



Australian Government

**Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations**

**ONLINE CURRICULUM RESOURCES
AND DIGITAL ARCHITECTURE INITIATIVE**

Funding Principles

August 2009



Table of contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction..... | 3 |
| 1.1 Purpose | 3 |
| 1.2 Policy context | 3 |
| 1.3 Outcomes | 3 |
| 1.4 Strategies | 4 |
| 1.5 Priority areas | 4 |
| Funding process..... | 5 |
| 2.1 Identification | 5 |
| 2.2 Assessment process | 5 |
| 2.3 Funding principles | 5 |
| 2.4 Additional requirements..... | 6 |
| Roles and responsibilities | 6 |
| 3.1 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations..... | 6 |
| 3.2 Internal delegations | 7 |
| Mandatory requirements | 7 |
| 4.1 Commonwealth Guidelines..... | 7 |
| 4.2 Information Management..... | 8 |
| 4.3 Privacy Act..... | 8 |
| 4.4 Departmental Chief Executive Instructions | 8 |
| 4.5 Amendments, Suspension and Termination..... | 9 |
| Project administration principles | 9 |
| 5.1 Evaluation and Monitoring framework..... | 9 |
| 5.2 Risk assessment framework..... | 10 |
| 5.3 Communications framework..... | 10 |
| Key references | 11 |

Introduction

1.1 Purpose

- 1.1.1 These funding principles support the implementation of the Online Curriculum Resources and Digital Architecture Initiative ('the Initiative') by providing a consistent and flexible framework for decisions on funding and administering projects and activities under the Initiative.

1.2 Policy context

- 1.2.1 The Initiative is an element of the Australian Government's \$2.2 billion Digital Education Revolution (DER). The Australian Government has committed \$32.6 million to the Initiative under the DER budget measure.
- 1.2.2 The aim of the DER is to support schools' access to and engagement in quality teaching and learning environments through the effective integration of digital teaching and learning infrastructure and resources.
- 1.2.3 The DER will provide mutual support for the outcomes of related areas of national reform, in particular the national curriculum and the national delivery of eLearning:
- i. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was established by the Australian Government in December 2008 to progress national curriculum, assessment and reporting agendas. ACARA is responsible for developing a national curriculum, from Kindergarten to Year 12, starting with the key learning areas of English, mathematics, the sciences and history, for implementation from 2011. Details are available on the ACARA website¹.
 - ii. New national arrangements for the delivery of eLearning that are being considered by Australian education senior officials.

1.3 Outcomes

- 1.3.1 In meeting the aims of the DER, projects and activities funded by the Initiative seek to achieve the following outcomes for digital teaching and learning in Australia:
- i. high-quality digital learning resources that can be readily discovered, accessed, used and shared by schools
 - ii. eLearning that is effectively integrated into national curriculum, assessment and reporting arrangements for schools
 - iii. a national, consistent approach to eLearning that enables collaboration between schools, systems and sectors
 - iv. schools' eLearning and ICT arrangements are sustainable and capable of capitalising on the educational value of emerging technologies.

¹ <http://www.acara.edu.au>

1.4 Strategies

- 1.4.1 To advance these outcomes, the following strategies will be employed. These include supporting:
- i. the development of high-quality digital learning resources that are aligned with the national curriculum
 - ii. the provision of digital learning resources that are affordable, useable and discoverable from digital repositories, from schools and academic institutions as well as from cultural and scientific organisations
 - iii. the development of national systems and interoperable digital architectures that enable schools users to discover, access and share collaborative education materials and information across ICT systems
 - iv. the development of policies, protocols, standards and infrastructure required to enable schools to safely and seamlessly communicate, collaborate and access and use digital learning resources across school, system and jurisdictional boundaries.
- 1.4.2 Where appropriate, confirmation of appropriate strategies will be sought from the following national entities:
- i. the Australian ICT in Education Committee (AICTEC)
 - ii. the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA)
 - iii. the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Senior Officials Committee (AEEYSOC).
- 1.4.3 The strategies will be implemented through high levels of collaboration and coordination across school jurisdictions and sectors.

1.5 Priority areas

- 1.5.1 The following areas are priorities for action and/or collaboration under the Initiative:
- i. digital learning, teaching and assessing
 - ii. digital resources management
 - iii. sustainable copyright arrangements
 - iv. interoperability of systems and data
 - v. identity and access management
 - vi. shared use of infrastructures.

Funding process

2.1 Identification

- 2.1.1 Funding opportunities may be identified through a number of means, such as:
- i. through national education entities (outlined in section 1.4.2)
 - ii. through a response to a Request for Quote, Request for Proposal, Request for Tender or Expression of Interest process
 - iii. a proposal initiated in conjunction with key stakeholders.
- 2.1.2 To be considered eligible, the proponent must be capable of entering into a funding agreement with the Australian Government. The organisation must have an Australian Business Number.
- 2.1.3 Proposals from consortia may be considered or sought. In this instance, the consortia must nominate a lead member that is authorised to deal on behalf of all members of the consortia. For the purposes of a funding application, all consortia members must clearly be identified and the identity of the lead member must be nominated. Consortia members may be required to execute statutory declarations stating that the lead member has the authority to bind other members.

2.2 Assessment process

- 2.2.1 The assessment of proposals will be performed by the Program Delegate², in conjunction with advice from other areas within DEEWR and/or external experts, where appropriate. This may be in the form of an internal assessment panel.
- 2.2.2 The Program Delegate will make a recommendation to the appropriate internal delegate for approval (as outlined in DEEWR's Schedule of Financial Delegations).

2.3 Funding principles

- 2.3.1 Funding will be awarded to projects and activities that best contribute to, or are supported by, a robust evidence base of existing arrangements for digital learning resources and architecture. Decisions on funding proposals will be informed by the following funding principles:
- i. the extent to which the proposal will advance the Initiative outcomes through the identified strategies and priority areas (as outlined in section 1.3, 1.4)
 - ii. the proposed project contributes to, or is supported by, a robust evidence base (as outlined in section 1.3)
 - iii. the proposed project supports a national approach to eLearning or is easily scalable to be of potential national benefit. The proposal must demonstrate support for an aspect of the broader national policy agenda (as outlined in section 1.2)

² The Program Delegate is the Director responsible for the online curriculum or digital architecture components of the DER, located in DEEWR's National Office in Canberra.

- iv. the extent to which the proposal enables collaboration across school, system or sector boundaries. Stakeholders have been consulted in the development of the proposal and the proposal must have support from a national policy entity³
 - v. the extent that the proposed project, wherever possible, builds on existing work and is interoperable and coordinated with existing digital learning resources and digital architecture
 - vi. the proposed project outlines an effective management and implementation strategy (including a risk management strategy) that ensures the project is cost-effective and complies with all relevant DEEWR and mandatory Government policies and procedures.
- 2.3.2 These funding principles do not preclude the development of specific funding criteria for a particular project or activity.
- 2.3.3 To avoid cost-shifting between different levels of government, applications will not be accepted for Australian Government funding of activities that are funded, have been recently funded or are expected to be funded by another level of government.

2.4 Additional requirements

- 2.4.1 Additional information that should be outlined in funding proposals includes:
- i. a full, itemised proposed budget, including anticipated costings for each item and estimated payment dates. Costs expended for travel must be detailed separately
 - ii. a detailed timeline, including all milestones and reporting dates
 - iii. a project description, deliverables and an outline of strategies for achieving each deliverable
 - iv. the proposed governance arrangements for the administration of the project. This must outline an appropriate level of representation from the DEEWR area responsible for online curriculum resources or digital architecture. An appropriate level of representation may include officers from policy and program areas
 - v. details of the results of stakeholder consultation undertaken in the development of the proposal.

Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

- 3.1.1 DEEWR is responsible for the overall management of the Initiative on behalf of the Commonwealth. DEEWR's responsibilities include:
- i. making decisions on funding proposals
 - ii. negotiating funding agreements
 - iii. overseeing, and reporting on the progress of, projects and activities funded under the Initiative, and the DER as a whole

³ This includes those entities outlined in section 1.4.2 (MCEECDYA, AEEYSOC, AICTEC, ACARA, ACACA) or other like entities.

- iv. advising the Minister on matters relating to the implementation of the Initiative, where appropriate, including where required under the Commonwealth Grant Guidelines.

3.2 Internal delegations

- 3.2.1 Decisions on the approval of funding proposals will be made in accordance with DEEWR's Schedule of Financial Delegations.
- 3.2.2 DEEWR's Program Delegate is responsible for supervision of projects and activities funded under the Initiative, including confirming that:
 - i. services have been received in accordance with a contract or funding agreement
 - ii. performance milestones specified in the funding agreement have been achieved
 - iii. advance payments have been approved in accordance with the funding agreement
 - iv. all mandatory corporate obligations have been fulfilled.
- 3.2.3 The Program Delegate is responsible for approving the payment of all project invoices.
- 3.2.4 Project officers will liaise with DEEWR's Legal, Investigations and Procurement Group when drafting, negotiating and administering funding agreements.

Mandatory requirements

4.1 Commonwealth Guidelines

- 4.1.1 Funding activities conducted under these principles must be in accordance with the *Commonwealth Grant Guidelines* (CGGs). Procurement activities conducted in accordance with these principles must be in accordance with the *Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines* (CPGs). Both the CGGs and the CPGs include requirements to assist in ensuring effective, efficient and ethical administration of Australian Government funding to approved recipients in accordance with the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*.
- 4.1.2 DEEWR officers involved in the administration of the Initiative funding are obliged to abide by provisions set out in the CGGs⁴ and CPGs⁵ (as applicable) and must be familiar with any requirements under the CGGs or CPGs.
- 4.1.3 Where activities conducted under these principles are procurements, DEEWR officers will also act in accordance with Government frameworks for *Ethics and Probity in Government Procurement*⁶.

⁴ The CGGs can be found at:

<http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/fmg-series/docs/FMG-23-Commonwealth-Grant-Guidelines-July-2009.pdf>

⁵ The CPGs can be found at:

<http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/fmg-series/procurement-guidelines/index.html>

⁶ Guidance on ethics and probity in Government procurement can be found at:

http://www.finance.gov.au/Publications/fmg-series/docs/Guidance_on_Ethics_Probity_11.01.05.pdf

4.2 Information Management

- 4.2.1 The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act) applies to documents in the possession of DEEWR, whether created in DEEWR or received in DEEWR. Accordingly all documents which are provided to DEEWR in relation to the Initiative are subject to the FOI Act.
- 4.2.2 Decisions regarding requests for access under the FOI Act will be made by an authorised decision-maker in accordance with the requirements of the FOI Act. To the extent required by the FOI Act, where documents captured by a request contain personal information or relate to the business, commercial or financial affairs of third parties, the Department will consult with individuals affected prior to making any decision on access to such documents.
- 4.2.3 All FOI requests received by DEEWR are to be referred immediately to the Freedom of Information Coordinator in the Legal and Investigations Group. Decisions regarding requests for access will be made by DEEWR's authorised FOI officers in accordance with the Act.
- 4.2.4 The administration of the Initiative will adhere to DEEWR's Recordkeeping Framework. All records will be properly managed to ensure information can be readily identified and retrieved when necessary.

4.3 Privacy Act

- 4.3.1 In administering the Initiative, DEEWR is bound by the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988* (the Privacy Act).
- 4.3.2 The Privacy Act requires all Commonwealth agencies to take contractual measures to ensure that private sector contractors, including subcontractors, do not breach the Information Privacy Principles set out in section 14 of the Privacy Act (section 95B).
- 4.3.3 DEEWR officers involved in the administration of the Initiative must abide by the Privacy Act when handling any personal information collected for the purposes of administering the Initiative⁷.

4.4 Departmental Chief Executive Instructions

- 4.4.1 The execution of all financial tasks in the administration of the Initiative is bound by the Chief Executive's Instructions.
- 4.4.2 Under the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* (the FMA Act), the Chief Executive of any Commonwealth agency is authorised to give instructions on any matters necessary or convenient in carrying out of the FMA Act, including spending public money and entering into contracts. DEEWR officers involved in the administration of the Initiative must be familiar with these instructions, as they compliment requirements outlined in the FMA Act.

⁷ The Act can be found at:

<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/ComLaw/Legislation/ActCompilation1.nsf/all/search/D3D9F2AE62E9E54ACA2575F50003FA61>

4.5 Amendments, Suspension and Termination

- 4.5.1 Notwithstanding any other provisions in this document, the administrators of the Initiative reserve the right to:
- i. terminate funding processes under the Initiative
 - ii. vary any information, requirement, term, process, time period, time or date set out in this document
 - iii. seek additional information or clarification from any proponent
 - iv. negotiate, suspend negotiations, or not negotiate with any proponent or
 - v. provide additional information or clarification to proponents.
- 4.5.2 Any clarification or amendments to information about the Initiative can be found at the DER website⁸.
- 4.5.3 It is the responsibility of proponents to check this website regularly for any amendments to information about the Initiative. The administrators of the Initiative do not undertake to inform any party when additional information is posted on this website.

Project administration principles

5.1 Evaluation and Monitoring framework

- 5.1.1 Funding agreement or services contract clauses should set out the individual reporting requirements for the project, and should be in line with guidance published by DEEWR's Legal, Investigations and Procurement Group. All funding agreements for projects and activities under the Initiative should require both progress and financial reports to be prepared by the contractor, as set out in DEEWR's legal guidance.
- 5.1.2 In order to ensure that evaluation and monitoring of the project is clear, DEEWR officers should ensure deliverables:
- i. are measurable
 - ii. accord with the desired outcomes and strategies⁹.
- Advice on effectively drafting and monitoring deliverables can be found in the Australian National Audit Office's Guide to Developing and Managing Contracts¹⁰.
- 5.1.3 Generally, an Expert Steering Committee will be established to advise on and monitor the implementation of the project or activity. Committee members may include officers from DEEWR or external experts and stakeholders. Steering Committees will be chaired by the Program Delegate¹¹. The Steering Committee will meet regularly and, as appropriate, may consider and advise on the scope of the project or activity, its progress or the quality of deliverables.

⁸ The website can be found at:

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/DigitalEducationRevolution/Pages/Onlinecurriculumresourcesanddigitalarchitecture.aspx>

⁹ As outlined in section 1.3; 1.4

¹⁰ http://www.anao.gov.au/uploads/documents/Developing_and_Managing_Contracts.pdf, see pages 28 – 34.

¹¹ See section 2.2.1

- 5.1.4 The funding agreement must outline the procedure for action, should the Program Delegate not be satisfied that all services are being or have been received and all performance milestones met, as specified in the funding agreement. If the Program Delegate is not satisfied at any stage in the project implementation, problems should be addressed promptly. In the first instance, informal remedial action will be taken. Further escalation measures will include:
- i. withholding payments until performance returns to an acceptable level
 - ii. involving senior management from both parties in formal discussions or written communications
 - iii. developing strategies to address the problem and formally documenting them, and tracking whether they are working in practice
 - iv. implementing other formal mechanisms included in the contract
 - v. formally ending the contract
 - vi. litigation¹².
- 5.1.5 At the conclusion of a project or activity, the following evaluation will be undertaken by administrators of the Initiative:
- i. an evaluation of the performance of the funded entity against the specified criteria set out in their funding agreement
 - ii. an evaluation of the purchasing process (if undertaken through BUYit).
- 5.1.6 Details of these requirements and associated procedures are contained in DEEWR's Procurement Manual.

5.2 Risk assessment framework

- 5.2.1 The risk management of each contract and the Initiative as a whole will be consistent with DEEWR's Risk Management policies and the applicable Risk Plans stored on DEEWR's online risk management system, Riskman. For 2009-10, these are:
- i. Digital Education Group Strategic Risk Assessment 2009-10¹³
 - ii. Development and implementation of the Online Curriculum Resources and Digital Architecture Initiative¹⁴.
- 5.2.2 These risk management plans are reviewed and updated when required.

5.3 Communications framework

- 5.3.1 Each organisation funded by DEEWR under this Initiative will develop a communication strategy that formalises communication arrangements between the contractor and DEEWR contacts responsible for the project or activity. The purpose of the communication strategy is to ensure consistency in dealings with the contractor from all staff and to enforce probity principles¹⁵.

¹² http://www.anao.gov.au/uploads/documents/Developing_and_Managing_Contracts.pdf

¹³ #2693 in RiskMan as at 4 August 2009

¹⁴ #2570 in RiskMan as at 4 August 2009

¹⁵ See section 4.1.3

5.3.2 All funding agreements under the Initiative should nominate a contact person within the contracting organisation and a project officer in DEEWR. A list of DEEWR contact officers should include the Program Delegate (as outlined in section 3.2.2). In accordance with the project communication strategy, officers in contact with the contracting organisation should ensure relevant communication with the proponent is circulated to appropriate DEEWR officers.

Key references

- i. Australian National Audit Office (2007), *Better Practice Guide to Developing and Managing Contracts*. Available at http://www.anao.gov.au/uploads/documents/Developing_and_Managing_Contracts.pdf
- ii. Department of Finance and Deregulation (2009), *Commonwealth Grant Guidelines*. Available at <http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/fmg-series/23-commonwealth-grant-guidelines.html>
- iii. Department of Finance and Deregulation (2008), *Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines*. Available at <http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/fmg-series/procurement-guidelines/index.html>.