



**AN COSAN APPLICATION FOR
2007 INTERNATIONAL SPIRIT AT WORK AWARD**



INTERNATIONAL SPIRIT AT WORK AWARD APPLICATION

1) Basic Data:

a) Name of Organization (can be a division of a larger organization):

An Cosán (phonetic pronunciation "On Kos-awn")

b) Date of founding:

In 1986 The Shanty Education Project Ltd., a registered charity, was established. In 1996, a Centre of Learning, Leadership and Enterprise was built and in 1999, An Cosán was founded to incorporate The Shanty Education and Training Centre, Rainbow House (an early Childhood Education Centre) and the Childcare and Enterprise Centre.

c) Number of employees

(Note: Small Business – 20-99 employees; Medium to Large Business – 100 or more employees):

An Cosán has 42 employees

d) Nature and scope of business:

An Cosán has three operations under its flagship

1. The Shanty Education and Training Centre – Community Education
2. Rainbow House – an early Childhood Education Centre
3. The Childcare and Enterprise Centre – for early Childhood Education and Care

The Shanty offers education and training to over 400 adults per week during the academic year. In addition, through Rainbow House, 100 children per week receive early childhood education and out-of-school education. Innovative models of Adult Education and Early Childhood Education have been developed to support this. The Childcare Enterprise Centre supports, trains and mentors women who wish to develop and manage Not for Profit Childcare Centres and work in them. 212 women are currently participating in accredited Childcare Training and 36 women are currently participating in Childcare Enterprise Training.

The nature of An Cosán's work is to make a real and a lasting difference to the quality of life for those who engage with the organization, both employees and members of the community.

The scope of the work involves aligning with elements of the National Development Plan (2000-2006) and the national Anti-Poverty Strategy 2002 and Sustaining Progress – The National Partnership Agreement (2003 – 2005) to ensure that initiatives dovetail with government policies and programmes.

1. The Shanty Education and Training Centre

The nature of the work here is to deliver community-based education to empower and bring about social change and support participants to become active citizens in their community.

2. Rainbow House

The nature of the work here is based on the belief that every child has a right to early education and Rainbow House is a centre of excellence for early childhood education and care of children in Tallaght West.

3. The Childcare and Enterprise Centre

The nature of the work here is to foster an entrepreneurial spirit within the community and the Childcare Initiative was developed in response to two core community needs: the need for local women to achieve economic independence and to cater for the need for quality, affordable childcare in Tallaght West.

The scope of the Enterprise is to provide training in many levels of Childcare. At present, 212 local women are participating in accredited Childcare Training, 36 are participating in Childcare for Enterprise Training, and participants are being supported to develop small-scale private enterprises in early childhood education and care, both in private homes and in community settings.

e) Location(s):

An Cosán has two locations, which are strategic in terms of the work that it does and the service it provides to the community it serves. A purpose built building which contains The Shanty Education and Training Centre, Rainbow House (an early Childhood Education Centre) and the Childcare and Enterprise Training Centre is based in Jobstown, in the heart of the community of Tallaght West in Dublin. This area is a well-known working class and disadvantaged community in Dublin West. The second location is a small purpose built retreat centre on the grounds of the original house, which was used when The Shanty was first set-up. This location is used as a Retreat and Reflection centre.

f) Website address (if applicable)

www.ancosan.com

2. Contact Information

a) Contact Person's Name:

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b) Position:

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Please provide full contact information for a back-up contact person in case we cannot make contact with you for any reason.

g) Backup Contact Person's Name:

Nadine Uí Duibhgeanán

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Consultant to the organization

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Note: It is essential that all this contact information be provided so that we can follow up with you.

3. A Brief Description of Your Organization:

a) What are the vision and mission; philosophy and core values of your organization?

Vision

This year is a very significant year for An Cosán. It is 21 years old and this represents a celebration to the unrelenting commitment to the ground-breaking and pioneering founding vision of the organization and its successes since 1986. In 1983, Dr. Ann Louise Gilligan and Dr. Katherine Zappone dreamed and set out to create a community-based education project that would empower through education and bring about social change. Their vision was to *"end poverty outright and not just put a dint in it"*. An Cosán's vision today remains true to that founding vision and is clearly stated as follows:

" Our vision is a community free from all forms of poverty and inequality, rich in resources to support the development of the unique individual potential of every, child, woman and man in Tallaght West"

The significance of the organisation's name "An Cosán", which is a Gaelic word, is particularly relevant in terms of the work the organisation does for a number of reasons. An Cosán means *"the path"* or *"the way"* and the organization creates and is seen as a pathway to learning, leadership and enterprise within the community in Tallaght West. In addition, the pioneering vision and practices which are explicitly spiritual in nature and have been in place for two decades have carved a path for other organizations in Ireland to follow.

Mission

The mission of An Cosán is *"to contribute to the development of a culture of learning and leadership through education and enterprise solutions for the challenges facing Tallaght West."*

Five strategic goals have been developed from 2006 – 2008 to achieve this mission and the ethos that the organization embodies of respect, support for each individual who comes into contact with them, in their educational, emotional, intellectual and spiritual journey facilitates the realization of this proactive and challenging mission. An active passion for personal development and social change underpins the activities and actions of the organization and its employees.

Ethos

We believe that the ethos of the organization is both visionary and unique. When An Cosán was first founded, its ethos was one of partnership and a deep sense of spirituality combined with a passion for social justice. Over the years, in line with this ethos, a distinctive model of community education has emerged, one which promotes the integration of emotional, intuitive, physical and spiritual intelligences, alongside the academic. An Cosán's ethos is to create a culture in the organization where everyone who uses their services and all who contribute to them, whether paid or voluntary, feel valued and supported.

We define our ethos as the values we hold, our customs and our practices and at the core of this lies a relational model. At an organizational level, we understand that central to being human is our nature as *beings-becoming-in-relationships*; each of us exists within a series of relationships ; relationship with one's self, with others, with

one's society, with the earth and with the divine. Through our work, we seek to encourage relationships that are positive, supportive, loving, affirmative with all users and providers of our services. In practice, this means the provision of education, childcare and enterprise and an attention to the total needs of the individual; physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual.

Core value

The core value of An Cosán is "the centrality of relationships with the individual and the community. Through our relational model and our work, we aim to attend to these diverse relationships and seek to make individuals aware of the importance of the web of interconnectedness in which we live and move. This understanding of interconnectedness and the "whole" person and their needs at the centre of the relationship is depicted in our logo. The orange circle that represents the letter "O" at the heart of the logo represents the individual and their relationship with themselves, the community, others and the divine. This core value is at the centre of the work that we do. Wrapped around the individual are the relationships and the work we do to welcome them into the organization in a spirit of care, warmth and welcome. The logo is a symbol of the work that An Cosán does that holds the individual *in love* and *in recognizing all their needs*.

Philosophy

The basic philosophy of An Cosán is underpinned by one belief – that Education is an individual and community transformative act, that the social exclusion and poverty experienced by the women, men and children of our community can be positively challenged and changed through education.

b) How does your organization define "Spirituality". How do you talk about the "vertical" and "horizontal" dimensions of spirituality? (Minimum of 500 words)

The Spiritual Dimension of our work was central to the founding vision of the organization over 20 years ago and it continues to be an essential part of the ethos and practice of An Cosán.

We define the Spiritual Dimension in the following way:

The Spiritual Dimension involves acknowledging the spiritual in everyone and involves having openness to the individual and communal search for the transcendent meaning in our lives. This search is inseparable from that of finding how best to live together as human beings on earth.

In An Cosán we seek to create opportunities for all employees to nurture and develop the spiritual elements of their being – however one names that. We create time and space in the midst of stressful, busy lives for stillness, reflection, relaxation and renewal.

We openly talk about the Spiritual Dimension of our work in our daily working lives and in our interactions with the community as well as with our sponsors.

As part of the bringing the Spiritual Dimension to life in our organization, we adopt an Holistic Approach to the work that we do. By this, we mean that we give attention to the total needs of the individual, physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual. This approach encourages us to acknowledge the uniqueness and

individuality of each employee and each individual who comes into contact with us through our services. At a practical level, we seek to create an atmosphere of welcome and safety for all who enter the building. Hospitality is a central value and so we place a priority on the provision of good food lovingly prepared and served in order to bring this dimension to life.

c) How do you handle concerns about diversity of religions and what boundaries do you set around employees trying to convert each other, or in any way making others uncomfortable? To what degree do employees have a choice about participating in spirituality in the workplace activities? To what degree are employees able to express their own spirituality? Is there any form of spirituality that is excluded from the organization? (Minimum of 500 words)

This was an interesting question to consider because we operate in Ireland, a much changed country in terms of religion and Christianity in the last decade. To give further context to this, it is important to provide some background comments to present day Ireland as this social backdrop is significant in terms of how the ethos of spirituality at An Cosán has experienced challenges that have required us to make this dimension even more explicit and clear to staff and the community we serve. Over the past ten years, Ireland has changed from being predominantly a practicing Roman Catholic country to one which is now multi-cultural and multi-denominational. There has been a decline in people attending Roman Catholic services and a disillusionment with the church because of scandals and cases of abuse reported on through the media. Our spiritual dimension, which was rooted in Christian principles, needed to be made explicit, as religion was being confused with spirituality. An Cosán has a great respect for the diversity of spiritual practices and religious beliefs but recognises that spirituality is not the same as religion. Because of this break-away from the church, we felt it was imperative that clarity be given to our Spiritual Dimension and our ethos so as to clearly celebrate diversity and uniqueness. Spirituality along with our ethos is now clearly laid out in our Staff Handbook. We believe that the spiritual ethos which underpins all our practices, initiatives and relationships provides individuals with a direct experience of themselves, others and of a Higher Power. During the recruitment process, we also make interviewees aware of the ethos of the organization, and draw attention to what their experience has been since coming into the organization (i.e. warmth of welcome, hospitality, candles and flowers etc). We offer them reading material and we clearly name the spiritual dimension of our work and explain that this dimension recognizes and encourages diversity and the individual needs of the person.

We believe that employees have great freedom in bringing personal expression into play in the work environment and no form of spirituality is excluded from the organisation. For example, in the Opening Circle, employees have a freedom of expression through the introduction part of the meeting (i.e poetry, music or silence) as well as through the "Check-In". (Further details are provided about these practices in Section 4). Employees have a choice with regard to how to decorate their desks and personal work spaces. For example, some employees chose to place candles, symbolic icons or inspiring pictures or poetry on and around their desks. We encourage this as an organization and do not set boundaries per se, as long as it is deeply respectful of others. The CEO for example has an image on her desk of Jesus breaking bread with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. She believes that this image also mirrors the holy Trinity. She uses this image frequently to centre herself before meetings.

A recent challenge in terms of managing diversity within An Cosán came when one employee spoke to her Manager with some concern about attending the Opening Circle. She explained that her Church would prefer that she did not attend the Opening Circle as it conflicted with their beliefs. This came as a shock as it was the first time since the founding of the organization that this practice had been challenged. In terms of respecting diversity and the choice of the employee to participate in this practice a meeting was held between the Manager and the employee to discuss the concerns and also to make explicit the meaning of the Opening Circle, which supports the spiritual dimension and reflective space of all participants, regardless of their faith or religious beliefs. After discussion and reflection, the employee made a decision not to attend the introduction part of the Opening Circle (where poetry is read, music played, a mediation or silence encouraged). It was agreed however that joining the Opening Circle for the Check-

In would not conflict with the employee's beliefs and this would still serve as a reflective space for the employee to consider herself, her individuality and to communicate with others on her team as to how she was feeling. An Cosán believe that they held the employee through this process respecting her beliefs, thus ensuring that the total needs of the individual were met.

We do recognize however, that there is a balance to be found between respecting diversity and the values we uphold as an organization. We believe that our values in no way offend anyones religious beliefs. At the heart of this organization, there is a respect for the spiritual dimension within everyone and we try to ensure that employees share this perspective through constant communication and through living the values.

It is also important to note that the relational model, which is a part of An Cosán's ethos, nurtures the reality that each of us operates within a series of relationships, (referred to in Section 3a under Ethos), i.e. with one's self, with others, with one's society and culture , with the earth and with the divine. Through promoting this awareness and through encouraging positive relationships we ensure that the diversity of these relationships is attended to.

4. Core Application:

The response to this section should be the heart of the application. What policies, programs, or practices **explicitly promote or enable spirituality at work?** "At work" refers to your workforce. For the purpose of this award, the Committee is more interested in how your workforce is treated but we also want to hear about your customers and clients. Your application will not be sufficient if your practices do not include your employees. Explain the nature and scope of the organization's activities; when these practices were implemented and by whom; relevant background; public visibility; etc. Finally do you believe these programs will be sustainable over time? If so why?

a) Description of policies, programs or practices (minimum of 1000 words):

The vertical component of spirituality at An Cosán

Opening Circle

The Opening Circle is a practice that has been in existence since the founding of the organization. It is an opportunity for quiet time and reflection before a teaching session or a meeting and every class or meeting begins with an Opening Circle. A member of staff takes responsibility for planning the Opening Circle in the context of the meeting or the training that is about to take place. All attendees sit in a circle so that all are facing each other. In the centre of the circle, some beautiful fabric may be placed, a candle may be lighting or an image, a statue, a toy may be placed on the fabric. This honours the beauty of the space and those who have come together. The orgainser may then chose to read an appropriate poem, play a piece of music or hold a guided meditation. Following this, a "Check-In" is held. This is where each attendee speaks to the group allowing them to check-in with how they are feeling, any thoughts or concerns or hopes they may have for the meeting/training session. This provides an opportunity for self-reflection as well as an opportunity to communicate what is happening for that individual at that time. This "Check-In" encourages individuals to be real about themselves and allows the group to hold them as they communicate their thoughts, emotions, needs or concerns. These

Opening Circles encourage the vertical component of spirituality within An Cosán as they provide an opportunity for the employee to experience themselves, connect with others and to centre themselves in preparation for the work they are about to do. In addition, this experience offers a direction and meaning to the meeting and the work that we do by allowing individuals to tap in directly to a Higher Power.

Isabel's Days

These are days of Reflection and are held twice yearly for staff. They are held in teams and provide an opportunity for a peaceful day of reflection, contemplation and renewal. It also provides individuals with an opportunity to appreciate themselves and the work that they and An Cosán does. The purpose built retreat centre on the grounds of the original house is used for this purpose, providing a tranquil setting for rest and reflection. These days support the vertical component of spirituality as they provide an opportunity for employees/individuals to centre themselves, find meaning in what they do and to experience a connection to themselves, others and a Higher Power.

Whole Organization Gathering Days

Three Whole organization days are held each year, where all staff are invited to take time to reflect, contemplate and renew. These days begin with an Opening Circle, celebrate different times of the year, celebrate the community and acknowledge each employee/individual. These days have a hospitality element and a team element to them to re-inforce the importance of self, nurturing, others and the organizational ethos and direction. These Gatherings support the vertical component of spirituality and feedback from them is extremely positive as staff enjoy and reap benefit from coming together to acknowledge each other and the work that they do.

Annual Staff Gathering with the CEO

This annual gathering is a half-day event where the CEO meets with all staff to learn about, listen to any issues, concerns or needs that employees have in relation to their working conditions and environment at An Cosán. This practice is in accordance with the organisation's holistic approach as it provides a forum for the CEO to attend to their needs. Teams have an opportunity to meet before the Gathering to collate employee needs and issues. Following this gathering, the CEO brings the needs and issues to the Working Group, the Board and then back to staff. This update demonstrates to staff that they can raise issues, communicate concerns and have their needs attended to in a supportive way.

Leadership Team Reflection Days

The Leadership Team of An Cosán have committed to taking 9 Reflection Days per annum. This represents a significant commitment but was wholeheartedly agreed to by the Leadership Team as they firmly believe that you can have practices in place but if they are not being led, then the ethos, mission and vision will not be delivered upon. These Reflection Days provide an opportunity for those leading the organization to reflect on who they are as individuals, who the organization is and also to review where they are. These days are led by members of the Leadership Team as well as providing an opportunity for external training and facilitation in relevant areas to be held.

Model of Leader as Disciple

The leadership model that the CEO subscribes to is the leader as disciple. For her, this model of servant leadership means that she operates in the leadership role as a disciple to the mission and vision of An Cosán. "The mission and vision leads us all", the CEO says and identifies with her specific role in delivering upon this. It is the CEO's belief however, that leadership must be encouraged at every level of the organization and that at any level of the organization, profound leadership can be at work and can contribute to expanding and broadening the mission and vision. This is facilitated through the practices, ethos, spiritual dimension and relational model. Feedback from members of the Leadership Team has been that the CEO holds the ethos and spiritual dimension of the organization and has facilitated "huge change and growth because of the way she holds this element".

One to One Meetings

Formal One to One meetings are held on a monthly basis between manager and staff member. These Supervision Meetings provide an opportunity for the manager and individual to connect. The CEO also meets with the members of the Leadership Team and prepares for these meetings with personal reflection and centring. She may use the icon on her desk to centre herself or she may read some poetry or take a few moments of silence in order to prepare. However, she does so with the intention to receive the person she is meeting with. She believes that there is a qualitative difference in the meeting when she does this and this practice directly supports the vertical component of spirituality in the workplace.

Hospitality

The Hospitality function within An Cosán is an integral part of the ethos of the organization and has been an intrinsic part since its foundation. Hospitality is central to our work and how we honor the individual. It was created out of an understanding that the women's educational process is best communicated around a kitchen table, with homemade food. Central to this is the idea of heart and hearth being at the centre of our hospitality ethos at An Cosán. We believe that this supports the vertical component as well as the horizontal component of spirituality as hospitality nourishes and nurtures the individual on every level, encouraging them to appreciate themselves and others. Great care, love and attention is paid to *how* food and nourishment is served as well as to *what* is served. This strong hospitality ethos symbolizes everything about An Cosán and supports our relational model. It is through the development of positive relationships with and between people and empowering people to feel confidence in themselves that An Cosán's real work is done. When our participants gather together they can take real time to get to know themselves, each other and forge lasting relationships, through them firstly being cared for and nourished by our hospitality ethos.

Beauty

It is hoped that the building is a place of "beauty, welcome and safety" which represents what we believe the staff and the community deserve. At the entrance to An Cosán, a candle is always lighting and there are always fresh cut flowers on display. The kitchen is in the main entrance hall and the staff who manage the hospitality function receive people with a warm welcome. The smell of home-baked and home-made food also reaches people as they step into An Cosán. Our Coffee Dock, in the reception area, is a centre where staff and participants can come together. It is envisaged that these honor the spiritual element in everyone and that they resonate with individuals.

Celtic Spirituality Gatherings

At various points throughout the year, we mark significant spiritual days with a gathering of all staff. The days that we celebrate may be significant in terms of acknowledging celtic spirituality and the marking of new seasons and nature, as well as acknowledging a Feast day of an Irish Saint, for e.g. St. Brigid's Day on February 1st. St. Brigid is the female patron Saint of Ireland and we use her feast day to mark the start of spring, to signify new birth and new beginnings as well as to honour women. These Gatherings begin with an Opening Circle and are used to celebrate, acknowledge and draw inspiration from the season or feast day.

Counseling

The counselling service, was set up to provide an opportunity to employees for personal transformation. It provides them with the opportunity to be listened to and be valued. Respect for the individual, their values, beliefs and dignity are core principals of the service.

Life Coaching

This service was set up two years ago to provide an opportunity for employees to reflect on their career and direction with An Cosán. Attendees have space to re-connect with themselves, evaluate their work and their spiritual needs. Since its inception, 10 employees have availed of this service and with retention rates extremely high, this is a testament to the practices and programs at An Cosán.

The horizontal component of spirituality at An Cosán

An Cosán offers several programs in training and education which seek to be of service to others, within the community we serve. The programs below are aligned to our mission and vision through providing courses to develop the "unique potential of every child, woman and man in Tallaght West". These courses create opportunities to nurture and develop the spiritual elements of those attending, providing an opportunity for transcendent meaning to be found in the lives of the participants who attend.

Opening Circle

As in the previous section, the Opening Circle is also used before any training session with participants. This practice reflects the horizontal component of spirituality and is aligned with our vision and mission. It is also interesting to note that every year, evaluations highlight the Opening Circle as one of the most supportive practices for participants.

The following are the courses run within the community which are explicitly spiritual.

Isabel's Reflection Days

These are also offered and held for members of the community. We have offered these unique days of quiet and reflection since the beginning of the organization. Similar to the employee Reflection Days, they provide an opportunity for individuals to take time away from their busy, demanding and pressurized lives. These days create a space for reflection, contemplation and renewal. This peaceful day of reflection takes place in a tranquil setting, giving the individuals within the groups the chance to spend time on issues that matter to them most. It promotes a time to celebrate the *doing* through taking time to acknowledge the *being* and resting. We

believe that this program supports the horizontal component in spirituality as it seeks to make a difference to members of the community through respecting the spiritual dimension in their lives.

The Spirituality Programme

This course has been in existence since 2000 and is a testament to An Cosán's commitment to the horizontal dimension of spirituality. Through offering a space to members of the community to explore the spiritual dimension of their lives, this year long program provides the opportunity for reflection and contemplation and the furtherance of each individual's spiritual journey. The course is open to anyone on a spiritual journey, anyone seeking and offering "soul friendship". It is about our own spirituality as we proceed with the task of living as a human being on earth. (For further information on this program and its content, please see page 9 in the document on Contemporary Spiritualities Research Project, by Carmel Habington).

Creative Writing

On this course, participants explore the pathways to creativity. This course provides a supportive environment for writing and reflection on the participant's journey to creativity.

Personal Development 1

This program provides the space for participants to grow and develop emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. The aim is to develop self-awareness (the ability to reflect on your life's experience) and to support participants in changes they would like to bring about in their lives.

Personal Development 2

Having completed Personal Development 1, participants who feel that they would like "Something More", can move on to Part 2 of this program. This course continues to build on the inner work already done but invites participants to move deeper, wider and higher and to see the bigger picture of their life. At a personal level, this means stretching multiple aspects of themselves – the physical, emotional, intellectual and the creative spiritual. Through this programme, participants are encouraged to develop the connections between themselves and the systems they live in, family, community, culture, society. This is in direct alignment with our ethos on the centrality of relationships, where each of us exists within a series of relationships ; relationship with one's self, with others, with one's society, with the earth and with the divine.

Monthly Spirituality Evenings

These evenings support both the vertical and horizontal component of spirituality. They are held monthly throughout the academic year and staff and members of the community are invited to attend. The aim of these evenings is to create a space for people to become truly more centered. People are invited to come with all that touches their lives, with the joys and sufferings of humanity and to rest and renew at the source of all life, however one names it. Each session lasts 90 minutes and follows a simple format. Much attention is given to the creation of an atmosphere conducive to meditation and reflection in line with our spiritual dimension. Following the session, hospitality is offered in the Coffee Dock which encourages positive relationships, connection with others and nourishment. These evenings provide attendees with a direct experience of spirituality.

We have also held spiritual evenings with Chloe Goodchild on The Inner Voice.

Curriculum for Rainbow House – early childhood education centre

Rainbow House is a beautiful purpose built space providing early childhood education and care for children from the Tallaght West community. We have an holistic approach that supports the horizontal component in spirituality by providing a safe secure and loving environment with a home from home atmosphere where confidence, independence and self esteem are nurtured encouraging each child to develop to their full potential at their own pace.

The curriculum is built on a sound educational ethos and has an 'eclectic' approach incorporating the best of the following different educational philosophies:

- The 'whole child' approach of Montessori education
- The spiritual and community spirit of Steiner
- The active planning and doing of Highscope

The curriculum provides an extensive variety of activities, which support the spiritual dimension and development of the child, covering six main areas:

1. Emotional, personal, social, cultural and moral development
2. Communication and language
3. Knowledge, care, understanding and appreciation of the world
4. Expressive and aesthetic development
5. Physical development
6. Cognitive development

Location and setting for training

In terms of alignment with our ethos and spiritual dimension, it is important to mention the environment and space where training programs are held. All training rooms are informal and invite people to be themselves. When An Cosán moved to their new building from "The Shanty", this was a concern, i.e. that the peaceful, beautiful, tranquil space would be re-created in the new An Cosán building. A commitment to maintain the true Shanty spirit has remained strong and today everyone who comes through the door of An Cosán speaks of the warmth, welcome and visible spirit of care that is present.

The importance of Training Supports

b) Every class has an *Educational Facilitator* and their role is to manage the opening circle. Their role is also one of pastoral care, of the class as a group and on a one to one basis. This builds a learning community consciously. This role is significant in terms of holding our spiritual ethos and relational model. It is a role that supports women, men and children through the educational process. It is a be-friending role as well as a referring role, providing opportunities for counselling or other supports to facilitate individuals engaging in the educational process. This supports the spiritual dimension as the Education Facilitator role places *huge emphasis on pastoral care*, the whole person and their needs. Facilitators are individuals from the local community who have experienced the educational process at An Cosán. We *provide* them with additional training in pastoral care, spirituality and give them a grounding in the community education principles we have developed.

What has been the effect of policies, programs, or practices on stakeholders? Stakeholders include employees, owners, customers or clients, suppliers, communities in which business has a presence, etc. A separate attachment with verbatim testimonials is allowed. Please email this attachment separately and limit to 4 pages (in addition to the maximum of 12 pages on the Application) (minimum of 1000 words):

Evaluation and Feedback

We have internal evaluations through which we gather feedback and evaluation from participants about their experience. The spiritual dimension is referred to time and time again through feedback as being an integral part of the educational process for them. It has been identified by participants as a space which allows them to connect with themselves and to acknowledge themselves and their needs. They feedback to us that this has helped them engage more fully in the educational process. Being aware of and acknowledging their own needs has allowed them to build confidence in their own abilities. It has been reported back to us that our programs feed into building a comfortable sense of self, acknowledges the whole person and deepens self confidence. Participants have also reported back to us that the most important realization for them in attending a course with us is that they had the chance to experience warmth, a welcome and a space to meet themselves.

This is powerful feedback for us to receive as it allows us to measure the impact that our spiritual dimension has on participants and subsequently on the community. We are also, however, acutely aware that this transformation in individuals as a result of engaging in our programs can be challenging for their family and the community within which they live and have contact. The training supports mentioned earlier facilitate this transition and hold the needs of the individual as they go through this journey of connection.

Active Citizenship

An Cosán has a deep and strong commitment to social change and we are dedicated to supporting our participants to review their own lives and the lives of those in the community. Another measure of the impact of our programs on stakeholders, i.e. members of the community, was clearly demonstrated through our Active Citizenship Program this year. We had a general election in Ireland this year and from February to May we held conversations/meetings with members of the local community every Thursday to explore the social/economic issues relevant for them and for the community. We ensured that the 600 participants who come through our doors every week were all registered to vote so that they could influence change in the community and at local level. The feedback received as a result of this program was one of recognition of the impact of the individuals voice in addressing their needs and also in an understanding of something greater than themselves, i.e. an interest in others and in the community.

This Program has also been crucial in terms of empowering members of the community to "find their voice". An Cosán continually strives to enable participants and members of the community to realise that they have a voice. The Active Citizenship Program for the Election was just one of many platforms from which we aim to raise educational and political issues. This process of empowerment has allowed men and women within the community to realise their own life situations and how best to develop their capacities to change situations.

Personal Transformations

In the Beacon of Light Executive Summary, a number of Case Studies are presented. The three individuals whose case studies are presented in this report were interviewed using a 'life history' approach. A 'life history' approach is qualitative in nature and has the individual's life as core to its unit of investigation, and as Welle (2004) describes, *'starts with the individual to work its way to construct a picture anchored in a distinct society and time period'*(Welle, 2004). This method was proven valuable in highlighting the impact An Cosán had on certain participants who used its services.

Below, quotes from personal reflection from three participants, of their experiences with An Cosán are presented to illustrate the impact the organization has had on them and also the impact it has had on the community.

Susan

Susan came into contact with the Shanty when it was still in Brittas (in the founding house). It was her sister who informed her after she had completed a course in Brittas. Susan signed up for a couple of courses and soon came to realise the wonders of the 'opening circle'.

"The opening circle is a big deal. They don't just come in and do a course there's always like a warm up and everybody gets to check in or they pull an angle card or, like it's just different, it's not like the way I, my fear of school would have been that teacher/pupil situation and that just didn't exist here so that was lovely. Any course that I did in this building was so, beneficial because you really feel like you're taken care of."

As part of this review, Susan identified her own personal transformation through her experiences in the Shanty but also pointed to the transformations she saw in other women that came through the doors.

"Empowered me, and, and a lot of people I've seen coming through this building. I've seen transformed. It's happened on a huge level. Now it's probably only the tip of the iceberg because they can't obviously cater for everybody. Anybody I've seen coming through the doors seems to take on that same transformation on some level. You know, the awareness that there's more to life and that they don't have to accept things as they are and that things could be better or things could be different. That is a huge key."

Susan appreciated the holistic educational approach she experienced and the authenticity of tutors and education facilitators in never speaking down to her but employing inclusive teaching methods. She now knows the value of education and the important contribution An Cosán make in highlighting this to the community of Tallaght West.

Patricia

Patricia was twenty nine years of age when she started her first course up in the Shanty and describes her life being in a very dark place at the time. Patricia's friend introduced her to the Shanty and signed her up for a course. After one or two weeks in the Shanty, Patricia claimed that she could not get enough. Of the Hospitality Ethos, she says,

"Somewhere you felt welcomed, like a home kind of a feeling and I wouldn't have had that feeling too often in my life, so, it was great."

She experienced directly the transformational change in her children through the services provided by Rainbow House.

"In my opinion, they are absolutely wonderful, they are gifted people. Again they work on the spirit of the child, every child is different, different needs."

As is evident above and in the report, Rainbow House provides a very high standard of childcare provision and early childhood education. Through its curriculum it ensures that early intervention will improve the life chances of young people. Patricia's and her children's experience of Rainbow House demonstrate this. Through a structured programme, coinciding with the level of support and the nurtured ethos of the Shanty, Patricia was provided with a path of self-realisation, a route to realise her uniqueness and her potential.

Teresa

Teresa began her experience in An Cosán before 1995. Like many women Teresa was an early school leaver and found herself heading straight for employment.

"When my daughter started school I took up these courses that were available at the Shanty as it was then known. So after the women studies I went on and did the BA and that was that and did the HDip (Higher Diploma) after that in community adult education and that was 2002."

Teresa described the experiences of the old Shanty sketching a picture of the lovely, warm surroundings which in turn created a positive and affirming learning environment where the women were treated with respect and not looked down on. These experiences were in complete contrast to the educational experiences many women encountered previously.

"It was different, I hadn't experienced that before, I didn't understand it, I didn't know what community education was, I didn't even know I was participating in community education, you know. I just knew this was a course and this place was lovely and everyone was really, you know, helpful and affirming if you like. Excellent tutors and the material was just fantastic you know. The environment was very lovely and warm and welcoming. I think that's all part of it, it's all part of a kind of healing from that. It's just the whole approach you know, you weren't treated like some kind of second class citizen you know. There was a kind of element of respect, you know you weren't looked down upon which was lovely. In that way it was different."

Teresa also spoke about the new An Cosán building and its facilities. She describes the facilities as reflecting the true spirit of the Shanty.

"Fabulous, absolutely! What's good about it and what, what makes it different is that the people who actually set up the organisation, they've in conjunction with the people in Tallaght, we're not prepared to settle for anything just because it's Tallaght. They are going to get the best and that's right, rightly so. Everyone's entitled to the best, that we as human beings have to offer, I think that's what really matters."

All three Case Studies recognise An Cosán as an important asset to the community of Tallaght West and acknowledge the huge leaps that being involved with the organisation has had on their lives, the lives of their families and their community. All individuals interviewed acknowledged the benefits a holistic approach to education can have on individuals. Full Case Studies can be read along with the Executive Report in The Beacon of Light Report 2004.

Participant Results on accredited Programs

In addition, the results achieved by participants on accredited courses are higher than the national average. We attribute this to our supports.

Staff Turnover Metrics

Other key metrics that measure the success of our programs and practices are our staff turnover figures and high retention figures. This is an internal metric as it looks at the number of staff per annum and the rate of turnover. As you will see, in the past 5 years the figures have been incredibly low. This should also be considered against a backdrop where the national average turnover figures are 15%.

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
No of staff employed	28	26	31	36	42
No of Staff who left	2	2	2	1	2
Percentage Turnover	7.1%	7.6%	6.4%	2.7%	4.7%

Feedback from Communications Audit

In 2007, we commissioned with an external consultancy, an internal Communications Audit, in alignment with our Strategic Goal No. 5, Build capacity to deliver on our mission to Tallaght West and its corresponding Key Action No 6 which is to establish communications systems relevant to the growth and development of the organization. A Questionnaire was submitted to staff for completion as well as facilitated Focus Groups being held to elicit feedback. As part of this Audit, the Culture, Ethos and Spirituality were reviewed in the context of internal communications. Positive feedback in this area was received and below, we have listed a number of positive comments captured in relation to internal communications in the context of this Application. Staff reported that they “felt a sense of pride when they reviewed what they and the organization had accomplished”. In terms of the ethos and the relational model, there was unanimous recognition from staff that the 1:1 meetings, both formal and informal worked extremely well. Feedback indicated that people within the organization are “willing to engage, be positive and support one another”. Staff also reported that one of the strongest spiritual practices for them was the 1:1 meetings and they believed that Spirituality at work was “realized through the way people met each other on a daily basis”. In terms of the Induction process, staff reported that they received information and an understanding about the ethos and spirituality in the workplace through this process. The Leadership Team fed back that they valued the “holistic approach of the organization, its spiritual dimension and the acknowledgement of the uniqueness and individuality of each employee”. Team-building events such as the Reflection Days as well as Whole Organisation Gatherings were also shown as support the relational model and inter-company relations. Staff believed that

participation in these events, "served as a mechanism to bring the operations together working positively towards a common goal".

In 2004, we commissioned a small external review of our services, called A Beacon of Light. At that time, we did not have sufficient resources to implement an in-depth review of the tangible, measurable outcomes of the impact of our services on the community we serve. Since that report, however, we sought funding from the Philanthropic Foundation. This review is currently being carried out and though the feedback will not be ready in time for this Application, we are working with the Trinity Children Research Centre to carry out an external review of the measurable impact of our services on participants. This report will further inform and enhance our services.

c) What has been the effect of policies, programs, or practices on nominee's business success? Please say how you feel these programs have helped you. For example: Has it contributed to growth? Has it improved employee retention? Please provide statistics whenever possible. (minimum of 1000 words)

The impact of our Ethos on the quality of our services

The ethos that underpins the quality of the services we provide to the community we serve is essential to our success as an organization. Indicators of our success in this area are clearly shown through the doubling of our provision of services in the past number of years. In 1999, when we moved from The Shanty to the new An Cosán building, we were offering 17 courses to 200 participants. We are now offering 35 courses to 600 participants on a weekly basis. We have never cancelled a class in all the time that An Cosán has been in operation and this has provided a sense of consistency and longevity for those experiencing our services.

The services that are provided are underpinned by the ethos, relational model and spiritual dimension and we believe that our care for one another and our search to understand the essence of "being part of the whole" brings sustainable energy to our work. In order to bring this ethos together 21 years ago, we considered psychological, philosophical and sociological views on human development. We often referred to this as our "spirituality" or "spiritual dimension" of the work at that time. It had little to do with religion per se. Instead *it represented our ongoing search to know and celebrate the meaning of life and the needs of the human spirit*. Indeed, it was this exploration that provided the context within which the ethos of the organization developed. That ethos shaped our work in a distinctive fashion and thus created our success. Our courses for men and women, our dreams for children and our desire to support an enterprise culture are all continually fuelled by an ethical vision and practice that places love in the centre of the struggle for social justice. This is something of the meaning behind the home-cooked smells that are integral to our hospitality for participants and for children or the sponsorship of Isabel's Days, or the Opening Circle, that initiates each class as a way of calling us to a place of stillness and to the presence of one another before the work begins. It is all these things that combine to make the ethos of An Cosán a unique one and one which has facilitated real social change in the community we serve.

The Effect of Empowerment on our success

An Cosán aims to empower people, provide them with opportunities to develop and educate themselves, creating better lives for themselves and their children. The case studies detailed in the Beacon of Light Report 2004 presented the impact An Cosán had on participant's lives. In terms of measuring the impact of our services

and ethos on our success, the three case studies clearly demonstrate that An Cosán has fulfilled the aim it has set out; that is to provide services that empower individuals. They further demonstrate; that the core ethos of heart and hearth are key factors to providing education to women; that the support structures in place, childcare, counselling, literacy and tutorial support, are crucial to education provision; the level of educational and emotional support that is required for many who wish to return to education; that positive educational experiences have a 'knock-on effect' which impact the family home.

Income/Funding

Funding is an important aspect in maintaining our growth and success. An Cosán is funded year on year because we are a hugely successful organization. We also attribute our success in this area to supporting and retaining people. Over the years An Cosán has developed excellent partnerships with many government departments and their relevant bodies. Representatives of funding agencies acknowledge the great strides An Cosán has achieved in community education and knows of its importance and value to the Tallaght West.

This is reflected in the tangible fact that our Income has grown steadily since 2001. We believe this is testament to the fact that people support us and believe in what we are doing.

The figures below provide tangible measures of our continued success in this area, reflected in the income we receive through state funding and funders.

Year	2001	2006	2007
Income Figure	1.01 million	1.7 million	In excess of 2 million

The steady rise in income since 2001 is also hugely significant as there was a general consensus from all associated with the organisation that funding, or the lack of secure funding, was the greatest challenge and concern for An Cosán in 2004, when the Beacon of Light Report was commissioned.

Creating a professional workforce

An Cosán has always believed in the importance of a professional workforce. Through An Cosán's structure, ethos and model of service, a professional workforce has emerged. In 2004, up to 80% of the professional staff at that time, were from Tallaght and many were educated and trained through the organization. At that time, this figure included two members of the management/leadership team.

Communicating with the community

Beacon Newsletter

One way we communicate the successes of An Cosán, and by this we mean the successes of those who come through our doors, is through publishing our bi-annual Newsletter, Beacon. This is circulated among members of the community to sponsors, and to funding and public bodies. Included in it are articles from participants, members of the community, the Founders, Board Members. It is a celebration of work done and provides an update to the community and to Funders about progress to date. Prior to the Beacon being published and as far back as Christmas 1987, the first Shanty Times Newsletter was published. In 2001, a magazine was produced called An Cosán, The Magazine of The Shanty Educational Project Ltd and today we have the Beacon. Relationships have always been at the centre of the work that we do and we believe that communicating in this way with

the community, staff and funders, and being explicit about our spiritual dimension has been crucial to our success in driving social change within the community.

Womens Mini-Marathon

Every year in Dublin the Women's Mini-Marathon is held over the June Bank Holiday Weekend. To connect and communicate with the community we host a Buck's Fizz Breakfast for all those running in support of An Cosán on the morning of the Marathon. We always start this breakfast gathering with an Opening Circle and with poetry and song to honour the women and men who run in this event on our behalf. The numbers who run on behalf of An Cosán each year is an indication of the support we have fostered within the community.

Graduation

Each year, we celebrate the Graduation of participants of men women and children at An Cosán. The commitment and successes of so many participants is powerfully presented by the voices of participants from different classes who share their experience over the past year. We also have a Participant of the Year Award and a Volunteer of the Year Award. The successful fundraising efforts of the Women's Mini-Marathon were recognized and all who contributed were thanked. This year the celebrations were hugely successful and it was reported that this night and its successes would "remain a source of inspiration in the times ahead".

d) How has the organization been a model or inspiration for others companies in your industry or outside of it? For example, is your CEO often asked to speak at industry conferences and does he or she speak explicitly about spirituality? (minimum of 500 words)

On a number of different occasions, our Founders have been asked to speak at public events and conferences in relation to An Cosán's model of community development and education. Within this, clear attention is given to the spiritual elements of the organization and how they foster community development as well as bringing about social change.

The following Conferences have been held where Dr. Katherine Zappone, one of the Founders has spoken:

- Conference 2006, National College of Ireland, Dublin on Community Development and Education
- Banulacht Conference 2006, Women and Human Rights
- Conference 2000, Gathering Blossoms Under Fire Conference, Ontario, Canada

At this Conference, Dr. Zappone spoke about the following "Has the Sacred a Future? The Intersection of Social and Spiritual Change

The organization also holds a number of fundraising events each year. For example, one such event is held on International Women's Day on March 8th. This event begins with an Opening Circle, which demonstrates the spiritual dimension of the work that An Cosán does. It serves to provide a moment of quiet reflection and celebration for the event. Participants speak to the audience about their positive experiences with An Cosán and although not always referred to explicitly as a journey of spirituality, participants refer to the power of transformative change and how their lives, those of their families and community have changed through the distinctive method of learning that An Cosán offers.

The CEO, Liz Waters, is on a number of boards where she represents An Cosán within the community and voluntary sector at national level.

Liz is a Director of The Wheel (www.wheel.ie), a representative group of organizations in the community and voluntary sector. The Wheel is a support and representative body connecting Community and Voluntary organisations across Ireland. It was established six years ago with a mandate from over 200 organisations and individuals and has evolved to become a resource centre and forum for the Community and Voluntary sector. Their role is to promote and support the sector and Liz's role as Director is a two year term, which finishes in 2007.

Liz has recently been invited onto the Board of the Adelaide Society, which is a National Community Education Network. Their role is to look at and promote Community Education.

Advocacy

These roles have a strong advocacy element and provide an opportunity for Liz to champion the shared concerns and interests of an entire sector on sector-related issues to the nation's decision makers.

International

The Wheel met regularly with international community and voluntary sector support groups in 2006 and again in 2007. These groups included the counterpart voluntary sector councils in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation CIVICUS and CEDAG – the Association of European NGO's. Approaches were shared and collaborative solutions developed.

Communicating the Ethos and Spiritual Dimension of An Cosán

Liz holds and speaks very comfortably about An Cosán's ethos. The Spiritual Dimension is "part of what we do and who we are", she says and "it therefore informs how I take things forward. I have a particular interest in justice and social policy issues. I make an input on these issues on any board of which I am a member and this is informed about where I come from", i.e. from An Cosán.

Liz also launched the Strategic Plan in the An Cosán building in 2006 to a public arena. The Strategic Plan was launched to staff, government ministers, politicians and funders. An Opening Circle began this meeting, in line with the ethos of the organization. Hospitality was provided afterwards, in line with this intrinsic value. This Strategic Plan makes explicit the Ethos, Relational Model and Spiritual Dimension that informs the work that An Cosán does to serve the community.

The organization is a model for inspiration for other companies. We are one of the biggest community development organizations in the country. We attribute our success to the following:

1. The quality of service we provide
2. Our commitment to justice and social change for the community we serve
3. Our commitment to supporting the community to grow its leadership capacity
4. Our commitment to the ethos of An Cosán, which holds the spiritual dimension and the relational model

In summation, it is relevant to quote the CEO as she spoke about the organization in the context of spirituality for this Application.

"The spiritual dimension is interwoven into the fabric of this organization. It is a dimension but the relational model is also hugely significant to our success. Together they make up the whole and we don't differentiate one from the other, in terms of how they contribute to success. The spiritual dimension is like a golden thread running through the fabric, interwoven with other elements which contribute to our high quality service, our focus on justice and social change, the community we serve, the individuals who work here and to leadership."

5. Stakeholder References

A minimum of two references are recommended. Stakeholders may be owners, employees, suppliers, customers, strategic partners, community representatives, or environmental representatives, who are not leading your Spirit at Work initiative but can attest independently and genuinely to at least one of these:

- Vertical and horizontal dimensions of Spirituality demonstrated by the organization
- The explicitly spiritual project, policy or practice being acknowledged
- Any impact this person/group has observed resulting from the organization's Spirit at Work program, policies, practices, etc.

Please include name, contact information and the relationship to the applicant.

Reference 1: Avril Bailey, Employee, Manager of Shanty Education and Training

Reference 2: Dr. Anne O' Reilly, Tutor in Creative Writing

Reference 3: Emma PhilbinBowman

Reference 4: Bernie Coleman, Previous Participant on An Cosán courses, currently Pastoral Careworker

Reference 5: Nadine Uí Duibhgeanán, Vendor, HR, Coaching and Training Consultant

Contact information and the relationship to An Cosán is clearly stated on the references.

6. Sources of additional information on the applicant:

Here you may mention documents which you attached to the email containing this application but which are not part of this 11 page application. You may also list websites that can be accessed by the committee if needed.

The following documents were sent by post along with the cheque for Application to the Awards:

- The Strategic Plan 2006 – 2008
- A book written by the Founders of An Cosán entitled Love and Social Change
- Two copies of our Beacon Newsletter
- The Executive Summary Report entitled A Beacon of Light, from 2004

The following documents are attached to the email Application:

- The Strategic Plan 2006 – 2008
- A book written by the Founders of An Cosán entitled Love and Social Change

- Two copies of our Beacon Newsletter
- The Executive Summary Report entitled A Beacon of Light, from 2004
- Contemporary Spiritualities Research Project by Carmel Habington submitted as part of her Higher Diploma in Applied Christian Spirituality, in Milltown Institute, 2007

IV. Submitting an Application

Applications shall include the information requested above (see Items #1- 6) and can be submitted via email to: **elisa@spiritatwork.org**

The Committee members reside on multiple continents and cannot share paper documents. For this reason only electronic submissions will be accepted. Additional support material, such as copies of the Mission Statement, descriptions of specific programs, or articles about the spiritual practices of the organization must also be submitted electronically.

V. Receiving the Award

Organizations receiving the Award must be willing to contribute to some of the activities that promote and raise awareness off the award, such as:

- Agreeing to attend the 2007 International Spirit at Work Awards conference to receive the award and to offer a workshop presentation on their programs and/or practices. The 2007 Conference will be held at Simpsonwood Conference Center, Atlanta, Georgia, USA on October 19-21st, 2007. You must attend the conference and offer a workshop in order to receive the Award and to be considered an ISAW Honoree.
- Providing a 1 page overview of your best practices for our Program Book and a 10 page overview of best practices for the attendees of the award ceremony and for the websites of the sponsoring organizations
- Signing a release form that grants permission for your case study to be included in ISAW publications
- Signing a release form that allows us to videotape and audiotape your presentations.
- Willingness to be contacted by researchers, journalists, and like-minded organizations to share what you are doing
- Agreeing that your application can be made available to future applicants and to journalists and researchers who are writing positive stories or work about spirituality in the workplace.

VI. Application and Award Schedule

Due Date for nominations is May 1, 2007 for the 2007 awards. The application form needs to be submitted in English. Decisions will be communicated to all applicants by the end of July. At the present time, we do not have enough funding to allow us to pay travel for honorees. However, we will waive the conference fee and pay the retreat expenses for one representative from each of the organizations honored. Award recipients will be profiled in co-organizers publications and on their websites and at their conferences. In addition to a few former award recipients, the

Selection Committee of the ISAW Awards is currently composed of members from following non-profit organizations:

- **The Association for Spirit at Work:** "The professional association for people involved with spirituality in the workplace" www.spiritatwork.org.
- **The World Business Academy:** "Rekindling the human spirit in business." www.worldbusiness.org
- **The European Baha'i Business Forum:** "Enhancing the well-being and prosperity of humankind." www.ebbf.org

VII. Who was Willis Harman?

This award was inspired by the work of Willis Harman, PhD (1919-1997) who was a visionary thinker, futurist and social scientist who continuously articulated the possibility for humankind to transcend the limits of out-moded thinking. He was the author of several books including *Creative Work: The Constructive Role of Business in a Transforming Society* (with John Hormann), *An Incomplete Guide to the Future*, and *Global Mind Change*. He was co-editor of *The New Business of Business: Sharing Responsibility for a Positive Global Future* (with Maya Porter). He was also co-founder of the World Business Academy (1988), president of Institute of Noetic Sciences from 1973 until late 1996, a social scientist and futurist with SRI International in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and a professor at Stanford University prior to these other affiliations. This award honors organizations who are living examples of Willis Harman's vision that business will play a major role in transforming social consciousness.

For further information contact:

Elisa Mallis

Chair, Selection Committee, 2007 International Spirit at Work Award

elisa@spiritatwork.org.

VIII. ISAW Application - Frequently asked questions

Q: Can my organization apply if it is faith-based?

A: You may apply as long as you are not promoting any one faith tradition. Honorees must respect all faith traditions and not use any Spirit At Work initiatives as a way to convert others to their preferred faith.

Q: Can my organization apply if it is based on the spiritual teaching of one person or is a religious organization such as a church?

A. No, we're sorry. We are looking for organizations that will serve as acceptable models to the broadest type of business organizations, and we believe that an organization that focuses on the teachings of one spiritual leader or is promoting one particular religion may not be easily accepted by mainstream organizations as a model. At the same time, we recognize that these kinds of organizations are often on the leading edge of spiritual practices in the workplace.

Q: What kinds of organizations can apply?

A: For-profit, not-for-profit, educational, or governmental organizations may apply. Privately held companies may apply. Publicly held companies may apply. Universities may apply. Basically any group of 20 or more full-time, paid

employees (or full-time equivalent) who meet the criteria listed in the application form can apply.

Q: Can I count volunteers as part of my employee count?

A: Generally not, and here is why: Work is generally to make a living and pay the bills. Therefore this kind of work is done in return for pay. Work-for-pay creates the potential for inconsiderate treatment of workers who may feel trapped. We are trying to promote change in the workplace so that our time at work is nourishing to our Spirit. Volunteers who are mistreated can easily leave. Thus our focus is on paid employees. However, if you have a special circumstance, contact us so we can consider your eligibility.

Q: My entire organization at large is not yet involved with Spirit at Work initiatives, but my Division has a great program. Can we apply?

A: Yes, as long as your Division has at least 20 full-time employees, has been in existence for 5 years or more (3 for small organizations), and has a reasonable degree of autonomy (decision-making authority) in regard to this project.

Q: Our project has been a pilot project within our larger organization. Can a pilot project apply?

A: Yes as long as your organization meets the other criteria and the leadership of your organization has approved this pilot.

Q: Do some types of organizations or organizations in particular countries/regions have an advantage?

A: Some types of organizations or organizations in particular countries/regions may be thought to have an advantage, both through having more experience of practicing spirituality in the workplace and where English is their first language. However, we have developed an approach that allows for all applications to be fairly considered in both the business and cultural context from which they are presented.

Q: Are there any restrictions on the types of organizations that can apply?

A: No – any organization can apply, with the exception listed above, and they have more than 20 employees. We do not exclude from consideration any organization based on their product or service. If an organization's product or service could be considered harmful to society as decided by the Selection Committee, then there will be an obligation for the organization to demonstrate that their overall vision/mission/values are aligned with compassion for the concerns and needs of every stakeholder – including but not limited to employees, the environment and the community.

Q: What could cause my organization to not be selected for an award?

A: If you do not meet the criteria specified in this application OR If the Committee feels there is any inappropriate behavior in the organization, such as attempts to convert employees or unethical behavior OR If the Committee feels that the greater purpose of the International Spirit at Work Award is not served by naming your organization as an honoree

Q: Can my organization be a sponsor (donate money or services) to the award in the same year as we apply for an award?

A: We would welcome your support but we're afraid we cannot accept donations in the same year as an application. If you have already donated in the same year, your contribution will be refunded. We want to avoid any conflict of interest – or even an appearance of a conflict of interest. Most of our donations for the

awards and for the conference come from ISAW Alumni, so if you have received the award in the past, we welcome your support through donations or services.

Q: Does my organization have to be present at the conference to receive the award?

A: Yes – since it represents a visible commitment of senior management to the Spirit at Work initiative. A photographer will be present, and possibly representatives of the press, so the Award Ceremony is a good opportunity for the organization to gain favorable recognition.

Q: Can I see some applications from prior honorees to get an idea of what other organizations have done?

A: Yes, several previous award recipients have made their applications available. Check the website www.spiritatwork.org to see if they are posted. If they are not yet there, contact Elisa Mallis at elisa@spiritatwork.org to request some sample applications.

Q: Do I have to model my application after previous year's applications?

A: No. We want to encourage a creative and authentic description of the uniqueness of your organization's policies, procedures, or practices that nurture the human spirit. We want you to tell your own story in your own words. However, you may consult previous applications to be inspired by the way Award honorees have filled out the application

Q: Can I get some help as I am working on my application? I have some questions and I want to be sure I present the information you need.

A: We are happy to help you complete the application process. However this is not necessary to be successful as an applicant. We will contact all applicants to clarify items in the application – so getting help in advance is available but optional. Contact the Chairperson and a Committee member will be assigned to help you through the application process. If you have a noteworthy program or practice we WANT you to apply! Let us help!

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