Executive Summary

Real Partners has just completed its first year of trading and we are delighted with the progress so far. The executive directors knew this would be a tough year; to start an organisation in the midst of a world-wide recession was never going to be easy.

This report sits alongside our financial statements and is a commentary on how we feel Real Partners is delivering against our social aims, community interest objectives and how we are living up our values and ethics.

We will also look at the extraordinary impact of winning our first tender to deliver the Social Enterprise Leadership Programme on behalf of the Social Enterprise Coalition as part of the I-SEE Big Lottery programme in December 2010.

Finally, we will take a look at future work and the development of the organisation as we grow our reputation, build our brand and strengthen our team.

Michelle Livingston, Managing Director
31 May 2011
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Background to Real Partners CIC

Real Partners is a community interest company whose mission is to become a leading provider of third sector leadership and organisation development, creating effective partnerships to build exceptional capability. Our vision is to become an inspirational force that brings enterprise to social purpose.

Our community interest objectives are:

- To promote effective organisation development across the third sector
- To facilitate individual development and promote personal learning
- To provide and develop value for money consultancy services
- To support ideas development and innovation across the third sector

Our areas of expertise are people and organisational development, leadership and team building. We work with our clients to develop innovative and sustainable strategies, which build a strong future for the sector.

The underlying philosophy of Real Partners is about delivering real value and sustainable change. We do this by keeping our fixed costs to a minimum and creating effective consortia and partnerships with skilled and highly motivated people uniquely positioned to deliver specific projects.

The directors of Real Partners first began to understand the need for real investment in leadership development in the third sector, some months before setting up the CIC. This was supported in an article on a dispute between two national third sector bodies which led to the collapse of the sector’s centre of excellence for management training in 2009. Commentators believed that this collapse has “deprived our sector of a valuable resource at the time of greatest need”.

More recently, the Guardian hosted a round table event to understand skills development in the third sector and published its findings. It found that while the private sector has a good record in developing leadership, and the public sector has been investing in its potential leaders, the third sector has been slow to follow. One speaker said: “It’s 2010 and we have just started to talk about leadership development.” Another added: “There is very little career development for people who aspire to be leaders – who are already demonstrating that they have potential for leadership.”

This event highlighted the continued focus of leadership development in the third sector on achieving MBAs and professional qualifications in an academic environment over the more practical skills and experience of managing and leading successful organisations and the real capability gap this leaves the sector. Real Partners CIC was formed in April 2010 with the aim of supporting the sector in developing these vital skills sets.

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1 Third Sector, 23 March 2009 ‘How infighting sank the Third Sector Leadership Centre’
2 Guardian public, 07 April 2010 ‘Challenges facing voluntary organisations’
Real Vision and Values

At the Real Partners Community Interest Company we have a strong company ethos and are committed to our vision and our values. The directors are committed to ensuring that these live and breathe in the organisation. These determine the choices of companies we work with, the associates we employ and will be the driving force in expanding our business and strengthening our governance.

Our Vision:
“The inspirational force that brings enterprise to social purpose”

Our Mission:
“To become the leading provider of social enterprise leadership development, creating effective partnerships to build exceptional capability”

Our Organisational Goals:
- Building a credible organisation which balances values and ethics with financial results.
- Fulfilling the needs of our customers in a real and practical way.
- Creating a vibrant organisation which innovates and inspires.
- Delivering outstanding service that is value for money.
- Respecting difference and championing diversity

Our Values:
How we deliver our programmes is just as important to us as what we deliver. The Social Enterprise Emerging Leaders Programme provides a great example of how Real Partners living up to its values and ethics. In designing and delivering this programme we ensured that we worked closely with social enterprises and third sector specialist to provide a tailored curriculum that was designed specifically for the needs of the leaders of the sector. We provided value for money by ensuring that we directed the funding to real learning and measured the outputs carefully. We focused on challenging paradigms, building exceptional leadership competence, sustainable strategies and innovation. By using social enterprise venues and third sector suppliers with environmental aims wherever we could, we ensured that this project fitted with our values and ethics from end-to-end.
Working with our Stakeholders

Real Partners understands that it must work carefully with its entire stakeholder group in order to determine the best way to meet social aims and objectives.

The table below shows groups of stakeholder Real Partners has consulted with over the past twelve months to develop an brand and services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our Directors</th>
<th>Our Shareholders</th>
<th>Our Associates</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Bodies</td>
<td>Our Strategic Partners</td>
<td>Social Enterprise Associations and Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Customers</td>
<td>Our Suppliers</td>
<td>Our Content Experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospective Customers</td>
<td>The Community</td>
<td>Other Interest Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Enterprises</td>
<td>Charities</td>
<td>Other 3rd Sector Organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In developing all our programmes and training courses, we have listened to the views of all of our stakeholder groups. Rightly this has led to the co-design of our social enterprise leadership framework, which underpins our work and has provided us with clear direction on the skills and capabilities the sector wants to and needs to develop. We seek constant evaluation and feedback throughout delivery of our programme and this has provided us with an immense amount of data in which to review and revise our offer constantly to best meet the needs of our stakeholders.

As a result of our constant conversations and feedback from stakeholders over the last twelve months we have made a number of significant changes to what we do and the services we offer. In particular, our strategic collaboration with SEC (the Social Enterprise Coalition) has resulted in a modification to our organisational goals, which now have more focus on developing and delivering cutting edge leadership development programmes for the Social Enterprise sector. SEC are the UKs national body representing social enterprise and have collated a considerable amount of information on the needs of the sector and have helped us to understand exactly where our areas of expertise can help and support the sector best.
Meeting our Aims and Objectives

Our community interest objectives provide us with structure and determine what and how we do business. In the past twelve months we have been developing our organisation, building our brand and have begun delivering our first leadership development programme.

In this section we will look at each of our community interest objectives and examine the work we have carried out to fulfil them.

1. To promote effective organisation development across the third sector

In June 2010 Real Partners began it’s a very strong relationship with Rainbows Children’s Hospice. Rainbows opened 15 years ago and will have effectively doubled in size after the completion of their “Building for the Future” project in September 2010. The growing third sector is not immune to the market challenges faced by most organisations. As they chase a static funding pool, the quality and skills of their people will be a key factor in their success. As a centre of excellence Rainbows colleagues had already engaged in the concept of continuous professional development and understand the need to review and update their skills. However, to date CPD had been inclined to focus on the development of clinical or technical skills. With approximately 40 Rainbows colleagues with both formal and informal management responsibilities, it is important for the hospice to develop its leadership capability and become a coaching organisation if it wants to continue to strengthen and reach its potential. We worked with the senior management team to develop the content of an organisational development programme with the following elements, delivered between July 2010 and June 2011:

1. Leaders Coaching Programme
2. Developing Rainbows Vision and Values
3. Diversifying and Developing Networking Skills

Leaders Coaching Programme

The overall approach for the leaders coaching programme is a series of sequential development days (cohorts) with time to practice skills at work and network in peer groups between the workshops. We designed an approach together to achieve the following outcomes:

- To provide the foundation for leaders to develop their own ability as coaches which will continue once back at the workplace.
- To develop leaders as coaches who are able to facilitate the development, learning and performance of individual and teams.
- To help managers understand the practical value of coaching in wide variety of situations, in enhancing performance and promoting development.

In our design, we ensured that leaders understand that coaching can start not only from a problem (‘remedial’) but also that you can coach somebody even if they are performing well already.
Overview of the Leaders Coaching Programme

Curriculum Developing Vision and Values

Rainbows is experiencing step-change as it comes toward the end of its "Building for the Future" project. Coming out of this period of transition it is important that all colleagues are engaged with the goals and values of the organisation. We have run a well thought-out, focussed vision and values-based initiative to achieve this engagement and deliver the following outcomes:

- Everyone is living and breathing the vision and key behaviours and values.
- Everyone had the same understanding of the “big picture” and where they fit in.
- There is a common language and common understanding of the key values and behaviours that are important to Rainbows’ success.
- There is an open empowered environment in which people can take responsibility for their actions and behaviours.
- Provides a foundation for the future success of the organisation

Vision and Values are an important building block of culture, they are deep-seated and enduring. They motivate behaviour and emotional responses. They underpin the very way people approach their work, make choices and decisions, and deal with each other. As such, it was vital that any initiative is involving and inspiring and owned by everyone in an organisation. Therefore we used some key principles to running an engaging vision and values programme.

- Engagement is a "People-First" way of working and managing. It must not be viewed as a process
- Leaders must first become the change they want to see
- Employees are individuals and work best as partners
- Engagement is fuelled by energy

An initial facilitated workshop with a “champions” group helped get this effort off the ground successfully. We continue provide the support materials and expertise your champions require along the way. The programme can ensure that Rainbows vision and
values endure and continue to drive excellence in the communities they serve. There have been many challenges faced in running a vision and values programme:

- How to avoid imposing the 'right' behaviours in a value-based organisation, which can lead to disengagement?
- How to ensure that any values activity will convey a fulfilling personal purpose and meaning at work as well as ensure the organisation positions itself well for the future?
- How to ensure that leadership activity is at all times unmistakably congruent with the values?

**Diversifying and Developing Networking Skills**

As Rainbows face into the realities of a more commercial environment and they chase a static funding pool, the quality and skills of their people will be a key factor in their success.

Diversify income and networking are important core skills and it is recognised that this not always the easiest of skills to develop. Real Partners will design and deliver a development day, available to any Rainbows colleague who will benefit from this development.

**Overview of the Development Day**

One of the biggest roadblocks to diversifying and networking for some people is fear of the unknown and the new. In truth, it's a feeling most people get; it is just that some people deal with this fear more effectively than others.

We therefore dedicated a good proportion of the development day to exploring and overcoming these fears together with the practical skills of building a wide-range of networks and explore opportunities beyond the obvious.

The Development Day was fun and interactive and avoided too much theory, culminating in the participants leaving the workshop with a practical plan they can implement as soon as they return to work.

2. **To facilitate individual development and promote personal learning**

In December 2010 Real Partners were delighted to be awarded the tender to deliver the Social Enterprise Leadership Programme on behalf of the Social Enterprise Coalition as part of the Big Lottery I-SEE programme. The programme has been developed for social enterprise professionals keen to improve their performance through effective and focused leadership.

The programme is being delivered from the beginning of March 2011 to the end November 2011, with project development starting from the December 2010. Participants will explore the fundamental requirements of leading an effective, innovative and successful social enterprise.
The programme was made available to two different professional groups (cohorts of 20) - **social enterprise emerging leaders** and **existing social enterprise senior leaders** and we advertised it across a wide range of channels and trusted intermediaries to reach as many diverse communities as we could.

Working closely with social enterprises, specialist leadership development associates and our strategic partners, we have provided a tailored curriculum that has been designed specifically for leaders of social enterprises, trading arms of charities, community organisations and former public sector organisations which are currently setting up as social enterprises.

The overall purpose of our curriculum design is to equip the next generation of social enterprise leaders to meet the challenges of growing and sustaining a high performing organisation. To that end, our programme of learning is to focus on developing capability across four key themes:

- **Leading** a social enterprise – the ability to provide direction, motivate and inspire a successful organisation
- **Managing** a social enterprise – readiness and skills to build and manage a productive and profitable venture
- **Marketing** a social enterprise – the ability to engage all of the key stakeholders in a complex and challenging environment
- **Sustaining** a social enterprise – the skills of creating strategies and ways of working, which balances people, income and planet in the long term

Developing the kind of ‘Enterprise Leadership’ described above requires more than just a good management-training programme. It requires leaders to create a culture where potential is spotted, nurtured and tested routinely and where development is not the preserve of training managers but owned by all those involved in the enterprise.

Consequently our programme of learning takes a practical approach to learning, which equips and encourages participants to reflect on their impact in the context of their own environment. We use current and relevant case studies, development days and action learning to embed learning and newly acquired skills. In designing our approach we support organisations to build and embed enterprise-wide practices, cultures and systems that will deliver outcomes for individuals and the organisations they lead.

The outcomes for leadership development project participants are:

- To increase their current capability to ensure they are a confident, capable leader who is able to manage and shape a value-driven social enterprise culture
- To have knowledge and understanding to create sustainable business models that supports the delivery of organisational goals and objectives
- To build the ability to define and drive vision and strategy and build an effective organisation to deliver this
- To be able to work brilliantly with others by building the capability to make the most from relationships and partnerships
- To participate in an active network of peers that acts as a rich source of new knowledge and understanding and provides a foundation for support and guidance
- To each receive a comprehensive hard copy development manual, which contains useful and practical information, templates and toolkits to use immediately to increase the effectiveness of organisations

We recognised that social enterprises have a wealth of experience in delivering today’s social agenda, which is why the social enterprise leadership framework that underpins the programme was designed in consultation with all of our key stakeholder groups. It will enhance enterprise leadership skills and give each of the participants the capability and confidence to ensure their organisation continues to flourish and grow.

**The Social Enterprise Leadership Framework**

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<tr>
<th>Developing Self</th>
<th>Developing Commercial Acumen</th>
<th>Effective Stakeholder Engagement and Communication</th>
<th>Developing a Balanced Approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being an Inspirational Leader and Role Model</td>
<td>Developing Yourself as Leader</td>
<td>Fostering Enterprise Thinking</td>
<td>Developing Determination and Resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making and Problem Solving</td>
<td>Effective Partnering and Collaborative Working</td>
<td>Customer Focused Agenda</td>
<td>Fostering Continuous Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning, Building and Leading Winning Teams</td>
<td>Diversifying Income Generation</td>
<td>Social Marketing</td>
<td>Developing a Sustainable Business Model</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Building an Organisation</td>
<td>Community Responsibility</td>
<td>Resource Management</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(creating the systems, processes and structures)</td>
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<td>Sustaining Change</td>
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<td>Delivery of Sustainable Programmes and Projects</td>
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<td>Managing Social Capital</td>
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3. **To provide and develop value for money consultancy services**

Our business model has been developed to ensure that we always focus on delivering against this important social aim. We know that the third sector struggle to finance the kind of support, training and development which would allow them to build organisations capable of competing with the private sector.

We work first and foremost with the principle of value for money – even when working with larger corporate organisations that are used to paying extortionate amounts for their consultancy support, we will always look to provide excellence for less.

The income we derive from our corporate work and from our funded projects is used to provide services, such as the programme for Rainbows described earlier, for little or no cost. During the year 2010/2011, we provided 18 full days training and consultancy to over 50 leaders at absolutely no cost to the individual or third sector organisation at all.

Our value for money Social Enterprise Leadership Programme is partly funded by the Big Lottery and is able to offer 6 full days of development, one-to-one coaching, development
planning and a range of on-line toolkits and templates at a very low cost of just £179 per head. There are examples of the feedback below, which was just incredible and as a consequence we have been re-commissioned to provide further events into 2012.

“Totally fabulous, challenging but so effective felt completely supported and understood”
“The visits added real value and worked well with the development days”
“Brilliant inspirational speakers, loved them and the days”
“Facilitators professional, skilled and approachable, great sense of humour”

In addition to the development programmes, we have also offered our services free to a number of events that benefit the sector. Most notably Real Partners ran the leadership workshop at the SEC annual conference “Voice 11” in March 2011. We were able to provide a whole range of prominent sector leaders with a flavour of the skills it takes to be an exceptional, innovative and courageous leader of the sector; they each received a toolkit to take away.

4. To support ideas development and innovation across the third sector

As part of the I-SEE project, Real Partners has facilitated two networking events (one event per cohort). Our aims are to enable participants to continue their leadership development journey using peer-to-peer support and to create a powerful network of social enterprise leaders to challenge thinking and innovate which is sustainable.

Peer support occurs when people provide experience, knowledge, and emotional, social and practical help to each other and can take a number of forms such as groups, learning sets, programmes, coaching and mentoring. Peer support works best when members are given an opportunity to meet as equals and can support each other on a fully reciprocal basis.

The events have been designed to stimulate collective thinking and use the collaborative power of enterprise working to deliver long term positive change. The design and content utilised our leadership framework as a platform to ensure that we met participant needs on every level.

The event was successful on every level and in particular the “What’s the Big Idea” session. This session was designed to inspire innovative thinking and to challenge paradigms within the sectors. Participants were encouraged to think wide and far and come up with creative solutions to complex issues.

We are now in the process of setting up Conversation Cafes that will continue this creativity and innovation well beyond the confines of the programme and the programme cohort.
Providing us with a Real Future

The hard work in setting out vision, stating our clear aims and ambitions and working with our stakeholder groups to develop our brand values and programmes is paying off. The pipeline for 2011 appears promising and we are looking forward to continued growth.

We are in meaningful discussions with the Social Enterprise Coalition about further programmes of work right into 2012, and we have been working very closely with them over the past months to map this out.

We have also secured further work with our corporate clients and this will provide us with some secure income with which to develop further offers for our third sectors programmes.

We are also exploring further markets within health and social care since organisation are beginning to step out of the public sector and become social enterprises. Early signs in this market are very positive with many expressions of interest, although there is considerable work to be done with stakeholder groups to map this out.

As our business grows and the brand becomes more well know it is becoming increasing obvious to the directors that it is time to strengthen our governance and we are therefore in the process of recruiting other like-minded people to join our board. When we have done this we will review our business plans and create an improved strategy for growth.

Directors Remuneration

During the financial year 2010 to 2011 the directors of Real Partners CIC have opted not to take any remuneration or pay any dividend on shares as the business does not make any real profit at this stage. Our decision at this time is to invest all surpluses into the development of further programmes to benefit our stakeholders and the development of the organisation. However, as the future pipeline does look more promising and this position on remuneration will be reviewed for 2011.