Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais, Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta
Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

the wheel
Stronger Charities.
Stronger Communities.

Carmichael.

Risk Management Support

Effective risk management is a fundamental component of good governance, organisational resilience and long-term sustainability. However, many charities, community organisations, voluntary groups and social enterprises struggle to implement practical risk management systems that are proportionate to their size, resources and activities.

Risk management continues to be identified as one of the most common areas of non-compliance with the Charities Governance Code. While many organisations recognise the importance of managing risk, they often lack the knowledge, confidence, tools and governance structures required to embed risk management into decision-making, strategic planning and organisational oversight.

Many organisations have developed risk registers, but these are often treated as compliance documents rather than active management tools. As a result, boards and management teams may not have effective oversight of emerging risks, mitigation actions or organisational vulnerabilities.

This programme is designed to provide practical, hands-on support to participating organisations, enabling them to move beyond compliance-driven approaches and establish sustainable risk management practices that strengthen governance, improve decision-making and enhance organisational resilience.

The programme combines facilitated learning, governance review, practical workshops and tailored consultancy support to build internal capacity and leave participating organisations with the tools, systems and confidence required to manage risk effectively into the future.

Programme Objectives

The programme aims to:

- Strengthen governance and board oversight of risk.
- Improve compliance with the Charities Governance Code.
- Increase organisational understanding of risk management principles and practices.
- Support organisations to identify and manage strategic, operational, financial and compliance risks.
- Develop practical and proportionate risk management frameworks.
- Strengthen organisational resilience and preparedness.
- Improve decision-making through effective risk assessment and monitoring.
- Build internal capacity and confidence in managing risk.
- Create sustainable risk management processes that can be maintained beyond the programme.
- Support organisations to embed a culture of proactive risk awareness.

Alignment with the Charities Governance Code

The programme will support organisations in strengthening compliance with the Charities Governance Code, particularly in relation to:

- Principle 4 – Working Effectively.
- Principle 5 – Behaving with Integrity.
- Principle 6 – Being Accountable and Transparent.

Effective risk management supports trustees and senior leaders to make informed decisions, allocate resources appropriately, safeguard services and demonstrate good governance practices.

Target audience

The programme is aimed at:

- Registered charities.
- Community and voluntary organisations.
- Social enterprises operating in the Republic of Ireland.

Priority will be given to organisations:

- With an annual turnover of less than €750,000.
- Seeking to strengthen governance arrangements.
- Experiencing organisational growth, change or service expansion.
- Developing strategic plans.
- Seeking to improve compliance with the Charities Governance Code.
- Managing increasing regulatory or funding requirements.

Each organisation should nominate two to three participants, including trustees, directors, senior managers or staff with responsibility for governance, risk management or organisational development.

Format

Each participating organisation will receive ten hours of tailored support delivered over approximately three months.

Phase 1 – Governance and Risk Review (2 Hours)

- Review of existing governance arrangements.
- Review of current risk management practices.
- Assessment of organisational strengths and challenges.
- Identification of governance and risk management gaps.
- Baseline organisational risk maturity assessment.

Phase 2 – Risk Management Workshop (2 Hours)

Interactive workshop covering:

- Understanding organisational risk.
- Why risk management matters.
- Roles and responsibilities of boards and management.
- Strategic, operational, financial and compliance risks.
- Risk assessment methodologies.
- Risk appetite and risk tolerance.
- Integrating risk management into governance and planning.

Phase 3 – Development of Risk Management Framework (3 Hours)

Facilitated support to:

- Identify organisational risks.
- Develop or enhance a risk register.

- Assess risk likelihood and impact.
- Establish risk scoring methodologies.
- Identify controls and mitigation measures.
- Allocate ownership and accountability.
- Establish monitoring and review processes.

Phase 4 – Embedding Risk Management (2 Hours)

Support to:

- Integrate risk management into strategic planning.
- Develop board reporting mechanisms.
- Establish risk review arrangements.
- Strengthen oversight and accountability.
- Embed risk management into organisational decision-making.

Phase 5 – Final Review and Action Planning (1 Hour)

- Review progress achieved.
- Conduct post-programme risk maturity assessment.
- Identify priority actions.
- Develop an implementation roadmap.
- Agree future governance and organisational development priorities.

Contemporary Risk Management Focus

The programme will address both traditional and emerging risks facing charities and community organisations, including:

- Strategic and governance risks.
- Financial sustainability and funding risks.
- Operational and service delivery risks.
- Safeguarding and duty of care risks.
- Health and safety risks.
- Human resources and workforce risks.
- Volunteer management risks.
- Data protection and GDPR compliance risks.
- Cyber security and ransomware risks.
- Technology and third-party supplier risks.
- Reputational and communications risks.
- Business continuity and crisis management risks.
- Succession planning and organisational change risks.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the programme participants will be able to:

- Understand the principles of effective risk management.
- Understand the role of boards and management in risk oversight.
- Identify strategic, operational, financial, compliance and reputational risks.
- Apply practical risk assessment techniques.
- Develop and maintain a risk register.
- Establish clear risk ownership and accountability.
- Monitor and review risks effectively.
- Report risks to boards and committees.
- Integrate risk management into organisational planning and decision-making.
- Strengthen compliance with the Charities Governance Code.

- Improve organisational resilience and sustainability.
- Foster a culture of proactive risk awareness within their organisation.

Programme Deliverables

Each participating organisation will receive:

- Governance and risk management review.
- Risk maturity assessment.
- Tailored risk management framework.
- Organisation-specific risk register.
- Risk assessment methodology and scoring matrix.
- Risk action plan.
- Board risk reporting template.
- Board Risk Dashboard.
- Risk appetite statement template.
- Annual risk review checklist.
- Guidance on ongoing monitoring and review processes.
- Practical resources and templates to support implementation.

Organisational Risk Management Toolkit

Each participating organisation will receive a practical toolkit containing:

- Risk Management Framework Template.
- Risk Register Template.
- Risk Assessment Matrix.
- Risk Appetite Statement Template.
- Board Risk Dashboard Template.
- Annual Risk Review Checklist.
- Risk Reporting Template.
- Incident Escalation Template.
- Governance and Risk Management Guidance Notes.

These resources will enable organisations to maintain and develop their risk management processes long after the programme has concluded.

Board Risk Oversight

A key element of the programme is strengthening board oversight of risk.

Participating organisations will be supported to develop meaningful risk reporting arrangements that enable trustees and directors to:

- Monitor strategic and operational risks.
- Review emerging risks.
- Track mitigation actions.
- Support informed decision-making.
- Strengthen accountability.
- Demonstrate effective governance and stewardship.

The programme seeks to move organisations from maintaining risk registers as compliance documents to actively using risk information to support governance and organisational decision-making.

Sustainability and Legacy

The programme is designed to create lasting organisational benefit by embedding risk management into governance structures, planning processes and day-to-day operations.

Rather than focusing solely on the production of a risk register, the programme seeks to build a risk-aware culture where boards, management and staff understand their responsibilities and are equipped to identify, assess and respond to risk effectively.

By the conclusion of the programme, participating organisations will have practical tools, enhanced knowledge and strengthened governance arrangements that will support organisational resilience and sustainability long into the future.

Expected Outcomes

Participating organisations will:

- Have greater confidence in managing organisational risks.
- Demonstrate improved governance practices.
- Strengthen board oversight and accountability.
- Improve compliance with governance and regulatory requirements.
- Develop a more proactive approach to risk management.
- Improve organisational resilience and preparedness.
- Be better positioned to respond to growth, change and emerging challenges.
- Improve protection of organisational assets, reputation and services.
- Increase confidence amongst trustees, directors and senior managers in managing risk effectively.