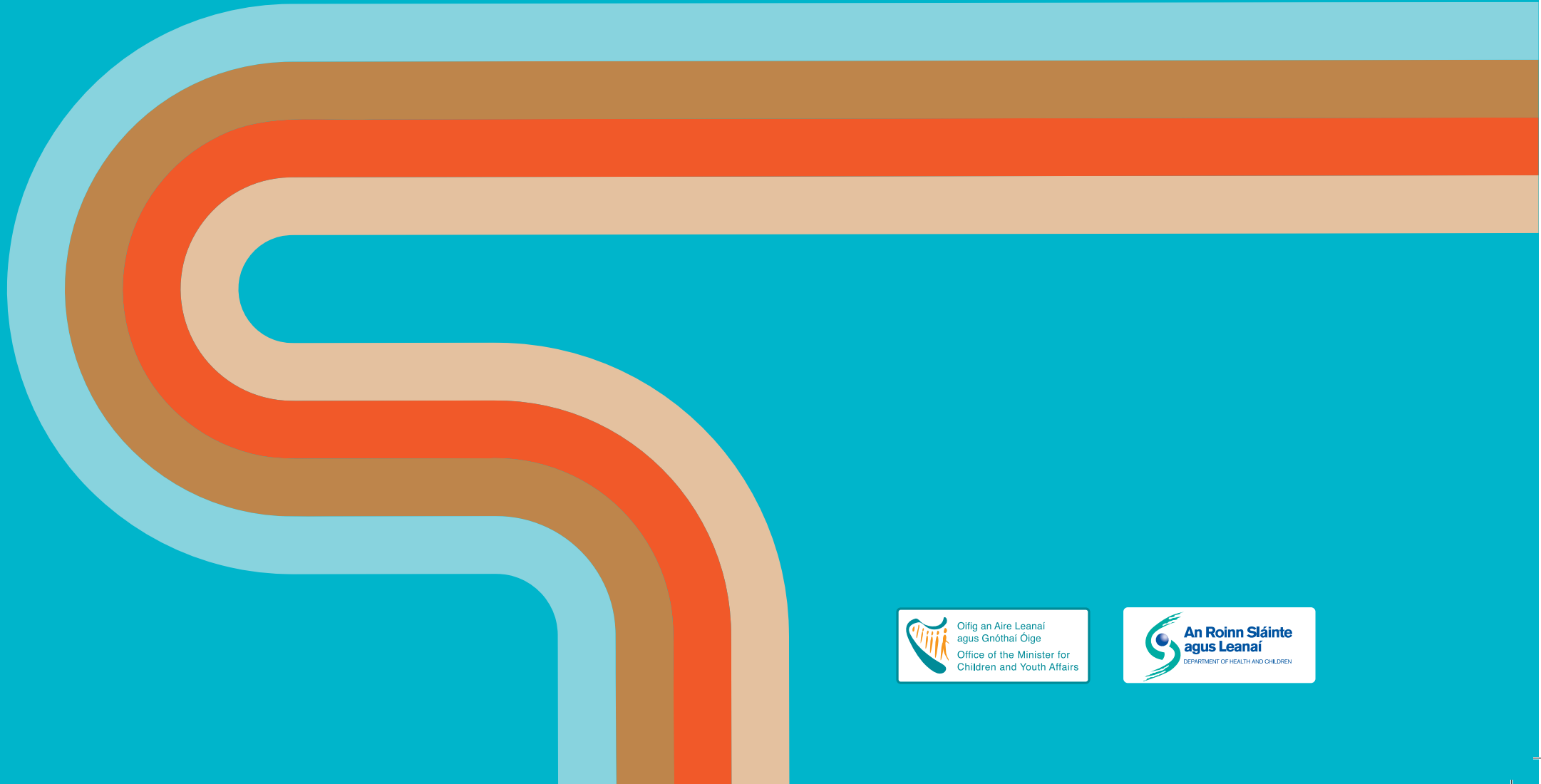
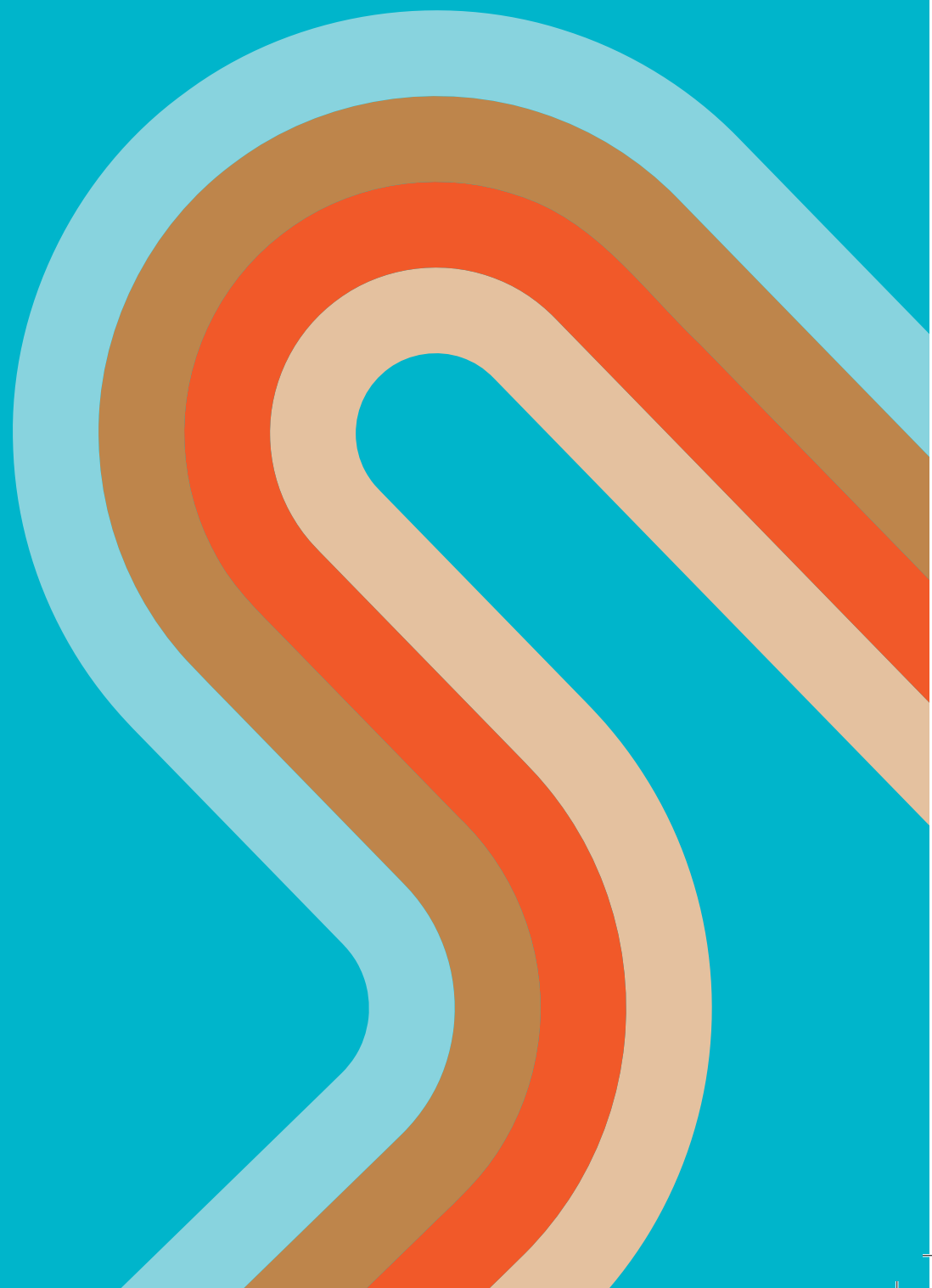




# National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for Youth Work







# National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for Youth Work

JULY 2010

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Copyright © Minister for Health and Children, 2010

Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs  
Department of Health and Children  
Hawkins House  
Hawkins Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: +353 (0)1 635 4000  
Fax: +353 (0)1 674 3223  
E-mail: [omc@health.gov.ie](mailto:omc@health.gov.ie)  
Web: [www.omcya.ie](http://www.omcya.ie)

Published by Government Publications, Dublin

ISBN 9-781406-425161

*All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission in writing of the copyright holder.*

For rights of translation or reproduction, applications should be made to the Head of Communications, Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2, Ireland.

# Contents

<b>Minister's Foreword</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>PART 1: Introducing the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF)</b>	
Background	1
Rationale for the NQSF for youth work	2
Values and core principles underpinning the NQSF	3
Criteria for engaging in the NQSF	3
<b>PART 2: The NQSF Process</b>	
Overview	5
Timeline for the NQSF	7
Step-by-step process of the NQSF	
<b>Step 1:</b> Meet with VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer and establish a NQSF Implementation Team	9
<b>Step 2:</b> Complete the Statement of Youth Work Practice	10
<b>Step 3:</b> Examine the 5 Core Principles – Identify outcomes	10
<b>Step 4:</b> Consider the 10 Standards – Select position on the scale of attainment	11
Scale of attainment	12
Falling between different points on the scale of attainment	12
<b>Step 5:</b> Engage in the external assessment process	13
Documentary evidence	13
Observations on practice	13
Focus groups with stakeholders	13
<b>Step 6:</b> Complete the Continuous Improvement Plan	14
<b>Step 7:</b> Complete NQSF Progress Report	14
<b>Steps 8 and 9:</b> Continue to update and progress actions in the CIP and complete NQSF Progress Report	16
<b>Step 10:</b> Review and Plan	16
Differences of opinion between the Implementation Team and the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer	16



<b>PART 3: Self-Assessment by youth work organisation</b>	
3.1 Statement of Youth Work Practice	19
3.2 Core Principles	20
3.3 Standards	
3.3.1 Planning	21
3.3.2 Practice	22
3.3.3 Progression	23
3.3.4 Monitoring and Assessment	24
3.3.5 Policies and Procedures	25
3.3.6 Governance and Operational Management	26
3.3.7 Strategy	27
3.3.8 Volunteers	28
3.3.9 Human Resource Management	29
3.3.10 Collaboration and Integration	30
<b>PART 4: External Assessment by VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer</b>	
4.1 Organisation information	31
4.2 Review of documentary evidence	32
4.3 Observations on practice	33
4.4 Focus groups with stakeholders	34
<b>PART 5: Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP)</b>	
5.1 Core Principles	35
5.2 Standards on Youth Work Practice and Provision	36
5.3 Standards on Organisational Management and Development	37
<b>PART 6: Progress Report – Self-Assessment (6.1) and External Assessment (6.2)</b>	
6.1 Progress Report – Self-Assessment	
6.1.1 Organisation information	39
6.1.2 Core Principles	40
6.1.3 Standards	41
6.1.4 Further Actions and Emerging Issues	42
6.1.5 Impact and Improvement	43
6.2 Progress Report – External Assessment by VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer	44
<b>Appendix</b>	
NQSF Working Group	47
NQSF Implementation Group	47
Organisations that participated in the NQSF Pilot	48

## Minister's Foreword

I am delighted to provide the foreword to this valuable support and development tool for youth work. It has taken us some time and much mutual effort and cooperation to see the National Quality Standards Framework (NQS) for youth work become a reality. The development of the NQS has involved the active participation of a number of groups and their involvement has been invaluable in the design and development of a framework which I consider is both practical and feasible. The collaborative approach taken and the shared understanding that the primary aim of the NQS is to ensure and enhance quality youth work provision for the participating young people has, I believe, served to ensure that ultimately the NQS will improve the effectiveness of youth work service provision.

It is important that we all understand and acknowledge that the NQS will provide organisations with the opportunity to articulate their youth work practice, as well as providing a structured framework for them to review and assess their work and to assist their continuous development. This will, without doubt, result in an improvement in good practice and in organisations addressing the needs of young people to an even greater extent.

I am sure that all those who have been involved in the process to date – whether in drafting the initial framework, participating in the pilot initiative or in its review and revision – will agree that the time, commitment and energy contributed was time well spent. I wish to acknowledge the willingness of all those involved in the process, which mirrors in many ways the very real commitment in the youth work sector to work and develop in a way that offers the maximum benefit to our young people and to achieve the best return for the investment of resources.

Finally, while the development of the NQS itself and its principles and standards has been a priority, the most important factor now is for us – my Office, the VECs and national youth work organisations – to collectively ensure successful and meaningful engagement with the process. I appreciate that embedding the NQS into everyday practice will initially take time, but I believe the rewards will be great for organisations and their services, and most importantly for the young people involved. I know that the youth work sector is committed to engaging in initiatives that will enhance the practice of youth work and, in turn, the learning experiences of young people. My Office shares that commitment and I wish to assure you of my ongoing support and that of my staff in making this process a working reality.

**Barry Andrews, TD**

*Minister for Children and Youth Affairs*

## Acknowledgements

The National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) is the result of significant work and investment by a number of individuals and groups. The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) would like to thank the NQSF Working Group and Task Group for their work in developing this framework from start to finish.

In addition, sincere thanks are due to all those who participated in the pilot of the NQSF, including the youth work organisations and projects, the staff, volunteers and young people who participate in these services, and the VEC Youth Officers who were instrumental in introducing the NQSF. A full list of all the people and organisations involved in the creation and testing of this NQSF is given in the Appendix of this document.



# Part 1: Introducing the National Quality Standards Framework (NQS)

## Background

The youth work sector works with young people outside, yet alongside, the formal education sector. Both the Youth Work Act 2001 and the National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007 have provided youth work with clearer definition and direction. Section 3 of the Youth Work Act 2001 defines youth work as:

*'a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and provided primarily by voluntary youth work services'.*

This definition highlights four important dimensions of youth work:

- planned;
- educational;
- based on voluntary participation;
- provided primarily by voluntary youth work services.

The continued development and sustainability of youth work requires that these dimensions be identified, demonstrated and developed. The National Quality Standards Framework (NQS) aims to ensure that youth work organisations provide quality services to young people. It also provides an opportunity to articulate their practice through the development of a common language within a structured framework.

The NQS is intended to be both practical and developmental, in that it will enable youth work organisations to assess service provision and to identify areas for development. As engagement in the NQS is a continuous process, it is not expected that all organisations will be able to immediately and fully achieve all the standards as set out in this document. Neither is it the intention that the NQS would require uniformity of provision. Rather, it aims to ensure that youth work providers continue to offer a rich and varied service, and commit to a process of continuous development through engagement in the NQS.

The NQS is primarily a support and development tool for youth work organisations. Self-assessment is fundamental to the process. In addition, there is also an external assessment function, which serves to validate the self-assessment process and which is performed by VEC (Youth/Liaison) Officers for local youth work services or by the NQS Standards Officer for national youth work organisations.

The NQSF will be introduced nationally on a phased and incremental basis, commencing in 2010. Initially, it will only apply to staff-led youth work organisations that receive funding from the following schemes administered by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA): Youth Service Grant Scheme (YSGS); Special Projects for Youth (SPY); Youth Information Centres (YICs); and the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSF). The implementation of the NQSF will be assisted by VEC (Youth/Liaison) Officers in the case of local services and by a NQSF Standards Officer in the case of national youth work organisations.

## Rationale for the NQSF for youth work

The rationale for the development of the NQSF initiative is:

- to provide a support and development tool to youth work organisations providing services to children and young people;
- to establish standards in the practice and provision of youth work;
- to provide an enhanced evidence base for youth work;
- to ensure resources are used effectively in the youth work sector;
- to provide a basis for 'whole organisational assessment'.<sup>1</sup>

The NQSF has been developed as a support and development tool to encourage youth organisations to review and assess their work and to assist in the continuous development of their services. It will help in establishing a common – but by no means an exclusive – language of youth work, while also recognising and respecting the diversity of the youth work sector. This is a framework through which to articulate, assess and assure quality youth work.

The NQSF represents a mechanism through which youth work can better demonstrate its effectiveness and continue to improve both provision and practice. It is therefore crucial that the NQSF is flexible enough to work for the setting and service in which it is implemented. Effectively, much of the work being carried out at present within organisations providing services should be compatible with the standards outlined in the NQSF document. If existing standards or quality assurance mechanisms are in place, these too should be transferable to the NQSF. In other words, the NQSF should fit with what is currently happening within organisations – and what is currently happening should fit with the NQSF.

The primary responsibility for ensuring quality lies with the individuals and organisations involved in youth work service provision, while the primary beneficiaries of quality youth work provision should be the young people with whom these services work. The NQSF aims to support organisations to do this.

<sup>1</sup> It is envisaged that the NQSF, once implemented within the youth work sector, will in time represent the foundation for a more comprehensive evaluation in the form of a 'whole organisational assessment' (WOA) to be carried out by the Assessor of Youth Work. The development of this assessment mechanism will relate to both the implementation of the NQSF and to other associated policy developments within the OMCYA.

In implementing the NQSF, organisations are being asked to assess their practice and are also being given the opportunity to identify further indicators and evidence of quality youth work that may exist within their services. This approach of encouraging the identification and feedback of additional evidence will ensure that the ongoing development of the NQSF is responsive to the work of youth work service providers.

## Values and core principles underpinning the NQSF

The **values** underpinning the development and implementation of the NQSF are:

- A clear understanding of youth work's educational purpose, methodology and context.
- Commitment to continual improvement and best practice.
- Transparency of governance and operation.
- Equality and inclusiveness embedded in policy and practice for staff, volunteers and young people.
- Promotion of the young person's well-being by ensuring safe learning environments.

Central to the NQSF are **5 core principles**, which are viewed as the essential elements of youth work and are fundamental to the application of the NQSF. They are:

1. **Young person-centred:** Recognising the **rights** of young people and holding as central their active and **voluntary participation**.
2. Committed to **ensuring and promoting the safety and well-being** of young people.
3. **Educational and developmental.**
4. Committed to **ensuring and promoting equality and inclusiveness** in all its dealings with young people and adults.
5. Dedicated to the **provision of quality youth work** and committed to **continuous improvement**.

## Criteria for engaging in the NQSF

To ensure that the implementation of the NQSF and the support and assessment functions involved in it are carried out in a uniform and transparent manner, a number of criteria have been identified. All those engaged in the NQSF should follow these criteria, which state that engagement in the NQSF should be:

- **Young person-centred** – that the process is concerned with delivering the best standard of youth work for young people. Young people are central to our work and their needs are paramount.
- **Based on partnership and cooperation** – that the process will be implemented in a spirit of partnership and cooperation, with clearly defined roles and boundaries and a shared commitment to contributing to a process of ongoing learning.

- **Solution-focused** – that the manner in which we work will be open, honest and supportive. We will work with integrity towards finding shared solutions to any emerging impediments to the work.
- **Challenging and developmental** – that we recognise the challenges in implementing the NQSF and are committed to working developmentally.
- **Realistic and clear** – that we recognise that the expectations and capacity of the various stakeholders are many and varied. We will seek to communicate effectively the purpose, process and outcomes to all concerned in a clear and constructive manner.
- **Focused on the benefits** – that we are convinced that the process will bring considerable benefits to all stakeholders, including young people, management, staff, volunteers and funding providers.

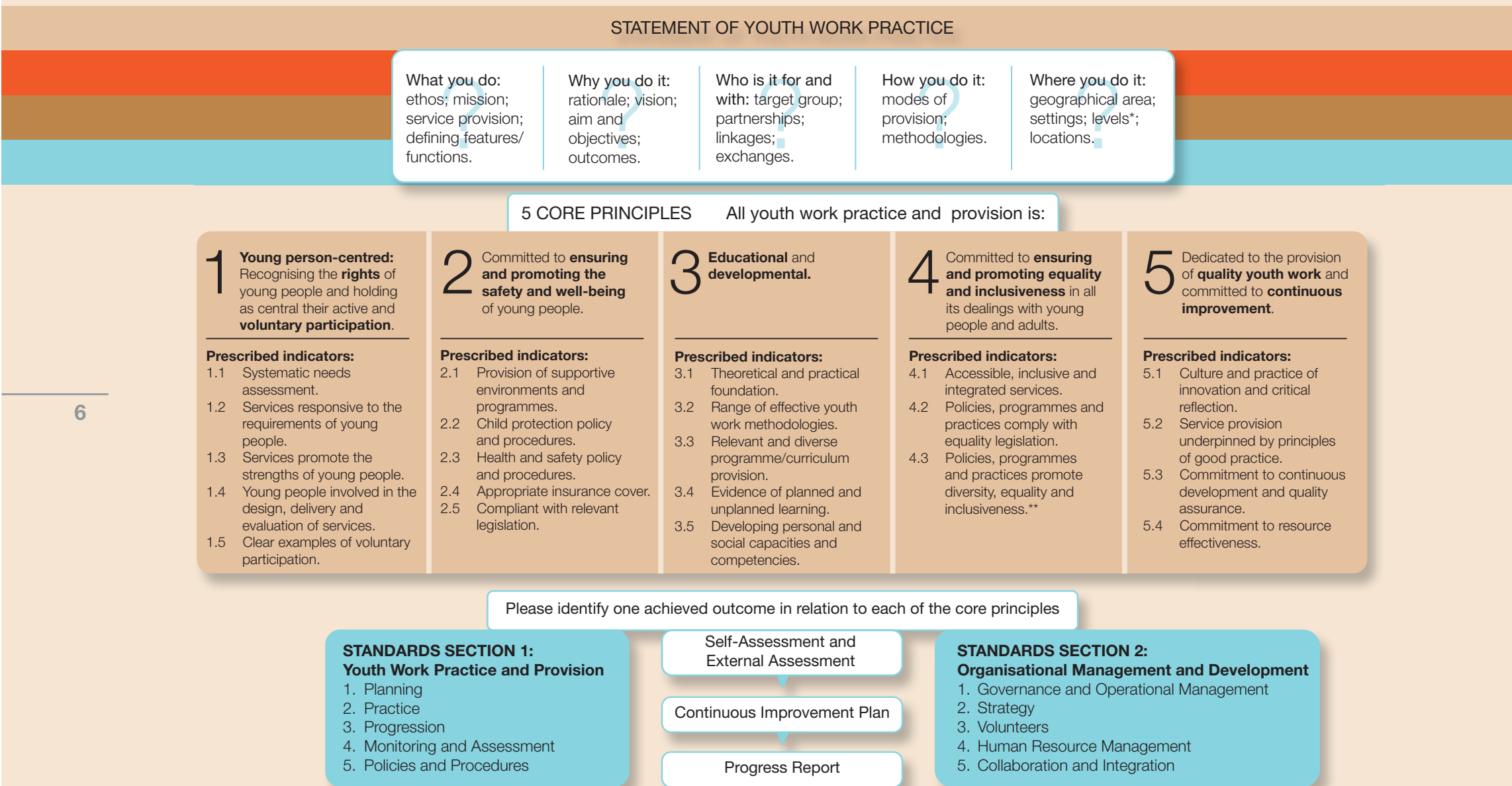
## Part 2: The NQSF Process

### Overview

The primary function of the NQSF is as a support and development tool, with the aim of assisting youth work organisations to identify strengths and areas for development in their services and to benchmark progress accordingly. Having done so, they will be able to take a structured and developmental approach to the assessment of youth work provision, examining its level, impact and efficacy.

In developing the NQSF, every effort has been made to ensure that it is balanced and proportionate in that it attempts to indicate evidence-based practice, but also to illustrate practice-based evidence. Fundamental to the effective application of the NQSF is the process of self-assessment. This should be based on exploring, negotiating and identifying the position and progress of the organisation and its services in relation to the essential elements of the NQSF, i.e. the 5 core principles, the 10 standards and their associated prescribed indicators (see *Figure 1*). The purpose of self-assessment is to determine the current status of the organisation and to assess future progress against this position. The organisation will liaise with VEC Officers at local level and the NQSF Standards Officer at national level. These officers will provide both a support function (offering guidance on the implementation of the NQSF) and an external assessment function (validating the organisation's self-assessment process).

**Figure 1: Overview of National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF)**



\* The term 'levels' should be taken to mean the levels at which your organisation operates, e.g. local, regional, national and international.

\*\* Equality and inclusiveness: The Equal Status Act 2000 prohibits discrimination on the following grounds: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age (not including people under 18), disability, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origin) and membership of the Traveller community.

## Timeline for the NQSF

Ensuring quality service provision takes time to achieve. It is difficult to definitively state the time commitment that will be involved in the implementation of the NQSF. This depends on a number of factors, such as:

- the stage of organisational development of the organisation;
- the existence of quality assurance processes within the organisation;
- the level of organisational support within the organisation and the culture of monitoring, review and evaluation in place.

The NQSF will be implemented on a 3-yearly cycle within each youth organisation (see *Figure 2*). In Year 1 of implementation, the full self-assessment and external assessment processes will take place. In Years 2 and 3, organisations will be required to continue to self-assess, to progress the actions outlined in their Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) and to complete their Progress Report in consultation with the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer. Following Year 3, the cycle of implementation of the NQSF will come full circle and the organisation will be required to recommence the NQSF process, as in Year 1.

As a guideline, in Year 1 of implementation, the NQSF will involve a commitment of approximately one day per month. Central to this will be the work involved in the NQSF Implementation Team. It is recommended that each organisation establish a NQSF Implementation Team, the function of which is to lead the implementation of the NQSF and to ensure that progress is made in the ongoing process of continuous development. It should also be noted that outside of the structured meetings of the Implementation Team, work will also need to be progressed at an individual level. This parallel process will ensure that progress is being made in addressing the identified areas for development.

Ideally, the NQSF should be used to support what is currently happening in organisations and their services. It can be used as a framework and reference point for team meetings, service reviews, operational and strategic planning events and, where appropriate, to inform reporting requirements. If there are existing structures within the organisation that are deemed effective, these could be tasked with implementing the NQSF. Therefore, rather than the creation of new structures and tasks, what may be required is a restructuring and refocusing of the work that is already being carried out.

Figure 2: Timeline for implementation of the NQSF

APPROX. TIMELINE	ACTIONS (by organisation except where stated)
<p><b>YEAR 1</b> Months 1 – 4</p>	<p><b>STEP 1:</b> Meet with VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer to begin NQSF.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer will brief the organisation on the process and documentation, and schedule a series of meetings to provide support and guidance throughout the NQSF.</li> <li>• Establish NQSF Implementation Team.</li> </ul> <p><b>STEP 2:</b> Complete Statement of Youth Work Practice.</p> <p><b>STEP 3:</b> Examine 5 Core Principles – identify outcomes and actions.</p> <p><b>STEP 4:</b> Consider the 10 Standards – identify position on scale of attainment and actions.</p> <p><b>STEP 5:</b> External assessment by VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review of documentary evidence;</li> <li>• observations on practice;</li> <li>• focus groups with stakeholders.</li> </ul> <p><b>STEP 6:</b> Complete Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) in consultation with VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer.</p>
<p><b>Months 5 – 10</b></p>	<p>Progress actions in CIP</p>
<p><b>Months 11 – 12</b></p>	<p><b>STEP 7:</b> Complete NQSF Progress Report based on implementation of CIP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation completes Section 6.1;</li> <li>• VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer completes Section 6.2.</li> </ul>
<p><b>YEAR 2</b></p>	<p><b>STEP 8:</b> Continue to update and progress actions in CIP in conjunction with VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer.</p> <p><b>STEP 9:</b> Complete NQSF Progress Report for Year 2.</p>
<p><b>YEAR 3</b></p>	<p><b>STEP 10:</b> As Year 2 (and review of and plan for NQSF cycle).</p>



## Step-by-step process of the NQSF

### Step 1: Meet with VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer and establish a NQSF Implementation Team

The VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer will perform a dual function, in providing support and guidance in addition to carrying out an external assessment function. The performance of these functions will adhere to the criteria for engaging in the NQSF as outlined in Part 1. The VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer will introduce the NQSF on a phased basis and provide support to local youth services/national youth work organisations either individually or in cluster groups, depending on the configuration of services and the capacity of the officer concerned. This support will focus on facilitating the organisation in making optimal use of the NQSF as a support and development tool.

Scheduled meetings will be arranged between the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer and the NQSF Implementation Team (see below). Each meeting will focus on specific and sequential tasks to be progressed in the NQSF (as summarised in Figure 2). Central to this will be examining the evidence in place in support of the core principles and standards, and exploring the position assigned on the scale of attainment during the self-assessment process. In advance of these meetings, the organisation will carry out a number of actions which will then form the basis for the next meeting. Feedback and guidance will be provided to the Implementation Team during this process by the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer. Following each meeting, it should be clear that incremental progress is being achieved in relation to the NQSF.

#### **Establishing a NQSF Implementation Team**

To ensure the effective implementation of the NQSF, it is recommended that an Implementation Team is established so as to ensure that appropriate support and expertise is in place to guide and implement the NQSF within the organisation. The Implementation Team should be led by a paid member of staff, who will liaise with the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer, and should involve personnel with relevant expertise. The team should comprise a minimum of three people and aim to be representative of the stakeholders involved in the organisation, i.e. ideally, this should include participation by the staff, board of management and young people. Consideration should also be given to parental involvement, where appropriate.

The Implementation Team is central to the NQSF process and regular structured meetings should be held to examine the position and progress of the organisation in relation to the NQSF. This forum will provide an opportunity to examine and apply the standards, to audit and assess existing service provision, and to plan for ongoing development. It should also promote the NQSF among the wider organisation. It is essential that a participatory approach is followed in the work of

the team, with each member being afforded the time and opportunity to engage with the issues under discussion. It is also recommended that identified tasks are delegated and followed up by individuals with particular expertise in these areas. These individuals do not have to be members of the team, but may be co-opted onto it in order to carry out specific tasks or to progress particular actions.

## Step 2: Complete the Statement of Youth Work Practice

The Statement of Youth Work Practice (see *Part 3: Section 3.1*) should represent a clear and succinct overview of your youth work service provision. Essentially, it outlines:

- **What you do:** ethos; mission; service provision; defining features/functions.
- **Why you do it:** rationale; vision; aim and objectives; outcomes.
- **Who is it for and with:** target group; partnerships; linkages; exchanges.
- **How you do it:** modes of provision; methodologies.
- **Where you do it:** geographical area; settings; levels (local, regional, national, international); locations.

This Statement should reference the definition of youth work as outlined in the Youth Work Act 2001 (see *Part 1*) and indicate how your work relates to the four dimensions described (i.e. planned; educational; based on voluntary participation; and provided primarily by voluntary youth work services). It should also indicate any specific functions or features associated with your youth service or mode of provision. The Statement should be accurate and realistic, be approximately 500 words in length and include the information in the order listed above.

## Step 3: Examine the 5 Core Principles – Identify outcomes

The 5 core principles are fundamental to youth work and for the purposes of the NQSF, they should define and direct youth work practice and provision. Youth work organisations should endeavour to present high-quality evidence in support of these principles. This should involve regular monitoring and review of the core principles and the associated supporting evidence.

Each core principle is accompanied by several prescribed indicators that must be in place to support the principle (see *Figure 1*). In *Part 3: Section 3.2*, you will be asked to:

- provide evidence in support of these indicators;
- identify an achieved outcome<sup>2</sup> in support of each core principle.

<sup>2</sup> To assist in defining what is meant by the term 'outcome', it may be helpful to differentiate between inputs, outputs and outcomes:

Inputs – the resources used to produce the services, e.g. personnel, staff hours, materials and capital.

Outputs – the services or activities produced or delivered.

Outcomes – the actual impact of the services, i.e. the effect of the output in practice.

This will afford organisations the opportunity to formulate their own outcomes in relation to the fundamental aspects of youth work as represented by the core principles. Identifying an outcome linked with the stated core principle will contribute to an enhanced evidence base for youth work.

### Step 4: Consider the 10 Standards – Select position on the scale of attainment

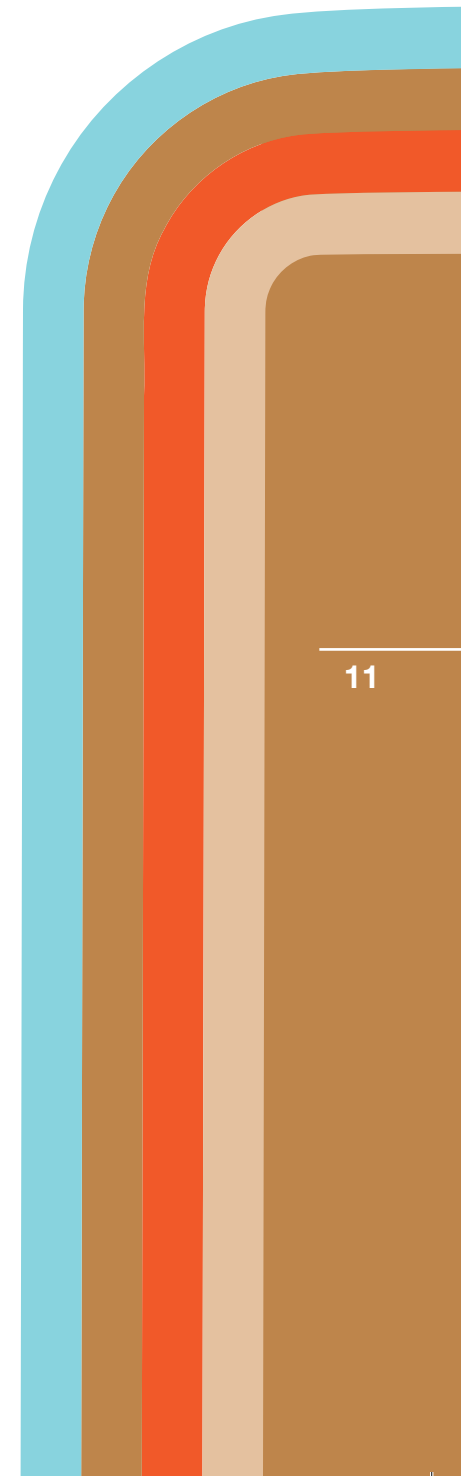
There are 2 sets of standards in the NQSF, with each set comprising 5 standards:

STANDARDS SECTION 1: Youth Work Practice and Provision	STANDARDS SECTION 2: Organisational Management and Development
1. Planning 2. Practice 3. Progression 4. Monitoring and Assessment 5. Policies and Procedures	1. Governance and Operational Management 2. Strategy 3. Volunteers 4. Human Resource Management 5. Collaboration and Integration

Alongside each standard (see Part 3: Sections 3.3.1 – 3.3.10) is a scale of attainment. This is a continuum outlining four different categories or levels of attainment – absent, acquiring, achieved and advanced. Under each of these categories is a list of indicators that should be in place in support of each of the four positions on the scale of attainment.

In considering the individual standard, you will need to:

- Ask the question ‘*What is this standard saying?*’ Consider each standard and its associated list of indicators under each of the categories. It is important to recognise that most of the standards and indicators should exist at some level, shape or form within your service. While the standards may make sense in theory or as general statements, it is essential that they also apply in practice.
- Examine objectively the activities and areas of service provision that could be considered as evidence of the standard. This should entail an audit of what is in place so that the NQSF Implementation Team takes a balanced and realistic approach to examining the evidence involved. If this approach is followed, it will assist in ensuring that the organisation does not overestimate – or underestimate – the evidence in place.
- Contextualise the standard to your organisation. It may become apparent that you have additional indicators in place in support of the standard; if this is the case, you are encouraged to list these also.



### Scale of attainment

The process involved in assigning a position on the scale of attainment is based on self-assessment. Organisations will be required to identify their initial position and over time determine their progress along this continuum. The terms on the scale of attainment are as follows:

Absent	Acquiring	Achieved	Advanced
<b>Evidence is not in place</b>	<b>Evidence is developing</b>	<b>Evidence is developed</b>	<b>Evidence is highly developed and successfully implemented</b>
<b>Not there</b> <i>(if not in place, please indicate the reasons why this is the case and outline how this will be addressed)</i>	<b>Not there yet</b> <i>(committed to achieving and making tangible progress)</i>	<b>Got there</b> <i>(committed to advancing)</i>	<b>Staying there</b> <i>(committed to continuous development)</i>

If, having considered the indicators, you feel that the indicators listed under one of the four categories apply to your organisation, you should take the following steps:

- based on the indicators listed, select a position on the scale of attainment;
- outline why you have chosen that position.

The NQSF is a continuous process. Therefore in the commitment to quality service delivery, there should always be room for improvement. For example, if you have decided that an 'advanced' position on the scale is merited in relation to a standard, your first step should be to ensure you maintain that position and your next step should be to consider how you might improve on this.

### Falling between different points on the scale of attainment

In a number of cases, your organisation may be at different points on the scale of attainment in relation to the indicators. For example, some of the indicators under 'acquiring' may apply to you, while you may also have several in the 'advanced' category. If this is the case, consider this collectively within the Implementation Team and select a point on the scale that best reflects your organisation's overall position. There should be sufficient evidence and a clear rationale for the position an organisation assigns itself on the scale.

## Step 5: Engage in the external assessment process

The external assessment process (see *Part 4: Section 4.1*) validates the practical and qualitative aspects of youth work provision. External assessment takes place in Year 1 of implementation of the NQSF – and thereafter, in Year 1 of every 3-year cycle. (In the intervening years, organisations will be required to continue to progress the actions in their Continuous Improvement Plan and to complete a shortened Progress Report in conjunction with the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer.)

To ensure that the NQSF has sufficient regard for youth work practice, three key sources of evidence will form part of the external assessment process – a review of documentary evidence, observations on practice and focus groups with stakeholders (see *below*). These will indicate support for the achievement of the core principles and standards in the NQSF and provide an opportunity to ensure that the position taken by the organisation on the scale of attainment is validated in practice.

### **Documentary evidence**

The VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer will request to review the documentary evidence cited and will discuss the basis on which the organisation assigns itself a position on the scale of attainment. All evidence will be retained locally by the organisation and will be made available upon request to the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer.

### **Observations on practice**

This aims to provide an opportunity for more practical examples of quality youth work to be observed and, where appropriate, fed back as further indicators, which may, in turn, inform the ongoing development of the NQSF. The VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer will ask to observe a specific area of practice that indicates support for a particular core principle or standard in the NQSF. Examples of practice to be observed should be part of the overall and ongoing programmes offered, and not specifically ‘set up’ for the sole purpose of showcasing practice. The areas of youth work provision to be observed should be considered in relation to the core principle or standard supported and the position taken by the organisation on the scale of attainment.

### **Focus groups with stakeholders**

In assessing the progress of an organisation and its services in the NQSF process, the views of stakeholders (such as staff, management, young people and volunteers) must be taken into account. This input is crucial in providing evidence of quality service delivery and should be carried out through focus groups within the organisation. It is essential that young people are included among these stakeholders so as to ensure that their views, attitudes and experiences are recognised and are regarded as central to the process.

Following the external assessment process, the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer together with the Implementation Team will revisit the scale of attainment and determine if the positions selected on the scale are an accurate reflection of current status in relation to specific standards. This should be discussed between the two parties and the position agreed, or adjusted if required.

### Step 6: Complete the Continuous Improvement Plan

The agreed position on the scale of attainment should be the baseline in the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) of the organisation and should represent the benchmark for progress and development. The CIP is a strategic summary of the position and progress in relation to the NQSF's 5 Core Principles and 10 Standards. It details the following information (see *Part 5: Section 5.1*):

- identified areas for improvement;
- identified actions to address these areas;
- identified personnel and timeframe.

The CIP should also inform the completion of the annual Progress Report. Therefore, it is essential that the actions outlined are realistic, achievable, assigned and time-related.

### Step 7: Complete NQSF Progress Report

The Progress Report (see *Part 6: Sections 6.1 and 6.2*) is to be completed and submitted annually, together with Section 3.1 (Statement of Youth Work Practice), via your VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer to the OMCYA in the 4th quarter of each year. It consists of two sections:

- **Section 6.1** is based on **self-assessment** and is completed by the Implementation Team each year.

The following information is required:

1. Organisation information.
2. Core Principles (5) – position and progress.
3. Standards (10) – position and progress.
4. Further actions and emerging issues.
5. Impact and improvement.

- **Section 6.2** outlines the **external monitoring and assessment**, and is completed by the VEC Officer/ NQSF Standards Officer each year. The following information is required:
  1. Date of most recent external assessment.
  2. Commentary on external assessment.
    - Note:** Section 4.1 to be included in Year 1 of implementation of the NQSF only and consists of:
      - Documentary evidence.
      - Observations on practice.
      - Focus groups with stakeholders.
  3. Commentary on position taken in the CIP (for Years 1, 2 and 3) and covers:
    - Negotiation with organisations based on CIP and annual Progress Report.
    - Year 3: Review of NQSF Cycle and plan for new NQSF Cycle.
  4. Commentary on progress achieved in implementing the CIP.
  5. Recommended actions to be achieved by next progress review dates.
  6. Additional comments/recommendations.
  7. Scheduled progress review dates.

In Year 1 of implementation and once in every 3-year cycle thereafter, the full Progress Report (i.e. *Sections 6.1 and 6.2, including the External Assessment section outlined in Section 4.1*) will be completed. In Years 2 and 3, the Progress Report will be shorter since the validation of self-assessment will require that only Section 6.2 (excluding Section 4.1) be completed. This will mean that in Years 2 and 3, the validation of self-assessment will be based on discussions with the organisation on progress, rather than on the full external assessment process as envisaged in Year 1 of the implementation cycle. Within the Progress Report, both the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer and the organisation will have agreed the actions to be achieved in the forthcoming year.

Sections 6.1 and 6.2 of the Progress Report – the self-assessment and external assessment sections – should both:

- be clear and concise;
- outline the key points indicating how the work supports the standards (while a degree of narrative is necessary in describing the work, it should be kept brief);
- be constructive, with the fundamental aim of building capacity within the organisation;
- benefit from a collaborative approach. It is essential that such collaboration be viewed favourably, as an opportunity to share and discuss quality work, determine good practice and identify areas for development.

## Steps 8 and 9: Continue to update and progress actions in the CIP and complete NQSF Progress Report

As mentioned in Step 7 above, in Years 2 and 3 of the implementation cycle of the NQSF, organisations will not be required to engage in the full external assessment process. In these years, the validation of self-assessment will be based on discussions between the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer and the organisation on progress within the NQSF. The organisation will be required to continue to update the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) and will also complete an annual NQSF Progress Report, summarising work and progress in the NQSF. The CIP should be completed and agreed in conjunction with the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer and be retained locally, while the Progress Report should be submitted to the VEC and OMCYA. The Progress Report, together with the quantitative information outlined in the OMCYA's revised reporting format, is currently all that is required by the OMCYA in terms of reporting. However, the OMCYA may, in certain circumstances, request additional information from the organisation and/or the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer.

## Step 10: Review and Plan

This last step refers to the actions required in Year 3, the final year of the NQSF cycle. Essentially, what is required is a repeat of the actions outlined in Year 2. However, in addition to this, the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer and the organisation will review the progress made in the previous 3 years and will commence planning for the next cycle of the NQSF.

## Differences of opinion between the Implementation Team and the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer

Both the spirit and philosophy of the NQSF underline the importance of collaboration, negotiation and consensus. Therefore, in relation to the NQSF, all issues should be discussed openly and dealt with constructively. However, it should be recognised that situations may arise where there may be a difference of opinion between the organisation and VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer regarding the recommendations outlined in the Progress Report. In such instances, it is important that these differences of opinion are acknowledged and recorded, and that every effort is made to resolve the issue and reach a consensus. Arriving at a resolution and consensus position is of crucial importance, provided this does not compromise or adversely affect the position or practice of the organisation, or present a picture of service provision that is at variance with what is in place in practice.

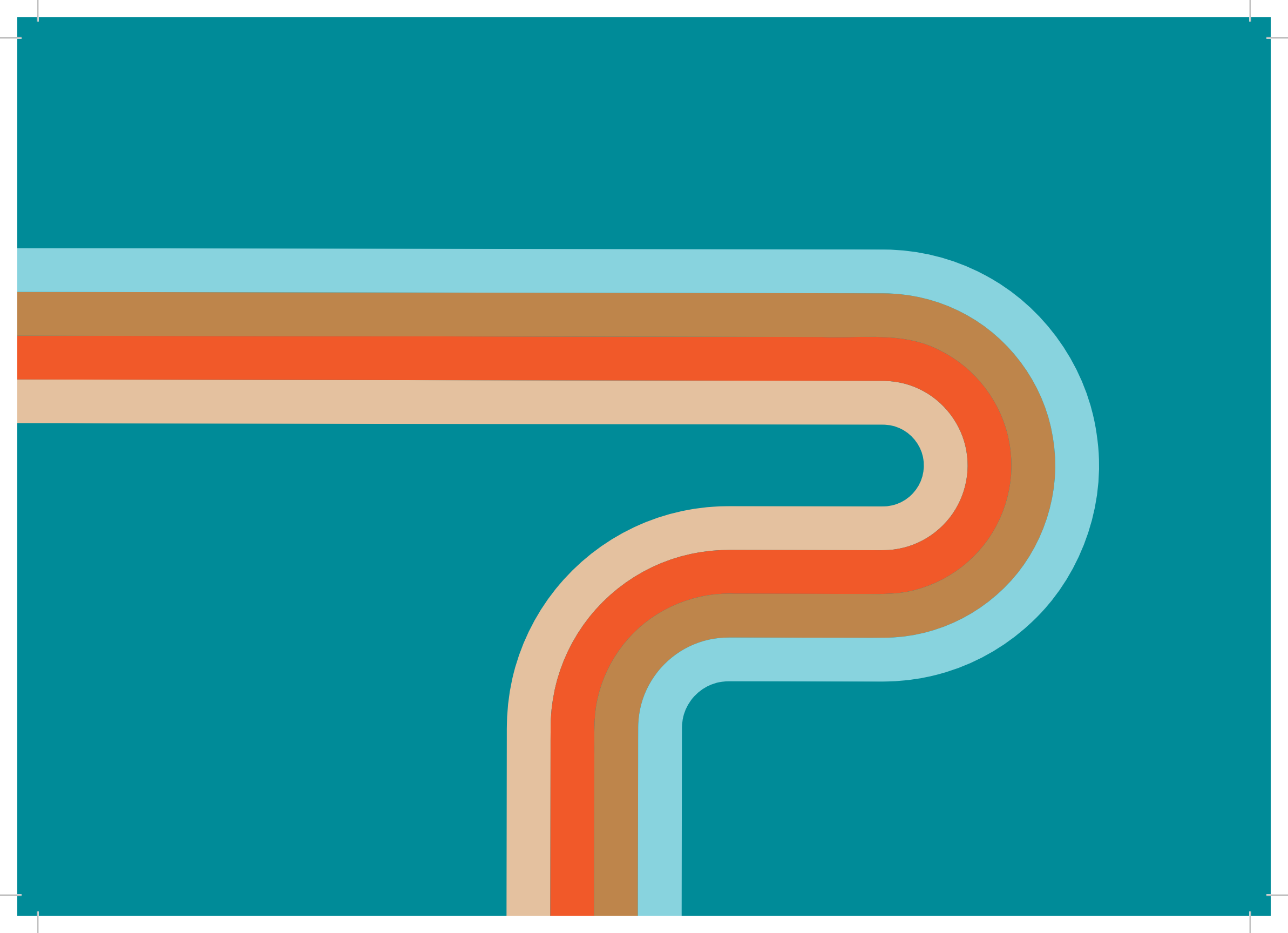


In local youth work organisations where consensus on significant issues cannot be reached by way of the Continuous Improvement Plan or Progress Report within the NQSF, the VEC Officer should consult his or her CEO/line manager to develop a strategy that will engage with the management within the organisation (or, where appropriate, the managing organisation) with a view to ensuring that a resolution is reached. In the case of national youth work organisations, the NQSF Standards Officer should consult the Youth Work Assessor to devise a strategy that will engage directly with the organisation concerned. Such strategies should always aim to resolve the situation locally; however, if necessary, the assistance of outside facilitators may be considered.

Where the assessment process in the NQSF identifies areas of concern that necessitate immediate action within an organisation, addressing these concerns will be part of a separate process outside of the NQSF. In such instances, the management within the organisation, and/or the managing organisation and funding body, will be informed and will assume their responsibility for ensuring effective youth work provision and practice within the organisation.

While it is not anticipated that this would be a common occurrence – and although not the intention of the NQSF – it is essential that due regard is paid to the possibility that the NQSF may, on occasion, identify practices that may be of significant concern and that, if allowed to continue, may compromise the well-being of the young people involved or the viability of the youth work service. An agreed set of standard procedures will be developed to address such matters and it is crucial that these are followed by grant-administering agencies in instances where areas of concern are identified. It is also important that organisations in receipt of funding via grant-administering agencies are aware of the existence of such procedures. This should clarify the remit of the NQSF, outlining when and where a developmental process is to be followed – making clear the boundaries of the NQSF – and indicating the separate and distinct procedures that need to be put in place in situations where a more urgent response to addressing areas of concern is required.

Such standard procedures will be developed by the OMCYA in consultation with youth work interests. These procedures will outline a range of responses proportionate to several potential issues of concern that may be identified and will ensure that any process followed is clearly outlined and consistently applied.



## Part 3: Self-Assessment by youth work organisation

### 3.1 Statement of Youth Work Practice

To be completed and submitted annually, together with Section 6.1 (Progress Report – Self-Assessment), via your VEC Officer/ NQSF Standards Officer to the OMCYA in the 4th quarter of each year.

Please provide a concise account of your youth work practice in relation to the following points:

- **What you do:** ethos; mission; service provision; defining features/functions.
- **Why you do it:** rationale; vision; aim and objectives; outcomes.
- **Who is it for and with:** target group; partnerships; linkages; exchanges.
- **How you do it:** modes of provision; methodologies.
- **Where you do it:** geographical area; settings; levels (local, regional, national, international); locations.

## 3.2 Core Principles

Please consider the following core principles, list the evidence in place in support of the indicators, and identify one achieved outcome in relation to each of the core principles listed.

All youth work practice and provision is:	Prescribed indicators	Please list evidence in place in support of prescribed indicators	Please identify one outcome your organisation has achieved in relation to each core principle
<b>1. Young person-centred: recognising the rights of young people and holding as central their active and voluntary participation</b>	1.1 Systematic needs assessment. 1.2 Services responsive to the requirements of young people. 1.3 Services promote the strengths of young people. 1.4 Young people involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of services. 1.5 Clear examples of voluntary participation.		
<b>2. Committed to ensuring and promoting the safety and well-being of young people</b>	2.1 Provision of supportive environments and programmes. 2.2 Child protection policy and procedures. 2.3 Health and safety policy and procedures. 2.4 Appropriate insurance cover. 2.5 Compliant with relevant legislation.		
<b>3. Educational and developmental</b>	3.1 Theoretical and practical foundation. 3.2 Range of effective youth work methodologies. 3.3 Relevant and diverse programme/curriculum provision. 3.4 Evidence of planned and unplanned learning. 3.5 Developing personal and social capacities and competencies.		
<b>4. Committed to ensuring and promoting equality and inclusiveness in all its dealings with young people and adults</b>	4.1 Accessible, inclusive and integrated services. 4.2 Policies, programmes and practices comply with equality legislation. 4.3 Policies, programmes and practices promote diversity, equality and inclusiveness.		
<b>5. Dedicated to the provision of quality youth work and committed to continuous improvement</b>	5.1 Culture and practice of innovation and critical reflection. 5.2 Service provision underpinned by principles of good practice. 5.3 Commitment to continuous development and quality assurance. 5.4 Commitment to resource effectiveness.		
<b>Please list any additional indicators you may have in support of the above core principles:</b>			

### 3.3 Standards

#### 3.3.1 Planning

#### Section 1: Youth Work Practice and Provision

All youth work practice is planned and designed according to young people's needs, outlining a clear rationale, objectives and expected outcomes.

The indicators below describe what should be in place in support of this standard at each point along the scale of attainment. Please consider these indicators in relation to your organisation and insert ✓ beside the appropriate indicator. You may add any other indicators you think are appropriate.

Absent	✓	Acquiring	✓	Achieved	✓	Advanced	✓
1. No rationale underpinning practice.		1. Rationale underpinning practice is mostly clear.		1. Rationale underpinning practice is clear.		1. Rationale underpinning practice is clear and comprehensive.	
2. Planning rarely takes place.		2. Planning is unstructured.		2. Planning is structured.		2. Planning is structured, implemented and reviewed.	
3. Objectives are not in place.		3. Objectives exist, but are unclear.		3. Objectives are clear and mostly achieved.		3. Objectives are clear and fully achieved.	
4. No outcomes identified.		4. Outcomes are being identified.		4. Outcomes are identified and mostly achieved.		4. Outcomes are identified and fully achieved.	
5. Operational/service plans do not exist.		5. Operational/service plans are being developed.		5. Operational/service plans are in place.		5. Operational/service plans are documented, implemented and reviewed.	
6. No strategic plan in place or being developed.		6. Strategic plan is being developed.		6. Strategic plan is implemented.		6. Strategic plan is implemented and actions being achieved.	

Add any other indicators below:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

In the relevant spaces below, please describe the evidence your organisation has in place in relation to the above indicators:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Having considered the above, identify a position on the scale of attainment that best reflects your organisation's position in relation to this standard (mark ✓ on a point on the scale below). If you think your organisation is at different points on the scale of attainment in relation to the various indicators, choose a point on the scale that, overall, best reflects this position.

Absent	Acquiring	Achieved	Advanced
--------	-----------	----------	----------

Why have you chosen this point on the scale?

--

### 3.3 Standards

### 3.3.2 Practice

### Section 1: Youth Work Practice and Provision

All youth work is delivered by suitably skilled personnel according to principles of good practice and is outcomes-focused.

The indicators below describe what should be in place in support of this standard at each point along the scale of attainment. Please consider these indicators in relation to your organisation and insert ✓ beside the appropriate indicator. You may add any other indicators you think are appropriate.

Absent	✓	Acquiring	✓	Achieved	✓	Advanced	✓
1. Personnel are unclear regarding their function.		1. Personnel are mostly clear regarding their function.		1. Personnel are clear regarding their function.		1. Personnel are clear regarding their function and remit.	
2. Personnel do not have the skills to fulfil the position/task.		2. Personnel are developing skills to fulfil the position/task.		2. Personnel have the requisite skills to fulfil the position/task.		2. Personnel have the requisite skills to fulfil and further develop the position/task.	
3. Delivery of practice is inadequate.		3. Delivery of practice is satisfactory in most areas.		3. Delivery of practice is competent in all areas.		3. Delivery of practice excels in all areas.	
4. Practice does not follow principles of good practice.		4. Practice recognises principles of good practice.		4. Practice identifies and follows principles of good practice.		4. Practice follows and contributes to identifying principles of good practice.	
5. Practice is not supported by an evidence base.		5. Practice is somewhat supported by an evidence base.		5. Practice is mostly supported by an evidence base.		5. Practice is strongly evidence-based.	
6. Practice is not linked to outcomes.		6. Practice is loosely linked to outcomes.		6. Practice is outcomes-focused.		6. Practice achieves all identified outcomes.	

Add any other indicators below:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

In the relevant spaces below, please describe the evidence your organisation has in place in relation to the above indicators:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Having considered the above, identify a position on the scale of attainment that best reflects your organisation's position in relation to this standard (mark ✓ on a point on the scale below). If you think your organisation is at different points on the scale of attainment in relation to the various indicators, choose a point on the scale that, overall, best reflects this position.

Absent	Acquiring	Achieved	Advanced
--------	-----------	----------	----------

Why have you chosen this point on the scale?

--

### 3.3 Standards

### 3.3.3 Progression

### Section 1: Youth Work Practice and Provision

All youth work engages proactively with young people, offering strategies and supports that enable young people to progress and achieve.

The indicators below describe what should be in place in support of this standard at each point along the scale of attainment. Please consider these indicators in relation to your organisation and insert ✓ beside the appropriate indicator. You may add any other indicators you think are appropriate.

Absent	✓	Acquiring	✓	Achieved	✓	Advanced	✓
1. Practice does not respond to the needs of young people.		1. Practice mostly responds to the needs of young people.		1. Practice is proactive and responsive to the needs of young people.		1. Practice is proactive, responsive and continuously developing.	
2. No strategies for engaging young people are in place.		2. A number of strategies for engaging young people are in place.		2. A range of effective strategies for engaging young people are in place.		2. A range of effective and innovative strategies for engaging young people are in place.	
3. No supports for engaging young people are in place.		3. A number of supports for engaging young people are in place.		3. A range of effective supports for engaging young people are in place.		3. A range of effective and innovative supports for engaging young people are in place.	
4. Progression does not happen.		4. Progression is unstructured.		4. Progression is structured.		4. Progression is structured and promoted.	
5. No emphasis on young person's learning.		5. Limited emphasis on young person's learning.		5. Emphasis placed on young person's learning.		5. Young person's learning is central to service provision.	
6. Achievement is not recognised.		6. Achievement is somewhat recognised.		6. Achievement is recognised and recorded.		6. Achievement is recognised, recorded and rewarded.	

Add any other indicators below:

--	--	--	--

In the relevant spaces below, please describe the evidence your organisation has in place in relation to the above indicators:

--	--	--	--

Having considered the above, identify a position on the scale of attainment that best reflects your organisation's position in relation to this standard (mark ✓ on a point on the scale below). If you think your organisation is at different points on the scale of attainment in relation to the various indicators, choose a point on the scale that, overall, best reflects this position.

Absent	Acquiring	Achieved	Advanced
--------	-----------	----------	----------

Why have you chosen this point on the scale?

--

### 3.3 Standards

### 3.3.4 Monitoring and Assessment

### Section 1: Youth Work Practice and Provision

All youth work is monitored and assessed to determine its effectiveness and efficiency, measure learning outcomes and enhance youth work provision.

The indicators below describe what should be in place in support of this standard at each point along the scale of attainment. Please consider these indicators in relation to your organisation and insert ✓ beside the appropriate indicator. You may add any other indicators you think are appropriate.

Absent	✓	Acquiring	✓	Achieved	✓	Advanced	✓
1. Monitoring and assessment is not in place.		1. Monitoring and assessment is ad hoc and unstructured.		1. Monitoring and assessment is in place and structured.		1. Monitoring and assessment is incorporated in all areas of practice provision.	
2. No assessment models are in place.		2. A basic range of assessment models are in place.		2. A range of effective assessment models are in place.		2. A range of effective assessment models are used to identify good practice.	
3. Assessments are not recorded.		3. Assessments are sometimes recorded and documented.		3. Assessments are recorded and documented.		3. Assessments are recorded, documented and disseminated.	
4. No indication of effectiveness.		4. Monitoring and assessment suggests effectiveness.		4. Monitoring and assessment indicates effectiveness.		4. Monitoring and assessment clearly evidences effectiveness.	
5. No indication of efficiency.		5. Monitoring and assessment suggests efficiency.		5. Monitoring and assessment indicates efficiency.		5. Monitoring and assessment clearly evidences efficiency and resource effectiveness.	
6. No learning outcomes in place.		6. A number of learning outcomes are in place.		6. Learning outcomes are in place and being achieved.		6. Learning outcomes are fully achieved.	
7. Assessment does not inform practice.		7. Assessment indirectly informs practice.		7. Assessment directly informs practice.		7. Assessment informs practice and service development.	

Add any other indicators below:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

In the relevant spaces below, please describe the evidence your organisation has in place in relation to the above indicators:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Having considered the above, identify a position on the scale of attainment that best reflects your organisation's position in relation to this standard (mark ✓ on a point on the scale below).  
If you think your organisation is at different points on the scale of attainment in relation to the various indicators, choose a point on the scale that, overall, best reflects this position.

Absent	Acquiring	Achieved	Advanced
--------	-----------	----------	----------

Why have you chosen this point on the scale?

--



### 3.3 Standards

### 3.3.5 Policies and Procedures

### Section 1: Youth Work Practice and Provision

All youth work is supported by appropriate policies and procedures, informing and enhancing the work of the organisation and its services.

The indicators below describe what should be in place in support of this standard at each point along the scale of attainment. Please consider these indicators in relation to your organisation and insert ✓ beside the appropriate indicator. You may add any other indicators you think are appropriate.

Absent	✓	Acquiring	✓	Achieved	✓	Advanced	✓
1. Policies and procedures do not exist.		1. Policies and procedures assist the work.		1. Policies and procedures support the work.		1. Policies and procedures support and enhance the work.	
2. Policies and procedures are not developed based on consultation.		2. Policies and procedures have been developed based on limited consultation.		2. Policies and procedures have been developed based on consultation.		2. Policies and procedures have been developed based on consultation and participation.	
3. Policies and procedures are rarely recorded, documented and followed.		3. Policies and procedures are mostly recorded, documented and followed.		3. Policies and procedures are recorded, documented and followed.		3. Policies and procedures are recorded, documented, followed and reviewed.	
4. Policies and procedures are inadequate, inaccessible and not understood.		4. Policies and procedures are mostly adequate, accessible and understood.		4. Policies and procedures are adequate, accessible and understood.		4. Policies and procedures are accessible, understood and effectively implemented.	
5. Policies and procedures are neither monitored nor reviewed.		5. Policies and procedures are occasionally monitored and reviewed.		5. Policies and procedures are monitored and reviewed.		5. Policies and procedures are regularly monitored, reviewed and revised.	
6. Policies and procedures do not inform practice.		6. Policies and procedures indirectly inform practice.		6. Policies and procedures directly inform practice.		6. Policies and procedures enhance practice and service development.	

Add any other indicators below:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

In the relevant spaces below, please describe the evidence your organisation has in place in relation to the above indicators:

--	--	--	--

Having considered the above, identify a position on the scale of attainment that best reflects your organisation's position in relation to this standard (mark ✓ on a point on the scale below). If you think your organisation is at different points on the scale of attainment in relation to the various indicators, choose a point on the scale that, overall, best reflects this position.

Absent	Acquiring	Achieved	Advanced
--------	-----------	----------	----------

Why have you chosen this point on the scale?

--

### 3.3 Standards 3.3.6 Governance and Operational Management Section 2: Organisational Management and Development

Youth work providers document and implement transparent and effective governance and operational management systems.

The indicators below describe what should be in place in support of this standard at each point along the scale of attainment. Please consider these indicators in relation to your organisation and insert ✓ beside the appropriate indicator. You may add any other indicators you think are appropriate.

Absent	✓	Acquiring	✓	Achieved	✓	Advanced	✓
1. Governance systems are unclear, undocumented and not in place.		1. Governance systems are mostly clear, documented and in place.		1. Governance systems are clear, documented and in place.		1. Governance systems are clearly documented and effectively implemented.	
2. Operational management systems are unclear, undocumented and not in place.		2. Operational management systems are mostly clear, documented and in place.		2. Operational management systems are clear, documented and in place.		2. Operational management systems are clearly documented and effectively implemented.	
3. Roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are unclear.		3. Roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are mostly clear.		3. Roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are clear.		3. Roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are clear and effective.	
4. Staff and management meetings are unstructured and infrequent.		4. Staff and management meetings are mostly structured, scheduled and documented.		4. Staff and management meetings are structured, scheduled and documented.		4. Staff and management meetings are clearly structured, scheduled and documented.	
5. Communication systems are unclear and inadequate.		5. Communication systems are mostly clear and adequate.		5. Communication systems are clear and effective.		5. Communication systems are clear and effective, both internally and externally.	
6. Governance and operational management systems do not inform service development.		6. Governance and operational management systems mostly support service development.		6. Governance and operational management systems support service development.		6. Governance and operational management systems enhance service development.	

Add any other indicators below:

--	--	--	--

In the relevant spaces below, please describe the evidence your organisation has in place in relation to the above indicators:

--	--	--	--

Having considered the above, identify a position on the scale of attainment that best reflects your organisation's position in relation to this standard (mark ✓ on a point on the scale below). If you think your organisation is at different points on the scale of attainment in relation to the various indicators, choose a point on the scale that, overall, best reflects this position.

Absent	Acquiring	Achieved	Advanced
--------	-----------	----------	----------

Why have you chosen this point on the scale?

--

### 3.3 Standards

### 3.3.7 Strategy

### Section 2: Organisational Management and Development

Youth work providers have a sustainable strategic plan that informs the direction and delivery of youth work.

The indicators below describe what should be in place in support of this standard at each point along the scale of attainment. Please consider these indicators in relation to your organisation and insert ✓ beside the appropriate indicator. You may add any other indicators you think are appropriate.

Absent	✓	Acquiring	✓	Achieved	✓	Advanced	✓
1. No overall strategic plan is in place or being developed.		1. Overall strategic plan is being developed.		1. Overall strategic plan is implemented.		1. Overall strategic plan is effectively implemented and actions achieved.	
2. Strategies for the work exist, but are undocumented.		2. Strategies for the work exist and are mostly documented.		2. Strategies for the work are implemented and documented.		2. Strategies for the work are fully implemented, documented and reviewed.	
3. Strategies have developed with no regard to consultation.		3. Strategies have been developed based on limited consultation.		3. Strategies have been developed based on consultation.		3. Strategies have been developed based on consultation and participation.	
4. Strategies are not based on clear rationale and do not lead to outcomes.		4. Strategies are mostly based on clear rationale and lead to the achievement of some outcomes.		4. Strategies in place are based on clear rationale and lead to the achievement of most outcomes.		4. Strategies in place are based on clear rationale and lead to the achievement of all outcomes.	
5. Voluntary and paid management do not provide leadership to the organisation.		5. Voluntary and paid management aim to provide leadership to the organisation.		5. Voluntary and paid management provide leadership to the organisation.		5. Voluntary and paid management actively provide leadership to the organisation.	
6. Strategies in place are unsustainable and provide no guidance or direction.		6. Strategies in place are mostly sustainable and provide some guidance and direction.		6. Strategies in place are sustainable and provide guidance and direction.		6. Strategies in place are sustainable and provide guidance, direction and purpose.	
7. Strategies have no regard to practice or service development.		7. Strategies indirectly inform practice and service development.		7. Strategies directly inform practice and service development.		7. Strategies enhance practice and service development, and are being achieved.	

Add any other indicators below:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

In the relevant spaces below, please describe the evidence your organisation has in place in relation to the above indicators:

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Having considered the above, identify a position on the scale of attainment that best reflects your organisation's position in relation to this standard (mark ✓ on a point on the scale below). If you think your organisation is at different points on the scale of attainment in relation to the various indicators, choose a point on the scale that, overall, best reflects this position.

Absent	Acquiring	Achieved	Advanced
--------	-----------	----------	----------

Why have you chosen this point on the scale?

--

### 3.3 Standards

### 3.3.8 Volunteers

### Section 2: Organisational Management and Development

Youth work providers promote the importance of volunteerism and all volunteers are valued and supported in their agreed roles.

The indicators below describe what should be in place in support of this standard at each point along the scale of attainment. Please consider these indicators in relation to your organisation and insert ✓ beside the appropriate indicator. You may add any other indicators you think are appropriate.

Absent	✓	Acquiring	✓	Achieved	✓	Advanced	✓
1. No volunteer policy exists.		1. Volunteer policy is being developed.		1. Volunteer policy is in place.		1. Volunteer policy is effectively implemented.	
2. No volunteer base exists.		2. Volunteer base is being developed.		2. Volunteer base is in place.		2. Volunteer base is developed and coordinated.	
3. The roles and responsibilities of volunteers are unclear.		3. The roles and responsibilities of volunteers are mostly clear.		3. The roles and responsibilities of volunteers are clear.		3. The roles, responsibilities and contribution of volunteers are clear and supported.	
4. Volunteers cannot access support and supervision.		4. Volunteers have limited access to support and supervision.		4. Volunteers are offered regular support and supervision.		4. Volunteers are provided with structured support and supervision.	
5. Volunteers cannot access training and development.		5. Volunteers have limited access to training and development.		5. Volunteers are offered regular access to training and development.		5. Volunteers are provided with and actively encouraged and supported in availing of training and development.	
6. Volunteer recognition, progression and mobility do not exist.		6. Limited volunteer recognition, progression and mobility exist.		6. Volunteer recognition, progression and mobility exist.		6. Volunteer recognition, progression and mobility are actively promoted.	
7. Volunteers do not participate in service delivery and management.		7. Volunteers have limited participation in service delivery and management.		7. Volunteers participate in service delivery and management.		7. Volunteers participate fully in service delivery and management.	

Add any other indicators below:

--	--	--	--	--

In the relevant spaces below, please describe the evidence your organisation has in place in relation to the above indicators:

--	--	--	--	--

Having considered the above, identify a position on the scale of attainment that best reflects your organisation's position in relation to this standard (mark ✓ on a point on the scale below).  
If you think your organisation is at different points on the scale of attainment in relation to the various indicators, choose a point on the scale that, overall, best reflects this position.

Absent	Acquiring	Achieved	Advanced
--------	-----------	----------	----------

Why have you chosen this point on the scale?

--

### 3.3 Standards 3.3.9 Human Resource (HR) Management Section 2: Organisational Management and Development

Youth work providers ensure the effective performance of both paid staff and volunteers, and offer appropriate support, supervision and development opportunities.

The indicators below describe what should be in place in support of this standard at each point along the scale of attainment. Please consider these indicators in relation to your organisation and insert ✓ beside the appropriate indicator. You may add any other indicators you think are appropriate.

Absent	✓	Acquiring	✓	Achieved	✓	Advanced	✓
1. No overall HR policy exists.		1. HR policy exists, but is not fully implemented.		1. HR policy is implemented.		1. HR policy is implemented effectively.	
2. HR policies and procedures have no regard to principles of good practice.		2. HR policies and procedures have regard to principles of good practice.		2. HR policies and procedures are based on principles of good practice.		2. HR policies and procedures clearly follow principles of good practice.	
3. Roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are unclear and undocumented.		3. Roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are mostly clear and documented.		3. Roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are clear and documented.		3. Roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are clear and effective.	
4. Recruitment and selection procedures are unclear and ineffective.		4. Recruitment and selection procedures are mostly clear and effective.		4. Recruitment and selection procedures are clear and effective.		4. Recruitment and selection procedures are clear, effective and regularly reviewed.	
5. Paid staff and volunteers cannot access support and supervision.		5. Paid staff and volunteers can access support and supervision.		5. Paid staff and volunteers are provided with regular support and supervision.		5. Paid staff and volunteers are provided with structured and scheduled support and supervision.	
6. Paid staff and volunteers cannot access training and development.		6. Paid staff and volunteers can access training and development.		6. Paid staff and volunteers are provided with regular training and development.		6. Paid staff and volunteers are provided with structured and scheduled training and development.	
7. Performance management systems are not in place.		7. Performance management systems are mostly in place.		7. Performance management systems are in place.		7. Performance management systems are implemented effectively.	

Add any other indicators below:

--	--	--	--

In the relevant spaces below, please describe the evidence your organisation has in place in relation to the above indicators:

--	--	--	--

Having considered the above, identify a position on the scale of attainment that best reflects your organisation's position in relation to this standard (mark ✓ on a point on the scale below). If you think your organisation is at different points on the scale of attainment in relation to the various indicators, choose a point on the scale that, overall, best reflects this position.

Absent	Acquiring	Achieved	Advanced
--------	-----------	----------	----------

Why have you chosen this point on the scale?

--

### 3.3 Standards 3.3.10 Collaboration and Integration

#### Section 2: Organisational Management and Development

Youth work providers operate collaboratively with other agencies and services to ensure an integrated response to the needs of young people.

The indicators below describe what should be in place in support of this standard at each point along the scale of attainment. Please consider these indicators in relation to your organisation and insert ✓ beside the appropriate indicator. You may add any other indicators you think are appropriate.

Absent	✓	Acquiring	✓	Achieved	✓	Advanced	✓
1. No collaboration exists with other services.		1. Limited collaboration exists with other services.		1. Collaboration exists with other services.		1. Active and productive collaboration exists with other services.	
2. Partnership arrangements are reactive.		2. Partnership arrangements are mostly reactive.		2. Partnership arrangements are mostly proactive.		2. Partnership arrangements are proactive.	
3. Needs of the young people are not regarded in service provision.		3. Needs of the young people are recognised in service provision.		3. Needs of the young people are clearly identified in service provision.		3. Needs of the young people are prioritised and central in service provision.	
4. Services work in isolation and do not have regard to an area-based approach.		4. Services work with others and aim to offer an integrated area-based approach.		4. Services work with others to provide an integrated area-based approach.		4. Services work with others to provide an integrated and planned area-based approach.	
5. No examples of resource-effective practices among services.		5. Some examples of resource-effective practices among services.		5. Examples of resource-effective practices among services.		5. Clear examples of resource-effective practices among services.	
6. No commitment to sectoral development.		6. Some commitment to sectoral development.		6. Commitment to sectoral development.		6. Clear commitment to sectoral development.	

Add any other indicators below:

--	--	--	--

In the relevant spaces below, please describe the evidence your organisation has in place in relation to the above indicators:

--	--	--	--

Having considered the above, identify a position on the scale of attainment that best reflects your organisation's position in relation to this standard (mark ✓ on a point on the scale below). If you think your organisation is at different points on the scale of attainment in relation to the various indicators, choose a point on the scale that, overall, best reflects this position.

Absent	Acquiring	Achieved	Advanced
--------	-----------	----------	----------

Why have you chosen this point on the scale?

--

## Part 4: External Assessment by VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer

To be completed in the 1st quarter of Year 1 and in the first year of each implementation cycle thereafter.

4.1 Organisation Information		External Assessment
To be completed by VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer following self-assessment by organisation		
Name of organisation		
Address		
Telephone		
E-mail		
Membership of the NQSF Implementation Team	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position/role in organisation</b>
	NQSF Lead:	
VEC area (if applicable)		
Name of VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer		
Scheduled progress review dates		

## 4.2 Review of documentary evidence

External Assessment

To be completed by VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer following self-assessment by organisation

1. Date review completed

2. Validation of self-assessment based on documentary evidence:

Comment on core principles and standards supported:



### 4.3 Observations on practice

### External Assessment

To be completed by VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer following self-assessment by organisation

1. Date and location of observations on practice	
2. Nature of practice observed <i>(e.g. activity with young people, leader training, etc).</i>	
3. Core principles and standards identified	
4. Validation of self-assessment based on observations on practice:	
(a) How the practice observed supports the core principles and/or standards identified (mark ✓ on a point on the scale below):	
Fully supports	Mostly supports
Somewhat supports	Fails to support
Comment:	
(b) How the practice observed validates the position taken by the organisation on the scale of attainment (mark ✓ on a point on the scale below):	
Fully validates	Mostly validates
Somewhat validates	Fails to validate
Comment:	

## 4.4 Focus groups with stakeholders

## External Assessment

To be completed by VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer following focus groups held as part of external assessment process

1. Date and location of focus groups

2. Composition of focus groups  
(e.g. young people, leaders, staff, etc)

3. Validation of self-assessment based on focus groups – Comments from focus groups

(a) How are you benefiting from your engagement with the organisation's services? (What do you get from being part of this?)

(b) How well are themes relating to specific core principles and/or standards (e.g. participation; planning, etc) in place within the organisation?  
(What do you see in practice here?)

(c) What could be developed and/or improved within the organisation? (What could be better?)

## Part 5: Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP)

### 5.1 Core Principles

CIP

To be completed annually in the 1st quarter by the organisation following the self-assessment and external assessment processes, and in conjunction with the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer.

Please identify the areas for improvement, outline the actions to be taken and indicate who will progress these actions and by when.

All youth work practice and provision is:	Identified areas for improvement	Actions to be carried out to address identified areas	Who will progress these and when?
1. Young person-centred: recognising the rights of young people and holding as central their active and voluntary participation			
2. Committed to ensuring and promoting the safety and well-being of young people			
3. Educational and developmental			
4. Committed to ensuring and promoting equality and inclusiveness in all its dealings with young people and adults			
5. Dedicated to the provision of quality youth work and committed to continuous improvement			

## 5.2 Standards on Youth Work Practice and Provision

CIP

To be completed annually in the 1st quarter by the organisation following the self-assessment and external assessment processes, and in conjunction with the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer.

Please identify the areas for improvement, outline the actions to be taken and indicate who will progress these actions and by when.

Standards	Identified areas for improvement	Actions to be carried out to address identified areas	Who will progress these and when?
<b>1. Planning</b> All youth work is planned and designed according to young people's needs, outlining clear rationale, objectives and expected outcomes.			
<b>2. Practice</b> All youth work is delivered by suitably skilled personnel according to principles of good practice and is outcomes-focused.			
<b>3. Progression</b> All youth work engages proactively with young people, offering strategies and supports that enable young people to progress and achieve.			
<b>4. Monitoring and Assessment</b> All youth work is monitored and assessed to determine its effectiveness and efficiency, measure learning outcomes and enhance youth work provision.			
<b>5. Policies and Procedures</b> All youth work is supported by appropriate policies and procedures, informing and enhancing the work of the organisation and its services.			

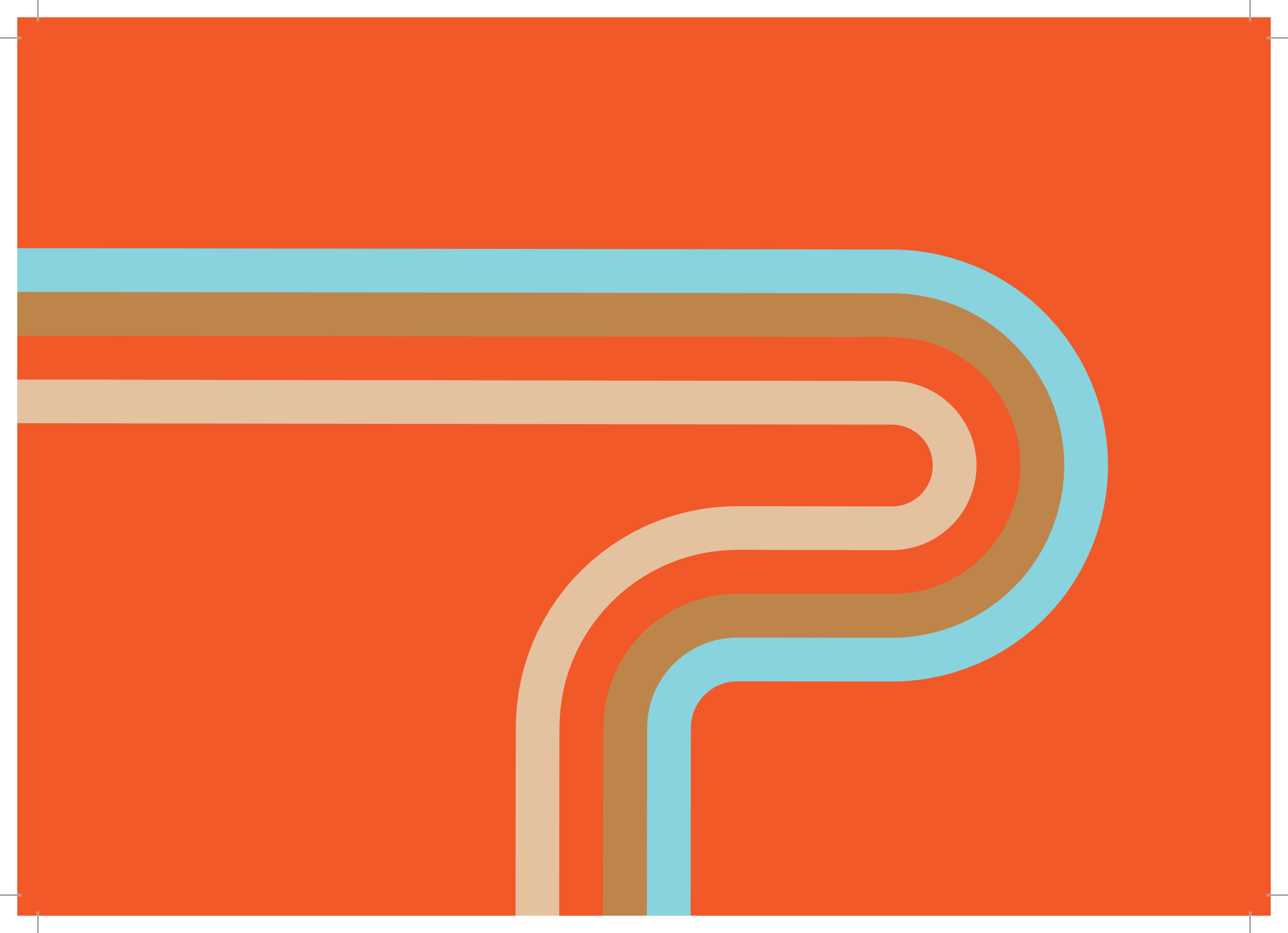
### 5.3 Standards on Organisational Management and Development

CIP

To be completed annually in the 1st quarter by the organisation following the self-assessment and external assessment processes, and in conjunction with the VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer.

Please identify the areas for improvement, outline the actions to be taken and indicate who will progress these actions and by when.

Standards	Identified areas for improvement	Actions to be carried out to address identified areas	Who will progress these and when?
<b>1. Governance and Operational Management</b> Youth work providers document and implement transparent and effective governance and operational management systems.			
<b>2. Strategy</b> Youth work providers have a sustainable strategic plan that informs the direction and delivery of youth work.			
<b>3. Volunteers</b> Youth work providers promote the importance of volunteerism and all volunteers are valued and supported in their agreed roles.			
<b>4. Human Resource Management</b> Youth work providers ensure the effective performance of both paid staff and volunteers, and offer appropriate support, supervision and development opportunities.			
<b>5. Collaboration and Integration</b> Youth work providers operate collaboratively with other agencies and services to ensure an integrated response to the needs of young people.			
Agreed by NQSF Lead within organisation: _____ Date: _____  Additional comment if required: _____		Agreed by VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer: _____ Date: _____  Additional comment if required: _____	



## Part 6: Progress Report – Self-Assessment (6.1) and External Assessment (6.2)

### 6.1 Progress Report – Self-Assessment

#### 6.1.1 Organisation Information

To be completed and submitted annually, together with Section 3.1 (Statement of Youth Work Practice), via your VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer to the OMCYA in the 4th quarter of each year.

This section of the Progress Report should be completed by the organisation following a period of implementation of the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP).

Name of organisation		
Address		
Telephone		
E-mail		
Membership of the NQSF Implementation Team	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position/role in organisation</b>
	NQSF Lead:	
VEC area (if applicable)		
Name of VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer		

## 6.1 Progress Report – Self-Assessment

## 6.1.2 Core Principles

To be completed and submitted annually via your VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer to the OMCYA in the 4th quarter of each year.

This section of the Progress Report should be completed by the organisation following a period of implementation of the Continuous Improvement Plan.

Please review the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) and detail any progress achieved.

All youth work practice and provision is:	Progress achieved (to include an identified achieved outcome)	Further areas to be developed (and outlined in new CIP)	Who will progress these and when?
1. Young person-centred: recognising the rights of young people and holding as central their active and voluntary participation			
2. Committed to ensuring and promoting the safety and well-being of young people			
3. Educational and developmental			
4. Committed to ensuring and promoting equality and inclusiveness in all its dealings with young people and adults			
5. Dedicated to the provision of quality youth work and committed to continuous improvement			



## 6.1 Progress Report – Self-Assessment

## 6.1.3 Standards

To be completed and submitted annually via your VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer to the OMCYA in the 4th quarter of each year.

This section of the Progress Report should be completed by the organisation following a period of implementation of the Continuous Improvement Plan.

Please review the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) and detail any progress achieved.

Standards	Progress achieved (please also indicate your current position on the scale of attainment)	Further areas to be developed (and outlined in new CIP)	Who will progress these and when?
1. Planning			
2. Practice			
3. Progression			
4. Monitoring and Assessment			
5. Policies and Procedures			
6. Governance and Operational Management			
7. Strategy			
8. Volunteers			
9. Human Resource Management			
10. Collaboration and Integration			

## 6.1 Progress Report – Self-Assessment

## 6.1.4 Further Actions and Emerging Issues

To be completed and submitted annually via your VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer to the OMCYA in the 4th quarter of each year.

This section of the Progress Report should be completed by the organisation following a period of implementation of the Continuous Improvement Plan.

Please detail any further actions required at this point.

Further actions required	Personnel responsible	Timeframe for achievement

Please identify additional areas of action/emerging issues identified, if any.

--	--	--

## 6.1 Progress Report – Self-Assessment

## 6.1.5 Impact and Improvement

To be completed and submitted annually via your VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer to the OMCYA in the 4th quarter of each year.

This section of the Progress Report should be completed by the organisation following a period of implementation of the Continuous Improvement Plan.

Please provide feedback on your involvement in the NQSF under the following headings:

Practical benefits of engagement in the NQSF

Challenges encountered in the NQSF

Suggestions for improvements to the NQSF

## 6.2 Progress Report – External Assessment by VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer

To be completed and submitted annually to the OMCYA in the 4th quarter of each year.

This section of the Progress Report should be completed by VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer following self-assessment by organisation of progress achieved on implementation of Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP).

Please provide a brief commentary on the following:

1. Date of most recent External Assessment completed

2. Commentary on the External Assessment (if in Year 1 of the implementation cycle):

3. Commentary on the position taken in the CIP (based on most recent self-assessment):

4. Commentary on progress achieved in the implementation of the CIP:

**6.2 Progress Report – External Assessment by VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer (continued)**

**5. Recommended actions to be achieved by next progress review dates:**

--

**6. Additional comments:**

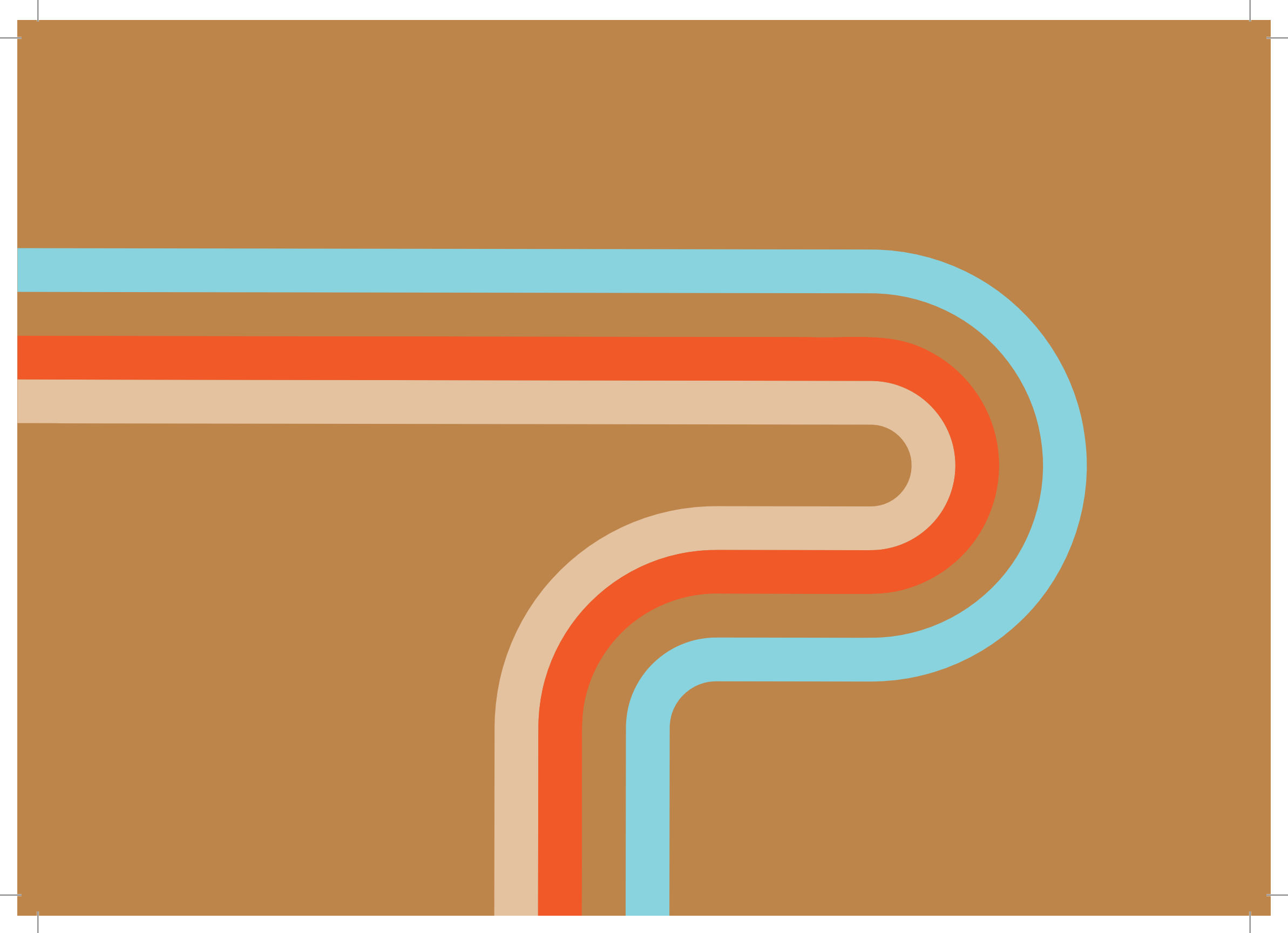
--

**7. Scheduled progress review dates:**

--

**Signed: VEC Officer/NQSF Standards Officer**

**Date:**



## NQSF Working Group

Conor Rowley ( <i>Chair</i> )	Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
John Cahill	Foróige
Ruth Griffin	Co. Cork VEC
Jim McVeigh	Co. Dublin VEC
Maurice Devlin	National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM)
Stephen Turner	Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)
Gwen Doyle	City of Dublin Youth Services Board (CDYSB)
Mary Cunningham	National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)
Diarmuid Kearney	Youth Work Ireland
Doreen Burke	Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

## NQSF Implementation Group

Trevor Sweetman	Sligo/Leitrim VEC
Lorraine Duane	North Tipperary VEC
Paddy Muldoon	Donegal VEC
Alison Fox	Wicklow VEC
Louise Ryan	Co. Galway VEC
Ruth Griffin	Co. Cork VEC
Brendan Gribbon	City of Dublin Youth Service Board
Celene Dunne	City of Dublin Youth Service Board
Mark Harding	City of Dublin Youth Service Board
Conor Rowley	Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

## Organisations that participated in the NQSF Pilot

### LOCAL YOUTH WORK SERVICES

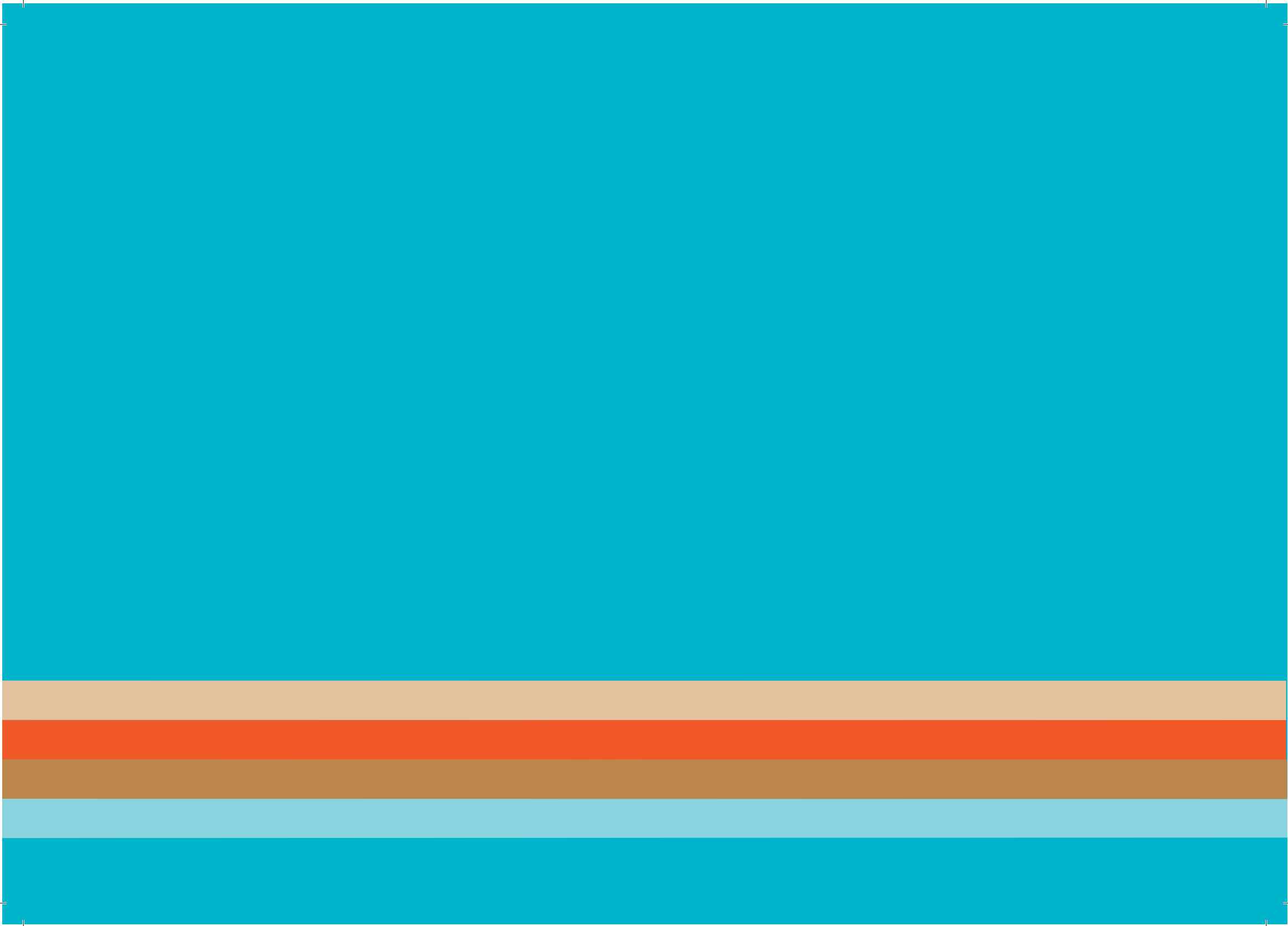
- **City of Dublin Youth Service Board**  
 Finglas Youth Resource Centre  
 Sphere 17  
 Crumlin Lower Area Youth Project (CLAY)
- **Co. Cork VEC**  
 Beara Peninsula Youth Development Project  
 Bandon Youth Information Centre
- **Donegal VEC**  
 Donegal Youth Information Centre and Youth Project  
 Letterkenny Youth Information Centre  
 Daybreak Programme
- **Co. Galway VEC**  
 Forum Adolescent Support Project  
 Beartas Mhuintearais don Óige faoi Míbhuntáiste (Muintearas)  
 Tuam Youth Service Project
- **North Tipperary VEC**  
 Nenagh Youth Development Project  
 Roscrea 2000  
 Tipperary Regional Youth Services
- **Sligo/Leitrim VEC**  
 Sligo Youth Information Centre  
 Leitrim Youth Project  
 Mohill Community Youth Project
- **Wicklow VEC**  
 Little Bray Youth Project  
 St. Fergal's Ballywaltrim Youth Project  
 Bray Youth Service Long-standing Project

### NATIONAL YOUTH WORK ORGANISATIONS

- National Association of Youth Drama (NAYD)
- Catholic Youth Care (CYC)
- Scouting Ireland









Oifig an Aire Leanaí  
agus Gnóthai Óige  
Office of the Minister for  
Children and Youth Affairs



An Roinn Sláinte  
agus Leanaí  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND CHILDREN

Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs  
Department of Health and Children  
Hawkins House  
Hawkins Street  
Dublin 2

Tel: +353 (0)1 635 4000  
Fax: +353 (0)1 674 3223  
E-mail: [omc@health.gov.ie](mailto:omc@health.gov.ie)  
Web: [www.omcya.ie](http://www.omcya.ie)

Design: [www.penhouse.ie](http://www.penhouse.ie)

PUBLISHED BY GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS, DUBLIN

To be purchased from  
GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS SALES OFFICE,  
SUN ALLIANCE HOUSE, MOLESWORTH STREET, DUBLIN 2  
or by mail order from  
GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS,  
POSTAL TRADE SECTION, 51 ST. STEPHEN'S GREEN, DUBLIN 2  
[Tel: 01 647 6834; Fax: 01 647 6843]  
or through any bookseller

Price: €5.00 Prn: A10/0972

IS BN 978-1-4064-2516-1



9 781406 425161