

Employers and organisations can use *Towards Standards* to:

- Identify and clearly describe the skills and knowledge needed from their employees.
- Design a training needs analysis to identify skills/knowledge gaps within the organisation and with staff.
- Develop recruitment & training plans to fill skills gaps and shortages by creating specific posts or areas of responsibility.
- Set job descriptions and person specifications in advance of advertising vacant posts drawing from the areas of responsibility set out.
- Design interview questions and agree indicative responses in advance of job interviews.
- Set and agree objectives for work plans with individual staff and use this as basis for supervision and appraisal.
- Use *Towards Standards* to develop an induction policy and identify the areas that induction needs to focus on.
- Use as the basis for identifying skills strengths within the organisation and assist with developing buddy/mentoring schemes to support others within the organisation in their own development.
- Use the values to establish a stakeholder relations policy ensuring the whole organisation works in ways that are respectful of individuals, groups and communities and meet identified needs.
- Benchmark against good practice to highlight areas for improvement.
- Support applications for funding or for quality standards awards based on national comparison and a measure against nationally recognised standards.

Education/Training Providers can use *Towards Standards* to:

- Set learning outcomes aligned to the nationally recognised standards for the sector.
- Match their existing courses to *Towards Standards* to meet the needs of the sector and promote the employability of students.
- Identify gaps in provision, and design new modules/units/courses to meet these needs.
- Highlight learning materials that are out of date and need updating/replacing.
- Design/develop new learning programmes to take account of the necessary skills and knowledge in a practice context.
- Design more practice focused forms of assessment and use the values and principles to support peer group and individual self-assessment.
- Set criteria for monitoring and evaluating training.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

More information and a full copy of *Towards Standards for Quality Community Work – An All-Ireland Statement of Values, Principles and Work Standards* contact:

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TOWARDS STANDARDS — FOR — QUALITY COMMUNITY WORK

AN ALL IRELAND STATEMENT OF VALUES, PRINCIPLES
AND WORK STANDARDS

HOW TO USE *TOWARDS STANDARDS*

INTRODUCTION

Towards Standards for Quality Community Work sets out the knowledge, skills, qualities, values and practice principles that combine to form standards relating to community work practice, and to education and training for that practice.

The aim is to provide a reference framework for all community work stakeholders to ensure best practice.

This implementation document gives practical examples of how community work stakeholders can use *Towards Standards* at all levels of their work.

Towards Standards can be used:

- Where a person is employed as a community worker.
- Where community work is undertaken on an unpaid/voluntary basis.
- Where community work approaches are being used in specific areas of work such as local development, estate management, community health or community adult education initiatives.

Community work stakeholders include:

Communities
Community Workers (paid & unpaid)
Employers
Funders
Education & training providers

WAYS IN WHICH TO USE *TOWARDS STANDARDS*

Professional Development

Practitioners can use *Towards Standards* to support their own professional development. For example:

- Use practice principles to develop work plans and draw up SMART targets for each objective.
 - Assess your skills and knowledge against those in *Towards Standards* and identify those that need improvement.
 - Identify previously acquired skills, knowledge and experience which could be used for gaining accreditation for prior experience and learning.
 - Develop a portfolio with evidence of skills, knowledge and experience to take to prospective employers/interviews.
 - Reflect on personal practice in relation to the practice principles and with peers in peer group sessions.
 - Identify areas for professional and career development by looking at the skills, knowledge and experience required for more senior posts and negotiating new areas of responsibility to gain these.
- Example:** Using *Towards Standards* to design a knowledge and skills audit questionnaire for workers within a workers forum/network. You could approach it as follows:
- Frame a question around each of the core areas within the knowledge and skills boxes, e.g. how would you rate your understanding of the principles and processes of community work?
 - Give workers the option to grade themselves, e.g. High, Medium or Low.
 - Looking at the results, assess the skills and knowledge areas where gaps have been identified.
 - Discuss common areas that workers would like to develop.
 - Identify appropriate ways to meet the knowledge/skills gaps through the forum e.g. group training/guest speakers/peer shadowing/research etc.
 - Draw up and implement a development programme for the members of the forum.

Funders and Policy makers can use *Towards Standards* to:

- Inform the design of new programmes and the development of existing programmes.
- Commission research into community issues focusing on the values and principles as the basis for development.
- Identify priority areas for new strategies and programmes.
- Develop outcomes for national strategies and programmes.
- Assess applications against criteria based on *Towards Standards*.
- Benchmark against international good practice to raise the quality of practice nationally.
- Monitor and evaluate against set outcomes across programmes.

Funders & Policy Makers

Groups and Communities

Practitioners can also use *Towards Standards* to help them in their own work with groups and communities. For example:

- Design a questionnaire to assist groups to collectively assess their effectiveness and competency.
- Support groups to use *Towards Standards* as the basis for forming new partnerships and alliances – determine membership, develop joint working agreements, terms of reference etc.
- Adopt the knowledge, skills and qualities to support groups through recruitment and selection processes, short-listing, interviewing etc.
- Use the practice principles as the basis for identifying community needs by designing an audit and preparing the case for funding applications.
- Draw from the practice principles to help groups develop their own strategies and plans, identify actions and set goals/targets which can also be used for monitoring and evaluation.
- Facilitate a review process with groups to reflect on the achievements of the past year for an Annual Report.
- Develop a set of case studies of local best practice highlighting how groups are putting the values into practice.
- Use the skills, knowledge and qualities to inform mentoring programmes.
- Use the practice principles to formulate questions for public meetings.
- ‘Proof’ policies against the values and practice principles when making policy responses/submissions.
- Frame conferences and networking events around the values.

Example: Using *Towards Standards* to design a mentoring support programme.

Begin by identifying the main tasks and activities that form part of the work role.

Together, match these to the skills areas and knowledge areas set out in *Towards Standards*. Jointly agree one or two key areas to focus on in each mentoring session.

At each session jointly consider the following points:

- Identify situations where a skills/knowledge area has been drawn upon.
- What was the learning that can be identified?
- What did they do well? This should be celebrated and documented as it could be used for case studies or preparing a portfolio for APL, their CV etc.
- What could have been improved?
- If any difficulties were expressed try to identify why? Are there any knowledge or skills gaps?
- Both try to identify what you consider to be good practice used by others?
- Identify and agree actions and timescales to address the issues/gaps discussed.
- At the next session, allocate some time to reviewing the learning in relation to the areas identified at the previous session and move on to explore one or two new areas, using the same process.

Note: You could use a similar process to this to work with a group to review their activities over the previous year to help them produce their annual report.

