

NNIC CONSULTATION PUBLIC MEETING – ADELAIDE
Held at the Disability Information and Resource Centre, Adelaide, Thursday 26 September 2006

Facilitator: Doug Jacquier, assisted by Simon Gee (CISA)

Present: 25 people

Introductory Process: Participants were provided with handouts covering the project brief, outcomes of the Connecting Up conference consultation, outcomes of the Informed Observers consultation, and draft outcomes of the survey, with the facilitator indicating the highlights and key issues emerging.

Key Issues for SA nonprofits

Participants were then asked to nominate their top of mind issues in ICT for their organisations. Responses included:

- Education, Training and Development
 - strategy direction, including help with the planning process
 - awareness raising
 - change management strategies involving ICT
 - demystifying technology
 - understanding of the potential for integration
- Governance
 - limited experience of boards
 - limited knowledge of ICT best practice
 - Lack of knowledge of statutory requirements re running a meeting, legal responsibilities of members etc
- Tech support and project management support
 - Perhaps share an ICT professional
- IT Security, especially for areas like online donations.
- Databases/CRM systems – few designed for nonprofit organisations and once one is adopted it is very expensive to switch and/or upgrade. Underlines the issue that there needs to be more software products designed specifically for the needs of the sector.
- Documentation
 - especially as related to high levels of staff and volunteer turnover
- ICT savvy groups and individuals need to share their expertise
- Open source solutions need to be more widely adopted
- Potential for misuse of corporate involvement, including fear that a national approach would allow companies like MS to ‘take over’ the nonprofit sector
- Greater potential for service delivery online
- Govt and corporate involvement should not be a controlling process, but a supporting process
- Cost of supporting proprietary software, including compliance
- There are format sharing issues, including issues arising from policy makers insisting on particular formats.

What could a NNIC do for SA nonprofits?

Participants were then asked what a NNIC could provide for SA nonprofits that did not currently exist. They nominated:

- Advocacy to govt, including funding as a first priority
- Coordinating a voice for the nonprofit sector on ICT issues
- Coordinating advice services
- Information on trusted resources
- It needs to have a statement of purpose and do a few things well
 - Concentrate on what will produce best Return On Investment (ROI)

- Needs to be connected to it's constituency
- Centralised online resource - ideas, feedback, resource sharing – supporting local service provision as near as possible to recipients
- Assisting in strategic planning and perhaps providing a kit to help with this
 - Provide facilitators to assist groups through the planning process
- Need a plan to translate initiatives to the local level, including 'hands on' projects that act as case studies for the benefits of ICT in service delivery, cost efficiency etc
- Establish forums to utilise the broader knowledge of the community e.g. similar to TechSoup online discussions

What Structure and Functions should a NNIC take on?

Finally, participants were asked to consider the need for a NNIC and what it might look like. Prior to the discussion they were provided with brief outlines of some overseas models and a range of possibilities for the Australian context. Having reached consensus that there is a role for a NNIC-type entity, the group nominated the following characteristics as being essential:

- Central web site, online communities, local info, software and hardware reviews etc
- Look at the Natural Resource Management (NRM) model, which includes
 - strategic planning at national Board level
 - employment of local contractors to assist local groups with planning and effective utilisation of grants
- Another model worth exploring might be the Primary Principals Association model of a small national secretariat and a distributed responsibility model to each State.
- National accreditation of suppliers
- Need to have two related processes in developing a NNIC – firstly, a strong case has to be made for why it is necessary, with clear criteria for success and failure, and, secondly, funding the NNIC needs to be made politically attractive i.e. aligned with govt direction.
- There was general consensus that the NNIC should focus on strategies and policy at a national level (including the effective use of ICT), and the hands on work (including training and skills development) should be left to the local level, with strong links up and down.
- Some felt that an existing organisation was in a better position to pull it all together, rather than new entity
- Some concern was expressed that if the NNIC was govt funded and not member based it could lose touch with the grass roots.
- There could be some potential to market the Intellectual property (IP) developed by the NNIC as a source of funding.
- Overall there was feeling that the NNIC should be a small national body facilitating State/Territory-based offices and workers, with a strategy to deal with the current wide differences between States.
- The NNIC should facilitate networking between peers.
- The NNIC should not undermine existing services but include them in the broader plan.