

Industry planning: Joining the Dots... One at a time

by Catherine Mahony

“The non-government human service sector makes a significant contribution, both socially and economically, within NSW. We attract over \$1.5 billion each year in funding, are comprised of over 7,000 organisations and deliver an extraordinary range of essential services throughout the state.”

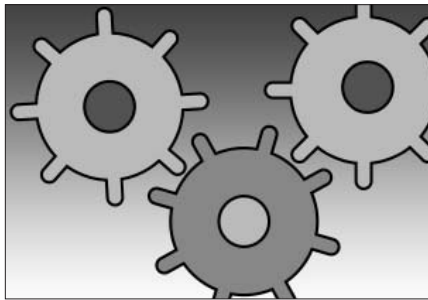
The development of a state-wide industry plan for the sector was a priority recommendation in the last NCOSS Pre-Budget Submission to the NSW Government. This recommendation was not funded this year. While other jurisdictions are comprehensively investing in building the capacity of the sector, notably Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria, NSW is seriously lagging behind.

The need for a *whole of sector and whole of Government* strategic approach to the sustainability and growth of the sector is a bedrock issue and NCOSS remains optimistic that this requirement will also become a priority for the NSW Government.

To date a fairly standard response from various Government agencies and Ministers has been to cite the ‘capacity building initiatives’ that are already underway across some programs and Departments, in particular their own. These sector development projects within Departments make a really valuable contribution to NGOs within those funding streams, but they do not constitute a strategic approach to industry planning or begin to address the common structural issues facing the sector

We need sector-wide policies and actions that ensure the sector is an attractive employment option now and in the future, as well as actively enabling regulatory and funding frameworks that support the growth and efficiency of community services in NSW.

However well intentioned, piecemeal initiatives across siloed programs will not deliver the outcomes we need.



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The proposed industry plan consists of five key interrelated projects, including:

- The development of a comprehensive workforce profile, including current demographics, trends, projected growth/gaps and recruitment capacity within the broader labour market.
- An industry-wide needs assessment and the development of collaborative cross-sector strategies to address emerging industry skills gaps and projected client needs.
- A marketing/communications strategy to enhance and improve the visibility and profile of the sector with prospective employees and the general public.
- The establishment of a state-wide non-government community services industry Task Force comprised of key stakeholders across higher education and training, Government human services agencies, NCOSS, unions and other industry peaks.
- The development of a standard funding agreement that minimises current high transaction costs, barriers to growth/investment and enables longer term planning.

Download Industry Development Plan recommendation:
www.ncoss.org.au/hot

NCOSS will continue to lobby for funding to enable the sector to realistically plan for future service delivery within an increasingly complex and competitive environment. In the interim however, NCOSS is taking small but significant steps towards this goal.

Workforce Profile – the basic data

The NSW human services NGO sector has very poor and inconsistent data on its workforce. This lack of really basic information makes it extremely difficult to undertake effective workforce planning and develop informed strategies to address the future needs, role and sustainability of the sector.

NCOSS, in partnership with the Workplace Research Centre at the University of Sydney and the Sector Development Forum, is developing a basic workforce profile that will gather data in a few key areas including total number of employees (head count and FTE), salaries, qualifications and employment status. This project will be entirely funded by the sector and cost approximately \$50,000.

The research project has been structured in three stages to enable us to ‘pay as we go’; at this point we have sufficient funds to complete stage 1, which has just commenced.

NCOSS is seeking contributions from members to enable us to fund this project, which we anticipate will be completed in late 2008. Suggested contributions range from \$2,500, \$5,000 to \$10,000, depending on your organisations financial situation. All contributors will be fully acknowledged on the promotional material and the final report. To enable us to progress beyond stage 1, we need your support.

For further information please contact:

Catherine Mahony
email: catherine@ncoss.org.au



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