

PARTNERSHIP FORUM
12 August 2011
COMMUNIQUE

On 12 August 2011 the Partnership Forum held its sixth meeting. Key issues discussed by the Forum included sustainable funding and contracting between the public and not-for-profit sectors, progress on establishing the Social Enterprise Fund - formerly known as Community Development Investment Fund, the outcome of the first round of the Social Innovation Grants Program and self directed services and supports in WA.

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING AND CONTRACTING WITH THE NOT-FOR-PROFIT SECTOR

The Forum considered the first quarterly report on progress with the roll out of sustainable funding and contracting reforms announced as part of the 2011-12 State Budget. The Forum noted the significant progress made by both sectors in the roll out of the component 1 funding and initial education and training around the implementation of the *Delivering Community Services in Partnership* Policy. The Forum noted a number of issues currently being worked through by both sectors in the roll out of the reforms and the importance of keeping a record of learnings throughout the implementation process.

The Forum endorsed the proposal to establish a Capacity Building Working Group with representatives from the public and not-for-profit sectors to develop an implementation plan to build the capacity of the public and not-for-profit sectors. The working group will be tasked with identifying immediate priorities for the public and not-for-profit sectors to progress roll out of the reforms, developing a four year implementation plan for capacity building across both sectors and a strategic approach to the implementation of component II funding. The working group will provide a draft implementation plan to the Forum by the end of October 2011 with final endorsement in December 2011.

The Forum considered a Draft Evaluation Framework for the implementation of sustainable funding and contracting reforms. It was noted that the indicators in the framework may need to change over time but primarily should focus on measuring the shift over time to an outcomes and person centred approach, social return on investment and the extent to which the not-for-profit sector is involved in policy development and service design.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FUND (FORMERLY KNOWN AS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENT FUND)

The Forum received a presentation by Professor Paul Flatau and Elena Douglas on their report entitled "Social Enterprises in Western Australia." The Partnership Forum supported further work on establishing the Social Enterprise Fund by early 2012, including a strategic approach to fostering new and innovative approaches to growing social enterprise in WA.

SOCIAL INNOVATION GRANTS PROGRAM

The Forum received a summary on the status of the first round of Social Innovation Grants. The Forum noted that the second round of grant applications would be considered by the Selection Panel shortly.

It was noted that the ongoing focus of the program will be to share the learnings gained from successful grants, with a forum proposed for early 2012 to enable successful organisations to share key learnings and ideas.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY

The forum received a presentation from the Department of Housing on the Government's Affordable Housing Strategy. It was noted that Strategy was a good example of the not-for-profit sector being successfully included in the policy development process with positive results.

SELF-DIRECTED SERVICE DESIGN – “MY LIFE, MY WAY” FORUM

The chairperson, Professor Peter Shergold provided a summary of the “My Life, My Way” self-directed service design forum, held on 10 August 2011. It was agreed that the forum was highly successful and that further similar forums should be pursued in the future. The outcomes and next steps from the forum were discussed, including exploring the idea of a one stop shop for individuals to gain information and support on self directed services in WA, and linking elements of self directed service design into the implementation of the *Delivering Community Services in Partnership* Policy.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Forum noted the work of the Project Team over the last 12 months in preparing the Early Years Collaborative Project report, and the significant focus on working collaboratively on progressing an important area of service delivery. The Forum will review progress on the recommendations in the Project Report following further consideration by public sector agencies.

STRATEGIC PLANNING – DIRECTIONS FOR 2011-12

A strategic planning discussion was held to develop the future scope and agenda of the Forum in 2011-12.

This was informed by the Pre-Brief held with the community sector on 11 August 2011. A summary of the outcomes of the Pre-Brief is provided in Attachment 1. It was agreed that the outcomes would be considered progressively over the next 12 months with key issues relating to capacity building being addressed as a matter of priority by the Capacity Building Working Group.

Other key areas of priority identified by the Forum for consideration over the next 12 months include:

- maintaining the momentum around self directed services and support in WA;

- continuing to ensure and support a person centred approach to all aspects of the Forum's work, including a strong focus as part of the implementation of the contracting reforms; and
- building the capacity of both sectors to work collaboratively in the policy development process.

Each of these areas will be considered in further detail at the next Forum meeting.

NEXT MEETING

The Partnership Forum's next meeting will be held on 15 December 2011.

PARTNERSHIP FORUM PRE BRIEF OUTCOMES

The following is a summary of the key points raised in response to five questions posed at the Partnership Forum Pre Brief held 11 August 2011.

Q1: What are the main capacity issues facing community sector organisations?

It was identified that the community sector could be supported by further investment in the areas of resources, education and governance.

Key issues identified:

- Resources - attracting and retaining appropriate staff; and navigating state and federal government funding processes.
- Education – including a lack of understanding of how to cost services and evaluate outcomes; how to engage with government, the community sector and consumers; appropriate governance; efficient use of resources; and appropriate specialised education and training at TAFE and university level.
- Governance – including a lack of strategic governance and coordination of the sector.
- Low ICT capacity.
- All capacity issues are exacerbated for smaller, specialised agencies.

Q2: How can corporate governance in community sector organisations be improved?

It was identified that education, guidelines and mentoring may assist addressing issues of inconsistent levels of effective governance.

Suggested approaches:

- Education - including training tailored to small organisations.
- Flexible corporate governance – manuals, guidelines, templates.
- Appropriate benchmarking suited to the community sector - allowing organisations to self assess governance.
- Increase the government's ability to provide appropriate governance support to community organisations.
- Establish an overarching organisation to provide assistance including training, research, support, resources, and advocacy.
- Mentoring – potential for organisations to support other organisations.

Q3: What are the best mechanisms that the Partnership Forum can use to ensure consumers, carers and their families are effectively involved in progressing the ongoing development of the reforms and their implementation?

There was consensus that government and the community sector need to employ a diverse range of strategies to engage with consumers, carers and their families.

Suggested mechanisms:

- Public Forums, online forums (including social media) which will provide a capacity for the public to respond to the communiqués.
- Including consumers in policy development process.
- Going to the community to have conversations with consumers in an informal space.
- Listening to personal stories and experiences.
- Awareness raising directed at consumers (explaining 'what reforms means to me').

Q4: In what ways can cross-public sector coordination be improved to reduce the administrative burden on community sector organisations and/or improve service delivery?

It was identified that efficient delivery and management of information are key to reducing the administration burden.

Suggested approaches:

- Flexibility and streamlining of funding.
- Broad outcome areas rather than a program focus.
- Streamlining administrative processes - one electronic database; common reporting tools; one stop shop; and community sector regulator.
- Consistent formats for information.
- Other approaches for tendering - competitive tendering encourages community organisations to 'under cost' administration.

Q5: How best can appropriate and timely support be provided to small and medium community sector organisations including those in regional and remote WA?

It was identified that regional hubs, greater access to communication tools and information, as well as peer support could assist small and isolated organisations.

Suggested approaches:

- Regional hubs – to reduce set up costs and minimise duplication, shared spaces in metro areas for regional and remote community organisations to access in the metro area.
- Flexible support - improved ICT capacity – skype, video conferencing.
- Direct engagement of smaller organisations - be informed to engage.
- Support to attract and retain staff - incentives for volunteer board members.
- Linking up smaller with bigger organisations to create mutually beneficial relationships whereby they can learn from each other – buddy system.
- Training – in applying for funding.