



Dublin City Interfaith Forum

Strategy 2018 – 2021



Background

The Dublin City Interfaith Forum (DCIF) is a network of people from a wide variety of faith communities in the city. It seeks to raise awareness of the diversity of faith and culture through deep interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

The aims of DCIF are to:

- Support and strengthen the contribution made by all faith communities in Dublin;
- Educate and encourage people of different faiths to engage in dialogue, reflect and work together on matters of policy, strategy and action;
- Promote and support the participation of third country nationals in the civic, community and public life of the city;
- Contribute to a fully integrated city; and
- Challenge all forms of injustice and discrimination.

Mission

To build understanding, respect and cooperation between different religious denominations and faith groups in our local community, our nation and the world.



Vision

We envisage a society based on mutual respect, cooperation and understanding driven by progressive pluralism and unity, diverse and vibrant, throughout Ireland and the World.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of DCIF recognizes that although participants come from individual faith groups they coalesce around a common identity of humanity and the common principles in our respective faiths. These principles are:

Service: Our primary focus within our respective faiths is service to others. Outreach and public awareness alongside education can increase the number of services provided over time and improve the wellbeing of individuals, congregations and the broader community.

Interfaith: We are enriched through the diversity of our volunteers and recipients' beliefs. While our primary focus is providing services, our shared activities facilitate appreciation and understanding of differing faiths.

Volunteers: Volunteers are the heart of our forum; they help people from varying backgrounds and traditions work together.

Collaboration: Fostering community collaborations and partnerships in support of those we serve while taking care to remain focused on our core services. We will provide opportunities for the community at large to offer financial and in-kind support and expertise to help fulfil our mission.

Integrity: We promote excellence within the organization at all levels and are prudent, transparent and accountable in our use of funds. We plan to create a stable and diverse funding base that supports our core programmes. DCIF does not take positions on political, social or religious issues. We do not support political candidates but endorse all activities that service the wellbeing of people.

Pillars of DCIF's Strategic Plan 2018–2021

Following consultation with members of the forum and discussions with people in various support environments in Dublin the following strategic plan is being created. The overall plan is divided into individual “pillars” or work plans to address specific areas. Each work plan will be developed in full once the relevant responsible individuals have been identified.

Pillar 1: Engagement

Context:

The work of DCIF provides new ways for people of diverse faiths to work together, respecting each other and preventing societal polarisation or hostility by creating positive interactions between the communities. To achieve this, however, DCIF must ensure it does not become homogenous or a silo devoid of connection to the communities that are the lifeblood of our respective faiths. We recognize that faith groups have a wide variety of organizational structures and that there is a need to work within these structures.





Actions:

- 1 Continuing with DCIF events that raise awareness of our activities and principles, and using these events to change the direction of public conversation. Creation of an annual programme of activities with joint co-operation where necessary;
- 2 Creating guidelines showing how we will activate projects including the development of a code of conduct;
- 3 Finding pockets of faith communities who are prepared to work together on specific grassroots projects of community interest to bring tangible outcomes to those communities. These projects might include providing support for the elderly and for children, etc.
- 4 Sponsor initiatives which will engage primary school children in diversity based activities;
- 5 Sponsor annual secondary school projects on diversity and engagement in religious discourse;
- 6 Reaching out to other organizations with similar aims to ensure that they understand our mission and goals and that our activities are planned to support and enhance their activities and vice versa. This should be done by mapping these organizations and their overlap with the activities of DCIF, and by agreeing mutual lines of support and communication. This will ensure there is a unified approach which will increase harmonization with other groups in Dublin by helping to prevent the duplication of activities and initiatives.

Pillar 2: Communications

Context:

To date DCIF has been governed by a level of informality and friendship that has provided a cohesive bond between members. In this way the organization was protected and supported by personality and passion rather than by a simple policy driven ethos. However, at all times DCIF must be able to maintain, broaden and communicate its ethos to the wider community, creating a safe space of shared values for everyone. This will require a communication approach that not only maintains our core strengths, but increases public awareness, enhances visibility and projects the ethos of DCIF to the wider community, and by action changes the public discourse concerning diversity and religion.

Actions:

- 1 Regenerate and renew DCIF's website to provide more details to the broader community about DCIF, our initiatives, newsletters, social media and content which will help change the public discourse on religion, diversity and the common purpose of religion;
- 2 Create a track record of the successes of DCIF and use this to publicize success on the website and through the media. Use quoted references where possible in all communications to demonstrate our impact at a local and personal level;
- 3 Create a plan that covers proactive communications to identified media about events, initiatives and thought processes which will encourage engagement in a broader way. This media plan must cover issues such as the relevance of religion, outreach to the community and how linking with disparate groups can help to create a new discourse in society;
- 4 Each participant community will create a plan showing how it can engage with and communicate our work and vision to its own members, and how DCIF can engage with the wider faith communities individually;
- 5 Sponsor initiatives which will engage primary school children in diversity based activities;
- 6 Sponsor annual secondary school projects on diversity and engagement in religious discourse;
- 7 Engage the services of a PR agency (pro bono) to support on an annual basis the activities and initiatives of DCIF.



Pillars of DCIF's Strategic Plan 2018–2021 (Continued)



Pillar 3: Resources

Context:

As with all volunteer organizations, there remains the question of resourcing and ambition, and the commitment of people to DCIF to achieve and provide capacity for our activities. There still remains a time commitment challenge alongside the need to maintain progress and not fall short of any expectations which the engaged communities may already have.

Actions:

- 1 Create a resourcing plan and develop an operational budget for each work plan representing a realistic view of the resourcing needed;
- 2 Develop an individual plan with each faith community on resources which can be brought to bear to help expand the capacity of DCIF, and enhance the resources towards collective initiatives;
- 3 Develop specific initiatives with each faith community to garner support in the community for the work of DCIF ensuring a broader level of grassroots involvement, and providing an umbrella service to all who propose common initiatives;
- 4 Support local based initiatives with practical help on an individual basis;
- 5 Hold specific one-on-one annual engagements with each of the faith groups represented on the forum to address any fears or challenges they may have about the work or activities of DCIF.

Pillar 4: Public Stakeholders

Context:

The diversity of representation on DCIF and the culture of the organization means that it has the respect and support of many public bodies. This diversity is a core strength and it also means that ideas, inputs and thoughts from public stakeholders can play an essential role since they inform the thinking from different backgrounds. The support of DCIF relates directly to public stakeholders and their engagement with the forum including Local Government, an Garda Síochána, the HSE, Dublin City Council, etc. Their engagement adds credibility to DCIF—it is essential and must be maintained.

Actions:

- 1 Create a key stakeholder map of core Government, Local Government and service providers that DCIF should engage with;
- 2 Seek to engage regularly with each of these stakeholders in electronic and personal ways;
- 3 Agree specific topics on an annual basis to which DCIF will bring a diverse viewpoint, and support the development of white papers to assist public stakeholders in drafting public policy initiatives.



Pillars of DCIF's Strategic Plan 2018–2021 (Continued)

Pillar 5: Funding

Context:

Funding is the lifeblood of DCIF and it is essential that it is maintained whilst not allowing its sources to influence or negate the principles or intent of the organization. Funding is required on an annual basis and there is a need to secure a broader base of financial assistance to ensure that sufficient funds can be found to support the programme into the future.

Actions:

- 1 Identify funding requirements based on a resources plan and budget;
- 2 Identify available sources of annual and distinct funding;
- 3 Create an MoU structure for funders outside the government arena so that pro bono or funded support does not impact or alter the ethos or engagement of DCIF;
- 4 Develop a due diligence process which supports the engagement of any funding organization but does not present a risk to DCIF's reputation or operation.







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