



Community Connexions

Addressing the Information &
Communication Technology Needs of
the NSW NGO Human Services Sector

Executive Summary





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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Executive Summary..... | 1 |
| 1.1 ICT Strategy for the NSW Human Services NGO sector | 3 |
| 2. Literature Review | 15 |
| 3. Research Methods | 27 |
| 4. Findings | 29 |
| 4.1 Questionnaire..... | 29 |
| 4.2 The Key Informant Interviews | 51 |
| 4.3 Consultations with NGOs in Central West NSW | 57 |
| 4.4 The Feasibility of Internet and Telephony Packaging..... | 59 |
| Appendix 1: The IT Sector Questionnaire | 62 |
| Appendix 2: Interviews Schedules | 68 |
| Bibliography..... | 72 |

1. Executive Summary

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capacity is now integral to communications, research, knowledge management, funding and promotion as well as issues-based campaigns and advocacy processes. Consequently ICT capacity is also integral to effective service delivery, whether to clients, communities or members.

Statutory reporting, financial acquittals and funding applications also increasingly depend on ICT. Appropriate ICT applications and adaptations have the potential to bring improvements to financial and administrative processes, to reduce costs and to strengthen relationships. Strategies that build this capacity are therefore an essential part of the sustainability and vitality of the human services sector (the sector) and a significant cross-sector issue.

Let us be clear however, that ICT is not going to solve poverty, structural discrimination, poor management practices or inequitable relationships with funding bodies. It is important to be realistic about our expectations of ICT and acknowledge it is a critical enabling tool with the potential to maximise the effectiveness of the sector in meeting its primary objectives. The significance of ICT will also often depend on a person's role within an organisation: those working in policy, administration and research positions have a different relationship and dependence on ICT than carers, counsellors and community development workers.

Newer information technologies bring both benefits and frustrations. Appropriate, reliable ICTs help to streamline and speed up routine information collection and exchange processes. They are used by Non Government Organisations (NGOs) in NSW to manage and share information and much has already been achieved in successfully integrating new ICTs into the daily work of NGOs.

The next steps towards better use of ICT systems and applications for the sector have been identified in this research. In summary, they are steps that aim to narrow, or even eliminate, the divide between those who have good access to reliable, affordable, appropriate ICT training, support, equipment and those who do not. This report identifies the outstanding issues to be addressed and the necessary strategies that will help to overcome these issues.

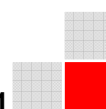
For those in rural and remote areas, the lack of widespread access to fast, reliable internet connectivity remains a problem. At the same time, dissatisfaction with the affordability of fast internet access and advice and maintenance and support is common to both NGOs and the wider community.

Some exciting models and initiatives for ICT capacity building for the NGO sector are identified in this report. Some have already been initiated by innovative ICT specialist NGOs, including TRI Community Exchange (TRI), Infochange Australia, Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE) and Community Information Strategies Australia (CISA).

Others, like an adapted Circuit Riders model, are recommended as suitable for implementation to meet a range of organisational and ultimately systemic needs identified in this research.

This report makes four primary recommendations and four secondary recommendations. The first set of recommendations have been further developed into discrete project proposals that require financial investment, the second have the capacity to be implemented within existing resources.

The four primary recommendations should be funded and implemented as an overall program rather than as individual projects. This will enable greater synergies between the projects, which are all complementary and also enable considerable efficiencies, particularly in relation to cost and the benefits to participating regional NGOs.



All these recommendations have been directly informed by a comprehensive and in-depth consultation and research process and NCOSS anticipates that the data in this report will prove valuable to a range of stakeholder groups.

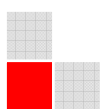
The research was conducted over twelve months and included a literature review, discussion paper and sector survey. One-to-one interviews were held with key informants including peak NGOs, private industry specialist providers and Government funding agency representatives. Consultations were also conducted with NGOs in the Central West region of the state to gain insight into the issues and circumstances pertinent to NGOs operating in rural areas.

Project Objectives

The main objective of the project was to develop of an overarching ICT strategy for the NSW NGO sector. This included the following key tasks:

1. Conducting a needs analysis of the medium to long term ICT support and development requirements of the sector.
2. Identifying and documenting the current status of HSNet implementation and issues from the NGO perspective.
3. Identifying the intersecting policies, programs and initiatives and investigating opportunities to build NGO capacity in these areas.
4. Investigating the feasibility and options for a state wide, locally sourced, maintenance and support system for participating NGOs.
5. Investigating the feasibility and options for a competitive telephonic package based on aggregated demand for participating NGOs.
6. Developing an ICT Strategy document, informed by the above evidence base, which includes recommendations, timeframes and resource requirements.

The central target group of the project is the NSW Human Services NGO Sector, with an emphasis on small to medium sized NGOs.



1.1 ICT Strategy for the NSW Human Services NGO sector

Recommendation 1: Shared service model of ICT support

Trial a model of ICT support, maintenance and resourcing based on the UK Circuit Riders model.

- The pilot should be trialled in three regional locations over a period of 18 months, auspiced by regional NGOs and service no more than 12 NGOs in each region.

Recommendation 2: Substantially increased ICT training provision

Substantially increase the funding, provision and availability of relevant ICT training for the sector.

- Double the capacity of TRI Community Exchange to deliver ICT training to the Western Sydney region over a 3 year period.
- Contract provider(s) to deliver ICT training to other key regions of NSW over a 3 year period, including Northern Rivers, Central Coast, Far West, Central West and New England.

Recommendation 3: Feasibility study and trial of aggregated ICT services

Conduct and evaluate a feasibility study and trial for the delivery of aggregated ICT services to clusters of NGOs within two discrete regions.

Recommendation 4: An 'NGO specific' ICT Guide for negotiating and contracting ICT services

Develop and promote an 'NGO friendly' resource to inform, demystify and empower NGOs to assess and select the best ICT services to meet their requirements.

1.1.1 Specific Proposals - Briefs

Recommendation 1: Shared service model of ICT support

Project Name: Shared Service Model of ICT Support

Objective: Develop an evidence-based model of NGO-based ICT maintenance and support, with the potential to be applied across the NGO sector

Outcomes:

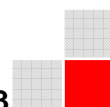
- Trial completed in 3 regions over 18 months;
- Evaluation of the project undertaken and completed;
- Development of a 'shared service' model of ICT support.

Target Group:

- 36 NGOs across 3 regions, and 3 regional auspices.

Stakeholders:

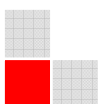
- NCOSS



- Up to 36 NGOs
- 3 Regional auspices
- NCOSS ICTPAG (ICT Project Advisory Group)
- Funding Body
- 3 Circuit Riders
- Training providers
- Technical ICT Support providers.

Delivery - key tasks, timeframe and sequence

| Milestone | Who | When |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Finalise project workplan | NCOSS | 1 month after project commencement |
| Identify 3 trial regions and 12 NGOs per region participation; Finalise contractual arrangements between NCOSS and Regional auspices | NCOSS & regional auspices | 2 months after commencement |
| Recruit Circuit Riders (CRs) | Regional auspices | 2 months from contract finalisation |
| Prepare and conduct a common satisfaction survey to benchmark trial | CRs, NCOSS | 1 month from CR recruitment |
| CRs document and address needs of participating NGOs | CR, relevant NGOs | On-going |
| Project launch | CR, NCOSS, 3 Regional auspices and key regional stakeholders | 1 month from completion of survey |
| Interim Progress Reports on Pilot | CRs, Regional auspices | Monthly |



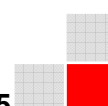
| Milestone | Who | When |
|--|---|-------------------------------|
| Conduct CR Model Pilot Activities include (not an exhaustive list): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolve technical issues Conduct ICT Health check- ups Train in applications use Identify ICT needs Assist with tendering Define and source support contracts Develop ICT budgets Provide general strategic advice Develop guidelines/protocols for the Implementation of the above | CR NCOSS/Regional auspices | 10 months following launch |
| Conduct Satisfaction Survey at end of pilot; collate results | CRs and external evaluator | 1 month prior to end of Pilot |
| Submit Pilot Evaluation Final Report | NCOSS | Due at conclusion of pilot |

Risk and mitigation strategies

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation |
|--|------------|--------|--|
| Regions unwilling to participate | Low | Medium | Select other regions, delay timeframe for pilot |
| Suitable skills for CRs not available in regions | Medium | High | Consider ICT-based candidates, provide orientation to sector |

Roles and responsibilities

| Role | Responsibility |
|----------------|--|
| Circuit Riders | Deliver services outlined in PD Develop, plan and schedule activities across participating NGOs to ensure equitable sharing of CR services Implement satisfaction surveys at start and end of pilot Conduct the pilot |



| | |
|-------------------|---|
| | Prepare interim and final regional pilot reports for NCOSS |
| Regional auspices | <p>Recruit and manage Circuit Riders</p> <p>Provide office space, technology and a vehicle sufficient to enable the CR work to be done</p> <p>Manage and promote project at regional level</p> <p>Report and communicate regularly with NCOSS</p> |
| NCOSS | <p>Secure and acquit funding</p> <p>Contract management</p> <p>Identify and contract with 3 regions for trial participation</p> <p>Provide a range of relevant templates: Circuit Rider PD, satisfaction survey reporting format etc.</p> <p>Project management</p> |

Budget/cost

- \$574,425;
- The cost of 3 Circuit Riders over 12 months;
- Travel costs - 3 trips per year for each CR to report and review progress;
- NCOSS Project Management Fee;
- External evaluation.

Recommendation 2: Substantially increased ICT training provision

Project Name: Substantially increased ICT training provision

Objective: Relevant ICT training is available to the sector throughout NSW

Outcomes:

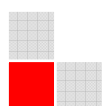
- TRI Community Exchange training resources and capability are doubled for the Western Sydney Region;
- Increased access to relevant training and increased ICT capacity of the NSW NGO workforce;
- ICT training delivered to all other identified key regions in NSW over a 3 year period.

Target groups

- NGO sector staff and volunteers

Stakeholders

- NCOSS
- NCOSS ICTPAG
- Regional auspices
- Training providers



- Target Group
- Funding Body
- TRI Community Exchange.

Delivery - key tasks, timeframe and sequence

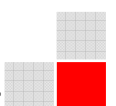
| Milestone | Who | When |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Finalise contractual arrangements between NCOSS and Regional auspices | NCOSS & Regional auspices | 1 month after project commencement |
| Conduct regional training needs analysis | Regional auspices | 1 month from contract finalisation |
| Issue Tender | NCOSS | 3 months from project commencement |
| Select training providers | NCOSS | 3 months from tender closing date |
| Contract with training providers | NCOSS, Regional auspices | 2 months from vendor(s) selection |
| Deliver training aligned to needs analysis | Training providers, Regional auspices | Within 6 weeks of vendor contract finalisation. Through to 3 year horizon. |
| Project completion and acquittal | NCOSS, ICTPAG, Regional auspices | 3 years from commencement date |

Risk and mitigation strategies

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|---|
| Regions unwilling to participate | Low | Medium | Select other regions, delay timeframe for pilot |
| Single suitable tender not located | Low | High | Consider engagement of multiple vendors |

Roles and responsibilities

| Role | Responsibility |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| NCOSS | Secure and acquit funding |



| | |
|--------------------|--|
| | Contract management Identify target regions Project management Manage promotions/communications program |
| ICTPAG | Advisory role |
| Regional auspices | Manage regional delivery |
| Training providers | Develop and deliver high quality appropriate training to the target groups |

Budget/cost

- \$1,962,000;

Breakdown:

- \$720,376 - TRI Community Exchange in the Western Sydney Region;
- \$1,242,000 - NCOSS and the Regional auspices to deliver across NSW.

Recommendation 3: Feasibility study and trial of aggregated ICT Services

Project Name: Feasibility study and trial of aggregated ICT Services

Objective: Develop an evidence-based model of NGO based aggregated ICT services, over a 16 month period, for potential application across the NGO sector

Outcomes:

- Measurably lower aggregated ICT costs for voice and data;
- Heightened carrier¹ competition in provision of sector ICT;
- Comparative evidence based research to inform new models for possible replication across NSW.

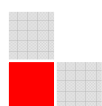
Target group:

- The clusters of NGOs within the 3 selected regions

Stakeholders:

- NCOSS
- Target group
- Funding body
- Regional auspices and Circuit Riders(CRs)

¹ Carrier = Communications carriers, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), such as Telstra, Optus, AAPT, Exetel, Powertel.



- Carrier(s) (chosen by Expression of Interest)

Delivery - key tasks, timeframe and sequence

| Milestone | Who | When |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| Confirm NGO Participants for trial Finalise contractual arrangements between NCOSS and Regional auspices | NCOSS, Regional auspices | 2 months from project commencement |
| Conduct needs determination & establish research KPIs, including current methods and costs to the target group Develop service recording template | NCOSS, CRs and Regional auspices | 2 months from contract finalisation |
| Issue expression of Interest | NCOSS | 1 month from needs determination; return from carriers due in 1 month |
| Engage carriers (ICT service providers) | NCOSS and Regional auspices | 2 months from EOI selection |
| Establish Internet, email and telephone services, including new equipment, if necessary | ICT providers, CRs | From carrier engagement |
| Deliver aggregated ICT services (telephony & data) to target group | Carrier(s) | Over 6 month period from service establishment |
| Record service results, outages, other issues in monthly reports to NCOSS. | CRs, Target group, Regional auspices | Monthly during 6 month period |
| Compile cost and service records for the trial, prepare feasibility report including evidence-based model with recommendations, project close-out | CR, NCOSS, Regional auspices | 2 months after conclusion of the 6 month trial |



Risk and mitigation strategies

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation |
|---|------------|--------|---|
| Regions unwilling to participate | Low | Medium | Select other regions, delay timeframe for Trial |
| Single suitable Carrier not found | Medium | High | Consider engagement of multiple vendors |
| Unsuitable terms and conditions imposed by Carrier(s) | Medium | High | Engage independent ICT consultant to advise and negotiate |

Roles and responsibilities

| Role | Responsibility |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| NCOSS | Finalise contractual arrangements between NCOSS and Regional auspices Final acquittal and report Identify and resource target regions Project Management Oversee EOI process |
| ICTPAG | Advise and consult on vendor selection |
| Circuit Riders and Regional auspices | Mediate and resolve issues between the target group and the vendors Monitor and resource NGO participation Capture monthly service records and complete monthly reports |
| Carriers | Develop and supply appropriate ICT solutions to the target group |

Budget/cost

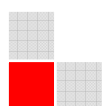
- \$470, 925: primarily for NCOSS and Regional auspice management costs to establish the trial, measure and report on outcomes.

Provisos and assumptions:

Regional staff costs (implementation) should be largely absorbed by the existing CR positions (refer to Recommendation 1).

Carrier costs (for file and email download limits, call costs etc.) are NOT included, as the trial will only proceed if these costs prove lower than current arrangements, as revealed during the EOI process.

Capital expenses and on-going maintenance: the equipment and equipment support costs for NGOs are unknown at this stage. Actual costs will be determined through further research during the vendor EOI process.



Recommendation 4: An NGO specific ICT Guide for negotiating and contracting ICT services

Project Name: NGO-specific ICT Guide for negotiating and contracting ICT services

Objective: Resource the sector to make better informed decisions regarding the acquisition and use of ICT services

Outcomes:

- Better informed NGOs, able to assess and select the best ICT services to meet their requirements;
- Reference manual written in laypersons terms, kept current and available via print, CD, or online, covering all aspects of ICT service and asset acquisition: assessment, selection, contracting, installation and use.

Target Group:

- NGO sector

Stakeholders:

- The Target group
- NCOSS
- Funding body
- NCOSS ICTPAG.

Delivery - key tasks, timeframe and sequence

| Milestone | Who | When |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Finalise brief of Guide requirements | NCOSS, ICTPAG | 1 month from project commencement |
| Recruit and engage Author | NCOSS | 2 months from brief finalisation |
| Produce Guide | Author, NCOSS, | 4 months from Author's engagement |
| Approve, launch and distribute Guide | NCOSS | 2 months from production of Guide |
| Project close out | NCOSS | One month from launch |
| On going reviews and updates | NCOSS | Every six months for 3 years |



Risk and mitigation strategies

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation |
|---|-------------------|---------------|---|
| ICT-competent author but unfamiliar with NGO Sector | Medium | High | NCOSS provide pro-active orientation & supervision during Guide development |

Roles and responsibilities

| Role | Responsibility |
|-------------|---|
| NCOSS | Secure and acquit funding Contract management Manage promotions/communications strategy Provide guidance and support as required |
| ICTPAG | Inform Guide brief |
| Author | Develop and supply NGO Guide |

Budget/cost

This project will cost \$ 195,000 as follows:

- \$77k NCOS Project Officer/Guide Author;
- \$60k Bi-annual revisions/updates;
- \$30k Promotion / communication and printing / distribution;
- NCOS Project Management.

Budget Summary

Total Cost: \$3. 21 million

As mentioned earlier in this report, the four primary recommendations and associated project briefs should be funded and implemented as an overall program rather than as individual projects. This will enable greater synergies between the projects, which are all complementary and also enable considerable efficiencies, particularly in relation to cost and the benefits to participating regional NGOs.



1.2 Secondary Recommendations

Recommendation 5: Comprehensive adoption of Common Data Sets

The adoption by all NSW government human service agencies of core and common data sets in relation to NGOs funded via their respective programs. These data sets should include but not be limited to:

- The full adoption of a standard/common chart of accounts;
- Generic common components for minimum data sets across programs;
- Generic common components for funding proposals and acquittals.

Recommendation 6: ICT specific NGO and Government consultation mechanism

Instigate a bi-monthly on-going forum to facilitate Government and NGO engagement, consultation and partnership regarding ICT capacity building and related issues. The forum could be co-chaired by HSNet and NCOSS.

Recommendation 7: Promote awareness and utilisation of HSNet

Increase NGO utilisation of HSNet by providing or facilitating generic ICT training for the sector, as well as enhanced website services and resources. Continue to promote the current services through more regular and direct participation with the NGO sector, while proactively ensuring that HSNet services are relevant to the sectors needs.

Recommendation 8: Realistic ICT component in funding formulas

The development and adoption by all NSW government human service agencies of a specific funding formula to provide additional resources to meet the on-going ICT requirements of NGOs within their funding programs. This formula should take account of the data expectations of the funding agency, the size of the NGO, as well the costs of maintenance and support, hardware and training.

