Community Internship Programme Evaluation Report

Department of Internal Affairs – Te Tari Taiwhenua

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Acknowledgements

The Department of Internal Affairs acknowledges and appreciates the time people and organisations gave to filling in the survey questionnaires and participating in the interviews that contributed information to this report.

Summary

The Community Internship Programme is administered by the Community Development Group of the Department of Internal Affairs and provides grants for the placement of experienced people from the public, private or community sectors, on six-month internships with host community organisations.

The objectives of the Programme and the evaluation

The internships are aimed at strengthening the organisational capacity of the community sector; nurturing improved relationships between the public, private and community sectors; and adding to the experience, skills and knowledge of individuals.

The 2001 funding round was the pilot year for the Programme. Twenty internships were funded that year. It is that first funding round for the Programme that is the subject of this evaluation report.

The data collection for the evaluation began in May 2002 in order that the data could be analysed and presented in a report within the specified time frame. As at 1 May 2002 interns had been in position for between one week and six months, with the majority having been in place for around three months.

The objectives of the evaluation were to:

1. Examine the implementation of the Programme and explore whether it may have affected the outcomes.

2. Examine whether the explicit and implicit objectives and intentions for the Programme were realised through the internships.

3. Identify any unanticipated outcomes, either positive or negative.

The primary sources of data for the evaluation were in-depth, face-to-face interviews with all host organisations, interns and home organisations. Postal surveys were conducted with unsuccessful applicant host organisations and unsuccessful applicant interns, and community organisations and individuals who expressed an interest in the Programme but did not apply.

As the evaluation was being conducted by the section of the Department of Internal Affairs responsible for implementing the Community Internship Programme, the Department sought the assistance of Social Audit New Zealand to ensure that the evaluation had integrity; that the report was an accurate representation of the data; and that the processes were conducted in accordance with the six social audit principles.

The host organisations, home organisations and interns

The twenty host organisations encompassed a wide range of community activities. The most common primary activities of the organisations included support towards employment, provision of social services and community development. Each organisation has its own philosophy or kaupapa. Concepts fundamental to both personal and community development – responding to need, empowerment, skill development, addressing disadvantage – were common within those statements of philosophy.

The original intention of the Programme was that interns should come from organisations within the public, private or community sectors and return to those organisations following the internship. However, this was the case for only two of the internships evaluated in this report. This was because of the tight timeframe between confirmation that additional funding was available (received mid December 2001) and when the

internships needed to begin (January 2002) in order for a meaningful evaluation to be completed by 31 August 2002.

The short timeframe prevented the Department from insisting that the interns came from home organisations because to do so would have necessitated that the Department took considerable time after the date of notification of the additional funding to market the Programme in a targeted way to suitable interns, based on the needs of the selected host organisations. There would also have been subsequent delays until the interns could be released from their current positions.

The notification of the additional funding just prior to Christmas was also a factor that impacted on the ability to do this in time for the internships to begin in January.

The short timeframe available for implementing the Programme in 2001 was an issue for the pilot year of the project and should not occur again. Fortunately, although most of the interns did not come from home organisations to which they would be returning, nearly all host organisations said that the skills of the interns had met, or in many cases exceeded, their expectations.

The interns came from a wide range of backgrounds. About half came from some form of paid employment, and the rest from studying, job seeking, voluntary work or overseas travel. Three-quarters of the interns were people who had from five to 30 years of paid working life before embarking on the internship. Many of these people had held a wide range of jobs in New Zealand and overseas. The rest of the interns were younger, and most of them had completed some form of tertiary study within the last five years.

Setting up the internships

The Community Internship Programme was advertised through a direct mail out, a range of community media as well as on the Internet and in specially prepared flyers. No one source was more successful in bringing the Programme to the notice of potential host organisations than others.

Fifteen of the interns were already known to the host organisations, and the internship was the result of negotiations between them. Four internships were the result of a match by the panel.

In almost all cases there was a high degree of satisfaction with the match between the interns' skills and attributes and the host organisations' needs. There were only two home organisations in this evaluation and it is clear from their comments, and the comments of some of the unsuccessful applicants, that home organisations have a strong stake in the match of intern to host organisations. Releasing an employee for an internship is not an insignificant cost to a home organisation and the benefit to the organisation lies in what the intern brings back with them.

The internships in practice

Host organisations had experienced few difficulties in integrating interns, and most reported that staff had received the interns very positively. Interns similarly reported that they had been made welcome.

Although the host organisations had to provide initial induction, practical support such as workspace and access to technology, and on-going supervision, the strong impression they gave was that the interns were capable, and showed initiative in establishing themselves and their project.

Host organisations were divided between those who thought six months was too short for the internship to provide maximum benefit to them, and those who thought it was an appropriate length of time to ensure that the internship maintained a focus. Two-thirds of the interns thought the internship should be longer.

Views on the salary for the internship ranged from those who thought the salary was generous in comparison with salaries paid in the community sector, to those who thought it fair, and those who thought it was too low to attract people with the level of skill and experience that the community sector agencies needed.

About half the host organisations thought the resourcing grant was appropriate. A small number of organisations considered it less than sufficient recompense for the cost incurred by the organisation.

The value of the Programme to the community sector

There is no doubt that the Programme brought valuable skills and experience into community organisations. Virtually without exception the hosts said that the skills of the interns had met, or in many cases exceeded, their expectations, and that the interns had used those skills to strengthen organisational capacity during the internship. The hosts valued the fresh perspectives that interns brought with them and their willingness to adapt to organisations where there are few staff who are often required to undertake disparate range of responsibilities.

The value of the Programme to the interns

Interns benefited from the Programme in a range of ways. Most felt they had been able to fully utilise or even extend their skills; they reported having learned a lot about the reality of life for organisations in the community sector, in particular the limited resources available to undertake the work. They were impressed by the obvious commitment that groups and individuals had to the objectives of their organisations. The interns were struck by the strength of community networks and how they were used to increase the capacity of organisations to do their work. Several interns reflected that what they had learned during their internship had affected decisions about their future.

The value of the Programme to the home organisation

The third beneficiary of the Programme that was envisaged was the home organisation. The reality was that only two of the interns in this first round of the Programme came from organisations to which they intended to return. For this reason the Programme had only limited success in conveying knowledge and experience of the community back into public or private sector organisations. Although only two interns came directly from home organisations the majority of the others came to the internship with a long and varied work history. It could be argued therefore that while there was not a direct transmission of the learning from the internship back into home organisations, the benefits of the Programme will be carried with the interns into whatever they do in the future.

The future of the Programme

The Community Internship Programme has been offered again in 2002. The selection process for the 2002 round has changed from that used in 2001. This has been in part to ensure that more interns come from home organisations to which they will return after their internship.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Community Internship Programme

The Community Internship Programme is administered by the Community Development Group of the Department of Internal Affairs and provides grants for the placement of experienced people from the public, private or community sectors, on six-month internships with host community organisations.

The internships are aimed at strengthening the organisational capacity of the community sector; nurturing improved relationships between the public, private and community sectors; and adding to the experience, skills and knowledge of individuals.

Each grant consists of:

- $18,000 plus GST for a six-month internship salary, and
- $2,000 plus GST to assist the host organisation with resource costs for the internship.

The internships were created to allow:

- opportunities for individuals to learn about how other organisations operate; the sharing of their particular knowledge and experience with a host organisation; and for the expansion of practical skills and experience
- opportunities for the host organisations to benefit from the services of a skilled, full time, staff member for six months; and the cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences.

Applications are accepted from prospective interns:

- who have skills that they can transfer from their existing employment (in the private, government, local government or community sector) to a host organisation
- whose home organisation will benefit after their return from the internship, and
- who are prepared to work with the Department of Internal Affairs, participate in an evaluation of the scheme and to write a report of their experience.

Applications are accepted from community organisations which:

- have the capacity to administer and support the proposed internship
- are a legal entity, and
- are prepared to work with the Department of Internal Affairs, participate in an evaluation of the scheme and to write a report of their experience.

Proposals are considered for an internship that will:

- take an innovative, fresh approach to community work
- foster cooperation between organisations
- enhance the experience, understanding and relationship building of community organisations

- seek improved relationships between the public, private and community sectors
- strengthen the organisational capacity of the host organisation
- allow for interns to share their particular knowledge and experience with the host organisation, and
- strengthen the skills of the intern.

1.2 History of the Programme

In 2001, the Government initially granted approval for five internships, and later approval for an additional 15. The proposal to establish the programme came from the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand. Much of what is written here about the rationale for the programme came from an interview with Green Party MP, Sue Bradford.

1.3 The rationale for the Programme

The rationale for the programme came from an awareness amongst the people who developed it of the lack of knowledge that people from the corporate and public sectors have about the reality of life in not-for-profit organisations, and a corresponding ignorance amongst people in community organisations about the corporate and public sectors.

A major objective for the programme, then, was to enhance cross-sectoral building of relationships and understanding, and to enable people from the corporate and public sectors to participate in the life of the community sector without having to leave their jobs.

The programme was seen as an opportunity to increase understanding between agencies within the community sector as well. It was hoped that there would be an exchange between some community organisations, so that people who worked for large community organisations, for example, might experience what it was like to work within grassroots consumer-driven organisations.

A second reason for proposing the programme was to build the organisational capacity of the community sector – to 'enable' that sector. The intentions for the programme were that it would be '*something to really add value to the substance, core or heart of an organisation*', '*to help boost the infrastructure of groups*' as opposed to simply being project funding *(Interview with Sue Bradford 16 April 2002).* Through placing interns with community organisations, the programme aimed to facilitate a transfer of experience and knowledge from the interns to the community organisations.

There were additional aspirations for the programme in the minds of its developers and other intended benefits for community organisations and interns. These were implicit rather than explicit in that they were not overtly stated in programme literature.

Perhaps the most significant of these was the intention that interns should be either employed or substantially engaged in voluntary work before their internships, rather than being unemployed or coming straight from tertiary study. This was so the interns could act as a bridge between organisations for inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral relationship building, and so the interns could take back to their original employer or voluntary base (home organisation) what they had learnt from their internship with a host organisation.

A second original and important intention was that the programme should include at least one meeting of all interns and some of the host organisations to reflect on the outcomes of the internships:

A third hope was that government, local government and corporate sector employers would subsidise their employees' placements in the programme, and that in some cases corporate employers and departments '*might even look at placing people without any cost to the programme or just a small administrative charge from the Department.'* (Ibid)

Other implicit rather than explicit objectives included the hope that the Department of Internal Affairs would actively work with government and corporate sector groups to promote the programme; that the programme would be something that really respected the values of the host community organisations; and that there was a preference that groups that received interns work from an empowerment kaupapa, although without excluding groups that provide essential services without that kaupapa.

This report provides an evaluation of the programme based on the values that underlie it as well as its stated objectives.

1.4   The objectives of the Programme

The stated objectives of the Programme are:

1. To place experienced / skilled people from the public, private or community sectors with community organisations and for those people to share their particular knowledge and experience and to transfer their skills to the host organisation

2. To strengthen the organisational capacity of the community and voluntary sector group

3. To nurture improved relationships between the public, private and community sectors and to foster cooperation between organisations

4. To enhance the experience, understanding and relationship building of community organisations

5. To add to the experience, skills and knowledge of individuals, that is:

    • individuals learn how other organisations operate

    • individuals' practical skills and experience are strengthened and expanded

6. That a cross-fertilisation of ideas will occur

7. That the interns' home organisations benefit after their return from the internships.

The 2001 funding round was the pilot year for the Programme. Twenty internships were funded that year. It is that first funding round for the Programme that is the subject of this evaluation report.

2.0   Evaluation methodology

In December 2001, following reference from the Cabinet Committee on Government Expenditure and Administration (EXG), Cabinet approved funding for an additional 15 internships through the Community Internship Programme for the 2001-2002 financial year. The Department had already funded five internships from within baseline funding. A condition for receiving the additional funding was that the Department provided an evaluation report on the Programme to EXG by 31 August 2002.

The data collection for the evaluation began in May 2002 in order that the data could be analysed and presented in a report within the specified time frame. As at 1 May interns had been in position for between two weeks and six months, with the majority having been in place for around three months.

2.1   Evaluation objectives

The evaluation draws on a mixture of evaluation models to:

1. Examine the implementation of the Programme and explore whether it may have affected the outcomes – for example, whether the interns who were chosen came from paid or unpaid positions in the public, private or community sectors and therefore had an organisation to go back to after their internships with which they would be able to share the benefits of their experience.

2. Examine whether the explicit and implicit objectives and intentions for the Programme (as outlined in sections 1.1 and 1.2) were realised through the internships.

3. Identify any unanticipated outcomes, either positive or negative.

The evaluation is therefore a mixture of process evaluation and outcome evaluation. It is both 'objective-based' in that it evaluates what has happened against both the explicit and implicit objectives for the Programme, and 'goal free' which means the evaluation attempted to examine all Programme effects. The Community Development Group will also use the data gathered by the evaluation as it decides on any modifications to the Programme.

2.2   Data

This evaluation drew on several sources of data. These included:

- an interview with Green MP Sue Bradford
- interviews with all host organisations
- interviews with all interns
- interviews with home organisations which had released interns
- a postal survey of unsuccessful applicant host organisations and unsuccessful applicant interns
- a postal survey of organisations and individuals who expressed an interest in the Programme but did not apply.

In addition to these data sources, each host agency and each intern was asked to write their own evaluation of the internship. Most did, and where they were available, these are included in Appendix 1.

A face-to-face, semi-structured interview with Green MP Sue Bradford MP was held to clarify the values behind the Programme. This was important in order to check whether the Programme as it was implemented captured the original purpose and aspirations.

The primary sources of data for the evaluation were face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with all host community organisations, all interns, and the two home organisations that released interns to participate in the Programme.

The interview guides were developed by the Department of Internal Affairs in consultation with Social Audit New Zealand and can be reviewed in Appendix 2.

David Mulholland from the Department of Internal Affairs conducted the interview with Sue Bradford, and a pre-test interview with one host organisation and its intern. An independent interviewer was contracted to complete all other interviews. Interviews were transcribed using a combination of verbatim and paraphrased recording. Copies of interview notes were sent to all those who had been interviewed who then checked them and made changes to the notes where they felt the notes did not accurately reflect their responses, signed them and returned them to the Department of Internal Affairs.

The third source of data was anonymous postal surveys sent to:

- all unsuccessful applicant host community organisations
- all unsuccessful applicant interns, and
- community organisations and individuals that expressed an interest in the Programme but did not apply and for which records of their enquiry had been retained.

The purpose of the surveys was to get feedback on the eligibility criteria, the application process, decision-making process and the advice given to applicants, as well as to gauge the willingness of the stakeholders to participate in future funding rounds.

Table 1 shows the response rates to the postal surveys (copies of which can be found in Appendix 3).

Table 1   Response to postal surveys

	Number sent questionnaires	Number of responses	Response (%)
Unsuccessful applicant host community organisations	63	28	44
Unsuccessful applicant interns	28	13	46
Community organisations and individuals that expressed an interest in the Programme but did not apply	14	4	29

The response rate is relatively good. Emory and Cooper (1991)[1] claim that mail surveys with a return of 30% or more are considered satisfactory, and in this case surveys were being sent to people who had been unsuccessful applicants for a Programme and might have little motivation to respond.

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[1] Emory, C. and Cooper, D., (1991) *Business Research Methods, Fourth Edition.* Richard D. Irwin Inc: Boston.

2.3   Analysis

The postal surveys were distributed, received and analysed by Social Audit New Zealand.

For each set of interviews – interns, host community organisations and home organisations – responses to similar questions were grouped and analysed for themes. This involves becoming very familiar with the responses of the interviewees, determining different categories of response, assigning responses to categories, and identifying themes and patterns in the data that are relevant to the evaluation.

The interviews along with the interview with Sue Bradford and the report of the postal surveys were analysed by David Mulholland of the Department of Internal Affairs in conjunction with an independent social science researcher contracted to assist with the analysis and writing of this report.

2.4   Quality assurance

Care was taken to assure the quality and objectivity of this evaluation given that it was undertaking by the Community Development Group responsible for managing the Programme.

The first is that an external interviewer was contracted to conduct and transcribe the interviews. Secondly, all interviewees were provided with the transcripts of their interview and given the opportunity to make any changes they wanted to.

Thirdly, an independent social science researcher was contracted to analyse and report the data, and to draft the conclusions.

As the evaluation was being conducted by the section of the Department of Internal Affairs responsible for implementing the Community Internship Programme, the Department sought the assistance of Social Audit New Zealand to ensure that the evaluation had integrity; that the report was an accurate representation of the data; and that the processes were conducted in accordance with professional and ethical standards and the six social audit principles. A report from Social Audit New Zealand is included as Appendix 4.

2.5   This report

After an introduction, an outline of the methodology of the evaluation and a brief description of host and home organisations, interns and internships, this report is in six sections. These are:

- setting up of the internships
- how the internships operated in practice
- the value of the Programme to the host organisations
- the value of the Programme to the interns
- the value of the Programme to the home organisations
- conclusions.

3.0 Profile of host and home organisations, interns, and the internship

3.1 Host organisations

The twenty host organisations encompassed a wide range of community activities. Table 2 summarises the primary activity of host organisations, fuller details about host organisations and what they do is available in Appendix 3. Several organisations had more than one focus.

Table 2   Primary activity or activities of host organisations

Type of organisation	Number of organisations
Support towards employment	6
Provision of social services	5
Community development	3
Adult education or literacy	2
Services for refugees	1
Community development (environmental / cultural focus)	1
National umbrella organisation	1
Support for volunteering	1
Services for gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender people	1
Early childhood education association	1
Research for runanga	1

Four organisations cater primarily for Pacific communities or individuals, two focus exclusively on the needs of Maori, and two more by virtue of their location primarily serve Maori communities. One organisation provided services to refugees.

About half of the organisations offer services to the whole community. Many of these acknowledged that people from lower income groups mainly use their services or who are otherwise marginalised to some degree. The rest of the organisations provide services that are targeted to a type of need or to a particular community.

Each organisation has its own philosophy or kaupapa. Concepts fundamental to both personal and community development – responding to need, empowerment, skill development, addressing disadvantage – were common within those statements of philosophy.

3.2   The home organisations

Although the original intention of the Programme was that interns should come from organisations within the public, private or community sector and return to those organisations following the internship, this was the reality for only two of the internships evaluated in this report.

The Community Development Group, Department of Internal Affairs, advises that the key reason for this was the tight timeframe between confirmation that funding was available for the additional 15 internships (the confirmation was received mid December 2001) and when the internships should have begun (January 2002). It was considered desirable that all of the internships were begun during January at the latest so that they would be in place for a reasonable amount of time before they were evaluated. The evaluation report was required by 31 August 2002.

The short timeframe available for implementing the 2001 funding round was an issue for the pilot year of the project and should not occur again. The timeframe for implementing the 2002 funding round was considerably longer, with confirmation of funding for all internships received in April 2002.

However, the secondary reason that only two interns came from home organisations to which they would be returning lay in the promotional and implementation strategies used. This has been addressed by significant changes to the strategies used for the 2002 funding round, these changes are discussed in section 9.3.

One of the two home organisations was a large government agency, the other a small business enterprise centre.

3.3   The interns

The interns came from a wide range of backgrounds. Table 3 shows in summary form what the interns were doing immediately prior to their internships. Fuller information about the interns can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 3   Interns' occupation/activity immediately prior to internship

Occupation or activity	Number of interns
Working with a community group	4
Working in a government or quasi government agency	3
Studying	3
Job seeking	2
Working in a private company	2
Self-employment	2
Voluntary work	1
Working with a professional association	1
Working for a political party	1
Travelling	1

Three-quarters of the interns were people who had had from five to 30 years of paid working life before embarking on the internship. Many of these people had held a wide range of jobs in New Zealand and overseas. The rest of the interns were younger, and most of them had completed some form of tertiary study within the last five years.

About half of the interns had worked in a community organisation at some point in their lives. About a third had worked with community organisations as part of jobs they had done in the past, and a small number had worked as volunteers. Only one intern had virtually no prior experience of working with community organisations before his internship.

The host organisations were very positive about the skills the interns brought with them. Here are two of the comments made:

It has been a real joy to have an intern who isn't just a low level practitioner but is completely competent and conversant in the field, as well as being comfortable meeting people from other agencies, government departments etc.

*****'s skills have been perfect. He's been able to maintain the financial management system to ensure the organisation's integrity – how it's seen in the community – and transparency, for funding bodies.

However, as well as the technical skills that were highly valued by host organisations, they recognised that the interns needed to have other skills if the placement was to be a success. These are some of the things organisations said that interns needed to have:

Patience and a sense of humour. Mix of hard and soft skills. And the attitude has to be 100%

(as well as) . . . . practical IT skills, the ability to get on with things, and to be decisive, as well as a good deal of patience . . .

She needed to be presented well and appropriate to the organisation's client group, to share similar beliefs and values, plus the ability to talk around some of the cultural dimensions required by the organisation.

The ability to relate to people on all different levels – trustees, staff and clients.

The intern's willingness to adapt and fit in with the organisation and its volunteers has also been important.

3.4 The internships

At the time of the evaluation

- one intern had been in place for nearly six months
- five interns had been in place for between three and four months;
- eight interns had been in place for between two and three months;
- five interns had been in place for between one and two months; and
- one intern had been in place for only 1 week, being a replacement for an intern who left his internship for another job.

Table 4 shows the main focus of work for each intern. Some internships had more than one focus. Fuller details of each internship can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 4   Focus of the internships

Focus	Number of interns
Programme development	5
Management and systems development	4
IT including training and web design	3
Strategic/ action planning	3
Scoping and needs assessment	3
Develop financial management systems	3
Organisational review	1
Research	1

Half of the organisations said that the work the intern was actually doing was the same as that outlined in the application. Some of the others said that the emphasis had changed slightly. There were a number of reasons for this including: that the skills of the intern were better suited to some purposes than others; that the initial task envisaged for the intern had been too broad in scope and needed refining; or, that a new focus had arisen for the organisation necessitating a change in the work undertaken by the intern.

About a third of the organisations said that the intern was undertaking some core work for the host. These comments are examples:

> *It's core work. What the organisation does is provide educational programmes and the intern has been invaluable in not only reviewing the existing Programmes but developing new Programmes.*

> *Most of what the intern is doing is core work and the greatest benefit to the organisation is having someone to do the administration.*

Another third said the intern's work was increasing the organisation's capacity to do its core work. Here is what two people said:

> *While not being core work, the work the intern is doing will help establish a stronger foundation from which the organisation can undertake its core work.*

> *It's work designed to increase our capacity to do our core work.*

The others said that what the intern was doing was additional to the core work of the organisation. These comments illustrate:

> *The intern's work is additional to the core work because the organisation never envisaged undertaking research projects.*

> *The work is additional – because without the intern the work wouldn't get done.*

Setting up the internships

4.1 How host organisations and interns found out about the Programme

The Community Internship Programme was advertised through a direct mail out, a range of community media as well as on the Internet and in specially prepared flyers.

No one source was more successful in bringing the Programme to the notice of potential host organisations than others. Interns similarly had heard about the Programme in a variety of ways, the most common of which was from the host organisation. It seems that even at this very preliminary stage some host organisations were active in seeking out people they considered would be suitable interns.

One of the two home organisations and one of the host organisations considered that the Programme had not been well advertised, as it had not heard about the Programme until approached by a host organisation wanting an intern.

More detail about the ways in which potential applicants heard about the Programme, and their evaluation of Programme literature is contained in Appendix 5.

4.2 The application process

Fifteen of the host organisations said that putting their application together was straightforward although two also commented that it took some time to complete, and that the timing was not ideal. Here is one comment:

> *Yes* [it was easy putting the application together] *apart from the timing just before Christmas, which meant the process was a bit of a rush. And because [we] had already looked at employing someone on a short-term contract to complete the task, they'd already completed much of the project development and thinking, and had even begun a funding application. Otherwise it might have been hard.*

This organisation found some value for them in completing the application:

> *The application was easy, but quite different from others the organisation has completed because we had to justify and explain not only why we needed an intern but how the intern would fit into the organisation. This was good because it made the Trust look at its requirements, which resulted in a number of discussions to try to define the terms of reference*

However, two host organisations found it hard putting their applications together, one said this:

> *It was 'ugly'. We weren't sure at all what it meant, so included all sorts of information. We were unsure what the questions meant, and hoped we had covered everything required. Even given our experience with filling out applications, we found it confusing and not very user-friendly.*

Seventeen of the interns said that it was easy or relatively easy to put their applications together. Indeed, five of these interns said that they only had to submit their CV, letter and a CV, or CV and two referees. Two had more difficulty, and one of them said:

> *The application was quite involved, especially finding current references.*

Through the postal survey, unsuccessful applicants, both host organisations and interns, reported some confusion about the objectives of the Programme and the decision

making process. Some of the organisations also would have liked more feedback on the reasons that their application was unsuccessful.

Unsuccessful applicants were generally positive about the information and advice they had been given from the Department of Internal Affairs. The majority of unsuccessful applicants indicated that they would be prepared to apply for the Programme again.

4.3   Matching of interns with host organisations

THE HOSTS

Fifteen of the interns knew and were known to the host organisations before the internship began. In some cases they were quite familiar with the organisation and in other cases less familiar. In seven of the fifteen cases the host organisation approached the prospective intern to ask if they would be interested, in two cases the prospective intern approached the organisation to see if they would consider hosting an internship. In the other six cases it was not clear which, if indeed either, party initiated the process or whether it arose from discussions between them. In one case the internship was the result of a negotiation between the potential host agency and the home agency.

Three host organisations spoke of their difficulties in finding a suitable intern. One organisation had eventually advertised for an intern. In four internships the intern was matched with the host organisation by the panel. Those hosts and interns who were matched by the panel thought that the panel had made a good assessment of the match between the intern and the organisation.

Four host organisations had their applications turned down initially, which had caused them some disappointment, but had subsequently had their applications approved. Other than that, organisations identified no problems in the application process.

In the concluding comments to their interviews several representatives of host organisations spoke of the importance of the matching process to the ongoing success of the Programme.

THE INTERNS

The interns were generally positive about way applications were processed and internships were established. A few experienced difficulties with the timing being so close to Christmas.

THE HOME ORGANISATION PERSPECTIVE

One of the two home organisations expressed reservations about the process whereby organisations are encouraged to release potential interns into a pool to be matched with host organisations. From the home organisation's perspective, much of the value of the internship lies in what the intern can bring back with them to the home organisation, and some internships are going to be much more relevant than others. This home organisation said that the issue of matching needed careful attention to ensure that the needs of the home organisation, as well as of the host and the intern, are met through the Programme. The other home organisation had been turned down initially, and then accepted.

UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

The feedback to the postal survey of unsuccessful applicants for host organisations and interns suggests that the match between the intern and the host organisation was

particularly important for services which had a Maori kaupapa or served primarily Pacific people.

5.0 The internships in practice

5.1 Integrating the intern into the host organisation

Most of the host organisations said that integrating the intern into the organisation was no more or less demanding than the induction of any new staff member. Those organisations which had known the intern beforehand found it particularly straightforward as they had already assessed that the intern would fit well into the organisation.

Two organisations mentioned issues that had needed attention because the intern was unfamiliar with the culture of the organisation. In one other organisation some clients were apprehensive because they felt some ambivalence about the intern's home organisation. However, once clients had worked with the intern any concerns they had were allayed.

THE RESPONSE OF STAFF

Sixteen of the host organisations reported that other staff had received the interns very positively. One organisation indicated that the other staff were somewhat unclear about the task the intern had been assigned, and that this affected their initial acceptance of the person. Another said that the intern took a while to appreciate the culture of the organisation and that this delayed staff acceptance of him. One intern was working largely in isolation, and the final host organisation made no comments about the response of other staff.

Sixteen interns spoke very positively about how they had been received by the staff of the host organisations. Four said they had had little contact, either because the organisation had few other staff, or because the internship was at a very early stage. One intern said she deliberately kept a distance from the staff because she thought her project required a degree of objectivity that made this desirable.

Two interns reflected on the assumptions created by the label 'intern' and said that they thought some of the staff in the organisations had some difficulty reconciling this label with their experience and expertise.

5.2 Support the intern needed

Although the host organisations had to provide initial induction, practical support such as workspace and access to technology, and on-going supervision, the strong impression they gave in their interviews was that the interns were capable and showed initiative in establishing themselves and their project. Here are some of the host organisations' comments:

> *The intern required little support after the initial orientation. He was able to work on his own with a few presentation and formatting guidelines.*

> *There wasn't much support needed because there were regular staff meetings and the intern was able to ask for any support she required.*

Interns generally felt that the staff were supportive and that there were people available to whom they could go with questions or for advice. Few had formal mentoring or buddying structures established for them. Three of the interns had been given the opportunity to attend training relevant to their task.

5.3 The duration of the internship

HOST ORGANISATIONS

Host organisations were divided between those who thought six months was too short for the internship and those who thought it was the right length of time. Those who wanted the internship to be longer generally expressed the view that it takes any new employee in an organisation some time to get up to speed with what they need to know. Here is one comment:

I think a longer term would be helpful because it takes six months for a person to learn a job – how the organisation works, its culture, who the contacts are etc. They only really start to be tremendously successful after they've been there for six months.

Other organisations, many of which had given a more project focus to the internship, thought that six months was just about right. Here is one organisation's view:

Three months would have been difficult but six months is fine . . . one year might be too long when considering the nature of the Programme. If you can't make a change in six months . . . . it'll be difficult to do it over a year.

Some organisations could see that the ideal length of time for the internship depends largely on what it is the organisation wants the intern to do:

To a degree it depends on the project. For some projects six months would be fine, but when dealing with providers on such a huge scale a year would be better.

And this person could see a slight danger in making the internships longer:

Six months is the minimum to get real benefits. But on the other hand it could be dangerous if it went for a year, because they'd probably come to rely on her too much and would miss her when she left.

INTERNS

Five interns said the six-month timeframe for the internships was satisfactory, with one saying he found it generous. One person said that six months gives a good opportunity to test out the match between the skills of the intern and the needs of the organisation, and another said that six months is not quite long enough to become fully part of an organisation so there are not too many problems for the intern or the organisation when the time comes to leave.

Twelve interns said that six months was not long enough and eight of them suggested that a year would be better. Their reasons were similar to those of the host organisations, which felt the same way, that is, they felt that too much of the internship could be swallowed up by the intern familiarising him or herself with the organisation and the role. As with the hosts, some of the interns recognised that ideal time frames would vary for different projects. One intern articulated it this way:

Because this is a pilot, there should be some flexibility because there might be some very good projects and people and it might take a year to do justice to the project. For some projects (e.g. explicit tasks with a beginning and end) six months may suffice, but for developmental

projects and those that will be invaluable and unique, there should be an opportunity to extend it up to a year.

5.4 The salary for the internship

The interns received a salary of $18,000 for a six-month internship.

HOST ORGANISATIONS

Host organisations had two main comments about the salary being paid to the interns. Nine organisations said that the salary paid to their intern was much lower than that person could expect in another sector, and that this may impact on the ability of the Programme to attract applicants.

It's at the lower end of the scale. $45,000 would be more attractive especially if trying to encourage interns in from the government sector. It would need to be subsidised.

I think from the perspective of someone like ****** he's essentially coming in as a volunteer . . . I think that we've been very fortunate that someone of *****'s experience has agreed to take on the challenge.

Six organisations commented that the salary the intern was paid was more than other people in the organisation were paid and in that sense was not just adequate but generous. Here are some comments to that effect:

For people with qualifications there may be expectations of receiving such a salary but for community organisations it's out of this world.

It's well paid and higher than is normal for people working in community organisations – it's the salary level of a director.

Four host organisations thought the salary was fair.

INTERNS

About half the interns were happy with the amount they were being paid. One said:

Considering the market for qualified people it may be a little low. The organisations don't need graduates, they need skilled and experienced people and the salary isn't attractive enough or competitive enough to entice such people.

For some it was comparable to what they were getting before the internship, for those who had been out of the workforce it was more money.

The other half thought that the salary was low

Some interns acknowledged that there were reasons, other than money, that they were doing the internship. Here are some of their comments:

Although I was earning more in my previous job I'm happy to be involved in the Programme because it's a new experience for me and I feel I'm putting something back into the community.

Even if they didn't pay I would have stayed. They've got a number of computer-based projects I'd like to be involved with.

One intern was having her salary topped up by her home organisation.

5.5   Resource costs for the organisation

About half the host organisations said the grant was an appropriate amount to offset the costs to the organisation. Here is a comment reflecting this view:

The resource grant was appropriate . . . it has allowed the organisation to buy books and pay for petrol/travel costs etc although it may not wholly cover the administrative costs of time, mainly for supervision.

About a quarter of the organisations saw the resource grant as a real bonus that allowed them to provide much needed equipment such as computer hardware or software to support the intern's task. Here is the view of one organisation's representative:

The operational grant was magnificent because once ***** started going out to work with groups she needed a laptop. So we used it to buy a laptop.

This person expressed a view shared by the three organisations which thought that the grant was insufficient recompense to the organisation for the costs incurred:

The organisation believes the resource grant is nowhere near enough and they will have to cover many of the cost associated with the project. Many of these costs weren't foreseen when the project was developed and, in retrospect, the organisation believes it would, given another chance, have negotiated the resource grant.

A couple of organisations said that consideration should be given to tailoring the resource grant to the needs of each internship.

6.0 The value of the Programme to the community sector

6.1 Strengthening organisational capacity

Eighteen of the twenty host organisations said that having an intern in place had increased organisational capacity. Here are two ways in which this has been achieved:

> *Absolutely. The whole plan was to bring an intern in to complete tasks which would increase the organisation's capacity. This will be achieved by the intern completing many of the strategic tasks set down by the Board, beyond the operational tasks of the organisation. And the intern has ensured they are progressed much faster and researched much more comprehensively and thoroughly than would otherwise have been possible.*

> *The work being undertaken by the intern is providing the fundamental groundwork for a major extension of the organisation's work in the homelessness area. This work is the kind of work an organisation doesn't often get a chance to do.*

One organisation said that having an intern had drained organisational capacity in the short-term but that they were hopeful of longer-term benefits. The other organisation said that it was too early to say whether organisational capacity would be enhanced, but that they were optimistic.

Many of the organisations saw that some of the benefits of having the intern – such as improved financial and administrative systems – would be felt well into the future.

6.2 Skills, knowledge and experience valued by the host organisation

THE HOSTS

The valued skills most frequently mentioned by the host organisations included financial management skills, research and analysis. This is what some people from host organisations said:

> *His training in financial management has played a big part in getting the organisation's financial management right.*

> *She's completely confident and competent in financial management and I can't say anyone else here was. She is also well versed in computer cashbook recording and processes. Before, it was all done on paper.*

> *Research skills. The ability to 'sniff out' things, track down organisations etc. The ability to grapple with very complex issues and other intellectual skills.*

> *Analytical skills . . . . the ability to challenge people's thinking in a non-threatening way.*

Good communication skills were also highly valued as were skills in teaching or training and the ability to present material professionally.

Table 5 shows the skills and knowledge that interns brought which were most highly valued by the host organisations.

Table 5   Skills and knowledge valued by the host organisations

Skills	Number of agencies which mentioned the skill as valuable
Research and analysis	6
Financial management	5
Communication and people skills	3
Teaching and training skills	3
Visual presentation and graphics	3
Administrative skills	2
IT skills	1
Networking skills	1
Detailed knowledge of home organisation	1
Treaty knowledge	1
Policy development	1

Many representatives of host organisations also reflected on the benefit to the organisation of having someone coming in with a fresh approach. Here are a few comments that illustrate:

> *And because she's fresh, she has no agenda, so has new ways of thinking about how the organisation works. She brings a different perspective.*

> *The organisation has already commenced an internal review process and the intern has been a real advantage because she is an outsider.*

And resilience was also valued:

> *Humour and sanity have been the most useful for him in order to survive the situation he walked into.*

Eighteen of the twenty host organisations were very happy with the level of skill and knowledge the intern brought to the internship. About a third of these mentioned that the organisation knew the intern prior to his or her placement and so was clear about the skills and knowledge that they were getting. Another third, which had not known the intern prior to the scheme, said that the level of skill and knowledge the intern brought with then exceeded the organisation's expectations. The rest of this group simply said they were happy that the level of skill and knowledge was what they had expected. One organisation did not consider that it was in a position to make a judgement about the intern's level of skill although the respondent indicated that there had been no concerns to date. One organisation expected more IT skills of its intern than that person was able to deliver.

THE INTERNS

Several interns agreed that their host organisations had really benefited from the skills the interns brought with them, noting that some of those skills are in short supply in the community sector. Here are two interns' comments:

> *Yes,* (the host organisation had benefited) *because not many people are passionate about policy and I'm pleased that I have been able to do that kind of work, work which will benefit lots of people.*

> *I feel my ability to write and facilitate programmes has certainly benefited the organisation. The reason I was taken on was that there was nobody else in the organisation with those skills.*

6.3   Exchange of ideas

THE HOSTS

The host organisations were better at analysing the ideas that the intern had brought into the organisation than at identifying what the intern might have learnt from the experience. When asked what ideas the interns had contributed, they commonly reiterated the skills that the interns had brought with them, management expertise, and the value of having an outsider bringing a new perspective to their work.

When host organisations were asked about the ideas that had been exchanged between the organisations and the interns some host organisations found it hard to identify what ideas the may have taken from the experience. A few could identify benefits for the intern; the organisation which made this comment had an intern from a government agency:

> *Having flexibility has allowed her to initiate things. Before, she was quiet and her duties and tasks were prescribed, but because of the nature of our organisation – the culture of the place and the commitment to community development – the answer is 'Yes' instead of 'No'.*

This organisation believed the experience had allowed the intern to transform his theoretical knowledge into something much more practical:

> *The organisation believes it has provided a framework for the intern to deliver his outcomes. It has made him focus on the needs of community organisations with which he hasn't necessarily been involved in the past. And it has exchanged ideas about how to take a tertiary level academic programme and repackage it into a community-based training programme.*

THE INTERNS

Although the interns were able to specify the skills they had brought to the organisation, they were less clear about the ideas. A few said that they thought they had contributed a sense of the importance of systems to support the work host organisations were doing, and one said she had been able to make the host organisation less 'scared' of accounting systems. Others said they had contributed ideas about the development of services. In terms of the ideas they had gained, some interns who had not previously worked in the community sector said the culture of the sector was quite a revelation to them; others talked about ideas and issues around the projects they were involved with.

Only two interns had come directly from a home organisation in the government, community or business sector. In the cases of those who had, while hosts felt that the interns had brought valuable skills and knowledge into their organisations, they found it more difficult to articulate precisely what the organisation had learned about the intern's home organisation through the internship.

6.4   New or strengthened relationships with other organisations

Generally the host organisations said that the interns had strengthened existing relationships for the agency rather than created new ones. As so few interns were from home organisations, the expected benefits of strengthened relationships between host and home organisations did not occur. Here are some of the comments made by host organisations:

> *Though the intern has mostly used the organisation's networks, she has added to their contact base.*

> *And existing links with other museums have also been strengthened through the intern's work. Though the Museum had already reached out to a lot of organisations previously, having the intern has made them renew the connection.*

In the one internship where the work of the host organisation was directly related to that of the intern's home organisation, there were clear benefits as the host says here:

> *The intern has eased this by putting a personal face on ******* and being able to talk through issues with clients in a relaxed environment and a non-threatening way . . . .   This has taken all the edges off the client/****** relationship and increased access to information.*

Some recognised that the intern had opened new doors for the organisation:

> *Although it is early days yet, the organisation has benefited from the variety of people within the IT and education field that the intern knew.*

> *We've always worked in partnership so many of the networks were already there, but as part of the financial safety programme there were Maori liaison people from IRD and Maori funding organisations so we established new contacts and networks there.*

6.5   The 'fit' between the Programme and values of the host organisation

Although asked about the fit between the values of the Programme and their organisation, almost all the respondents spoke of the fit between the values of the intern and the host organisation. They were virtually unanimous in their agreement that there was a good fit between the values of the intern and the values of the host organisation. These are some of their comments:

> *Yes. She has a consultative style and involves people.*

> *Yes. The intern has similar values to the Trust and is a good people person.*

> *She's been flexible and willing to participate in whatever's going on, and sometimes things are quite unexpected because of the nature of community work, and it's been very successful.*

6.6   Unanticipated outcomes for host organisations

Host organisations described a range of unanticipated outcomes. The most common was that the work the intern was doing had alerted the organisation to a range of possibilities for further development. These are two typical comments:

> *The school programme was unexpected. It's not an area the organisation has previously considered but it has now created another client group.*

> *The only unexpected outcome has been the increase in the number of people using the archive and becoming involved in the research project.*

Some host organisations were surprised at the interns' willingness to become fully involved and contribute to the organisations in ways that were above and beyond what they had agreed to do. Here are a couple of examples of hosts' comments:

> *I guess as a Board member I've been surprised that *****'s been prepared to drop things round after hours etc, or do whatever was required just to facilitate getting on with the job.*

> *One unexpected outcome is that when the intern feels he hasn't got enough to do he is keen to help out elsewhere.*

Other unanticipated outcomes included opening the organisation to the possibility of taking on other people in different capacities. This is what one person said:

> *Also we took on someone for work experience who was a registered accountant in India and who'd come to New Zealand only to be told she couldn't work here because she had no NZ accounting knowledge. So we took her on and . . . . (*described what she did for the organisation*) . . .and she then applied for a job with Price Waterhouse on the basis of having New Zealand experience. And she got it. We've since taken on an assistant in computer literacy and another in Maori literacy. This was a whole new perspective we hadn't considered. It's like work shadowing.*

6.7   Another intern?

As part of their interview host organisations were asked if they would consider taking another intern. Three-quarters were unequivocal in their agreement that the organisation would take another intern. Four organisations said they would be open to the idea if they had a suitable project and the right person was available.

7.0   The value of the Programme to the intern

7.1   What interns have learned

The interns were articulate about what they had learned through their internships.

Several spoke of the insights they had gained to the community sector and the people who work in it. Four of them made these observations:

Going to the meetings of the Community Services Council has been a real eye-opener. On the one hand I'm surprised by just how interested the Council is in community development, but I also saw the political side and how that impacted on submissions – the fact that the Draft Annual Plan isn't really a draft but is almost set in stone.

When working with a committee the processes have to be at a level everyone can work with – you can't expect to take huge steps overnight . . . . it has been a revelation to see how they can arrive at the same destination only through a much longer route . . . and the value of their commitment, once they commit, they commit themselves wholeheartedly.

When it comes to decisions you've got to own it – so you feel responsible to 'deliver the goods'.

One of the main things I've learned is about the work volunteers do – how passionate they are about it, and how much they enjoy it and what they get out of it. It's been quite an eye-opener.

One of the most common reflections was that working in a community organisation had given them opportunities to do things they would not otherwise had been able to, and in so doing had allowed them to build skills and confidence. One intern, who had been unexpectedly left in charge of a community centre after a staff member left suddenly, realised this through the experience:

Although I know I still have shortfalls . . . . I have realised I want to be decision-maker. Having been put in the position of 'director' I have learned how the decision-making processes work and understand better why people make the decisions that they do.

Another spoke of the opportunities the internship had offered him in this way:

The counselling work is nothing new, but the other work, such as project development, running a community organisation and networking has given me many opportunities to learn new skills and acquire new knowledge.

Another learning for some interns was opportunity to put theoretical knowledge into practice as these two comments show:

(I've learned). . How to pull my head in. Getting everything I know down properly by learning off my mistakes. Before, I knew all the theory but now I know it doesn't necessarily apply in the real world.

I've learned different communication, management and reporting skills. It's given me my first opportunity to put theoretical knowledge into practice. It's been a steep learning curve.

Host organisations also readily identified the benefits the interns gained from the internships. Most commonly mentioned were: a new or enhanced perspective on the community sector and issues faced by community organisations; new or increased skills likely to improve future job prospects; and improved relationships and networks with community organisations.

7.2 Skills and knowledge interns used, extended or shared

THE INTERNS

Three-quarters of the interns said that the internship had not only used their existing skills but also extended their skill set. Many of the skills that interns said they had acquired were to do with having to be take more responsibility f or the whole of the project they were involved in, whereas previously they may have been using more specific skills. Here are two examples of comments to this effect:

> *Before I came to the organisation I had good facilitation skills but had only last year studied learning needs analysis, evaluation, and programme writing and developing. The internship has meant I've had to do all those things – put the theory into practice.*

> *Although I had previously worked on action plans, I'd never had to develop one from scratch by myself – and that was a big undertaking.*

Some interns thought that they increased their skills in different ways of working:

> (The work I'm doing) *has extended my skills and knowledge by teaching me the political side – how organisations work and how they network. It's opened up a whole new world – from one of simple finances to a whole new career.*

> *It's demanding, and it takes a lot of imagination. Instead of the organisation saying what it wants and me doing the job and handing it back to them and having them say 'no', they work together, it's a brilliant way to work and much quicker too.*

Five interns said that the internship had not, at the time of the evaluation, extended their skills or knowledge.

Five interns said that they had shared knowledge or skills with other staff in a formalised way through running staff training sessions or in one-to-one skill development with staff. A further nine interns said that they had passed on skills or knowledge in an informal way within the host organisation. The others had not, or not yet, had the opportunity to do this.

THE HOSTS

Host organisations identified a number of skills that interns had gained. Many of these related to the range of experiences that the intern had had within often small organisations. Other benefits to the interns identified by organisations included exposure to the culture of the community sector and the establishment of community networks.

7.3 What interns most valued

When asked what they had valued most about the experience to date, four dimensions of the internship were most commonly mentioned. They were:

- the opportunity to be part of something worthwhile
- the supportive working environment
- the opportunity to really make a difference to a small organisation
- a broadened perspective.

THE INTERNS

Interns' comments below illustrate each of these points. These are from two people who most valued being able to contribute to a worthwhile initiative:

> *The organisation is sincere and determined to make a difference in the community, and I'm trying to make a difference in the organisation.*

> *Feeling part of a project, sharing people's visions and hopes.*

These interns most valued the supportive working environment they found themselves in:

> ****** has a relaxed management style and I have felt absolutely supported. There is also a feeling that my family is also valued and the organisation is concerned about my personal welfare.*

> *Having come from an organisation in which the culture had changed for the worse I have valued the supportive environment prevailing in ******.*

The opportunity to really make a difference to a small organisation was the thing most valued by these interns:

> *The main thing I have valued is sharing my experience with people who really need my help and seeing that they have learned something from the lessons.*

> *The opportunity to contribute something valuable by doing work that needed to be done but wouldn't otherwise be done as fast or thoroughly because of the limited resources of the organisation.*

A broadened perspective was the greatest benefit these interns identified:

> *My work was previously confined to South Auckland and I imagined the greatest need existed there, but during the internship I have seen how widespread the need is and it's expanded the scope of my work and broadened my perspective.*

> *I have valued the change and the opportunity it has given me to see things from the other side. I've learned the value of money for a community organisation and ways in which I can do a better job for my clients once I return to ******.*

7.4 Interns' perceptions of the community sector and the host organisation

A third of the interns thought that they already were quite familiar with the community sector and that the internship had not contributed much more to what they already knew. The rest could identify things they had learned about the sector through their internships. One of the more common realisations was how little money community organisations have to achieve their objectives. Here is one intern's comment:

> *So far the experience has reinforced how problematic funding is for community organisations. I had forgotten how much of a noose around their neck it is.*

Another observation that was new to a couple of interns was that one of the defining aspects of community organisations is the way they work together. Here is a comment about that:

> *Before I had the perception that you had a contract and you did the work, but now I realise that there's a lot of work in building links with the community and working with other service providers.*

One intern said that previously she had thought community organisations were focused largely on helping people who had problems, but that she now realised there was much more of a focus on trying to prevent those problems in the first place. Another had thought that the staff of a community organisation might be 'slack' and was surprised to find how hard working and committed they were.

Interns were asked what they perceived to be the values of the host organisation and what, if any, adjustments they had had to make to fit into the host organisation's culture. Apart from two people who thought the organisations they were in were still at a stage of developing their culture, and one person who felt she had not been in her organisation long enough to have a sense of the culture; almost all the interns described the culture of their organisations in very positive terms. The most common observations were about the supportive working environment, the commitment to social justice, and the client focus.

Virtually all the interns had found no difficulty in fitting into the organisation. Several of them reflected on the good match that was made between them and the host organisation which made fitting in easier.

7.5   Long-term benefits

Almost all the interns agreed that the internship had added to their future prospects.

The long-term benefits that several interns identified included an increase in their confidence which would be an asset in the future, the acquisition of new skills and perspectives, and the development of relationships and networks that will enhance their future prospects.

Three said that their internship had opened them to the possibility of working in the community sector in the future, and one that she intended to refocus post-graduate study to include some community development papers.

7.6   Unanticipated outcomes for interns

Interns identified a range of unexpected outcomes from their internships. One person who had come from an accounting background was surprised by the degree of people contact she had, how it developed her communication skills and how she felt had gained confidence in talking to new people. Two interns had faced unexpected changes in the host organisation which had led to their role being different from that initially envisaged. One intern commented that he had learned to be more patient, which was an unexpected outcome, and another had been surprised by how much he enjoyed his internship.

For others, their internships had developed in line with their expectations, or their expectations had been that the internship would unfold, and so they had not been surprised by anything that had happened.

8.0   Value of the internship to the home organisations

Only two interns came from home organisations in the sense that they planned to return to where they had worked before the internship.

Interviews with the two home organisations revealed that the benefits they anticipated lay in the enhanced skills their employee would bring back to the organisation, personal development for the staff member, and increased networks and partnership opportunities within the community sector.

Home organisations reinforced that much of the value to them lies in what the intern brings back with him or her, and therefore the home organisation has a strong interest in ensuring that the intern is placed in an organisation that has relevance to their work.

The two interns who had come from home organisations thought that those organisations would benefit from the Programme. One had worked in a host organisation doing work directly related to that or her home organisation and thought that the internship would improve the liaison between the two bodies. The other thought that his home organisation would benefit from the contacts he'd made during his internship.

On a personal level, one of these interns returning to a home organisation thought she might have difficulty fitting back in to her home organisation since she had experienced a more relaxed working environment. The other said the break had been invigorating and he was enthusiastic about returning to his previous job.

Conclusion

9.1   Evaluation of the Programme against objectives

EXPLICIT OBJECTIVES

The Community Internship Programme had several objectives. Primarily, it was designed to bring additional skills and experience into community organisations at no extra cost to the organisation, as well as to expose individuals and organisations in the public and private sectors to the perspectives and values of the community sector. In assessing how well it has met these objectives it is important to remember that this evaluation has been conducted while many of the internships are still underway.

There is no doubt that the Programme brought valuable skills and experience into community organisations. Virtually without exception the hosts said that the skills of the interns had met, or in many cases exceeded, their expectations, and that the interns had used those skills to strengthen organisational capacity during the internship. The hosts valued the fresh perspectives that interns brought with them and their willingness to adapt to organisations where there are few staff who are often required to undertake disparate range of responsibilities.

Interns benefited from the Programme in a range of ways. Most felt they had been able to fully utilise or even extend their skills; they reported having learned a lot about the reality of life for organisations in the community sector, in particular the limited resources available to undertake the work; and, they were impressed by the obvious commitment that groups and individuals had to the objectives of their organisations. The interns were struck by the strength of community networks and how they were used to increase the capacity of organisations to do their work. Several interns reflected that what they had learned during their internship had affected decisions about their future.

The third beneficiary of the Programme that was envisaged was the home organisation, that is the public or private sector employer of the intern to which that person would return after the internship was complete. The reality was that only two of the interns in this first round of the Programme came from organisations to which they intended to return. For this reason the Programme had only limited success in conveying knowledge and experience of the community back into public or private sector organisations. Interestingly, although only two interns came directly from home organisations the majority of the others came to the internship with a long and varied work history. Although a few had worked in the community sector previously, several had not and it was clear from them that what they learned about the community sector during the internship was going to be something they carried with them into their future endeavours. It could be argued therefore that while there was not a direct transmission of the learning from the internship back into home organisations, the benefits will be carried with the interns into whatever they do in the future.

IMPLICIT OBJECTIVES

As well at the explicit objectives stated in the Programme literature, the Community Internship Programme had a number of implicit objectives. The first of these, to enhance cross-sectoral relationships and understanding, could only be achieved to a limited degree because of the way in which interns were recruited for this first round of the Programme. The Programme did allow 20 individuals to participate in the community sector, and to increase understanding of the issues and challenges of the sector.

Another implicit objective of the Programme was to enhance relationships between organisations within the community sector. Both organisations and individuals interviewed for this evaluation rated networking amongst community organisations as being a common achievement of the internships. This involved both the interns further developing relationships or networks that the organisation already had, or, giving the community organisation access to new networks by virtue of their own previous experiences and contacts.

The intention of the Programme was that the internship should not simply be something that was 'clipped on' to a community organisation to be removed without leaving a trace at the end of the internship period. It was envisaged as something that could really add value to the substance, core or heart of an organisation, As well as having a project focus there was a hope that the internship would leave a more indelible mark on the host organisation. Most of the internships being evaluated by this report had not finished at the time the report was written, making it very hard to assess how durable their impact will be.

Other objectives were that the Programme should respect the values of the community organisations, and that preference should be given to community organisations which work towards the empowerment of individuals or communities. This evaluation has shown that host organisations felt interns fitted well into the values of the organisation, and interns reported that they had been impressed by the commitment and hard work that they found in community organisations. There were no indications that interns, despite in many cases being both skilled and experienced in other fields, came into community organisations with a critical or judgemental approach. In this sense, the Programme in operation clearly respected the values of the community sector. The evaluation also shows that a commitment to empowerment was one of the key concepts found in the philosophical statements of many host organisations.

A final objective, that the Programme should contain the opportunity for at least one meeting of interns and possibly of host organisations was not met, and in fact, had not been part of the design of the Community Internship Programme.

9.2   Implementation issues and unexpected outcomes

As well being an evaluation against the objectives of the Community Internship Programme, this evaluation also explored Programme implementation and unexpected impacts.

PROGRAMME PUBLICITY

The Programme was widely advertised but many of those who were interested in applying felt that it was more by chance than design that they had heard about it. There was also some confusion, particularly among unsuccessful applicants about the criteria for acceptance. These findings have implications for how the Programme is advertised and explained in the future.

MATCHING OF INTERNS TO ORGANISATIONS

Host organisations and interns spoke highly of the matching process and there was a high degree of satisfaction with the match between the interns' skills and attributes and the host organisations' needs. There were only two home organisations in this evaluation and it is clear from their comments, and the comments of some of the unsuccessful applicants, that the needs of home organisations must also be considered

when matching interns to organisations. Releasing an employee for an internship is not an insignificant cost to a home organisation and the benefit to the organisation lies in what the intern brings back with them. For this reason the home organisation has a strong stake in the match of intern to host organisation.

UNANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

Host organisations described some unanticipated outcomes of the internship. The most common was that the work the intern was doing had alerted the organisation to a range of possibilities for further development. Some were surprised at the interns' willingness to become fully involved and contribute to the organisations in ways that were above and beyond what they had agreed to do when taking on the internship. Other unanticipated outcomes included opening the organisation to the possibility of taking on other temporary staff members in different capacities. Each of these can be taken as further evidence that the internship contributed to the strengthening of organisational capacity.

9.3   Recent developments

The Community Internship Programme has been offered again in 2002. However, the selection process for the 2002 funding round has changed from that used in 2001. Rather than all applications from prospective interns and prospective host community organisations being sent to the national decision-making panel, host organisations were asked to first submit a brief expression of interest to regional offices of the Community Development Group, using a standard application form. This was implemented to avoid a large number of organisations going to the effort required for an application given that there were only 20 internships available. Interns were also asked to submit their applications to the regional offices.

Where there are more than a few expressions of interest received from community organisations by any one office, a local decision-making panel including community representatives is convened to select one or two of them from which a more detailed application was requested.

Successful applicants – host organisations and interns – will be assisted to find suitable matches if they are not available from the applications received. This involves active marketing within the regions concerned in order to identify a suitable host organisation that could use the skills of an unmatched intern, or a suitably skilled intern for an unmatched host organisation. The aim is that all applications sent to the national decision panel would be pre-matched with interns that had come from the public, private or community sectors and who intended to return to their positions after the internships.

The promotional strategy involved more explicit advertising about the requirement that interns came from these sectors and intended to return to their positions after their internships, and was able to be more targeted because of the pre-selection process at regional level.

However, at the time of writing, the selection of new internships from the 2002 funding round has not yet taken place.

It is envisaged that this new process will lead to most or all of the interns being derived from government, private or community sector organisations to which they will return after their internships. This will facilitate a key purpose of the Programme – the cross fertilisation of ideas and experience.