



Project ID No.	CA 187 / 4 / 1 / 07
GOAL	2
SUB-PROGRAM	

Strategic and Change Management for Continuous Improvement - National Training Change Agents

Action plans must be submitted online to www.reframingthefuture.net by COB Tuesday 5 June 2007.

Please select "Submit a Form" on the Home Page Menu and follow the prompts.

All sections must be completed.

Please note: sections 1 – 6 of this document will be uploaded onto the Reframing the Future website.

1. Change Agent's details

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Position: Senior Program Manager		
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Name and title of your senior manager/CEO who is supporting your work: Peter Skippington		

2. Project focus (100 words maximum)

Please summarise the change management activities you propose to undertake that will assist VET provider(s) with the implementation of the national training system, citing those personnel, groups and/or organisations with whom you intend to work.

I propose to hone my skills and build strategies as a change agent by working with participants of a current RTF Applying Information and Research project. This representative group of VET practitioners will develop a draft Employability Skills Implementation Framework for the sector. Although recent changes to Training Packages ensure that employability skills are progressively embedded into units of competency, I believe a significant cultural shift is required to convince teachers and educational managers of the importance of explicitly addressing employability skills in training delivery and assessment. Since participants will represent both public and private training providers they will provide multiple and complex challenges to the change management role.

3. Project methodology

Please describe how you intend to:

<p>identify and diagnose a change management challenge in your own and/or other VET organisations, related to the implementation of the national training system</p>	<p>Equipping workers for the challenges of globalization and the knowledge economy has been identified as a key role for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector in the 21st Century. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) argues that, to operate in current environments and overcome the gap between new technologies and current workplace practices industry requires workers who in addition to technical skills, have highly developed generic and transferable skills which optimize individual productivity (Rychen & Salganik, 2003). There is general agreement that to date, initiatives introduced to build generic skills have not been effective. This has resulted in VET approaches to generic skills training being undervalued by teachers, learners and employers and does not auger well for the introduction of employability skills in Australia (Down, 2003; Curtis, 2003).</p> <p>The employability skills agenda is strongly reflected in the Queensland Skills Plan (Department of Employment and Training, 2006). The Skills Plan policy document focuses on the positive impact this strategy will have on the external clients of the training system – the students and industry. It does not however appear to consider the complexity of the learning required, or the implications of its introduction on internal customers – the teaching staff and their educational managers. It is unlikely that teachers will embrace practice mandated from above, or that the mere inclusion of employability skills into units of competency will generate the results the Skills Plan demands. They must be convinced of the value of employability skills in transforming the learning experiences of their students, and have confidence in their ability to incorporate them into their teaching and learning strategies, if the initiative is to move from a good idea to a real possibility.</p>
<p>identify and gather data regarding that challenge</p>	<p>Significant research has been undertaken in relation to the introduction of generic skills into training and assessment programs. This project will work with a Reframing the Future Information and Research Project focussing on the application of current research and practice. This group will identify and interrogate a range of research on employability skills implementation. Working with these stakeholder representatives will allow me to gather data relating to the challenges facing employability skills implementation for the sector.</p>

<p>select change management processes (based on theories of change management, e.g. Kotter or Cummings & Worley or a mixture or your own) to address that challenge and to bring about change required to implement the national training system</p>	<p>At this stage I'm not sure of the most appropriate models – I know where I want to get to but not which road or combination of itineraries will be the most appropriate – one of the challenges of the project I feel will be exploring the relevance of different change management processes at different stages of the journey. Kotter's (1995) stages look tempting and his warning of the dangers associated with leaping to speedy solutions - realistic. We have a "sense of urgency" with the introduction of Training Packages with embedded employability skills and hopefully a "powerful guiding coalition" in the establishment of the key stakeholder group but whether they will have the capacity, or the power to create the vision to "direct the change effort" (or even if this will be appropriate) will have to be determined. Cummings and Worley's notion of developing readiness for change is also an interesting concept since the position of stakeholders in relation to the employability skills agenda will be unknown at the outset. Immersion in the literature to guide practice and reflection will be key activities from my perspective – open and honest communication the key to the stakeholder involvement.</p>
<p>use diplomacy in working sensitively with the organisation(s) involved, particularly in agreeing on objectives of the change management activity with the sponsor/CEO</p>	<p>Working with representatives from both public and private training providers in Queensland presents a minefield of possible sensitivities – focussing on a collaborative approach which recognises individual differences (and competitive agendas) will be crucial in maintaining involvement in the project.</p>
<p>identify any resistance to the change process</p>	<p>Resistance to change is likely to occur at various levels within the project and could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers have become distrustful of change initiatives. • practitioners may not be confident in the pedagogy • teachers may not have the expertise in the design of strategies to assist students recognise the importance of employability skills and motivate them to learn and to document their skills and achievements. • cultural change can't happen without management support so it will be important to have a mix of practitioners and managers in the stakeholder group and a mutual appreciation between the two groups • established practice will need to be challenged which will incur a cost (time, money, effort, buy-in)
<p>assist the VET providers in the organisation(s) to develop an increased client focus in implementing the national training system</p>	<p>The entire employability skills agenda focuses on the outcomes for the clients of the training system – particularly students and employers. This project will work with key stakeholders to analyse the challenges associated with embedding employability skills in training and assessment, share good practice exemplars and develop recommendations for staff capability building activity to achieve the required outcomes.</p>

4. Capacity development

What capabilities as a change agent do you most expect to develop during this program?

I expect that a project activity will assist me to:

- identify and build current strengths and areas for development in my current skill set
- develop and apply knowledge of a range of change management theories/models/approaches in relation to the practical activities of the project.
- build skills in facilitating change in resistant environments
- establish and grow networks across the VET sector
- use reflection as a self development tool

5. Self-evaluation

Please provide an outline of the methods you propose to use to evaluate the participants' learning and your efficiency and effectiveness.

The conundrum with change management appears to be that while there may be urgent imperatives for change, patience is needed with those who must accept and implement it – I feel this will be one of my greatest challenges and a focus of evaluation throughout the program.

In relation to the evaluation process – it will form part of the action learning cycle for this project - it will be continuous and will contribute to progressive modifications required as project activity is undertaken. It will also result in an end stage formal evaluation as required for project reporting.

At this stage I would think evaluation will be required on two levels:

- the development of my skills as a change agent to support the project goals;
- the outcomes achieved in relation to the progress of the employability skills agenda across the system.

My aim is to establish from the beginning a process of both self evaluation and external evaluation. My proposed mentor (Sandra Lawrence) has suggested that she can provide valuable input into the evaluation process – in its initial stages as critical friend and as the project progresses as external evaluator.

I expect evaluation strategies will include

- A comparative audit of my current skills and a quest (using the literature) to identify methods and activities to build skills and to measure the impact;
- Personal reflection on my learning and personal development journey;
- Response from the stakeholder group in relation to strategies devised within the project activity.

6. Promotion

Please outline how your project's processes and products will be promoted:

within your organisation(s)	Across communities of practice and existing networks, submission of articles to relevant media (newsletters etc)
to industry and other relevant organisations	Through stakeholder representatives from key public and private training providers.

to the broader VET sector	Collaboration with other Change Agents Dissemination through peak body networks
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7. Project timeframe

Please list project milestones and key dates

(Please add rows as required)

Milestone	Key date
Start up workshop and Action Plan	June 2007
Meeting with Mentor to discuss approach and consultation framework	June 2007
Immersion in the Diagnostic activity / Research	June - August
Nomination of representatives from VET sector peak bodies	July
Scoping the Research project	July - August
Workshop 1	August
Project Mid-term Report	28 August
Workshop 2	September
Mid Term Forum	September
Workshop 3	End October
Moderation, collaboration, reflection and stakeholder consultation	July – October
National Forum	November
Project Final Report	27 November
Celebration	November