

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AND GENERAL COMMENT

CONNECTIONS AND YOUTH PATHWAYS NATIONAL NETWORK MEETINGS

RE NEW YOUTH ATTAINMENT AND TRANSITIONS PROGRAMS FROM 2010

A: Discussion regarding Youth Connections at the *Connections* National Network Meeting:

Please note that this advice relates to the *Connections* National Network meeting on 22-23 June 2009 and reflects information that was available and current at that time and which may have altered since. For probity reasons this information will be posted on the Department's website in the 'frequently asked questions' section. Where questions and answers from the meeting relate to existing questions and answers on the website, a reference has been provided.

The latest information about Youth Connections can be found at the following link:

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/>

Q. Is there any more information about the regions?

A. A tailored page for each State and Territory will be added to the website as regions are finalised. The aim is to release information on the regions well before the Request for Tender (RFT), so that potential providers can start conversations with potential partners within their region.

Please refer to the website for the latest information about regions. Frequently Asked Questions 1.2.1 & 3.0.1 also contain answers relating to regions.

Q. Will the programs eventually be handed over to DEEWR State offices or to State Governments?

A. Under the new National Partnership it is envisaged that State/Territory Governments will eventually take over the program, although it will be run federally initially and won't be handed over until State/Territory Governments achieve required reforms and have demonstrated they can meet required outcomes. Initial contracts will be with the Australian Government. States/Territories will need to provide evidence of reform. The National Partnership has an "additionality" clause which covers what the money is used for. As the funding is ongoing, the "additionality" clause will also be ongoing.

Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions for the latest information 2.3.1

Q. What happens if State Governments take the Youth Connections money and use it for something else?

A. DEEWR is involving States/Territories from the beginning. If States/Territories have involvement in development they are likely to have ownership of the program which lessens the likelihood of programs being dropped.

Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions for the latest information 4.3.5 & 4.7.1

Q. Will the program be the same across Australia?

A. The program may look different in each State and Territory. The variables are around the age range, regions and working with students at school.

The State/Territory Governments are responsible for working with schools, so they take responsibility for all students in the school age range.

In some States/Territories the money might be directed at school age and in others it may be redirected to 20-24 year olds already out of school.

Q. Will Youth Connections be affected by FLO in SA?

A. Yes, as it is a program which services some of the young people in the cohort that Youth Connections is targeting, but we cannot say how at this stage, it is still under negotiation.

Note: The RFT will shortly be available and will have a schedule for State and Territory specific information.

Q. Will State Governments be involved in the selection of successful tenders?

A. Although the initial contract will be with DEEWR, States and Territories will be involved with tender assessment, provider selection and monitoring of contracted providers. The reporting will be to DEEWR whilst the contract is with DEEWR.

Note: This will vary from State to State. Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions for the latest information 4.4.2 & 4.6.3

Q. With State/Territory involvement in the design of the programs, and therefore having ownership, is there not conflict of interest in them being able to tender at various State/Territory Government levels for the delivery of the services, and also in the assessment of tenders?

A. Not answered at this forum. This question and response will be posted on the website.

Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions for the latest information 4.3.8, 4.4.1 & 4.4.2

Q. Can only one organisation tender to create a partnership or can a few put in separate submissions for partial delivery within a region?

A. Not answered at forum. This question and response will be posted on the website.

Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions for the latest information 1.1.2, 3.0.14, 3.0.15, 3.0.16

Q. Concerns were registered regarding how State Governments will use the 'bonus money' they receive for lifting education outcomes. They may not use this for the current "Connections" cohort and therefore that cohort will be worse off under Youth Connections. They may find it easier to reach the year 12 attainment targets by servicing those who are only just at risk.

A. In order to receive the money States/Territories will have a target under the National Partnership. If they reach that target they can use that money for any education. Similarly for Year 12 attainment the reward funding can be spent for any educational purpose.

See Q3 on page 1

Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions for the latest information 1.1.7 & 4.3.5

Q. If a young person started a Year 10 certificate with a Connections provider but the new Youth Connections provider did not offer Year 10? Would the new Youth Connections provider have to offer the same courses as the previous local Connections provider?

A. There is no guarantee that the new provider in that area will be offering the same range of courses or assistance, however the Department is working closely with existing providers to put in place transition strategies for young people, as well as an overarching wind-up strategy for providers.

Q. If a young person completed a Cert II under Youth Connections, they would be counted as achieving Year 12 equivalent, but in reality may have only reached year 10.

A. Currently COAG has agreed that a Certificate II is equivalent to Year 12.

Q. Will the new program have State and National Networks?

A. Yes. DEEWR will want those Networks to be strategic, particularly from an advocacy perspective. There will be one Youth Connections National Network which will work through continuous improvement and evaluative cycles.

Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions for the latest information 4.0.1 & 4.0.2

Q. It was reported that as a result of the QLD and NSW information forums in particular, smaller providers went away quite 'fearful' that there might not be a place for them in the new programs. Smaller providers have a perception that they may not be able to cope with the larger geographical distances and multiple service locations required. They don't have as much experience in partnering. Their partnership arrangements may be more likely to be informal rather than written.

A. To deliver the new services providers may have to partner. This could involve a change of thinking.

Note: This will be discussed in greater detail at the public information sessions.

Q. Will Career Advice Australia still be the overarching brand for the new programs?

A. There may be an overarching brand for the new programs but it is unlikely it will be CAA.

Q. Re the age range for Youth Connections

NB not answered at this forum.

A. Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions for the latest information 1.1.4.

Additional Provider Comments

The *Connections* National Network noted in relation to the new program;

Provider members felt there was a potential conflict of interest between schools and providers;

(i) MIPS dollars in Victoria – concern about how this is currently used, could this be extended to new program?

(ii) The Network agreed that the forums had been informative and useful.

B: Discussion regarding Youth Connections at the Youth Pathways National Network Meeting

Please note that this advice relates to the Youth Pathways National Network meeting on 25-26 June 2009 and reflects information that was available and current at that time and which may have altered since. For probity reasons this information will be posted on the Department's website in the 'frequently asked questions' section. Where questions and answers from the meeting relate to existing questions and answers on the website, a reference has been provided. The latest information about Youth Connections can be found at the following link:
<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/>

Q. Will existing performance from providers will be taken into consideration on their application for a tender?

A. Provider performance will be required to be demonstrated in the Tender response.

Q. Will information about regional boundaries be released prior to the tender documentation?

A. It is more likely that this information will be released as part of the RFT.

Note: Since this meeting Youth Connections regions for some States have been loaded onto the website. Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions for the latest information 1.2.1 & 3.0.1

Q. Can DEEWR clarify the notion of collaborative partnerships for the tender as there appear to be different understandings about what was suggested at the Provider information sessions.

A. No provider currently runs all four programs which will be rolled into Youth Connections; Youth Pathways, Connections, Mentor Marketplace and YouthLinx. It will be up to Providers to determine what partnerships can be formed to put in a Tender bid.

Q. Is Youth Connections going to be outcome funded? If so, can the National Network provide input into what outcomes might work and avoid 'cherry picking'?

A. Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions for the latest information 1.1.7

DEEWR comments

... Under a National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions, States and Territories will have increased responsibility.

Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions for the latest information 1.4.1 & 2.3.1

... There will be a questions and answers section on the website and this will continue to be updated.

... Providers can ask questions directly to this website and any questions raised via meeting minutes will also be fed through the Taskforce and they will be formally answered on the website for all to see.

... There will be reward payments for states/territories linked to outcomes to support attainment of National Partnership targets.

... In 2010 we will see a new IT system for all providers.

Additional Provider Comments

The Youth Pathways National Network noted;

- ... Some providers are concerned that the state/territory education departments could potentially keep money and deliver the program themselves (not subcontract).

- ... Providers worried that consistency is not good currently as a national program and this will become a lot messier at a state level. On the other hand, by being at state level it will allow for a flexible program that meets the specific needs of the state.

- ... Providers raised their concerns about the credibility of the program in the long term once it becomes state/territory funded.

- ... Discussions as to whether a national network will still have a role to play once it becomes a state program. DEEWR feels that the national network still has an important part to play in tracking how the provision of service is achieving broader goals of retention and year 12 achievement – therefore playing less operational roles and more strategic. General feeling was that the national network would be more important than before.