

2005 Indigenous Engagement Project Report

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Messages from the research	3
<i>Summary of research findings</i>	3
<i>Main messages from the research.....</i>	6
<i>Moving forward.....</i>	8
3. Lessons from State and Territory environmental scans	8
<i>Types of e-learning being trialled.....</i>	8
<i>Factors hindering take-up of e-learning</i>	9
4. 2005 Indigenous Engagement Project.....	12
<i>Project A1: Creating Community Partnerships for E-learning Opportunities on the North Coast NSW and Project A2: Doing IT Our Way.....</i>	12
<i>Project B: Indigenous e-learn = e-skills n work: building capacity through e-learning.....</i>	16
<i>Lessons from the Indigenous Engagement e-learning projects</i>	19
5. What does this mean for Indigenous e-learning?	22
6. What needs to happen in 2006?	29
1. <i>Focus on building the capacity of providers.....</i>	29
1(a) <i>Mentoring of smaller RTOs.....</i>	29
1(b) <i>Availability of resources.....</i>	29
1(c) <i>Professional development</i>	29
2. <i>Connect with existing resources and infrastructure</i>	30
2(a) <i>Funding clarity</i>	30
2(b) <i>Infrastructure.....</i>	30
3. <i>Build skills within communities</i>	30
3(a) <i>Training in maintenance</i>	30
3(b) <i>Champions seminar.....</i>	30
3(c) <i>TAA training.....</i>	31
4. <i>Document the current situation and track progress</i>	31
4(a) <i>Baseline study</i>	31
4(b) <i>Stocktake of resources</i>	31
4(c) <i>Performance indicators.....</i>	31
5. <i>Prepare the ground for a new application process</i>	31
5(a) <i>Application process.....</i>	31
5(b) <i>Professional development for project leaders</i>	31
5(c) <i>Promotion of e-learning</i>	31
Attachment A: Invitation to tender — some guiding principles	33

Attachment B: National project champions workshop 2006 — a broad structure 35

Attachment C: Baseline study — outline 36

For more information contact: 37

1. Introduction

The 2005-2006 Australian Flexible Learning Framework's (Framework) Indigenous Engagement Project aims to ensure the long-term sustainability of e-learning, a component of flexible learning, which involves the application of electronic media in the delivery of flexible vocational and technical education (VTE) programs within Indigenous communities. Its objective is to 'strengthen the role of Indigenous people and communities in shaping VTE provision in very remote, remote, provincial and urban contexts.'

The last few years have seen many research projects as well as innovative new programs aimed at increasing Indigenous engagement in e-learning. This activity has been auspiced both through the Framework and as part of broader policy processes, including the national Indigenous vocational education and training strategy, *Partners in a Learning Culture*.

The aim of this report is to support the Indigenous Engagement Project by analysing key research, e-learning activity in each State and Territory, and the outcomes of the Indigenous Engagement e-learning projects, and to recommend strategies and opportunities for 2006 and beyond.








2. Messages from the research

Summary of research findings

Recent research has investigated aspects of Indigenous Australians' education and training, including the use of e-learning and technology to improve training outcomes. This section summarises seven research reports that are particularly relevant to the Indigenous Engagement Project.

Aspects of Training that Meet Indigenous Australians' Aspirations (Miller, C., National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), 2005)

This comprehensive systematic review of Indigenous vocational education and training literature found that there are seven key factors that lead to positive outcomes from training for Indigenous Australians when present all of the time. These are:

-  community involvement and ownership
-  Indigenous identities, cultures, knowledge and values
-  working in true partnerships
-  flexibility in course design, content and delivery
-  quality staff and committed advocacy
-  extensive student support services
-  appropriate funding that allows for sustainability.

Desert Disconnections: E-learning and Remote Indigenous Peoples (Young, Schaber, Sawyer and Guenther, Australian Flexible Learning Framework, 2005)

This report explored the extent of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support flexible learning opportunities for Indigenous peoples across desert Australia. It found that ICT use in desert communities is increasing but that opportunities are limited by a lack of appropriate resources, technical support, ICT skills of teachers and trainers, and literacy issues.




There are also often problems with infrastructure which is mostly targeted at basic communication needs rather than formal education and training. The roll-out of infrastructure is fraught with problems including lack of affordable power supplies, bandwidth and interoperability issues. These are further compounded by the range of organisations involved across jurisdictions.

The report suggested that there is a need to build on ways people *currently* engage with ICT rather than providing pre-defined services and resources.

Indigenous Australians' Training Experiences (NCVER – forthcoming)

This national survey involved interviews with 785 Indigenous vocational education and training students, from all types of locations—very remote areas to major cities—to find out more about their engagement with vocational education and training.

One of the issues in training Indigenous Australians is the higher than average non-completion rate. According to this survey, the most common reasons for not completing a course are: being needed by the family; getting a job; moving; and not being able to afford it. Even if students do not complete any units in their training, they still gain significant benefits, especially in terms of confidence and workplace skills. The most highly rated aspects of training are:

-  the social dimension—being with other Indigenous people and talking with others
-  having access to computers
-  understanding how to finish a course.

Engaging Indigenous People in E-learning (Joy, P., Australian Flexible Learning Framework, 2004)

This report scoped and analysed the effectiveness of current e-learning activity within the Indigenous vocational education and training sector. It found that ICT capability varies greatly in remote communities. Indigenous Australians rarely own computers and, when they do, bandwidth is often an issue. Repair and management of ICT is also critical for sustainability, and providers require professional development in this area.

This research found that collaborative partnerships between the community and experts from outside is a major indicator of success of e-learning initiatives. Also,





blended delivery (incorporating face-to-face delivery) with integrated literacy components and contextualised materials works best.

A concern with current e-learning activity is that projects have a limited timeframe and may not be sustainable when support is removed.

National Flexible Learning Toolboxes: Indigenous Australian Delivery Trials (Bamblett, E., Australian Flexible Learning Framework, 2005)

This report evaluated the use of Flexible Learning Toolboxes (Toolboxes) used by Indigenous trainers and learners. It found that students, trainers and managers are very positive about e-learning resources which depict Indigenous people, and they do not respond as well to content that is not customised for Indigenous use. However, it is not enough to include Indigenous faces and images in learning resources: Indigenous learning styles need to be accommodated in the way e-learning content is built.

E-learning is also particularly useful in prison education, but specialised resources are required because prisoners:



-  are unable to access the Internet
-  may be incarcerated for short periods of time and be unable to complete competencies
-  come from different Indigenous communities
-  have limited access to education programs.

This research also found that ongoing technical support for registered training organisations (RTOs) would improve the uptake of e-learning in Indigenous communities and contribute to successful VTE outcomes.

Emerging Technologies: A Framework for Thinking (Education.au, ACT Dept of Education and Training, 2005)

This research identified ways in which technology can be used to create learning tools to better engage students. For example, iPods can hold audio books, mobile phones can be used as research tools and online games can build problem-solving skills—all while keeping the interest of the learner. It also showed that emerging technologies can reduce the ‘digital divide’ by assisting learners through activities designed to suit their learning styles, preferences and/or learning needs. It may, however, *widen* the digital divide if students and staff do not have access to the latest devices.

The report emphasised that

-  educators will need to acknowledge and recognise the new literacies required to use technology, and build upon and extend them
-  teachers and tutors need access to professional development opportunities to develop confidence in using educational technology.

E-Learning Benchmarking Project (Phillips, I., Australian Flexible Learning Framework, 2005)

The Framework's 2005 E-learning Benchmarking Project undertook national surveys of the uptake and use of e-learning by VTE providers, clients and teachers. It found that the uptake of e-learning in TAFE institutes is slightly higher than among other training providers. Around 50% of RTOs, particularly smaller RTOs, are not yet offering e-learning but many are currently in the process of adopting it.

Ninety-four percent of VTE students report that they have some component of e-learning in their VTE course. Sixty-five to seventy percent of students said that the e-learning in their course had increased their confidence and skills in using computers, and 73% said that they thought the e-learning in their course would improve their future employment outcomes. Employers also viewed e-learning as favourable for their employees.

Eighty-six percent of VTE teachers and trainers reported using some form of e-learning in their training delivery, most commonly by encouraging students to access and download learning materials and resources from the Internet or to submit work electronically.

Main messages from the research

The above pieces of research yield several consistent messages:

Uptake is highly variable and limited by lack of infrastructure and technical expertise

There is a general acceptance amongst Indigenous people of computer technology. Even in remote communities, people are experimenting with technology, where it is available, for their own purposes such as sharing information and preserving culture and language.

However, this change is not happening everywhere as every community does not have the same level of access. We cannot assume that Indigenous students have access to reliable power and telephone. In many desert communities, even essential services are difficult to maintain. What's more, many people have no interest in owning computers. The literacy levels and technical expertise needed to maintain ICT operations is lacking in many communities and the situation is not likely to change soon, with only 1.4% of desert Indigenous students undertaking study in the field of ICT (Young et al, 2004).

The ability of RTOs to offer effective e-learning opportunities also varies considerably, with TAFE institutes and other large RTOs usually much better placed than smaller RTOs to provide e-learning. All types of RTOs, however, identify a need for professional development in e-learning technologies before they can extend their Indigenous e-learning programs.

The training process is as important as the outcome

Social aspects of training such as enjoyment of learning and building relationships are valued outcomes for Indigenous people. Even when qualifications are not completed less tangible benefits are gained from the learning experience, including familiarity with computers, improved confidence, and other workplace skills.

The student/teacher relationship is all-important in successful Indigenous programs; possibly more important than the content of a program. E-learning is most effective for Indigenous people when it involves some components of face-to-face delivery. Frequent communication between students and teachers is essential. Committed and sensitive staff, preferably Indigenous staff, who build strong rapport with their students and communities, make a significant difference.

Extensive support is important from enrolment to completion and beyond to employment. Literacy and numeracy programs, mentoring and one-on-one tutoring need to be available, even with distance education. The most frequently cited barrier to positive outcomes from vocational education and training courses is limited literacy and numeracy skills. Non-academic difficulties also continue to have a major impact on success rates in training.

A culturally affirming learning environment is important and this can be created by negotiating all aspects of training with students and the community, contextualising learning materials and accommodating Indigenous learning styles in both content and delivery.

E-learning needs to be demand responsive rather than supply driven

Training needs to be demand-responsive rather than supply-driven. Programs that are integrated into social and cultural framework of the community achieve more successful and sustainable outcomes. Creating community involvement and ownership involves consultation with key people in the community from the outset and developing partnerships with local organisations that can assist communities meet their aspirations.

There is a need for a better understanding of user needs and demands in order to create training around *people*, rather than around the available technology or programs. Indigenous people must be involved in deciding what technology they want to use, not as passive recipients of something they may not want. Educators can then build on the technologies and uses that will engage their students.

Funding arrangements need to support the structure of a program required for individual communities. Short-term, project-based funding creates uncertainty and may not allow the time needed for sufficient consultation in the development of a project, and the flexibility needed to respond to community needs as they arise.

Moving forward

Most of the points are not new. For example, as far back as 1994, the *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People* (Yunipingu 1994) highlighted the importance of Aboriginal involvement in the initiation and development of vocational education and training programs and effective linkages to community development priorities and aspirations. All the recent research points to the same conclusions, and further research at this point is likely to lead to diminishing returns.

So, how can we move on, and put these messages into practice? Scans of e-learning activity in each State and Territory and a detailed examination of the three Framework funded e-learning projects in 2005 give us some clues.











3. Lessons from State and Territory environmental scans

Each State and Territory prepared an environmental scan of projects and programs in their jurisdiction designed to engage Indigenous learners in e-learning. The scans were mostly compiled using telephone interviews, email questionnaires and Internet research. While they provide a good starting point in describing the types of activity underway and some of the issues faced, most jurisdictions acknowledge that a lot more time and effort is required to fully understand the extent of engagement and the factors assisting and hindering take-up of e-learning.










Nevertheless, when taken together, the reports paint an interesting picture. They suggest that a highly fragmented agenda has developed, with variable levels of commitment. There are some key issues which are repeatedly raised as barriers to implementing a broader, more coordinated program of activity. An overview of the scans and the issues raised is provided below.

Types of e-learning being trialled






Teachers and trainers are experimenting with a wide range of delivery methods using technology, including:

-  live meetings
-  video conferencing
-  digital storytelling
-  MARVIN technology to convert resources into local languages
-  interactive whiteboards
-  online networks
-  mobile learning units
-  interactive distance learning via satellite
-  CD-ROMs
-  m-learning (using mobile phones).





Some programs involve training students for ICT applications, including:

-  basic ICT skills
-  creating blogs
-  creating stories and cartoons online
-  using digital cameras
-  creating websites
-  Internet research
-  producing DVDs and CD-ROMS
-  multimedia software
-  repair and upgrade of software.

There is some professional development for teachers and trainers in:

-  upgrading basic ICT skills
-  training in using the various e-learning delivery methods
-  portals for teaching and learning exchange
-  forums, workshops, conferences for providers
-  cultural awareness using CD-ROM and video.

Finally, some projects are developing resources and infrastructure such as:

-  Toolboxes designed for Indigenous learners
-  contextualising existing resources
-  guidelines for good practice
-  e-hubs / online access centres.

Factors hindering take-up of e-learning




The States and Territories identified a number of factors that are hindering the take-up of e-learning, many of which are consistent with the research findings. They are outlined in the following table, with the strategies that have been proposed to address them.

Hindering factor	Quotes	Proposed strategies
<p>Poor infrastructure</p> <p>Poor infrastructure or limited access to ICT and related support services ie low bandwidth, satellite phones only or no funding for computers, software or maintenance services</p>	<p><i>“Access to e-learning facilities such as computers with up to date software and support ‘access to e-learning facilities’ such as computers with up to date software and support services is the main barrier”</i></p> <p><i>“Communities currently wait up to six weeks to have equipment repaired”</i></p> <p><i>“Very slow Internet speeds and satellite phone connections were some reasons they were not using e-learning”</i></p>	<p>Establish shared facilities.</p> <p>Develop skills in maintaining hardware systems to ensure sustainability, particularly in remote areas.</p>
<p>Level of staff capability</p> <p>Teachers not adequately trained to use technology.</p>	<p><i>“Many teachers still lack confidence in their ability to use technology to its full advantage, others skilled in e-learning are not necessarily skilled in working with Indigenous learners”</i></p> <p><i>“Teacher and facilitator capability is still developing and there is a need for more Indigenous staff”</i></p>	<p>Engage Indigenous teachers with the right skills, including facilitation and ICT skills.</p> <p>Increase investment in professional development</p>
<p>Lack of resources</p> <p>Availability of culturally appropriate resources ie resources to support Indigenous e-learning are either not available or RTOs are not aware of them.</p>	<p><i>“It is hoped that funding can be accessed to develop child/youth friendly resources for communities.”</i></p> <p><i>“Many of the current online resources are overly reliant on language, literacy and numeracy skills.”</i></p> <p><i>“Conversations with project officers showed that many were not aware of national databases where resources could be found to support e-learning for Indigenous people and their communities”</i></p>	<p>Develop small, localised, just-in-time online learning resources that can be contextualised for communities with their own images and stories.</p> <p>Raise awareness of the resources that are available.</p>
<p>Inadequate funding</p> <p>Funding is sporadic, short-term, project-based and not sustained. Few resources are available for infrastructure.</p>	<p><i>“There are few dedicated resources in organisations... funding is often project-tied”</i></p> <p><i>“Need to ensure a sustainable resource base to deliver e-learning”</i></p> <p><i>“Activities are largely driven by the requirements determined by the funding sources and are often sporadic”</i></p> <p><i>“Overall there is a sense of inadequate funding for RTOs other than TAFEs to venture into e-learning with Indigenous learners”</i></p>	<p>Provide sustainable funding sources, particularly for non-TAFE RTOs.</p>




Hindering factor	Quotes	Proposed strategies
<p>Lack of partnerships</p> <p>Lack of coordination and partnerships. E-learning is not treated in a strategic, holistic manner.</p>	<p><i>"Many providers are competing for a small client base"</i></p> <p><i>"There is lack of coordination for a concerted, collective contribution"</i></p> <p><i>"The establishment of shared facilities will create greater opportunities for engagement"</i></p>	<p>Develop partnerships for the planning and delivery of training.</p>
<p>Lack of support from RTOs</p> <p>Staff workloads or lack of awareness by RTO leadership prevents staff pursuing e-learning opportunities.</p>	<p><i>"Accountability demands often hinder genuine consultation with communities."</i></p> <p><i>"E-learning has not been identified as an organisational priority."</i></p> <p><i>"The IT department does not approve lecturers having a CD-burner on their computers."</i></p>	
<p>Lack of awareness</p> <p>Low levels of awareness of e-learning in communities resulting in a lack of demand.</p>	<p><i>"The community needs to be willing and ready... people need to be convinced of the benefits of e-learning"</i></p>	<p>Stimulate demand by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linking programs to strategic or long-term goals of the community or region. ▪ Providing appropriate e-learning opportunities that lead to real, practical outcomes.
<p>Not relevant</p> <p>E-learning not seen as an appropriate teaching method</p>	<p><i>"Most Indigenous training courses were practical, hands-on skills training...which was best done one-on-one performing the task"</i></p>	

4. 2005 Indigenous Engagement Project

The Indigenous Engagement Project is funded by the Framework. Its objectives are:

-  to use e-learning to achieve training outcomes for Indigenous people which lead to meaningful work outcomes
-  to use e-learning to strengthen Indigenous communities and organisations.
-  to increase the knowledge, skills and understanding of both vocational education and training personnel and Indigenous communities in the application of e-learning to Indigenous vocational learning.

Three Indigenous Engagement e-learning projects were funded in 2005:

-  TAFE NSW Northcoast Institute – Creating Community Partnerships for E-learning Opportunities on the North Coast NSW (A1)
-  TAFE NSW Northcoast Institute – Doing IT Our Way (A2)
-  TAFE Qld - Open Learning Institute – e-learn = e-skills n work (B)

An overview of each of these projects, their achievements, and challenges faced is provided below. This overview is based on written reports and interviews with project managers as well as question and answer sessions with teachers, project champions and, in the case of the Northcoast projects, Indigenous students.

Project A1: Creating Community Partnerships for E-learning Opportunities on the North Coast NSW and Project A2: Doing IT Our Way

The *Creating Community Partnerships for E-learning Opportunities on the North Coast NSW & Doing IT Our Way* Projects undertaken by TAFE NSW North Coast Institute (NCI) were closely linked, and involved use of much of the same infrastructure. Because of this, the key outcomes and issues facing the projects are presented together.

About the projects

Project A1 provided learning and employment opportunities for long term unemployed and disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as students in years 10 and 11 from the Maclean and Yamba communities. Two e-hubs were established at Pippi Beach, Yamba and Hillcrest, Maclean, with the assistance of project partner, the North Coast Computer Project. The e-hubs are banks of networked computers on broadband, refurbished by project participants, with TAFE software. They are housed in community buildings, supervised by team leaders (project champions) and are available to the whole community. There are extensive possibilities for their use. Learning modules and courses can be provided from anywhere in Australia or overseas, the hubs can be used as homework and education centres for communities or as venues for e-business activities.

Students participating in the project were trained to assemble computer hardware and develop websites. They also helped establish the e-learning hubs. During this project, learners undertook one of the following courses:

- ✚ Statement of Attainment in Workskills
- ✚ Certificate I in Workskills
- ✚ Statement of Attainment in Aboriginal Vocational Preparation
- ✚ Selected Studies program.

As well as select modules from:

- ✚ Statement of Attainment in Aboriginal Mentor Training
- ✚ Statement of Attainment in Workskills – Video production
- ✚ Statement of Attainment in Workskills – Painting and Decorating.

The project had a secondary aim of working with a range of industry partners to increase computer ownership among the disadvantaged individuals and community groups in the region.

The aim of Project A2 was to build on existing partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, industry and government organisations and NCI to provide employment outcomes for participants from the *North Coast A1 Project*. Project participants undertook a range of training aimed at building literacy and numeracy skills, and a range of employability skills and vocational competencies at the Certificate II level.

Learners were given literacy and numeracy support in campus learner resource centres, in the workplace and at off-campus venues, such as the Pippi Beach community in Yamba. Mentors also worked with small groups of learners during their studies.

Negotiations between NCI and the Nungera Co-operative, and the Clarence Valley Council have resulted in agreements that will produce employment outcomes for project participants. The agreement with Nungera Co-operative is for NCI to train up to 20 people, 10 of whom will be employed in 2005 by Clarence Valley Council in Land Management and Conservation roles. The partnership with Clarence Valley Council involves NCI training another 20 people in 2006, 10 of whom will be selected to work on the Shannon Creek Dam project, a major infrastructure development.

How the projects changed from the original conception

Both of the NCI projects needed to adjust their approach during the project to achieve the intended outcomes for learners. The *North Coast A2 Project* had to change its plans either because the courses did not meet community needs, or were not feasible to deliver in the short life of the project. In the case of *North Coast A2 Project*, the project team realised part-way through the project, that the project objectives were too ambitious. This was because the original approach to achieving employment outcomes sat outside or conflicted with existing community structures.

Originally, the project team aimed to identify a minimum of 10 employment opportunities in private enterprise for graduates of the *North Coast A1 Project*. The project also hoped to secure information technology and clerical employment opportunities as a result of NCI's involvement with the Aboriginal Employment and Education Initiatives Group of the NSW Government's North Coast Regional Coordination Management Group.

As the project progressed, the team realised that private employment opportunities were in short supply in the area, and so re-examined the project from a 'whole of community' perspective. They found that the resources and expertise needed to secure employment outcomes sat outside NCI, and that a more strategic approach was needed. The project manager negotiated the partnership agreements outlined above that will result in better employment outcomes than originally anticipated.

The *North Coast A2 Project* also had to abandon its original plans to deliver Certificate III courses¹ as project participants did not yet have the capacity to undertake training at this level within the project timeframe. Learners with the potential to undertake training at a Certificate III level were already working in the community, and were not interested in this training. Instead, the focus shifted to ensuring that learners had base level skills to Certificate II level.

How Indigenous people were engaged in the projects

The projects employed a number of strategies for engaging Indigenous people. From the outset, an Elders reference group was set up and consulted throughout the project. As well, the community drove the content of websites established during the project and was also involved in decision making at key junctures of the project.

Key achievements of the projects

The projects resulted in a number of significant achievements, some of which were unexpected. The project gave participants access to the wider world through the Internet. Both the participants and the broader Indigenous community increased their knowledge and confidence in e-learning, to the point where community members now readily discuss concepts of e-learning. The project also gave the young people somewhere to go, and for some, it provided a diversion from drugs and alcohol.

The projects have also demonstrated how e-learning can help maintain Indigenous culture. For example, as a result of the *North Coast A1 Project*, the community now has a comprehensive electronic dictionary of all the Yaegl place name meanings in the area which will go online. This provides the platform for future activity such as translations of street names and town signs.

¹ Originally, the team planned to work with project participants to identify two occupation/industry fields and two specific courses chosen from: *Aboriginal Studies (Information Technology) Certificate III*; *Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Tourism Certificate III*; and *Certificate III Carpentry*

There has been a dramatic increase in computer ownership as a result of the partnership with the North Coast Computer Project. This has wider benefits as one computer can give access to up to 20 people.

Factors contributing to the projects' success

There were a number of factors that contributed to the success of the projects according to the project managers. One was the effort made to include the Indigenous community and the extent to which the project team (approximately 50% of whom were Indigenous) was sensitive to cultural issues. For example, the Hub was situated in the Elders' room in the local community because the Indigenous community are unlikely to access mainstream centres. The location of the Hub meant that it was seen as 'Indigenous' and as part of the community. Also, a 'different mindset' permeated the project, so that, for example, there was no guilt in students coming and going or even withdrawing. As a result, the project had strong community support and a high profile, helped by the involvement of local politicians.

An Elders' advisory group was involved right from the outset of the project, and was genuinely involved in providing advice and trouble-shooting as problems arose. Bringing the Elders and young people together was a culturally appropriate approach to learning. As acknowledged in the Final Report of the A1 project, "the fact that the project has been led and 'championed' in many respects by the Elders has given an authority and authenticity it would not otherwise have had..."

The teachers also made an effort to tailor learning to suit students' circumstances, whether it be applying for a driver's licence online or using computers to prepare resumes so they could apply for a job. As written in the Final Report for the A1 project, "we aimed to have a *culture of celebrating achievements and of turning negatives into positives*". When a young student faced a fine, a lengthy period of disqualification from obtaining a licence and a possible jail term due to unlicensed driving, the newly created e-hub became a community youth focus for intensive 'Getting Your Ls' classes. We utilised the online Registered Training Authority Driver Knowledge Test Study, combined with practical, personal instruction. In one instance, a young student achieved her Ls (on her third attempt) and she received a much lighter penalty at her subsequent court hearing.

Another critical success factor was the flexible approach taken during the project. There was flexibility in how project funds were allocated, so that funds were available for unexpected problems. The commitment of the project team also contributed to its success. This was demonstrated by the project champions who transported students by car so they could attend classes.

Finally, the links and partnerships established during the project were critical. NCI worked collaboratively with the local Job Network, Centrelink, New Apprenticeship Centres, Group Training Centres, Indigenous Coordination Centre and RTOs. It also established strong partnerships with businesses such as WorkVentures, Westpac, Centrelink, and Microsoft Australia. NCI's ongoing partnership with the North Coast Computer Project Inc helped increase computer ownership in the community by providing recycled computers to disadvantaged members of the community.

Challenges faced by the projects and how they were overcome

As can be expected, the projects also faced a number of challenges. Particular challenges included finding a suitable location for the e-hubs and issues around ongoing responsibilities in relation to the hubs and their purpose. These were resolved with a Memorandum of Understanding.

Another significant challenge was securing employment for project participants. This was exacerbated by the fact that the local Indigenous community has an unemployment rate of approximately 50%. This was resolved by strategic partnerships arrangements that focus on delivering training tailored for identified future employment opportunities.

What could be improved

Although both projects have achieved their aims, the project team has identified that in future there is a need for:

- ✚ additional time for an up-front analysis of the community's training needs and realistic assessment of what is possible when identifying the training to be delivered
- ✚ creative solutions to the problem of ongoing hardware maintenance
- ✚ capability building across all areas of the TAFE Institute to ensure that different faculties are equipped to work with students in a way that meets their learning needs.

Project B: Indigenous e-learn = e-skills n work: building capacity through e-learning

About the project

The Indigenous *e-learn = e-skills n work* project had a dual focus. The project involved delivering training using specially developed training products to allow Indigenous people to access relevant training without having to leave their communities. It also focussed on building the capacity of project partners to deliver e-learning and develop e-learning products for Indigenous learners.

Certificate I in Work Education was delivered to learners aged 15 to 25 in four sites across Queensland—the Gold Coast, St Paul's (Torres Strait), Woorabinda and Charters Towers. The project trialled a model of delivery where an experienced online teacher worked out of Brisbane and study coaches/tutors supported students on site.

Learners participating in the project attended a learning program of two 50 minute sessions, plus a Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) placement of 14 hours each week. Six culturally appropriate, customised on-line resources were developed. Three were existing resources that were re-contextualised to suit Indigenous learners, and three were new resources. Project champions worked closely with the project manager, CDEP staff, delivery staff and product developers such as writers, and designers. The project built on an existing co-provider agreement and

learning pathway established in 2004 between the Open Learning Institute of TAFE (OLI), Brisbane School of Distance Education and the Learning Place.

How the project changed from its original conception

The approach to implementing the project did not vastly differ from that originally anticipated, although two workshops allowed the project team to identify areas for fine-tuning along the way. A workshop of all CDEP facilitators and project champions held early in the project helped re-frame the project to respond to some practical considerations, such as the lack of available technology and difficulty locating an appropriate delivery site for each project. A second workshop provided professional development in online delivery and facilitation as well as an opportunity to give feedback to instructional designers on the appropriateness of the draft resources and how they would be used.

How Indigenous people were engaged in the project

The project used CDEPs in each of the sites to promote the program and recruit Indigenous learners. All learners were existing CDEP program participants. Project champions promoted the course and delivery framework to CDEPs, and worked alongside the CDEP representative as a mentor. Project champions also promoted the project to local communities. Integral to the project's success was the fact that the project team took the time to develop rapport and trust within each community. They also adhered to Indigenous protocols for introductions to prospective partners and project personnel.

Key achievements of the project

In the view of the project manager, the main achievement of the *e-learn = e-skills n work* project was that it generated an interest in, and passion for, e-learning amongst Indigenous learners. It also gave learners the opportunity to see the potential of the technology. Learners were excited that people outside their communities (ie teachers as far away as Brisbane) were interested in them. They particularly enjoyed communicating with other remote communities and learning about their similarities and differences.

Other key achievements of the project are that it developed culturally appropriate resources for Indigenous learners and a delivery model that can be replicated in very remote, remote, rural or urban locations. It also increased the capacity of project participants to support Indigenous students engaging with e-learning

Project champions helped design and develop e-learning resources which enhanced their understanding of issues relating to Indigenous learners and increased their understanding of e-learning. CDEP staff also increased their capacity to support Indigenous students engaging in e-learning as a result of participating in the project, particularly through participation in two training workshops arranged by the project team around development of e-learning resources and mentoring and facilitating e-learning.

Factors contributing to the project's success

A critical success factor was the involvement of CDEPs and the contribution of their existing community knowledge and infrastructure. Other factors that the project managers felt contributed to the project's success were:

- ✚ flexibility of project champions—in each case project champions worked with CDEP facilitators to provide whatever support was required
- ✚ the opportunity, at a workshop held at the outset of the project, to collectively reconceptualise the project, share ideas and assumptions, and build relationships
- ✚ a study coach on each site to provide one-on-one help to students
- ✚ customised resources, particularly to address language and literacy barriers.

Challenges faced by the project and how they were overcome

The *e-learn = e-skills n work* project faced a number of hurdles. One was the shortcomings of the technology: lines dropping out, long download time, and the wrong type of technology (analogue vs digital) were all particularly frustrating for the students. The project team has identified the critical importance of resolving these issues in future as it has the potential to affect student motivation and confidence.

There were also challenges in finding new partners to supply computers and delivery sites, when original arrangements didn't work out. A local primary school and the Brisbane School of Distance Education were eventually able to assist.

The geographic location of project team members presented a challenge. In only one site was the project champion located close enough to provide hands on support. This also made student attendance difficult, especially because of lack of transport options. At one site the CDEP facilitator had to pick up each of the students and drive them home each day. In one area in particular, the CDEP staff were too stretched to provide this level of support for the students.

Another hurdle was language and literacy issues. These were anticipated however and explicitly addressed through the customised resources (eg using a narrator as well as written instructions), and a language, literacy and numeracy guide was provided to each site. In one site a local retired teacher attended classes to help out.

A final challenge at one particular site was the serious issues facing the community at the time the project was being established. This impacted on participation and the ability to secure staff.

What could be improved

Although the project was considered to be largely successful, the project team identified that there could be improvements in future, particularly relating to the support available from personnel. For example,

- ✚ Project champions should ideally be based in the community and selected by the community or the CDEP
- ✚ CDEP facilitators need to be able to devote sufficient time (2 days a week) to the project
- ✚ study coaches and tutors should be included in any professional development activities.

Lessons from the Indigenous Engagement e-learning projects

Indigenous involvement from the outset and in all aspects of decision making is critical

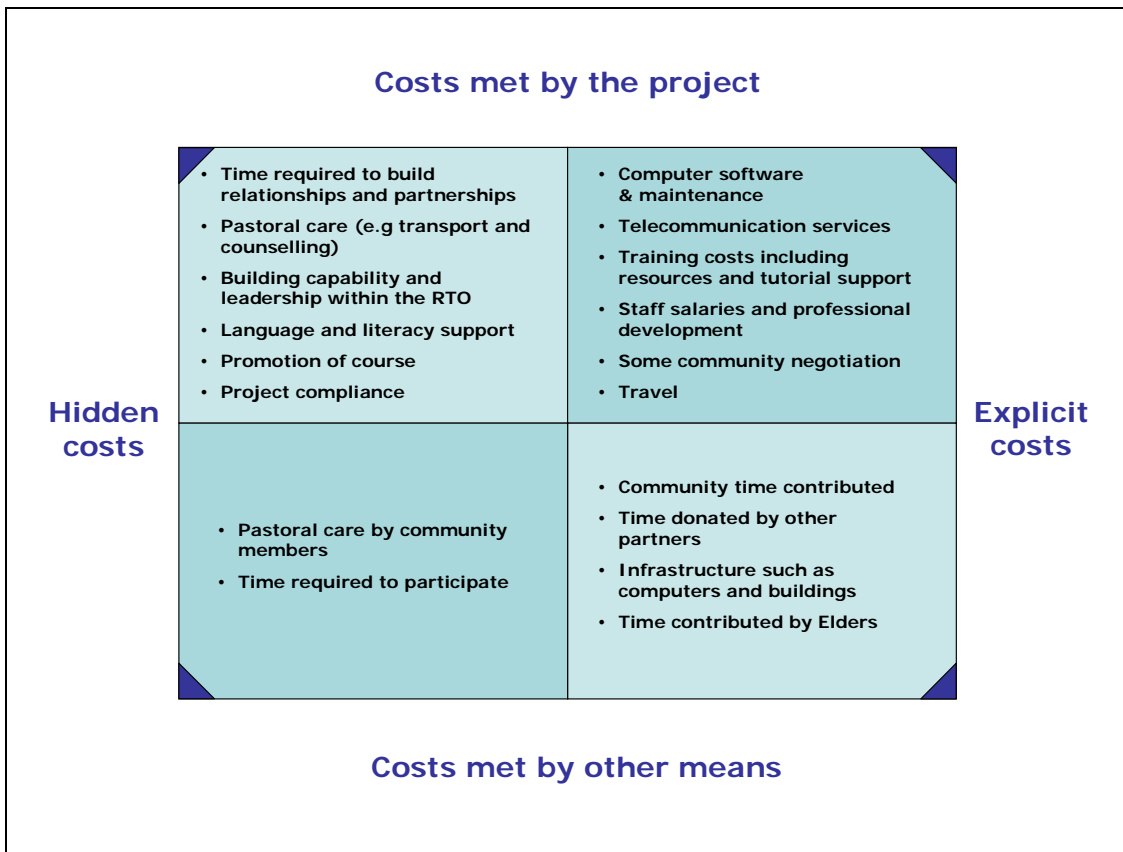
Strong relationships with communities need to be developed from the outset, and community needs must be central in designing the scope of, and implementing a project. E-learning needs to be a tool to achieve broader community and individual goals rather than an end in itself. Drawing on the expertise of community members, and involving them in troubleshooting as problems arise, facilitates ownership of projects by communities and leads to better outcomes for learners.

Infrastructure continues to be a problem

Remote projects often fall over because of lack of both human and physical infrastructure. Better results are often achieved when resources are pooled between organisations. Having staff with specialist knowledge and experience in setting up and testing the ICT infrastructure required for online delivery is critical.

There are hidden costs in undertaking Indigenous e-learning projects

In some cases, costs become 'hidden' due to an under-estimation of the time involved in activities such as building the relationships required to successfully implement a project. In other cases this is due to unanticipated activities required to get outcomes, such as providing pastoral care for students, or providing a higher level of language and literacy support than anticipated. The nature of hidden and explicit costs of implementing the projects is outlined in the diagram overleaf.



The project champion role is a key contributor to successful outcomes

Each project shaped the role of the project champions differently in order to meet local needs. The project champion role worked best when champions were identified by the local community. In some cases it was difficult to get the right people, so effort was invested in growing the skills of project champions to enable them to effectively provide support and mentoring to project participants.

Project-based activities can work against achieving outcomes

The time required to comply with project reporting and accountability requirements often directs valuable resources away from the business of achieving project outcomes. This can also sometimes force projects to work in an insulated way—so focussed on complying with accountability requirements, that there is little time to reach out to the other areas of the organisation, or external organisations required to achieve results.

Short timeframes for developing funding applications can mitigate against the development of networks and relationships required to successfully undertake a project, and detract from the strategic thinking required in the project planning phase.

Investment in professional development and knowledge contributes to better outcomes

Ensuring that professional development and opportunities for knowledge sharing is available to the broad range of project participants (eg CDEP staff, project team, designers) is a critical aspect of project quality. This also supports the relationship building required to make the project a success. It is important to not just sustain the *outcomes* from a project, but to sustain the learning of stakeholders involved in projects in order to continue to build capability.

Strong connections are a critical aspect of achieving results

Strong links between training providers, communities, industry and government organisations yield better outcomes for Indigenous learners, and increase the likelihood that outcomes will be sustained beyond the life of project funding.

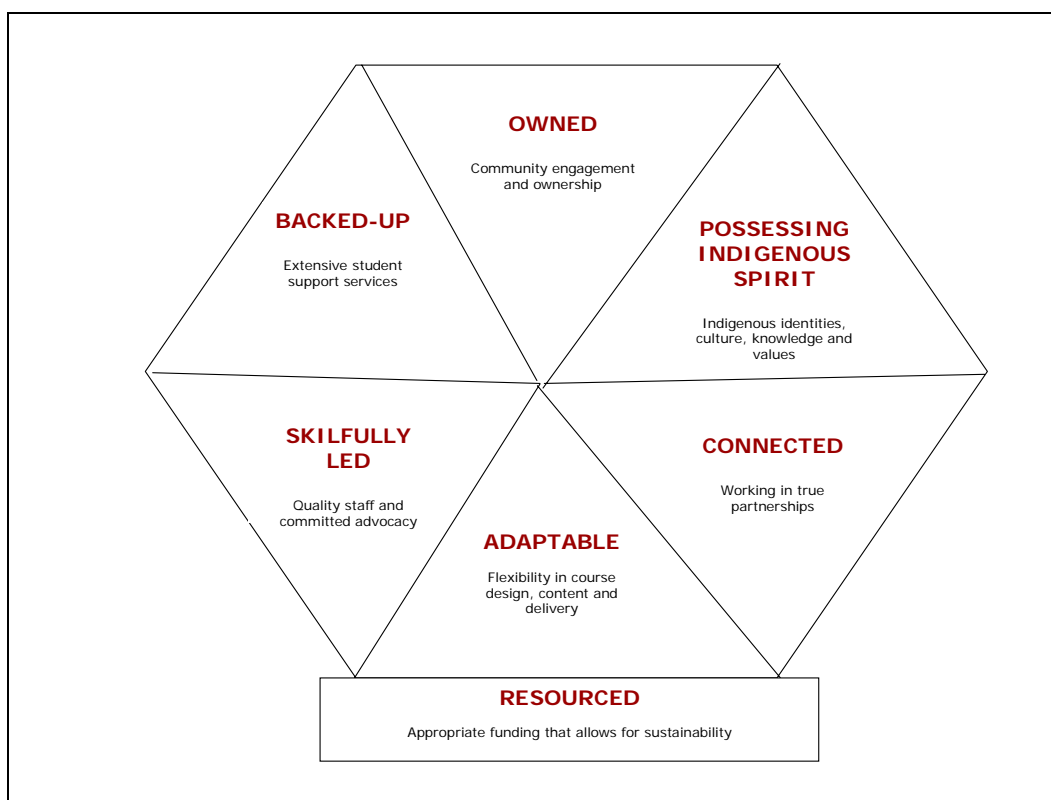
5. What does this mean for Indigenous e-learning?

The research and practice is telling us that e-learning can be a very useful tool for Indigenous people, but there is little interest in e-learning for e-learning's sake. It needs to bring practical, positive outcomes.

Before embarking on an e-learning program, communities need to assess whether e-learning can help them meet the broader objectives of the community and its members and what e-learning methodologies will be of most benefit. There are established long-term planning processes in many communities which could be built on. For example, the Australian Government has partnership arrangements with many communities spelt out in *Regional Partnership* and *Shared Responsibility Agreements* which aim to promote coordination to meet locally identified needs and priorities. There is also the 'Pathways to Employment' initiative operating in 16 CDEPs. This initiative aims to help communities link Indigenous people with appropriate training and sustainable jobs. Whatever the mechanism, some sound consultation and planning will ensure that any e-learning activities are integrated into a community's long term vision for the future.

Secondly, if e-learning is deemed to have a role for a community, programs need to be carefully designed if they are to maximise positive outcomes. A systematic review of research on Indigenous vocational education and training undertaken by NCVET in 2005 (Miller, 2005) identified some critical elements in training programs that ensure positive outcomes. An analysis of recent Indigenous e-learning research, feedback from States and Territories on e-learning activity and the results of the three 2005 Indigenous Engagement e-learning projects, corroborate NCVET's findings.

The same seven factors come up again and again. We think of them as follows:



By integrating each of these elements into all future Indigenous e-learning projects, and supporting their development, we can improve quality and sustainability and thus create a more cohesive Indigenous engagement agenda.

The following analysis outlines where current processes could better integrate these elements and suggests a range of responses to consolidate recent achievements and build up the deficient areas.

“Owned”





The findings

Sustainable strategies need to be relevant to the realities of community life and managed by the community. Money will be wasted and outcomes will not be achieved if communities are not willing and ready to engage. Many communities are still not aware of what e-learning is and have not considered how it can help their community.

To create a demand from students, we need to understand what technology people are using, or want to use, and build on that. Indigenous people must be involved in deciding what technology they want to use, not as passive recipients of something they may not want. This means assessing the types and uses of technology already emerging, and implementing infrastructure and systems around them.

The process of building and maintaining relationships to create ownership is not sufficiently recognised in the scope of current projects or in funding levels. It can take many months to negotiate the relationships that need to be in place for a project to be successful.

How to respond

-  Decide first if e-learning is part of the answer. Fund a concept development phase, including consultation, and training needs analysis.
-  Work with those communities that are already ready and able to engage. For example, leverage off the best organised Pathways to Employment (PEP) CDEPs, which already employ staff to identify local training needs.
-  Spread the word about e-learning in other communities so people will start thinking about how it might assist their community in achieving its long term goals.
-  Make project champions an ongoing part of how projects managed and ensure they are people chosen by the community.

“Possessing Indigenous spirit”




The findings

This is about ensuring all aspects of training and the way it is conducted reflect the Indigenous culture. Culturally appropriate resources are one important aspect. Some

say that there is an abundance of culturally appropriate resources but they are not well promoted and shared, others believe there are too few appropriate resources. The EdNA Online Group, *E-Learning for Indigenous Learners*, for example, lists only seven Indigenous-specific resources, although clearly many more have been developed. Even when using the foundation resources that are available, time and effort will always need to be spent in contextualising the materials to make them relevant to the local community to reaffirm students' own cultures and identities.

Learning environments also need to reflect Indigenous identities and values for students to feel comfortable in attending courses. This might involve setting up training in an Elders room, having flexible start and finish times, and encouraging whole families to attend training together².

How to respond

-  Undertake a stocktake of culturally appropriate resources. Promote what is available for which groups of Indigenous learners and provide funding to create new resources and contextualise resources where there are gaps.
-  Create culturally appropriate learning environments through e-learning centres that promote peer support, team-work, both-ways learning and blended delivery modes.
-  Fund 'two-way learning' in resource development by asking students and experienced Indigenous resource developers to mentor non-Indigenous resource developers in creating culturally appropriate materials.

“Connected”

The findings

It is important to have a clear understanding of where an e-learning project fits with other activities and programs in the community, particularly in situations where many providers are competing for a small client base. The e-learning experience needs to lead to real, practical outcomes if it is to be valued. Being 'connected' will help avoid duplication or creating unrealistic expectations about what the project can achieve. It will also provide opportunities for pooling resources and sharing ideas.

Connectedness needs to operate at a systems level too. There is a plethora of programs in many government departments, agencies and large businesses aimed at supporting skills development by Indigenous people but communities and RTOs do not have the time or know-how to tap into these resources. The many funding buckets and

² A 2004 report by Julie Woolcock, *Shaping New Practices: promoting a more culturally led and community inclusive approach to vocational education and training*, presents a range of options for educators to consider in working with Indigenous people that aim to reposition the learner so that they can build a strong sense of identity as well as develop the necessary skills for success in non-Indigenous contexts. See <http://knowledgetree.flexiblelearning.net.au/edition08/index.html>

accountabilities create disincentives for getting involved. Agencies can work together to make it easier.

How to respond

- Create local networks around projects that include organisations such as NACS, Centrelink, Job Network, group training organisations, other RTOs, schools, Indigenous Coordination Centres, local council, and local businesses.
 - consider the establishment of shared facilities, where appropriate
 - work with local industry to achieve employment outcomes
- Work with Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) to form partnerships with the PEP projects, to maximise outcomes for these communities
- Explore partnerships with other government agencies to engage in joint planning and problem solving – eg the Australian Government’s Department of Communication, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) on broadband issues³, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination on coordination with other projects through Indigenous Coordination Centres⁴.

“Adaptable”

The findings

Indigenous projects often seem to be beset by challenges that were not at all envisaged before the project got off the ground. This may be because the project is breaking new ground, because the right people haven’t been involved in the planning, or simply due to the difficulties of providing services in isolated places with limited infrastructure. Experience has shown that successful e-learning projects must be able to be modified and changed to fit with needs as they emerge in delivery. When that element of flexibility is not built-in, project managers have felt compelled to resort to ‘creative accounting’ measures to ensure their projects can continue.

The unpredictability of technology can reduce any e-learning project to a standstill. Local communities need to have immediate access to people with skills in maintenance of hardware systems to ensure the sustainability of projects.

The students’ personal and family commitments are an additional unpredictable factor. Courses need to be fluid and flexible to allow students to meet these obligations without penalty.

³ DCITA is implementing the Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities (TARPRIC). It aims to improve take-up and effective use of Internet services, viability and provision of broadband services and increased awareness of telecommunications opportunities and rights

⁴ The Australian Government has a new network of 30 Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs). They operate as whole of government centres, housing staff from various departments. Their role is to coordinate the delivery of Indigenous-specific and mainstream programs at the regional level and to negotiate agreements with local communities based on the principles of partnership and shared responsibility.

How to respond

- ✚ Ensure that funding arrangements are flexible enough to allow project managers to respond to unforeseen changes, without encountering too much red-tape.
- ✚ Explore creative ways of overcoming infrastructure issues. For example consider the potential for Indigenous communities in the soon-to-be-released AUD\$100 Wind-up laptops⁵.
- ✚ Train local people in repair and management of ICT systems. Where local technicians are not currently available, ensure outside help is promptly at-hand.
- ✚ Employ well-connected project champions to work on the ground to troubleshoot when obstacles arise.

“Skilfully led”

The findings

Well-meaning staff quickly become discouraged if they do not have the support they need within their organisation to make things happen. Because Indigenous e-learning projects usually require cross-faculty involvement and innovative approaches, they need to be championed by the RTO leadership as an organisational priority.





TAFEs and other large RTOs are more likely to have the resources and organisational muscle to lead successful projects, making it difficult for small RTOs to compete in funding applications.

RTO staff, particularly teachers, but also resource developers, feel they need more training in both working with Indigenous learners and in using new technologies. Other participants in these projects, such as project champions and CDEP facilitators, also require professional development to maximise their contribution. Local people need to be helped to understand what is meant by e-learning and shown practical models that can be applied to their own communities, including innovative ways of incorporating literacy and numeracy programs.

There is a dire lack of Indigenous teachers in the VTE system, particularly those with ICT skills, and particularly in remote areas. A long-term strategy is required to build up the Indigenous VTE workforce.

⁵ A new non-profit organization, One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) is developing a AUD\$100 laptop to sell to governments to distribute to children, particularly in developing countries. The machine will be Linux-based, with wireless broadband that, among other things, allows them to work as a network. The laptops will use innovative power, including wind-up, and will be able to do most everything except store huge amounts of data. See <http://www.laptop.media.mit.edu/>

How to respond

-  Fund project managers from large RTOs, experienced in e-learning, to mentor a group of small RTOs which are new to the area.
-  Run an annual seminar for project champions to provide space to reflect on projects, build networks and address professional development needs.
-  Work with the Framework's LearnScope Project to maximise professional development opportunities in Indigenous e-learning, particularly for RTOs working in communities that have identified e-learning as a useful tool to achieve their longer term plans.
-  Proactively identify talented Indigenous students undertaking ICT courses and encourage them to undertake the required training and assessment to become trainers.

“Backed-up”





The findings

The availability of support services and pastoral care is as important in e-learning courses as it is in traditional face-to-face courses. The technology should support a blended approach to learning which also includes face to face time with teachers and appropriate support services.

The 2005 Indigenous Engagement e-learning projects found that many students required non-academic support such as transport to and from learning centres and help in negotiating with Centrelink, as well as extra help in literacy and one-on-one tutoring. Often, the cost in providing this additional support, whether it is provided by RTO staff or donated by community members, is not adequately accounted for in the project funding.

The importance of the student-teacher relationship can not be under-estimated. Even with distance learning, frequent communication with the teacher is required to build a strong rapport. Learners may be isolated from other learners in a subject area and will rely heavily on the teacher to provide support and motivation. When teachers are not physically available, face to face time can be provided through facilitators or mentors working with the students at the learning site.




How to respond

-  Clearly identify the costs of additional support and the value of in-kind contributions so that these costs can be reflected in project funding
-  Train project champions to provide a mentoring and/or counselling role for students on-site
-  Ensure training is learner centred so that students' individual literacy needs are picked up in the program design and the impact of personal issues is acknowledged
-  Provide opportunities for one-on-one tutoring.

“Resourced”

The findings





Underlying each of the previous six factors is the need for adequate resourcing. The three strongest messages coming out of the research and practice are:

-  Funding needs to be long-term to enable better planning and account for long lead times for successful project development.
-  Various buckets of funds are confusing for applicants and place a huge compliance burden on organisations and communities.
-  Costs are often underestimated. Funding needs to reflect hidden costs involved in providing additional support and also ongoing maintenance costs.

Related to the resourcing issue is the issue of measurement. There is currently very little information about the level of e-learning activity in Indigenous communities, and what a reasonable benchmark is. The Framework’s recent E-learning Benchmarking Report found around 6-8% of all VTE enrolment involved some level of e-learning (Australian Flexible Learning Framework 2005). But to what extent are Indigenous people engaging compared to others? Participation in VTE is high for Indigenous people, but does this flow on to engagement with of e-learning methodologies? Some standard or baseline measures are needed.

Measurement needs to take account of the fact that positive outcomes may be different for Indigenous people. Indigenous people are likely to get significant benefits from training even if they do not complete any units, especially in terms of confidence and workplace skills. They see being with other Indigenous people, talking with others, access to computers and understanding how to finish a course all as very useful outcomes from training.

How to respond

-  Explore options for more holistic funding. For example, provide an opportunity for applicants for e-learning projects to request VTE infrastructure funds via e-learning project applications.
-  Explore and trial options for longer-term project funding – eg over two years.
-  Determine the current extent of Indigenous engagement in e-learning and how this compares with mainstream involvement.
-  Ensure that the evaluation of future e-learning projects picks up any personal and community benefits gained by students, as well as the traditional employment and training outcomes.

6. What needs to happen in 2006?




In terms of what all this means for the Indigenous Engagement Project in 2006, we suggest that rather than funding a whole new suite of projects, that funding be focused on building on the achievements of the 2005 projects and on addressing some of the ongoing issues that have been identified in the research, the experience of States and Territories and in the experience of past projects.

We propose that the following five areas of activity should be funded in 2006.

1. *Focus on building the capacity of providers*



1(a) Mentoring of smaller RTOs

In order to transfer the knowledge acquired in 2005, and to build the capacity of some smaller RTOs, fund OLI and NCI to mentor two or three small RTOs each to help develop a concept and deliver training. RTOs in States or Territories other than NSW and Queensland should be particularly targeted. RTOs can be selected through seeking interest from:

-  previous applicants for funding
-  RTOs working with PEP CDEPs
-  RTOs that have already expressed interest in working with OLI and NCI.

1(b) Availability of resources

Following a stocktake of culturally appropriate resources (recommendation 4(b)):

-  Undertake a campaign to raise awareness of what resources are available and how to acquire them, targeting all Indigenous RTOs and Indigenous Education Centres, as well as RTOs that deliver in corrections institutions⁶.
-  Provide funding to RTOs to create and contextualise small, localised, just in time learning resources, using two-way learning, whereby students and experienced Indigenous resource developers mentor non-Indigenous developers in creating culturally appropriate materials.

1(c) Professional development

Offer professional development in ICT and working with Indigenous students through LearnScope to RTOs that participate in the Stage 1 application process.

⁶ Upcoming NCVET work on how the VET workforce can better capture and exchange information and resources should provide more guidance on this area of activity.

2. Connect with existing resources and infrastructure

2(a) Funding clarity

- ✚ Develop a procedure that better connects the different components of VTE infrastructure funds, particularly the capital components with e-learning funds for Indigenous Australians so that applicants only need go through one process. This issue could be taken up as part of the 2006 work of the Review of Resourcing Vocational and Technical Education Action Group chaired by the Queensland Department of Employment and Training.
- ✚ Explore opportunities for more holistic, integrated funding through links with Indigenous Coordination Centres.

2(b) Infrastructure

Work collaboratively with other agencies on overcoming infrastructure barriers:

- ✚ Build connections with One Laptop per Child (OLPC) to explore potential for wireless laptops in Indigenous communities.
- ✚ Work with DCITA to try and fast-track access to adequate telecommunications services for communities wishing to engage in e-learning.
- ✚ Investigate any potential benefits from a longer term focus on alternatives such as Linux and other open-source software.
- ✚ Seek donations from hardware manufacturers to improve access to up-to-date technology.

3. Build skills within communities

3(a) Training in maintenance

Request a small number of the PEP CDEPs to identify four or five students within each community to train in maintenance of hardware systems. Fund an RTO to deliver training. Use the early findings of the DEWR funded PEPs to target communities that are ready to engage.

3(b) Champions seminar

Run a two day seminar for existing and 2006 project champions and project managers to help them reflect on their experiences, share what they learnt, build networks, clarify their role and identify professional development needs. Use the structure at Attachment B as a starting point for planning.

3(c) TAA training

Identify current talented Indigenous ICT students and encourage them to become trainers by completing the Training and Assessment (TAA) qualification:

- Fund a program in each State and Territory whereby students receive funded places, mentorship and employment outcomes.

4. Document the current situation and track progress

4(a) Baseline study

Undertake a baseline study to determine the extent of Indigenous engagement in e-learning and how this compares with mainstream involvement. Use the outline at Attachment C as the basis for the research brief.

4(b) Stocktake of resources

Undertake a stocktake of culturally appropriate learning resources for availability, currency, relevance and potential for adaptation.

4(c) Performance indicators

Set broader performance indicators for future e-learning projects that pick up the personal benefits gained by students, as well community benefits.

5. Prepare the ground for a new application process

5(a) Application process

Develop a two-stage application process to operate from 2007 onwards:

- Stage 1 - in mid-2006, offer funding for concept development, including consultation, negotiation and training needs analysis.
- Stage 2 - in January 2007, offer funding for delivery of training for up to three years to communities that have identified potential for e-learning and developed a plan through Stage 1.

Use the principles outlined at Attachment A as the basis for the invitations for tender for each stage.

5(b) Professional development for project leaders

Educate PEP leaders at each project site on how e-learning models can be applied in their communities.

5(c) Promotion of e-learning

Undertake a promotional campaign on e-learning in other communities targeting Indigenous Coordination Centres, CDEPs and RTOs working in Indigenous communities.

Attachments

A. Invitation to tender—some guiding principles

***B. National project champions workshop 2006—
a broad structure***

C. Baseline study—outline

Attachment A: Invitation to tender — some guiding principles

Stage 1: Concept development

A small amount of funds should be made available to support the development of e-learning project ideas, to ensure applicants can commit sufficient thought, consultation, negotiation and planning to support applications for funding.

Allow up to six months for communities to develop a proposal for an e-learning project. Time is needed to make sure that the people who make the important decisions about community matters can participate and a thorough analysis of training needs can be made.

Potential Indigenous e-learning projects submit a brief Expression of Interest (no more than 2 pages).

Expressions of Interest should include:

- a) information on the partners in the application
- b) a brief outline of the proposed project and approximate cost
- c) a brief outline of how and why e-learning may contribute to building community capacity.
- d) potential for employment outcomes
- e) timelines for concept development
- f) consultation / relationship building planned during the process of concept development. Key organisations might include Community councils, schools, Education Consultative Committees, Community Controlled Health Services, Land Councils, Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) schemes, Aboriginal resource, language and cultural centres and other local Aboriginal corporations, New Apprenticeships Centres (NACs), Group Training Companies, registered training organisations (RTOs), Indigenous Coordination Centre, Centrelink
- g) the issues that will be considered during the concept development stage.

Stage 2: Application for funding

If the concept development process indicates that e-learning will provide a useful outcome for the community, an application for funding should be made.

The funding agreement should not unnecessarily tie funding to specific inputs or outcomes, recognising that the scope of the project may need to be adapted as the project progresses.

Applications should detail the results of the concept development phase, including:





- a) a snapshot of the target Indigenous community - population, employment and training needs, and employment opportunities
- b) consultation undertaken with the community, and networks in place to support the project
- c) methods of assessing community training needs eg community meetings and individual interviews and questionnaires to define perceptions of need, supply-and-demand assessments to accurately identify groups or individuals to be targeted by training programs, external research on regional economic trends, labour market needs and skills audits⁷
- d) goals in responding to community need. These need to be realistic, based on training needs assessment and employment outcomes
- e) project scope - including method of delivery, considering technology literacy levels and building longer term capacity, additional support required for literacy needs, one-on-one tutoring, mentoring, creation of culturally appropriate learning environment, transport for students
- f) involvement of project champions - how champions will be selected, trained and involved in project
- g) involvement of employment sector – including employment providers and key businesses and how the transition from education to employment will take place
- h) available resources - training venue, available technological infrastructure, and community capacity to contribute to project, including skills in repair and maintenance, access to technical expertise
- i) costs - include in-kind contributions by community members and local organisations
- j) ongoing consultation on and management of project – eg Indigenous advisory committee, involvement of local networks
- k) risk factor assessment and management plan

⁷ For more information on community involvement see Odgers, A and Potter, D., New Practices in Flexible Learning 2004: Indigenous Inclusiveness: Getting down to business <http://pre2005.flexiblelearning.net.au/projects/indigenouslyinclusiveness.htm>




Attachment B: National project champions workshop 2006 — a broad structure

Objective

To provide an opportunity for Indigenous e-learning project champions to:

-  reflect on their role in Indigenous e-learning projects
-  build networks with other project champions
-  receive professional development
-  identify future professional development needs.








Participants

-  all 2005 and 2006 project champions
-  identified 2007 project champions
-  selection of other participants in e-learning projects eg Indigenous engagement project managers, Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) facilitators, students, teachers and resource developers to provide different perspectives.

Structure

The workshop should run for two days in order to meet all the objectives and provide maximum benefits for people travelling a long distance. Participants should be questioned before-hand on what they would like to achieve through the event and what their professional development needs are. The program should provide a mix of opportunities for sharing past experiences and looking forward. Networking should be a major focus, with plenty of time built in for informal discussions.

Possible topics

-  reflect on experiences - 2005 and 2006 project champions share experiences about their role in the projects, the challenges and rewards
-  discussion on what could be done differently
-  defining the role of the project champion
-  intensive professional development - eg half day courses in skills in networking with communities, tapping into government resources, securing donations, mentoring
-  reports on latest research
-  professional development needs - identifying what training is required and how it can be delivered
-  developing a network - methods for staying in touch and accessing assistance.

Attachment C: Baseline study — outline

Description

A baseline study is an essential starting-point in any major change initiative: by describing the initial situation, it uses a process of monitoring and evaluation to enable comparisons to be made as the initiative progresses.

In this case, the baseline study will provide a reference point against which to monitor and report on progress in achieving Indigenous engagement in e-learning over a ten to fifteen year period. It will systematically assess the circumstances in which the Indigenous e-learning program has commenced, and provide the basis for subsequent assessment of how well it is being implemented.

Process






The first suggested step in preparing the specifications for the baseline study is to identify the parameters which will provide the most effective measure of success.

Where possible the parameters should mirror those used in the broader baseline survey tool undertaken through the E-learning Benchmarking Project in 2005. In this way we can compare how Indigenous engagement in e-learning compares with mainstream engagement using indicators such as percentage of VTE unit enrolments that use e-learning and percentage of VTE learners who through e-learning have increased skills and confidence in using information and communication technology (ICT).

There will be some additional indicators, however, that are specific to Indigenous e-learning activity. For example, there will need to be specific indicators around building community capacity.

Data might come directly from government agencies, through for example building on the State and Territory environmental scans, from teachers and other participants in Indigenous engagement projects, from students and from recent research.

The variables identified need to be judged against the 'SMART' criteria:

-  **Specific** – clear, simple, single items of information
-  **Measurable** – items that can be reliably quantified
-  **Attainable** – data that is easily and cost effectively gathered and available for the duration of the Indigenous e-learning agenda
-  **Relevant** – to the goal, objectives and outcomes of Indigenous engagement in e-learning
-  **Timely** - the data can be collected and analysed quickly enough to be useful in managing the program.

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