimCheck’, an electronic lodgement system for police checks of volunteers; and
- Community Desk, a system designed to give staff in different agencies easy access to documents they need and reduce the time spent reviewing and updating them.

In collaboration with VCOSS, the CSIF team will continue to promote awareness of the outcomes of the Networks.

Purchasing – Are you paying too much?

Many community sector organisations are unaware of existing contracts, exemptions and allowances and sometimes paying more for goods and services than they need to.

Opportunities for savings include fuel and related products, stationery, information

technology products and many others. Interested? The CSO Information Portal contains links to resources available to the sector as well as a new streamlined process for accessing whole of government contracts.

There is even a Help Desk contact to help you through the process of applying for access to confidential information for government contracts, such as fuel, electricity and stationery.

Over time, we hope to grow the contracts that are available to the sector, so keep checking back.

Training – Planning, Purchasing, Improving

At the commencement of the CSIF, the sector raised the issue of limited access to training. The Workforce Initiative included a project to implement a training strategy for the sector. The strategy aims to improve planning and purchasing of training, and improve alignment with workforce priorities. This work is still ongoing, further updates will be provided.

You should also check out the VCOSS Training and Development Clearing House. You will find lists of training providers that provide community sector rates; a calendar of workshops, seminars and other events; and links to lots of resources. You can access the site at www.vcoss.org.au/clearinghouse or contact Kate Johnson for further information on 9654 5050 or email kate.johnson@vcoss.org.au.

Staff Banks are Coming

URCOT (an applied research and development centre affiliated with RMIT) was commissioned to carry out the Staff Bank Modelling Project. The project was one of the strategies in response to the workforce issues of the sector. This project addresses the high reliance on casual staff and impacts on quality of care, workplace harmony, costs and training issues.

The aim of the project was to provide advice to the sector on possible models, requirements and estimated costs for the establishment of a community sector staff bank.

Next steps are to advertise for expressions of interest to run demonstration models in the metropolitan and a rural area.

News in General

There have been further changes in the CSIF team. Julia Thomas and Ian Vague have headed to distant shores and new

opportunities, and Cedric Hassing has joined the team. Leonie Middleton continues to be involved.

Any enquiries or feedback can still be sent by email to csif@dhs.vic.gov.au or 03 9096 8716.