

**Evaluation of the
Highlands and Islands Equalities Forum**

Final report

SCVO

July 2008

**Organisational Development and Support
2 Myrtle Park
Glasgow
G42 8UQ**

**Tel. 0141 424 3765
Fax. 0141 423 9997
Email: andrew.fyfe@odsconsulting.co.uk**



Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
1.1 About the study	1
1.2 Methodology	1
1.3 Inception meeting	1
1.4 Email survey	1
1.5 Detailed case studies of SMEs	2
1.6 Interviews with staff	2
1.7 Interviews with stakeholders	3
2. Background to HIEF	4
2.1 Contextual information	4
2.2 Activities to date, in a nutshell	4
2.3 Funding	6
3. Review of activities to date	8
3.1 Training courses and road shows	8
3.2 Equality toolkit	9
3.3 Monthly e-bulletins	11
4. Assessment of impact – Online survey results	12
4.1 About the email survey	12
4.2 Awareness of HIEF services	12
4.3 Use of HIEF services	13
4.4 Rating HIEF services	14
4.5 Which services were of most value	15
4.6 Impact of HIEF	17
4.7 Future use of HIEF services	18
4.8 Profile of respondents	19
5. Initial key findings from stakeholder interviews	24
5.1 Definitions of Equalities	24
5.2 Equalities as a priority	25
5.3 Awareness of HIEF among stakeholders	26
5.4 Perceived objectives of HIEF	27
5.5 Perceived benefits of working with HIEF	30
5.6 Alternatives to HIEF	32
5.7 Perceived impact of HIEF	33
5.8 Personal experiences of HIEF's services	34
5.9 Suggestions for improvements	35
5.10 Limitations of HIEF	35
6. Initial options for the future	37
6.1 Purpose	37
6.2 Geographical area of operation	39
6.3 Constitutional arrangements	40
6.4 Name	41
6.5 Funding	42
6.6 Measuring impact	42
7. Conclusions and Recommendations	43
7.1 Conclusions	43
7.2 Recommendations	44

Annex 1 – List of stakeholders interviewed for telephone survey

Annex 2 – Copy of online questionnaire

Annex 3 – List of organisations who contributed financially to HIEF

1. Introduction

1.1 About the Study

ODS Consulting was appointed by SCVO in February 2008 to evaluate the Highlands and Islands Equalities Forum (HIEF).

The study reviewed the activities of HIEF, assessing the perceived impacts of the project to date. This report develops a picture of the activities carried out and how HIEF is viewed by stakeholders.

1.2 Methodology

We gathered the information in a number of different ways:

- Desk research reviewing the previous work of HIEF;
- An email survey sent to 900 subscribers to HIEF's e-bulletin service, advisory group members and Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs);
- Three depth telephone interviews with staff working at HIEF;
- Telephone depth interviews with 9 key stakeholders;
- Discussions with other organisations involved with HIEF to develop case studies of SMEs.

1.3 Inception Meeting

An inception meeting was held on 21 February 2008. This meeting ensured there was a shared understanding of the study brief and proposed research methods.

1.4 Email Survey

We conducted a targeted email survey of service users. The survey was issued on 7 March 2008. We requested that the survey was completed by 28 March, with one email reminder sent out one week prior to the deadline date. Approximately 900 surveys were issued to individuals already known to HIEF through their subscription to the e-bulletin service, or their membership to the Advisory Group.

The survey was sent out by HIEF themselves to encourage response. A reminder email was sent by HIEF on 18 March to boost the response rate. The rate was unusually poor, with approximately 7% of those on the mailing list responding (65 respondents in total). We could suggest that this was due to the timing of the survey falling over the Easter holidays, and in the run up to the end of the financial year for many organisations. Or it could possibly be due to a number of generic (or incorrect) email addresses. The table below shows the breakdown of responses by sector.

Table 1.1 - Responses by sector	
Private sector	14%
Public sector	48%
Voluntary sector	22%
Volunteer	11%
Interested as an individual	6%

Source Q13; Which of the following describes your role. N = 65 responses

1.5 Detailed Case Studies of SMEs

One of the questions within the online survey was to gauge if any respondents would be willing to take part in further research for HIEF. Encouragingly, 92% of the online respondents positively indicated their willingness to take part in additional research. A follow up telephone call explored in more detail the services HIEF had provided to their organisation and the impact this had had on their day to day working. Ten case studies were carried out and these are presented throughout this document.

1.6 Interviews with Staff

Telephone interviews took place with staff at HIEF. This was conducted early in the evaluation to offer some contextual information to the findings. Three telephone interviews were conducted with the Project Manager, the Project Leader and the Development Officer. Findings from these interviews are incorporated throughout the report.

1.7 Interviews with Stakeholders

Interviews were conducted with stakeholders with a range of interests in equalities, for example:

- NHS Highland;
- Highland Council;
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise;
- The Equalities and Human Rights Commission;
- Northern Police Constabulary; and
- University of Highlands and Islands (UHI).

A list of those consulted is included in Annex 1. Discussion focussed on six key areas:

- Perceptions of Equalities, this included how people describe the term and how 'equalities' are perceived within the organisation;
- Awareness of HIEF and their main objectives;
- Perceptions of training and events attended;
- The benefits HIEF can offer organisations;
- The impact that HIEF has had on individual organisations; and
- Ways HIEF could be improved, or become more effective.

2. Background to HIEF

2.1 Contextual Information

The Highlands and Islands Equality Forum was originally set up in 2002 as a pilot project, with the aim of raising awareness about all areas of equality and diversity, particularly among Small and Medium Enterprises (SME). Their original remit covered the Highlands and Islands region. In the absence of any baseline data, HIEF have now, in 2008, asked ODS Consulting to evaluate the project thus far, by investigating the impact of its activities and to consider its future direction.

Since the project began in 2002, there have been significant changes in the context in which HIEF operates. For example, changes to legislation have given additional legal rights to many groups, including disabled people and older people. Employers and public organisations now have greater obligations to promote equality.

Secondly, the organisational context has changed. Nationally, the new Equality and Human Rights Commission has been established, taking the place of the three previous Commissions on disability, race and gender. The new Commission has a much wider remit, working for equality and human rights for all.

Finally, the funding context has changed. Although supported by a range of partners, HIEF has had a strong reliance on the European Social Fund – with half of its funding coming from this source. As European Social Funds for Scotland decrease, this will impact on the funding available to HIEF, making consideration of other funding options vital. Additionally, uncertainties about the future budgets of local partners has made it difficult to commit matched funding – certainly for more than one year.

2.2 Activities to date, in a nutshell

This section very briefly outlines the key activities of HIEF for each calendar year since its inception. A fuller discussion is presented in section 3.

2002 and 2003

- Focus on raising awareness of equalities issues;
- Several training courses offered to people from the public, voluntary and private (particularly SME) sectors – almost 1,000 people were involved;
- Contacts list established.

2004¹

- HIEF website published;
- Contacts list grew from 500 to 870;
- Co-hosted events with Scottish Civic Forum, Scottish Executive and the DRC;
- Almost half of the beneficiaries were from the private sector;
- Articles about HIEF appeared in the press - for example, Executive magazine, FSB News, Chamber of Commerce Newsletter;
- Engaged 3 business champions; and
- 25 road shows were offered and about 175 delegates attended these events.

2005 and 2006²

- HIEF database now grown to 1,150 members;
- Advisory Network established to give expert advice on HIEF output;
- HIEF involved with ten strategic planning groups – such as the Scottish Executive’s Race Equality in Rural Areas Strategic Group and the Disability Rights Commission Employers’ Reference Group;
- Sixteen road shows took place in 2005 to a total of 116 people in locations such as Fort Willian, Dingwall, Aviemore and Kirkwall. A further 23 road shows took place in 2006 to a total of 327 people;
- Funding was gained from Scottish Enterprise/HIE as part of their ‘Equality Matters in Business’ project;
- Welcome pack established;
- Five training sessions delivered to approximately 150 beneficiaries; and
- Twenty-one new training courses were established, covering topics such as Disability Awareness, Gender, Race and Attitudinal Challenging and Case History Workshops, which were interactive sessions delivered to Orkney Health board.

2007 and 2008³

- HIEF database now contains 1,200 members;
- Training events continue to take place with clients such as UHI and Shetland Access Panel;

¹ Source: Leaders report, 2004

² Scottish Programmes 2000-2006 HISTP Form, European Structural Funds Grant Application

³ Overall events and training log, 2007.

- Road shows have continued to be popular and HIEF's pre and post awareness questionnaires indicate an increase in the participants' awareness of equality and diversity issues from 40% to over 90%; and
- HIEF has jointly presented events with DRC and organised with events such as Highlands R Us.

2.3 Funding

The core funding for HIEF has, since its inception, been based on funding from the European Social Fund and an equal amount of 'matched' funding from the main partners. The main funding partners over this period have been SCVO, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the University of Highlands and Islands and Highland Council.

In addition a wide range of organisations have made financial contributions (normally for specific activities). A list of the organisations which have provided 'one-off' or occasional support to HIEF are included in Annex 3.

The annual core funding has varied from year to year – based on the amount of matched funding which partners could commit to each one year or two year application for European Social Funds. The amount of actual core expenditure in each calendar year from 2002 to 2007 averaged about £150,000.

Table 2.1 shows the pattern of core funding between 2002 and 2008. The actual expenditure has been a little less than the approved amount each year. Typically the final claim level has been about 90% of the approved figure. This is prudent, given the importance of making sure that all expenditure was eligible and that the matched funding is available at the correct time. From time to time, regulations for ESF expenditure change.

Table 2.2 provides more detailed information about the planned maximum match funding from core partners for 2007.

Table 2.1 - Core funding breakdown since inception (calendar years)

Period	Year	Length of application	Approved Eligible spend (£)	Actual spend (£)	ESF Approved (£)	ESF claimed (£)	Match Funding (£)
	2002 and 2003	2 years	238,896	215,751	119,448	107,876	107,876
Jan - Dec	2002			86,466		43,233	
Jan - Dec	2003			129,285		64,643	
Jan - Dec	2004	1 Year	167,000	147,732	83,500	73,866	73,866
	2005 and 2006	2 years	455,031	402,438	227,516	201,488	201,488
Jan - Dec	2005			185,485		92,742	
Jan - Dec	2006			216,953		108,746	
Jan - Dec	2007	1 year	183,900	169,000	91,950	84,500	84,500
Jan - Dec (planned)	2008	1 year	112,050		56,025		56,025

Source: HIEF Development Officer, 2008

Table 2.2 - Core funding – approved figure for 2007

Public match funding	
SCVO	£53,250
Highlands & Islands Enterprise	£20,000
UHI	£10,500
Highland Council	£8,200
Total match funding	£91,950
ESF funding	£91,950
Total project cost	£183,900

Source: Scottish Executive European Structural Funds Grant application form, 2007

3. Review of Activities to Date

3.1 Training Courses and Road Shows

Between 2002 and 2004 HIEF established itself with a focus on raising awareness of equalities issues. This involved the establishment and development of a contacts list; a range of training events across Highlands and Islands – including Argyll and Bute - and the launch of the website. Over this period the contacts list grew to 870 people – and well over 1,500 people were involved in training events.

Training courses were produced and delivered in several locations across the area.

Training included:

- Disability Awareness training road shows;
- General Awareness and Equalities Information; and
- Discussions with sixth year students about equalities awareness.

In 2005 and 2006, 30 new courses were introduced by HIEF, including:

- Disability Awareness in terms of delivering services to the public;
- Flexible working;
- Equality Law;
- Equality Policy;
- People Management/Equal Opportunities;
- Mainstreaming Equality; and
- Belief & Religion, Sexual Orientation and Age and Diversity Training.

Over 800 SMEs attended events in this period, resulting in over 1,600 participants attending courses or training.⁴

From 2007 HIEF extended its list of partners to include Scottish Enterprise as well as the National Equality Commissions, in order to raise awareness of equality issues and to ensure that the Highlands and Islands area contributes towards national policy. Around 17 road shows took place in 2007 attracting over 200 delegates. In addition 17 training events took place covering areas such as Kirkwall, Stornoway and Aviemore with over 260 delegates attending in total⁵. These events covered the

⁴ Scottish Programmes HISTP form. European Structural Funds grant application form, 2000-2006

⁵ Overall 2007 events report and analysis, HIEF.

six strands of HIEF's work, namely Training and Learning, Awareness Raising, Events, Research, Communication and Strategic Programme.⁶

3.2 Equality Toolkit

The equality toolkit is a substantial pack distributed to those attending conferences and events. It contains a remarkable wealth of information including important and highly practical documents on all aspects of the six strands of equality, like:

- Equal Pay, Fair Pay. A small business guide to effective pay practices;
- Delivering quality services, meeting different needs. Promoting sex equality in the public sector;
- Are you getting equal pay?;
- Are you providing equal pay?;
- Gender Identity;
- Introducing and managing flexible working. Guidance for Managers and Supervisors;
- ACAS Age and the Workplace;
- Age +ve. Age Diversity at work;
- Age and the workplace – putting the Employment equality Regulations into practice;
- ACAS Religion or belief and the workplace;
- ACAS Sexual orientation and the workplace;
- Employing Disabled People;
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 – What Employers Need to Know; and
- Guidance for managers on topics such as sexual harassment, pregnancy and gender reassignment.

The pack is updated each year with the most relevant information.

Also contained within this pack is a Pre-Event Awareness Questionnaire which HIEF ask attendees to complete prior to the conference. It tests specific knowledge and awareness relating to the six strands of equalities legislation. Following the training, attendees are provided with the correct answers. This questionnaire is used by HIEF to indicate the impact of their training and conferences.

⁶ Scottish Executive European Structural Funds Grant Application, Nov 2007

In 2007, HIEF's own analysis of the pre-event questionnaire indicates that prior to attending a training event, 45% of attendees were aware of equalities issues, compared to 89% after they had attended the training. Similarly, the lunchtime road shows indicated that only 41% of attendees knew of the issues before the session, but 94% indicated awareness after HIEF's training.⁷

In 2004, 95%⁸ of delegates at HIEF conferences indicated they valued the Toolkit, but no subsequent analysis has been conducted, only anecdotal feedback.

Case study 1 Shetland Council

One department of **Shetland Council** offers training and advice to external companies, SMEs and industries such as the construction and fishing industry. They provide a variety of training on such topics as health and safety, administration, food and hygiene as well as accredited courses such as NEBOSH (The National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health). Having attended HIEF training and received the equality and diversity toolkit, this is now used as a resource in their own training. The toolkit provides examples that help 'bring legislation alive' and the documents provide a useful checklist on what organisations should be thinking about, as well as an excellent resource for signposting to other organisations for more up to date information.

⁷ Source: HIEF overall events report and analysis log, 2007

⁸ Source: HIEF end of year presentation, 2004

3.3 Monthly E-bulletins

HIEF and Highland Council jointly issue a monthly e-bulletin giving details of all equalities news and events. Recipients include those who have signed up to the contacts list at HIEF, which currently stands at about 900 (with useable email addresses). E-bulletins dating back to 2006 are available on HIEF's website. Anecdotal feedback indicates that the e-bulletin service is well received and is important at keeping people up to date with news and forthcoming events.

Case study 2 The Ceilidh Place

The Ceilidh Place in Ullapool is described as a 'venue with bedrooms'. This hotel hosts art exhibitions and regular live music events. One member of staff commented that it was often difficult to attend training and events as they tended to be focussed around Inverness, and this was too far from Ullapool to justify attendance. However, they have welcomed the approaches taken by HIEF. The monthly e-bulletins were described as 'invaluable'. Also they were able to benefit from 'on site' equalities training on 'Employment Law and Equalities in the Workplace' from HIEF. This has been particularly useful as the Ceilidh Place employs a substantial number of seasonal workers.

4. Assessment of Impact – Online Survey Results

4.1 About the Email Survey

The email questionnaire aimed to gauge the perceptions of individuals across Scotland with some connection to HIEF and an interest in equalities. The questionnaire was designed in consultation with staff at HIEF.

The questions focussed on:

- awareness and use of HIEF's services;
- rating these services and indicating which were of most value; and
- gauging the impact of HIEF on their organisations.

We designed, delivered and collated responses to the survey using SurveyMonkey.com.

The questionnaire used a tick box format. For some questions respondents were asked to choose from a list of words and phrases and decide which phrases were most or least accurate. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Annex 2.

The low base sizes should be borne in mind when interpreting these findings. Only 65 respondents in total answered this survey, and within questions the base size varies as some people chose not to respond to certain questions. The relevant base size is indicated where appropriate.

4.2 Awareness of HIEF Services (64 responses)

We asked two questions about awareness in relation to HIEF. One asked about the level of awareness of HIEF while the other asked respondents to indicate the services they were aware of from a pre-defined list.

Almost two thirds (62%) of respondents indicated that they knew 'a little' about HIEF and the services it offers, compared to almost four in ten (39%) who rated themselves as knowing 'a great deal'. Encouragingly, no respondents indicated they knew nothing about HIEF.

Respondents were asked to select from a list, which services they had used. Overall, respondents' awareness of services was generally high, but with room for improvement on some measures. For example, approximately four in ten respondents claimed to be aware of HIEFs literature dissemination (38%) or their 'Train the Trainer' events (41%).

In ranked order, the services respondents were most aware of were as follows:

- General equalities training – 70%
- Conferences and large events – 66%
- Advice on good equality practice – 66%
- Response to general enquiries for information – 59%
- Road shows/lunchtime seminars – 58%
- Equality strand specific training – 58%

4.3 Use of HIEF's Services (64 responses)

In addition to stakeholders' being *aware* of the services, we also asked them to indicate which services they had *used*. The take up of services across all the measures we tested was lower than the awareness of the service. For example, 70% of respondents were aware of the general equalities training and 39% had actually used it. Similarly, 16% of respondents had used HIEF for advice on good equality practice and 66% indicated they were aware of it.

The lowest levels of use were for the following services:

- Train the trainer training – 5%
- Customised equalities training – 11%
- Response to general enquiries – 11%

Only 3% of respondents indicated they had not used any of the services offered by HIEF.

The highest levels of take up for HIEF's services were for:

- Monthly e-bulletins (nearly six in ten respondents (58%) indicated they used this service);
- Conferences and large events (44%); and
- Lunchtime seminars (34%).

The figure below shows the top five services that respondents were aware of, with the comparative use of these services.

Figure 1: Awareness of HIEF services and their comparative use

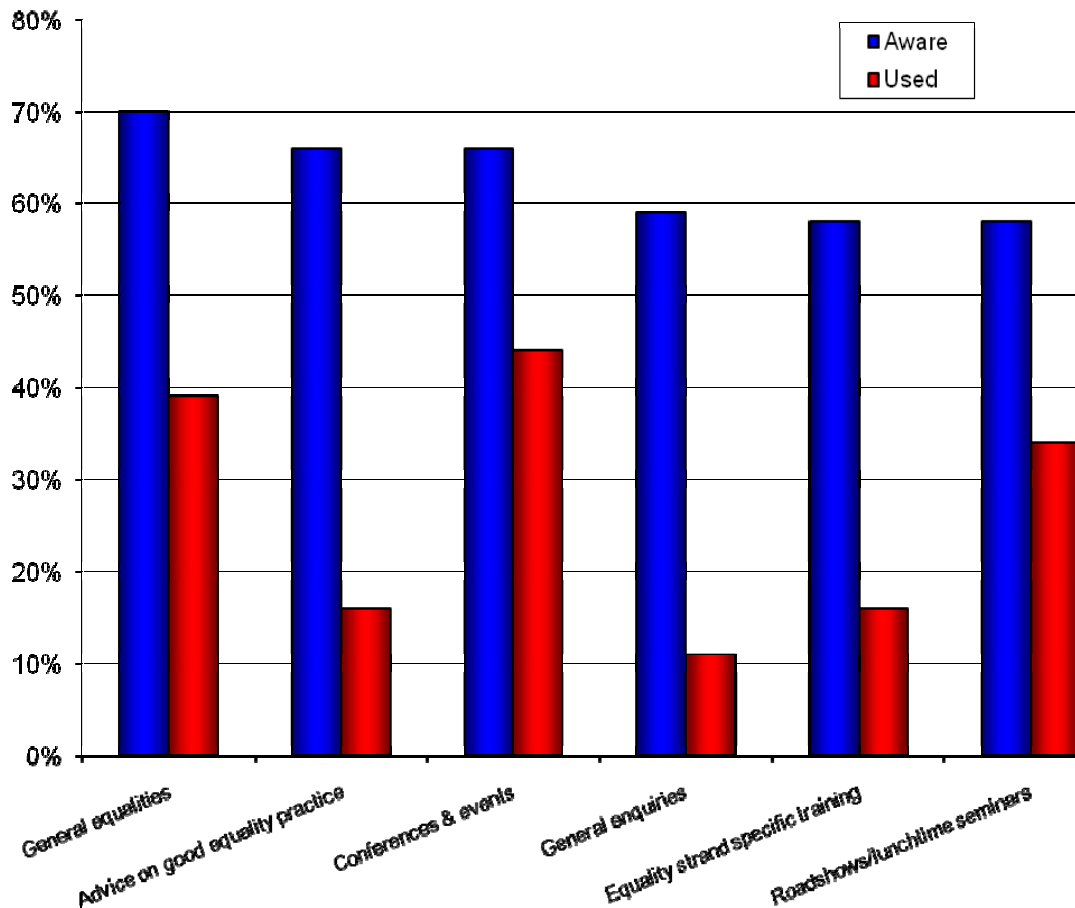


Figure 1: Awareness and use of HIEF services, from Q4a Are you aware that the following services are offered by HIEF? Q4b: Have you used them? N= 64

Attendance at conferences (44%), general equalities training (39%) as well as road shows and lunchtime seminars (34%) was significant, as was the general awareness of these services (66%, 70% and 58% respectively).

4.4 Rating HIEF's Services (59 responses)

Respondents were asked to rate on a scale the services they had used. The vast majority of respondents gave positive ratings on the scale, which ran from 'very good' to 'very poor'. For the purpose of this question, net scores have been calculated. This combines the 'good' and 'very good' scores to give an overall positive score.

No one who had used the services rated them as 'poor' or 'very poor'. For analysis purposes, those who indicated 'not applicable' on the scale have been removed from the calculations. Therefore, individual base sizes are marked for each measure.

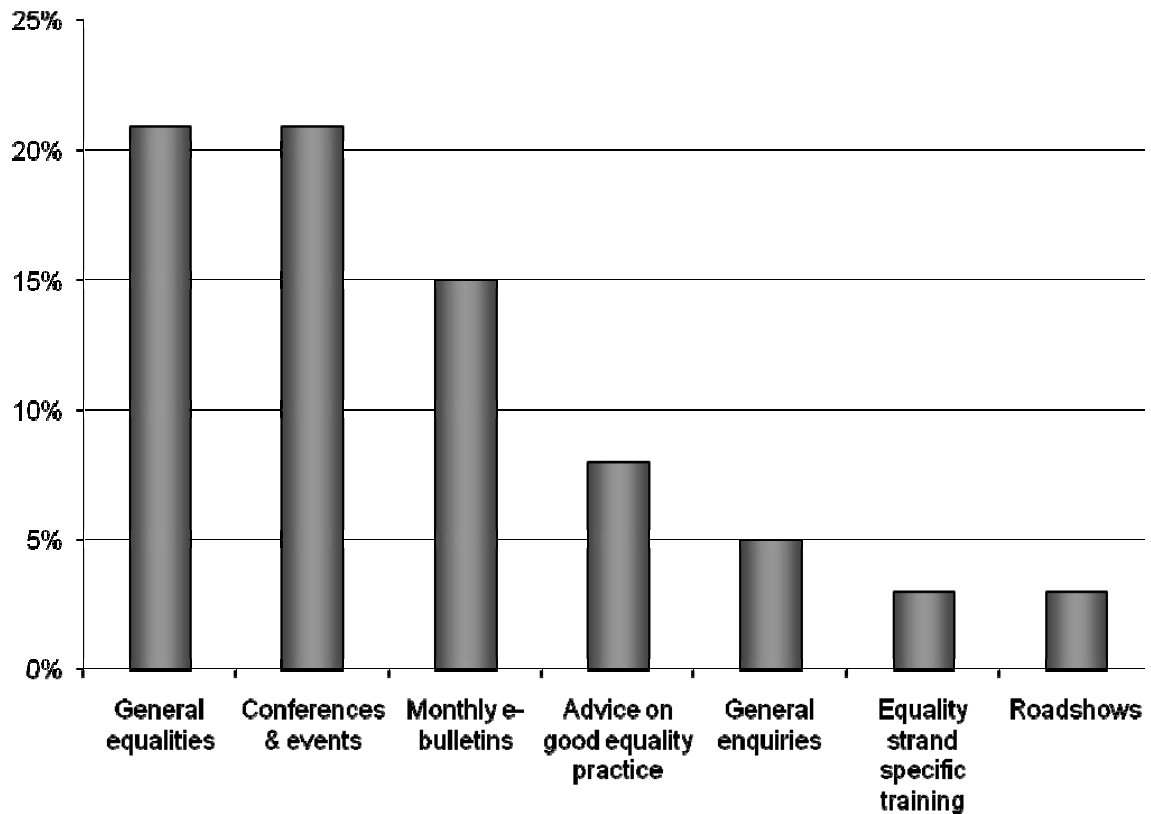
For example:

- 73% of those indicating they had attended a conference or event rated it as 'very good'. A further 24% rated the events as 'good' giving a net score of 97% (n=37)
- Two thirds of those attending general equalities training (66%) rated it as 'very good', while a further 28% rated this training as 'good' giving a net score of 94% (n=32)
- Lunchtime events and road shows were also positively received, with equal numbers rating these sessions as 'very good' (48%) or as 'good' (48%) demonstrating an overall positive score of 96% (n=29).

4.5 Which services were of most value? (61 responses)

Respondents were then asked to indicate which single service offered by HIEF had been, or would be, of most value to them. Overall results indicated that conferences and large events (21%), general equalities training (20%), and monthly e-bulletins (15%) were beneficial to stakeholders. The following chart shows the perceived relative value of some of the services offered by HIEF.

Figure 2: Perceived value of HIEF services



Q6a Which of these services offered by HIEF have been or would be most valuable to you? N= 61

4.5.1 Reasons why services perceived as valuable

Respondents were then asked to give reasons as to why particular services were valuable to them. Responses included:

Conferences and large events

- Ability to network with other organisations
- Brings together key local players with national good quality speakers

General equalities training

- To enable the organisation to comply with legal obligations
- Information about good practice
- Information about legislation and employment law

4.6 Impact of HIEF (64 responses)

Respondents were asked to gauge the impact that HIEF has had on them as individuals as well as the extent to which it has impacted on their organisations.

Three questions were asked to ascertain this information:

- Firstly by relating to a number of statements about understanding of equalities practices;
- Secondly by asking respondents the extent to which they agreed their organisation has met certain requirements, and
- Thirdly, in the absence of HIEF, who else they would have approached for information.

The results are detailed below.

4.6.1 Impact on individuals (64 responses)

Respondents indicated from a list of statements the one which best described the impact HIEF has had on their understanding of equalities. Over eight in ten respondents (88%) indicated that HIEF had made, at least, some difference to their understanding of good equalities practice.

Table 4.1: Impact of HIEF on understanding equalities practice	
	%
I highly value HIEF and involvement with them has led to a greatly increased understanding of good equalities practice	36%
HIEF is useful and involvement with them has made some difference to my understanding of good equalities practice	52%
HIEF has made no difference in my approach to equalities	13%

Table 4: Source Q7; Please select the description that best describes the impact that HIEF has had for you. N = 64

Very few respondents indicated that HIEF made no difference to their approach to equalities.

4.6.2 Impact on organisations (59 responses)

Encouragingly, around seven in ten respondents indicated that there had also been some positive impact on their organisation, following either training or information offered by HIEF. Again, net scores have been calculated to give overall scores of agreement.

- Sixty-eight per cent agreed that their organisation had met their legal obligations in terms of equalities (29% strongly agreed this was the case)
- Seventy per cent agreed that they had implemented good practice since HIEFs training or information (31% strongly agreed)
- Almost two thirds (63%) agreed that their organisation had since improved its policies (24% strongly agreed with this statement).

4.6.3 Alternatives to HIEF (53 responses)

Respondents were asked to identify from a pre-defined list which alternative organisation or resource they would have approached for advice or information on equalities, in the absence of HIEF. Over a third of respondents (36%) indicated they would approach the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. Alternatives included:

- The internet – 28%
- Local enterprise company, such as HIE – 13%
- University or local college – 6%
- Scottish Government – 4%.

4.7 Future use of HIEF services

The impact that HIEF has had on organisations and individuals can be further explored through the responses to three short questions added at the end of the online survey. These questions ascertained whether respondents would use HIEF services again, and would they still do so if there was a charge imposed for its use? Finally, we asked respondents if they would recommend HIEF to a colleague, indicating the extent to which people would endorse them.

4.7.1 Continued use of HIEF services

Encouragingly, all those who responded to this question (n=63) indicated that they would use HIEF services again. It could be inferred then that the majority of respondents had had a positive experience of HIEF and would continue to use its services.

However, four in ten (41%) respondents indicated they would not use HIEFs services if there was a charge involved.

All of the respondents indicated that they would recommend HIEF to a friend or colleague. This positive endorsement is encouraging.

4.8 Profile of Respondents

4.8.1 Sector

The following section reports the profile of those responding to the survey. Almost half (48%) were working for a public sector organisation, compared to 14% of respondents from the private sector. Figure 3 below shows the breakdown of respondents by sector.

Figure 3: Breakdown of respondents by sector

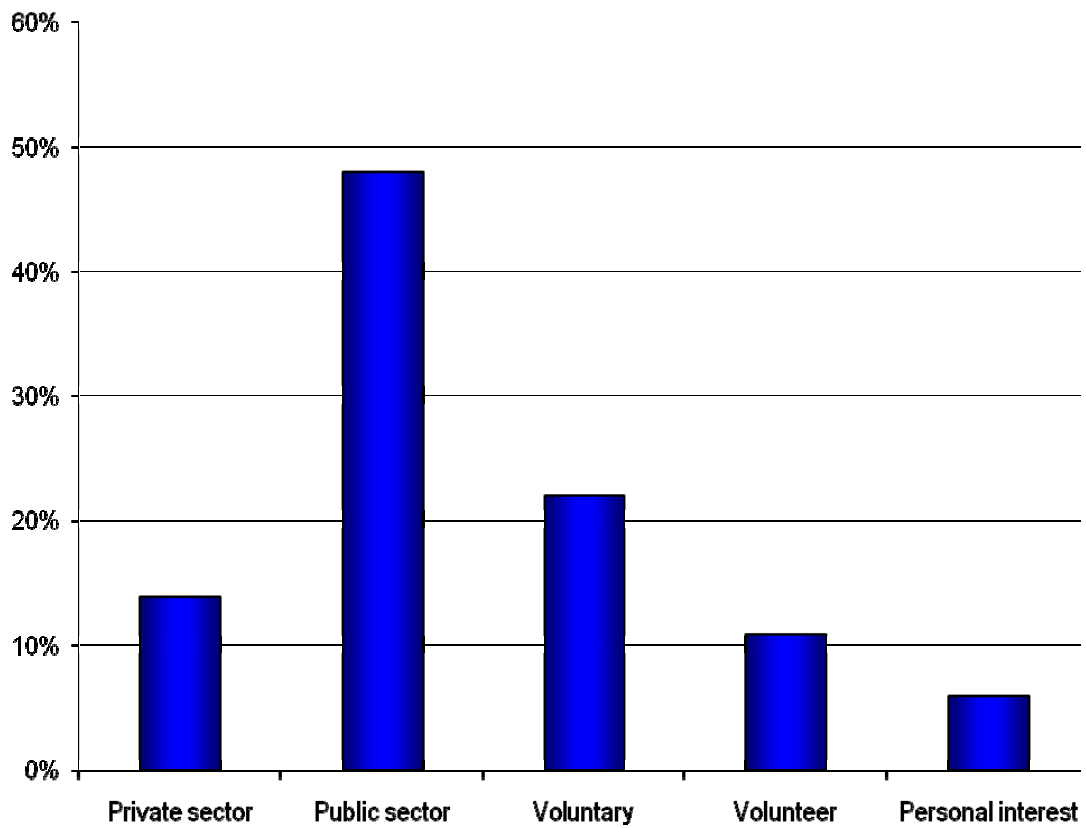


Figure 3: Source Q13: Which of the following describes your role. N = 65 responses

4.8.2 Staff

Respondents also indicated the relative size of their organisations. Interestingly, there were almost equal numbers of those working in the smallest organisations (24% stated there were less than 5 employees) as were working in large organisations of over 250 staff (22%).

Figure 4: Numbers of employees at respondents' organisations

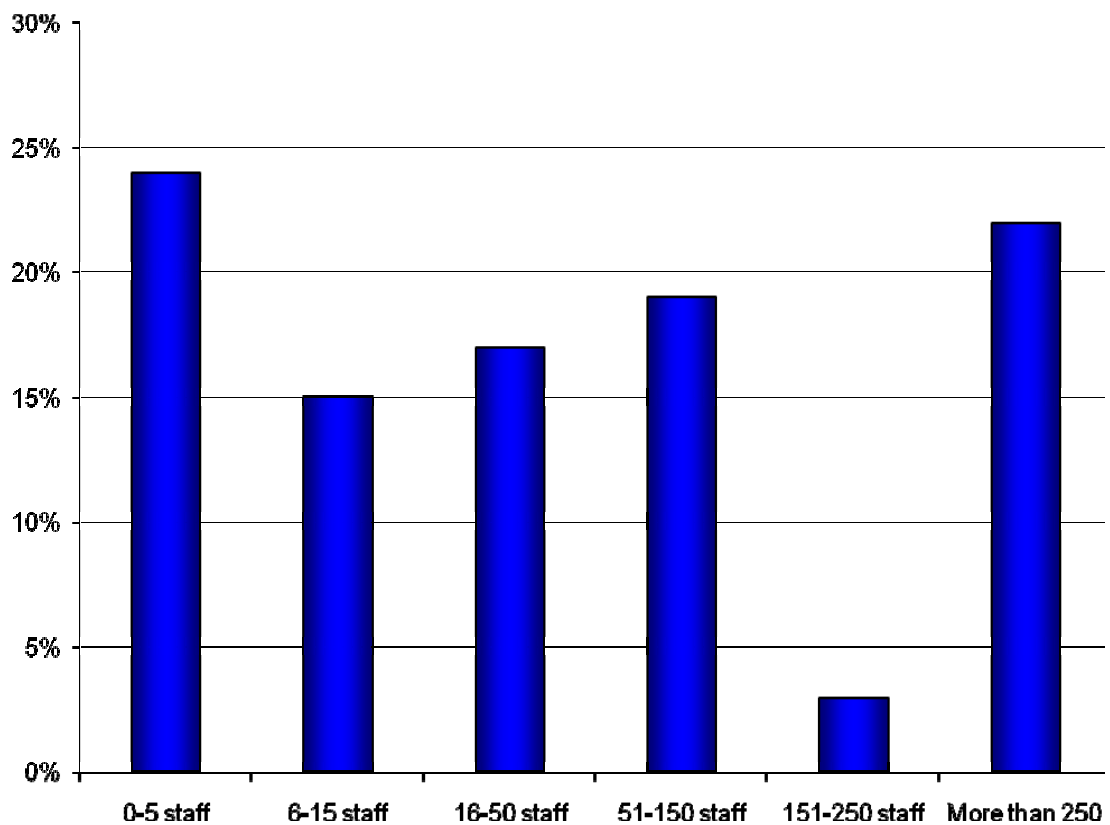


Figure 4: Source Q14: If you work in a company or organisation, how many staff are employed? N = 59 responses.

4.8.3 Location

Respondents were asked to select from a list the location of their organisation, to give an indication of the extent of HIEF's services. Seven in ten respondents (70%) were based in the Highlands. Other locations are detailed in the figure below.

Figure 5: Location of respondents' organisations

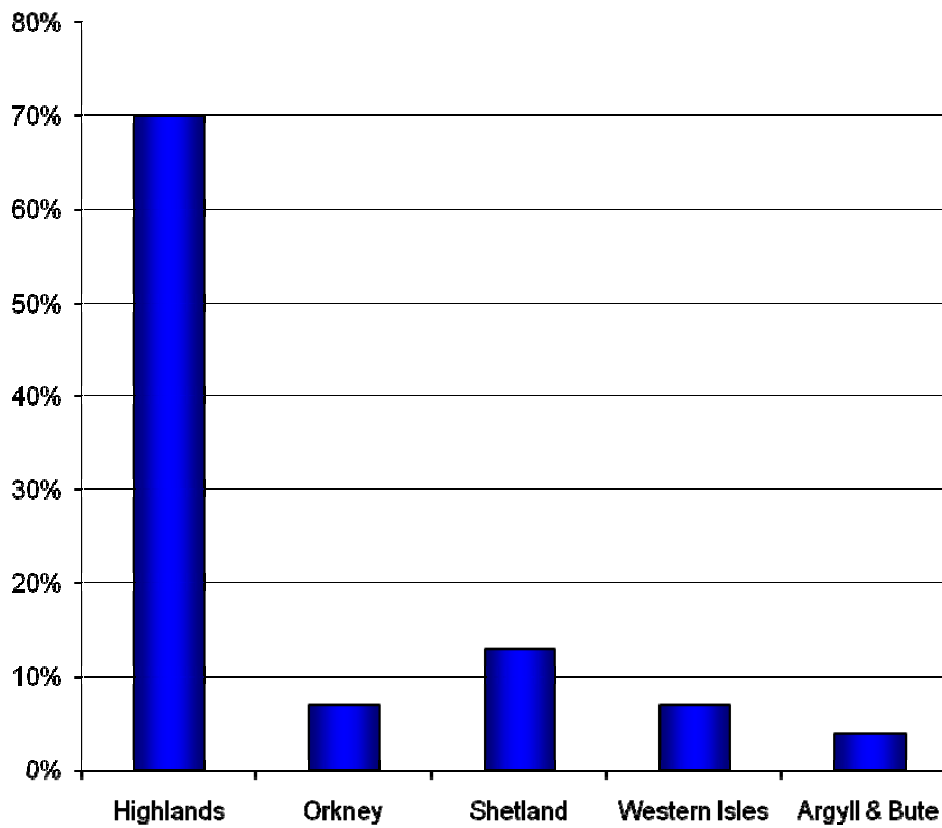


Figure 5: Source Q15: Where are you (your organisation) based? N = 56 respondents

Further profile information was sought on the individual respondents, such as age, gender and sexual orientation. The majority of respondents were female, aged between 41 and 64 years, were of White Scottish origin and did not consider themselves disabled.

Table 4.2 - Respondents' profile information				
Gender			Transgender	
Male	18%		Yes	2%
Female	82%		No	95%
			Prefer not to say	3%
Age				
25-40 years	25%		Consider yourself disabled?	
41-50 years	38%		Yes	11%
51-64 years	31%		No	83%
65 plus	6%		Prefer not to say	7%
Ethnic group			Sexual Orientation	
White Scottish	67%		Bisexual	2%
White Welsh	3%		Gay woman/lesbian	5%
White English	23%		Heterosexual/straight	90%
White Irish	2%		Prefer not to say	3%
Other	5%		Other	2%

Table 5: Source Q21 Gender N = 63, Q22 Age, N = 64, Q23 – Ethnicity, N = 60, Q32, Disability, N=63, Q33, Sexual Orientation, N = 62, Q34, Transgender, N = 62.

5. Initial Key Findings from Stakeholder Interviews

Nine telephone interviews were conducted with stakeholders representing both public and private sector organisations. These were predominantly located in the Highlands, although some represented other areas of Scotland. The people we spoke to gave their views of HIEF's activities and impact and gave their perceptions on equalities issues in general. These interviews provide a subjective view of the work of HIEF from those with a remit or interest in equalities.

The interviews were approximately 20-25 minutes long and explored the following key areas:

- What constitutes 'equalities' – what is included and what is not
- Perceptions of equalities within organisations
- Awareness of HIEF and their main objectives
- The benefits of an organisation such as HIEF
- The impact HIEF have or can have on an organisation
- Perceptions of HIEF services – particularly training or conferences.

5.1 Definitions of Equalities

Respondents indicated what they understood by the term 'equalities'. The majority of organisations' represented mentioned the six strands of legislation, namely race, gender, age, disability, belief and sexual orientation. However some organisations had extended this list to cover the following:

- Transgender issues
- 'Social origin' which relates to people's social background i.e. whether they are from a disadvantaged area.
- Gaelic (given the importance of Gaelic language in the area)
- Rurality (as many businesses are predominantly in a rural area).

Other descriptions of equalities include the idea of the '**whole person**' and not trying to categorise someone into a 'box'.

- *“Treating people with respect and matching ambitions with abilities – it involves looking at the person and not the disability or their gender.”*
- *“Race discrimination, disability discrimination – but that puts people within boxes and doesn’t take into account the ‘whole person.’”*

One stakeholder also mentioned that equalities includes the idea of **achieving potential**.

- *“There will only be equality when everyone is able to achieve to their own capacity and ability – achieving the best outcomes for them if no barriers were in place.”*

There is also the need for organisations to educate staff to provide an **equal and accessible service**.

- *“Providing opportunities and being proactive in encouraging use of the service and not being passive towards race or gender. It also includes educating staff and engaging with them.”*

In addition to the six strands of equalities, stakeholders commented that it is also important for organisations to bear in mind 'positive discrimination'. For example, it is not just the rights of minorities, but the rights of everyone; essentially *“treating other people as you would want to be treated yourself”*.

5.2 Equalities as a Priority

One of the key findings from these discussions with stakeholders was that equalities is becoming more of a priority for organisations, but it tends to happen in pockets of good practice rather than across whole organisations. One suggestion was that educating staff was a priority, so that equalities legislation was integrated into policies from the beginning of a process, rather than tacked on at the end.

- *“Equalities can’t just be ‘bolted on’ at the end of a process; it has to be embedded from the beginning”.*

Some stakeholders had encountered some opposition to equalities, in that it was almost seen as a 'chore'.

- *“Generally equalities are not taken seriously – people tend to see it as another hoop to jump through. It’s not ‘mainstream’ or ‘core’ to some organisations so it tends to be ‘added on’.*

One way of measuring whether equalities is being taken seriously is the attendance of staff at events, such as those organised by HIEF. As we have identified in section 4, there is a good knowledge of these conferences, and a reasonable attendance.

- *“There is a commitment across the staff to taking on more of equalities as well as good attendance at events organised by HIEF.”*

Case study 3 Albyn Housing Association

Albyn Housing Association offers short term, low level housing support to people in their own tenancies in the Inverness area. Staff attended a training day in Inverness run by HIEF which covered the key strands of equalities legislation, with a particular focus on Disability and Gender issues. Following this event, the team leader was able to work with HIEF to generate training materials for use within the housing association; particularly using key statistics to present to the Committee during a strategy day. The team leader believed there had been an impact on the organisation as staff were now more aware of key equalities issues.

5.3 Awareness of HIEF Among Stakeholders

All nine stakeholders consulted for this research had an ongoing relationship with HIEF, either by sitting on a working group or committee, or having hands on input into events and conferences. The majority had first heard of HIEF through word of mouth, predominantly from colleagues.

- *“Through a colleague who used to be the representative on the HIEF board.”*
- *“The equalities unit at the Scottish Government.”*

Others had been involved from the very early days of HIEF, for example as part of initial funding streams. Only one stakeholder had been approached by HIEF themselves, during their initial set up as part of a drive to raise awareness.

- *“We were a lead partner in getting it off the ground”.*
- *“HIEF came to one of our internal meetings on equalities to tell us about their project.”*

5.4 Perceived Objectives of HIEF

The stakeholders were asked to comment on their perceptions of HIEF’s main objectives. Predominantly, stakeholders mentioned HIEF’s aim of **raising awareness**.

- *“HIEF is about raising awareness and training in regards to all areas of equalities.”*
- *“I would see their main objective as raising awareness of equalities issues across the Highlands, in a practical way and supporting organisations such as ours to write their equalities schemes, and action plans that show proactive action to addressing inequalities.”*
- *“They offer education and training to the private and public sector.”*

Case study 4 Scottish Health Council

Scottish Health Council has a remit to ensure that NHS boards across Scotland take account of the public’s views when making decisions about health services. This remit also covers equality and diversity in terms of consulting groups. Having attended a series of conferences and events, one representative of this organisation said that involvement from HIEF had informed her work to the extent of raising awareness of some faith and ethnic minority groups and has contributed to more focused efforts to involve some community groups in consultations.

One other stakeholder commented that HIEF play an important part in terms of raising awareness of issues that perhaps organisations are not aware of. In so doing they are challenging stereotypical attitudes.

- *“HIEF challenge stereotypes of what life is like to live in the Highlands. They are bringing the community together and overcoming barriers but in a celebratory way – in that they celebrate diversity and bring key messages to people who might not have thought of them in the past.”*

Case study 5 Argyll & Bute Council

A representative of **Argyll & Bute Council** commented that information from HIEF at a conference about equalities issues has helped inform some campaigns. These have particularly been about public transport which is an issue for those in predominantly rural areas. The events have also acted as a useful network for information on other organisations, such as the Terrance Higgins Trust and Transport providers which this representative has been able to pass on to other members of the Council.

Representatives from HIEF echoed this as one of their key objectives.

- *“Lots of people were interested in the issues but few knew where to turn, so HIEF acts as a resource to take the resources and raise awareness to employers and this is any kind of employer, whether voluntary, public or private sector.”*

Stakeholders also mentioned the training that HIEF provide to SMEs as well as to the public sector, and the **conferences and events**, which stakeholders received positively.

- *“The conferences and road-shows are fairly focussed.”*
- *“It was very, very good as it was well organised, there was a good panel, it finished on time and there was a good lunch.”*

A few of the stakeholders mentioned a particular workshop on transgender issues they had attended as part of a recent conference. This workshop was particularly well received and was educational for those in attendance.

- *“The event blew me away. It raised my awareness, not only as a service provider but as an individual.”*
- *“They had speakers from large organisations and they were raising awareness and challenging communities.”*
- *“(The conference) ran smoother than any I had been to before, and the speakers were fab.”*

Case study 6 Working for Families

Working for Families is at the end of a four year pilot stage, set up by the Scottish Government as part of their ‘End Child Poverty in Scotland’ plan. They work with individuals to encourage them into employment and this could include initial confidence and self-esteem building, to mentoring and signposting to training and employment. After attending a conference on Equality and Diversity and a workshop on transgender issues, staff felt more informed and confident at liaising with local construction sites to encourage women into apprenticeships. Knowledge of employment law and gender issues discussed at the conference allowed a member of staff to challenge a male employer about female employees.

A further remit, according to the stakeholders is to work with **businesses**, in particular SMEs. This includes training and support with new legislation.

- *“HIEF are also working on training, guidance, keeping businesses updated on legislation through road-shows and helping organisations implement services.”*
- *“They establish good practice in equality and diversity across organisations and to work with local businesses especially SMEs which cover a large number of employers in the area”.*

5.5 Perceived Benefits of Working with HIEF

One of the key benefits of HIEF as perceived by stakeholders was the extent of their reach, in that HIEF are able to connect with many organisations throughout the Highlands and Islands and so attendance at conferences, for example can be invaluable for organisations to meet and **network** with others.

- *“They promote communication throughout the Highlands.”*
- *“They provide a very useful link between organisations, allowing networking and other types of joined up working.”*
- *“They are great for networking with other organisations and are an invaluable source of information and advice.”*

Stakeholders commented on the **expertise** of HIEF, in that they work across the broad spectrum of equalities issues, not on any particular strand and so are able to be called upon to source information on a number of issues; rural issues were often mentioned by stakeholders.

- *“They draw together expertise and are well respected and trusted by employers and they can capture a wide audience which means they have a wider benefit to organisations like ours.”*
- *“Their benefits are that they are experts in particular geographic areas as well as being experts in issues such as rurality.”*

Case study 7 CSREC

Central Scotland Racial Equalities Council (CSREC) is an independent charity established for almost 25 years working in the areas of advocacy, support, community development and delivering race equality training to organisations in the Central belt. Their interest in HIEF is around joined up working and sharing of resources and expertise. The CSREC are in the process of working with HIEF to establish a forum that covers all strands of equalities issues, not just racial issues of which they are champions; essentially setting up a similar forum to HIEF but in the central region. They see their relationship with HIEF as one of shared learning, offering their expertise in racial issues in return for advice on other strands of equalities. They hope to see real impact as a result of working with HIEF in the next few months.

A further benefit was linked to their role as **training provider**, particularly the training that is offered to voluntary and private companies as well as using this training to highlight and raise awareness of new issues.

- *“They have filled a gap in the market whose purpose is to offer training to voluntary and private companies.”*
- *“They create opportunities for highlighting issues that might not otherwise be a focus – like transgender-ism.”*

Case study 8 Argyll College

Argyll College provides learning and support to students, many of whom are part time or distance learners. Staff have been discussing the possibility of working with HIEF to develop the Train the Trainer programme. This would allow staff to deliver training internally covering all strands of gender equalities. They hope to see a real impact from this in the coming months.

HIEF were praised for their **approachable and knowledgeable staff**, a key benefit for stakeholders.

- *“Having a named contact within the organisation is a great benefit, particularly one who is approachable and knowledgeable.”*

Case study 9 NHS Orkney

NHS Orkney as part of their mandatory requirements regarding Equality & Diversity, invited HIEF to give a general training session to frontline staff. This was a half day training session and covered the six strands of equalities legislation. This session was positively received as the trainer from HIEF was approachable and knowledgeable and it offered the opportunity to ask questions. One member of staff found it particularly useful as she chairs and facilitates staff training on disability issues and was able to update her information to refine the internal training offered by NHS Orkney.

Some stakeholders commented on the internal work on equalities that exists within their organisation, but admit that sometimes ‘*equalities issues can be difficult to make time for if it is not your job*’. HIEF take on the burden of **sourcing the relevant information** and making sure people are aware of it.

- *“It helps to have something that is a focus and a reminder to work on equalities issues – which are difficult to make time for if it is not your job. HIEF take the time to bring the information to you and provide support.”*
- *“They are like a ‘toolkit’ of skills and experience.”*

A few stakeholders commented on the benefits of HIEF being **independent**, and therefore they have the ability to see the bigger picture and help individual organisations focus their particular needs.

- *“HIEF are not politically connected, in a sense they are independent money and so have more freedom to tailor their organisation to the needs of the area.”*
- *“They are an independent voice whose expertise goes beyond the Highlands.”*
- *“They are the voluntary sector and not the public sector as important because they don’t have a narrow focus they see the broader picture.”*

5.6 Alternatives to HIEF

Stakeholders were asked to comment whether they could suggest an alternative organisation that was able to provide a similar service to that of HIEF. Just as in the online survey discussed in section 4, the majority of stakeholders could not offer any alternative suggestions.

- *“There is no-one better placed to offer this service.”*
- *“Not in the Highlands but there are other equal opportunity groupings but these tend to be strand specific (i.e. only covering disability) rather than all of the strands.”*
- *“There is definitely no-one providing a similar service in the Highlands.”*

Only one respondent offered an alternative and that was Capability Scotland. Although it was recognised that this organisation would only be able to give guidance

on one strand of equalities issues, and that HIEF were unique in their ability to cover all types of equalities issues.

- *“If HIEF did not exist, I would probably have approached an organisation like Capability Scotland for guidance.”*

5.7 Perceived Impact of HIEF

Stakeholders gave their personal opinions on the impact and achievements of HIEF to date. Key areas of impact include **raising awareness** and the importance of equalities:

- *“It has definitely raised the profile of equalities among the voluntary and private sectors.”*
- *“They have raised the Equal Opportunities profile significantly and have persuaded people that it is not just trendy, but that there are real benefits and that it should also be taken seriously.”*

Case study 10 Careers Scotland

Careers Scotland based in Skye & Wester Ross try to get a member of staff to attend HIEF’s training and events as much as possible in order to keep up to date with changes in legislation. Of particular interest was the training on equalities duties and how the law translates into day to day practice for their organisation. As a result of this information provided by HIEF, changes have been made, or are about to be made at Careers Scotland. For example, they are looking at undertaking a benchmarking exercise to see who is in the organisation, to see how well they are doing relating to equalities. They are also looking into gender pay and the content of materials sent to clients. Generally HIEF has increased awareness of equalities issues.

In addition to awareness raising, stakeholders felt that HIEF had created opportunities for staff to attend events and receive training; essentially increasing their **professional development**. One stakeholder commented:

- *“This is a clear benefit for employees and the wider community to tackle subject matters that might not otherwise get broached.”*

HIEF were also perceived to be **adding value** to organisations they engaged with; particularly because of their expertise in particular areas of equalities.

- *“They do add value because no one else has the expertise that they have.”*
- *“They have put the issue of rurality on the agenda and are a conduit for doing more work.”*

There was a concern however that HIEF were only able to reach those organisations and employers who had an interest and awareness of equalities; and that the real challenge for HIEF is to **extend their service** to those organisations who are not aware of equalities issues.

- *“Their impact is good, but only in a narrow part of the community. The people who are already interested in equalities and are knowledgeable about HIEF can engage with them easily, but the problem are those businesses who don’t come forward for help with equalities, and are not interested – the challenge is how to engage with them.”*

5.8 Personal Experiences of HIEF’s Services

Several of the stakeholders had attended events or conferences run by HIEF and were asked to comment on their first hand experience of these events. Their predominantly positive experiences are described below.

- *“The event blew me away. It raised my awareness not only as a service provider but as an individual. There were speakers from large organisations and they were raising awareness and challenging communities. It ran really smoothly and the speakers were fab.”*

(Public sector rep discussing a recent conference on Gender Issues)

- *“I attended a workshop on transgender which was a real eye opener. A local group came to present and so it was really useful at highlighting the issues. I don’t think any other organisation would be brave enough to hold an event like this. HIEF certainly aren’t scared of raising controversial issues.”*

(Public sector rep discussing a workshop on transgendered issues)

5.9 Suggestions for Improvements

Stakeholders were asked to suggest ways in which HIEF could improve their service. One respondent was of the view that HIEF signposts individuals to information and advice rather than offering support themselves, and this could be perceived as a gap in their service.

- *“If individuals approached HIEF with an issue regarding equalities they would be signposted to another organisation, so perhaps there is a gap in their services.”*

Others felt that HIEF had deviated slightly from their original remit, taking on more consultative work, and events management for other organisations.

- *“HIEF have been organising conferences on behalf of other people because they need the money to keep them afloat!”*
- *“The nature of the voluntary sector means that is an issue around sustainability and funding and I believe that HIEF often have to take on jobs because they need the funding or because of what the funder is involved in.”*

5.10 Limitations of HIEF

The general consensus among respondents was that HIEF services and subsequent impact could only be limited by funding and resources, but that taking on work outwith their remit could have a detrimental effect.

- *“The limitations of an organisation like HIEF are that it tries to take on too much, beyond its original remit; trying to do everything but I think that HIEF has found a real niche in the market.”*
- *“The only limitations to the impact of HIEF are due to staff time, resources and funding. They certainly provide value for money.”*

The staff at HIEF also commented that they have seen a change in their financial situation since the project started and partners were keen to get involved, to more recent changes due to budget cuts.

- *“When project started, there were lots of partners making donations and getting involved financially. We were a new project and people had to be seen*

to be getting involved.....but then their own budgets tightened as equalities became a fundamental priority.”

Staff at HIEF commented that other organisations were investing in their own, internal, equality and diversity resources, which despite being necessary for Government targets, undermine the existing resources available through HIEF.

- *“There are concerns that organisations like the Police and HIE now have their own Equality and Diversity managers and although their role is largely internal, and they are told by Government to meet targets, there is already a vehicle in HIEF that they could invest in.”*

6. Options for the Future

6.1 Purpose

The main purpose of HIEF has been to increase awareness of the importance of equalities in small and medium sized enterprises – and to help develop skills and expertise in equalities amongst this group (mainly through ‘signposting’ rather than the direct provision of services). This has included both the role as employers and the role as service providers.

The initial focus has been on voluntary sector organisations and private sector organisations (in part because of the funding sources that were available). This has extended to involve public sector organisations. Public sector staff found HIEF a useful source of information to assist them meeting the requirements of both general and specific equality duties.

However, at the workshop that we held in April 2008, it became clear that there were other potential purposes for HIEF. Most people held the view that HIEF’s main purpose should remain related to employers’ equalities responsibilities (both as an employer and as a service provider). But there was also a view that HIEF’s purpose could be broader - to challenge discrimination and inequality across HIEF’s area of operation. This purpose would lead HIEF down a route that would involve widespread community capacity building – and significantly more engagement of individuals and organisations representing equalities groups.

So, given this alternative suggestion for the purpose, we have considered three options for the main purpose for HIEF. These are:

- Option 1 – primary purpose is working with small and medium sized employers (in their role as employers and in their role as service providers) to improve their awareness and skills in the wide equalities area
- Option 2 - primary purpose is capacity building of equalities groups
- Option 3 – the purposes in the first two options are combined – building equalities impact of employers **and** developing community capacity.

Option 1 – Working with Small and Medium Sized Employers

Throughout its life, HIEF has engaged with small and medium sized employers (in the voluntary and private sector) to raise their awareness of equalities issues and to help improve their practice as employers and service providers. There is a clear need for this – many employers in Highlands and Islands still have limited awareness of equalities issues, or where to get advice and support on these issues. The work that HIEF has been doing has raised awareness and understanding for many individuals in small businesses.

Other, larger employers have also seen the benefit of the services which are provided by HIEF – with a range of public agencies (and some larger private companies) getting services from HIEF.

Because of the important role that HIEF has played in developing awareness of equalities issues amongst businesses and service providers in the area, it has been seen by the Scottish Government as having a clear understanding of equalities issues across Highlands and Islands. This has allowed HIEF to develop a strategic and influencing role in informing the Scottish Government about equalities issues in the Highlands and Islands. This is important in itself – and it also helps to give HIEF increased credibility locally.

So the first option is to focus the work on small and medium sized employers – in both the voluntary sector and the private sector. This ‘fits’ with parts of the current funding package (particularly money from HIE and ESF). It is a clear market – with just one potential competitor at the moment – the national Scottish Enterprise/ HIE funded equalities support programme for businesses (Equality Matters in Business). But this does not have the local network to allow coverage of Highlands and Islands – with all delivery taking place in Inverness.

Clearly, to ensure that it can raise the awareness of businesses and service providers, HIEF has to be well tuned into the position ‘on the ground’ in relation to equalities and to have contacts with the organisations providing support to people from equalities groups across the area.

Option 2 – Capacity building of equalities groups

It was suggested (by some) at the stakeholders' workshop that HIEF should be more interested in strengthening the capacity of equalities groups – working with individual people who face discrimination in their lives. The current range of activities is not particularly focused on this work – although clearly HIEF is aware of equalities issues and engages some people from equalities groups in its work. It is the sort of work that is carried out (to a limited extent) in other parts of Scotland by a range of organisations, including, for example Race Equality Councils or Age Concern. We have considered this option further. We have concluded that while it is important for HIEF to have an understanding of the issues causing discrimination, it is not normally appropriate for them to work with individuals on a case-by-case basis. This would not preclude the useful work done at present to signpost individuals to other relevant organisations. In addition, HIEF would not want to be in direct competition with those organisations on its contacts list, such as Age Concern.

Option 3 – Working broadly on equalities issues across Highlands and Islands

This would be a very wide remit (essentially an 'Equalities and Human Rights Commission for Highlands and Islands'). It is hard to see how this could be delivered without a substantial increase in the current staff compliment. If this option was selected we would urge that there is a clear description of the responsibilities. Care would also have to be taken that any campaigning role which was undertaken did not breach the rules for funding (for example, EU rules for projects funded from ESF).

6.2 Geographical Area of Operation

HIEF currently focuses its activities on the operating area for Highlands and Islands Enterprise – covering five full local authority areas (Highland, Western Isles, Orkney, Shetland and Argyll and Bute) and parts of Moray and North Ayrshire. There has been engagement with a broader area than this on occasion. This is a large area, with a sparse population – making it essential that HIEF 'goes to people' rather than asking people to 'come to HIEF'. This can include both physically travelling to different local areas to provide services – and also creative use of information exchange through IT. We have considered three options:

- Continuing the focus on the Highlands and Islands Enterprise area
- Developing HIEF to cover all of rural Scotland

- Retaining the current area focus but offering ‘franchises’ in other areas.

Option 1 - Continuing the focus on Highlands and Islands, including Argyll

This is the most straightforward option, continuing the current arrangements from a base in Inverness.

Option 2 - Developing HIEF to cover all of rural Scotland

There is nothing like HIEF in other parts of Scotland. There is clearly an interest in replicating the work of HIEF in some other areas. HIEF have been approached regularly with enquiries from other areas on how to develop awareness of equalities issues in rural parts of Scotland.

Option 3 - Retaining the current area focus but offering ‘franchises’ in other areas

This would be a way of supporting the development of equalities activities in other areas without over-extending the demands on the (currently) limited resources of HIEF. We suspect that formal franchises may not be the best way forward – but the provision of consultancy and support (at least in part paid for) to Equalities Forums in other rural areas could allow the approach adopted by HIEF to be adapted as appropriate in different areas.

6.3 Constitutional Arrangements

HIEF is currently hosted by SCVO in Inverness. SCVO employ the staff working on HIEF (one full time and two for 20% of their time) and undertake the administration and financial management of HIEF. This arrangement seems to us to work well and to be appropriate.

The other options that we considered were:

- HIEF to become a stand-alone social economy organisation
- HIEF to become part of one of the public agencies (for example Highland Council).

Neither of these options provides an obvious improvement on the current arrangements (and in the immediate future, there would be likely to be disadvantages from both options). In the case of creating a stand-alone organisation, there would be set-up costs and ongoing costs for the organisation (including registration costs and audit fees). There would also be less cover available in the case of staff

indisposition. This option may be worth considering in the future, if there is likely to be a sustainable future for HIEF.

In the case of HIEF being incorporated into a public agency, there would be the risk of HIEF losing its independence and identity within a larger organisation and so we would not recommend this at this time.

6.4 Name

It is acknowledged that Highlands and Islands Equalities Forum (HIEF) is not an ideal title – given that the organisation does not operate as a ‘forum’. A more accurate name might be ‘Highlands and Islands Consultancy Network’. Not only is this a bit of a mouthful – but HIEF is a recognisable brand and is visible in the Highlands and Islands. We do not see any value in changing the name.

6.5 Funding

For the last few years HIEF has been funded in part, by ESF money and this has been matched by contributions from public sector agencies (such as HIE, UHI and Highland Council). SCVO makes a contribution to ensure the project’s survival. It is likely that the role played by SCVO in the development and sustainability of HIEF is under valued – because HIEF is not ‘branded’ by the SCVO. Future potential sources of funding include:

- Charging fees to members for services or an annual membership fee (perhaps proportional to the number of employees)
- ESF (which requires match commitments – principally from public sector agencies)
- Core funding from councils that are not currently making regular contributions (including Shetlands, Orkney, Western Isles and Argyll and Bute)
- Public agencies (in addition to their matched contributions to ESF)
- Skills Development Scotland
- Equalities and Human Rights Commission
- Scottish Government
- Trusts and the like.

6.6 Measuring Impact

HIEF holds a great deal of detailed historic information about the activities that it undertakes and participants' views of these. And it has to report to its European funders in detail on the outcomes achieved. But there is a sense that the quantity of information can divert focus from a sharp appreciation of how well HIEF is performing against its key objectives. We think that there would be benefit in HIEF developing a handful of key performance indicators. They should be maintained from year to year to assist in the analysis, on a consistent basis, of the performance of HIEF against its objectives. This would encourage HIEF to make sure that it sought funding to achieve its objectives – rather than (as can sometimes happen) changing its objectives to meet the funding available.

It would be for HIEF to decide the most appropriate indicators. They might include:

- the level of awareness of HIEF activities amongst the target audience;
- the total number of people actively taking part in HIEF activities;
- the level of satisfaction with these services;
- the breadth of geographic coverage; and
- the wider influence that HIEF achieves.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

Awareness

This research has demonstrated that stakeholders and members of HIEFs 'network' have a good awareness of HIEF, their objectives and the services on offer. Overall, respondents' awareness of services was generally high, but with room for improvement on some measures. Some stakeholders were concerned that the current approach engages businesses which already have some interest in equalities – and that there was an ongoing need to engage those who were currently more negative on the issue.

Services

Encouragingly, only 3% of those who took part in our survey indicated they had not used any of the services offered by HIEF. Conferences and events were particularly well received with three quarters of people who had attended an event rating it as 'very good' and most respondents stating this service had been of most value to them.

Benefits

Stakeholders commented on several benefits of working with HIEF, for example the extent of their reach across Highland and Islands allowing people to network, as well as draw on HIEF's expertise across all strands of equalities issues. Also encouraging was that our survey identified eight in ten respondents who indicated that HIEF had made at least some difference to their understanding of good equalities practice.

Perceived impact

Raising awareness and highlighting the importance of equalities issues were seen as the major achievements of HIEF to date. In addition, there was a welcome for HIEF creating opportunities for staff to attend events and receive training, which is essential to their professional development. Stakeholders believed that HIEF had successfully raised the profile of equalities across the Highlands and Islands.

Equalities as a priority

One of the key findings from discussions with stakeholders was that equalities is becoming more of a priority for many organisations, but (especially in larger organisations) this tends to be in pockets of good practice rather than across the whole organisation. Educating staff so that equalities legislation was integrated into policies from the beginning of a process rather than tacked on at the end was one suggestion for ensuring equalities remains on the agenda.

A strategic role

HIEF have increasingly played a strategic role in informing the Scottish Government of current equalities issues in rural settings. For example, HIEF is currently in discussion with EHRC and Scottish Government Equality Unit (along with the Central Scotland Racial Equality Council) about how all parties can constructively work together on a joined-up strategic approach to equalities in rural Scotland. Part of these discussions include specific pieces of work which will be announced later in 2008.

7.2 Recommendations

Purpose

The main purpose of HIEF has been to increase awareness of the importance of equalities for businesses (as employers and as service providers) – and to help develop skills and expertise in equalities amongst this group (mainly through ‘signposting’ rather than the direct provision of services). This has been successful to date and our recommendation is that this should remain the core purpose for HIEF. To allow HIEF to achieve its purpose, it is important that it keeps informed about the impact of discrimination on individuals in Highlands and Islands. In fulfilling its purpose, HIEF will also be able to make a wider contribution to the strategy for equalities in rural areas. There are clear signs that both the Government and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission wish to augment HIEF’s local delivery with a contribution to strategic development of the equalities agenda in rural Scotland.

Geography

HIEF’s area of operation currently covers the Highlands and Islands Enterprise area. Our recommendation is that this continues, with HIEF continuing to be flexible by

'going to people' rather than asking people to come to HIEF. Recent discussions on strategic working in rural Scotland may open up opportunities to engage (to mutual benefit) with areas outside of the Highlands & Islands.

Constitutional arrangements

HIEF is currently hosted by SCVO in Inverness. SCVO employ the staff working on HIEF (one full time and two for 20% of their time) and undertake the administration and financial management of HIEF. This arrangement seems to us to work well and to be appropriate. There are concerns that if HIEF were to move under the umbrella of a larger public agency (for example Highland Council) then it would lose its identity and independence – factors which stakeholders have cited as being strengths of the organisation. Similarly, becoming a stand alone social economy organisation may be an option for the future, but at this time we would recommend that SCVO continues to host HIEF.

Over time, it may be advantageous for SCVO to consider the development of an SCVO rural equalities group in the Highland office – of which HIEF would be one of a number of projects. This could allow the management of funding more effectively – with HIEF supported by ESF and matched funding (for the duration of the current European programme) and with other income from equalities training and commissioned work going to the wider equalities programme.

If HIEF is to remain within the SCVO structure, there will be opportunities for improved 'branding' of SCVO's role in the HIEF project.

Name

It is acknowledged that Highlands and Islands Equalities Forum (HIEF) is not a particularly appropriate title – on the basis that it does not operate as a 'forum'. A more accurate name might be 'Highlands and Islands Consultancy Network'. However, HIEF has become a recognisable brand name and is visible in the Highlands and Islands. We do not see any value in changing the name at this time.

Funding

With increasing pressures on reducing ESF funding, it would be prudent for HIEF to source alternative sources of funding. We think that contributions from public sector organisations should continue to be sought by HIEF – not least if individuals from public sector organisations are using the services (and valuing them). We think that

consideration should also be given to charging larger organisations a fee for the services. Skills Development Scotland (the new public body which combines the key skills elements of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise with Careers Scotland and the Scottish University for Industry) has a remit to help individuals realise their full potential and enable employers to develop new skills - and could be another alternative source of funding for HIEF.

Annex 1

List of stakeholders interviewed for telephone survey

- Moira Paton, NHS Highland
 - Rosemary Mackinnon, Highland Council
 - Douglas Guest, The Equalities and Human Rights Commission
 - Lisa Buchannan, Northern Constabulary
 - Liz Scott, Highlands & Islands Enterprise
 - Lesley Irving, Equality Unit, Scottish Government
 - Isla Cruden, UHI
 - Claire Ross, Cairngorm National Park
 - Mabel Hildebrand, Energy and Tourism Directorate
-
- Morag Redwood, Highlands & Islands Equality Forum, SCVO
 - Alison Cairns, Highlands & Islands Equality Forum, SCVO
 - Barbara Love, Highlands & Islands Equality Forum, SCVO

Annex 2

Online Questionnaire

Evaluation of HIEF (Highlands and Islands Equality Forum)

Online Survey

- 1 How much would you say you know about the law in relation to equality and diversity?

	Yes (X one box only)
A great deal	
A little	
Nothing at all	

- 2 How much would you say you know about HIEF and the services it has to offer?

	Yes (X one box only)
A great deal	
A little	
Nothing at all	

3. How did you first hear of HIEF?

	Yes (X one box only)
From colleagues at my organisation	
From colleagues at another organisation	
From local enterprise company	
Direct mailing or publications from HIEF	
Internet	
Somewhere else (specify)	
Please write in	
Can't remember/ Don't know	

- 4a. Are you aware that the following services are offered by HIEF?
 4b. Have you used any of these services?

Tick all that apply

	Yes – heard of	Yes - used
General equalities training		
Equality strand-specific training		
Customised equalities training		
Equality Public Duties training		
Train the Trainer training		
Road shows/lunchtime seminars		
Conferences and large events		
Speakers & facilitators for events, seminars, meetings		
Advice on good equality practice		
Disseminating literature – case studies		
Monthly E-bulletins		
Consultations on Equality & Diversity		
Response to general enquiries for information		
Other (please write in)		
None of the above		

5. If you have used any of the following services, how would you rate them?

Tick one box per row for all that apply

	Very good	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Very poor	N/A
General equalities training						
Equality strand-specific training						
Customised equalities training						
Equality Public Duties training						
Train the Trainer training						
Road shows/lunchtime seminars						
Conferences and large events						
Speakers & facilitators for events, seminars, meetings						
Advice on good equality practice						
Disseminating literature – case studies						
Monthly E-bulletins						
Consultations on Equality & Diversity						
Response to general enquiries for information						
Other (please write in)						

6a. Which of these services offered by HIEF have been, or would be most valuable to you?

	Yes – X one box only
General equalities training	
Equality strand-specific training	
Customised equalities training	
Equality Public Duties training	
Train the Trainer training	
Road shows/lunchtime seminars	
Conferences and large events	
Speakers & facilitators for events, seminars, meetings	
Advice on good equality practice	
Disseminating literature – case studies	
Monthly E-bulletins	
Consultations on Equality & Diversity	
Response to general enquiries for information	
Other (please write in)	
None of the above	

6b Why do you say that?

7. Please select the description that best describes the impact that HIEF has had for you.

	Yes (X one box only)
I highly value HIEF and involvement with them has led to a greatly increased understanding of good equalities practice	
HIEF is useful and involvement with them has made some difference to my understanding of good equalities practice	
HIEF has made no difference in my approach to equalities	

- 8 Following training or information from HIEF, to what extent do you agree or disagree that your organisation has....

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Met your legal obligations						
Implemented good practice						
Improved its policies						

9. Had you not received the advice or training from HIEF, where would you have received the information from?

	Yes (X one box only)
Local enterprise company such as HIE	
Scottish Government	
National organisation such as Equality & Human Rights Commission	
Communities Scotland	
University or local college	
Internal company resources	
Internet	
Would not have been able to access advice/training	
Other (specify)	

10. What specific information, support or advice on equalities would be most useful to you?

	Tick all that apply
Overview of equality & diversity legislation	
How to identify and challenge discrimination	
How to mainstream good equality & diversity practice	
Good practice in regard to race	
Good practice in regard to older and/or younger people	
Good practice in regard to disability	
Good practice in regard to gender	
Good practice in regard to belief and religion	
Good practice in regard to sexual orientation	
Advice on Public Equalities Duties	
Specific case studies	
Online or interactive materials	
Equality & diversity news updates	
News of equality & diversity events, conferences, seminars, consultations etc	
Other (specify)	

11a Would you use HIEF services again?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

11b Would you use HIEF if there was a charge for the service they provide?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

12. Would you recommend HIEF to a friend or colleague?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

13. Which of the following best describes your role?

	Yes (X one box only)
I work with a private sector company	
I work with a public sector organisation	
I work with a voluntary organisation	
I am a volunteer in a voluntary organisation	
I am interested in equalities as an individual	

14. If you work (or volunteer) in a company or organisation, how many staff are employed?

Number of staff	Yes (X one box only)
0-5	
6-15	
16-50	
51 - 150	
151 - 250	
More than 250	

15. Where are you (or your organisation) based?

	Yes (X one box only)
Highlands	
Orkney	
Shetland	
Western Isles	
Argyll & Bute	
Other Scotland	

16 Do you have any other comments? Please detail them below.

--

HIEF may wish to conduct further research on this topic. Would you be willing to be re-contacted for further research? All of your contact details will remain confidential and will be used only for the purpose of research by HIEF.

	(X one box only)
Yes	
No	

If yes, please provide your name and daytime contact details below.

Name:
Daytime telephone number
Email address

Finally, some questions about you. All the information you provide will be anonymous. It is also voluntary – you don't have to fill in this section, or if you prefer you can leave some questions blank. This information will only be used to help us better tailor the service.

1A. Are you....

	(X one box only)
Male	
Female	
Transman	
Transwoman	
Prefer not to say	

2A Which age band do you fall into?

	(X one box only)
Under 18	
18 - 24	
25-40	
41-50	
51-64	
65 plus	
Prefer not to say	

3A. What is your ethnic group?

White		Multiple ethnic background	
White Scottish		Any (write in)	
White Welsh			
White English		Black	
White Irish		African	
Other (write in)		Caribbean	
		Other (write in)	
Asian			
Indian		Gypsy traveller	
Pakistani			
Bangladeshi		Other background	
Chinese		Other (write in)	
Other (write in)			
		Prefer not to say	

4A Are you an EU migrant worker?

	(X one box only)
Yes	
No	
Prefer not to answer	

5A. What is your current faith, religion or belief?

--

6A. The Disability Discrimination Act defines a disability as something which has a substantial and long-term (over 12 months) adverse effect on your ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

	(X one box only)
Yes	
No	
Prefer not to say	

7A. What is your sexual orientation?

	(X one box only)
Bisexual	
Gay man	
Gay woman/lesbian	
Heterosexual/straight	
Other	
Prefer not to say	

8A. Are you or would you consider yourself to be transgender?

	(X one box only)
Yes	
No	
Prefer not to say	

Many thanks for your time in completing this survey. Please be assured all your responses are confidential.

Annex 3

List of stakeholders who have contributed financially to HIEF

Year	Contributor	Activity
2005	Communities Scotland	General
2005/6	DTI	Roadshows
2006	Tulloch plc	General
2006	Life Scan Scotland	Business Seminar
2006	Shetland Council	Welcome Pack
2006	Highland Council	Welcome Pack
2006	Communities Scotland	General
2006	Scottish Enterprise	Roadshows
2007	Disability Rights Commission	Conference on Disability Duty
2007	Crown Office & Procurator Service	Highlands R Us event
2007	Northern Constabulary	Highlands R Us event
2007	Cairngorm National Park Authority	Consultancy on public duties
2007	Highland Wellbeing Alliance	Consultancy on gender duty
2007	Equal Opportunities Commission	Conference on Gender Equality
2007	Hi Jobs	General
2007	Communities Scotland	Highlands R Us and Conference on gender duty
2007	Highland Council	Highlands R Us
2007	Scottish Executive	Conference on gender duty

In 2008 to date, HIEF have had pledges from the following organisations:

Year	Contributor	Activity
2008	Scottish Government	Conference on rural issues
2008	Equality & Human Rights Commission	Conference on rural issues + Round table discussions
2008	Lochaber College	Training
2008/9	Inverness College	Training
2008	Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service	Highlands R Us
2008	Northern Constabulary	Highlands R Us