

Enhancing career development: The role of community-based career guidance for disengaged adults – Support document

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Literature Review/Issues Paper

Introduction

Box 1: The Current State of Play

- Career guidance benefits individuals, society and governments.
- The provision of career guidance services is increasingly being viewed as a component of policies related to lifelong learning, the labour market and social equity.
 - Demand for lifelong guidance provision has seen a shift away from the traditional client groups of school leavers and the unemployed.
 - There is increasing demand for career guidance services across the lifespan.
 - Career guidance services are moving away from supply driven approaches toward demand driven approaches.
 - Career guidance needs to redefine itself in order to maintain relevance in the knowledge economy.
 - Quality standards (primarily related to the training and qualifications of career practitioners) have received much attention in recent reviews of career guidance.
 - Cross-sectoral, collaborative approaches to the development of quality standards work best.¹

The OECD Review of Policies for Information, Guidance and Counselling Services has put the spotlight on the issues of career and life-planning in the 21st century. Its *raison d'être*:

Careers guidance can play a role in fostering efficient allocation of human resources, reducing labour market failure, shortening terms of unemployment, supporting mobility...

Guidance may serve as societal lubricant in easing the frictions in the labour market, in the educational system and between the two.²

The Community-based Careers Guidance research project takes the comprehensive OECD study as its starting point and builds on the growing consensus about the importance of lifelong careers guidance in the knowledge economy. It recognises that the OECD review of Australia has already generated considerable activity both in terms of research and policy initiatives and therefore concentrates particularly on those adults least catered for in the current system.

The project aims to take the issue of the disengaged one step further by testing an existing model being developed in the adult and community education (ACE) sector in Victoria against research findings and other programs already being piloted or in operation. Its goal is to encourage the development of a culture of careers advice and guidance in Australia, one which will ensure that those least engaged in the labour market and education system are not excluded from guidance which will help them be more productive members of their community.

The current interest in careers guidance has been prompted by the profound changes in the nature of work most countries are now facing and concern that careers advice and learning guidance is rarely available to those who need it most—people not working in the mainstream and the disengaged learner. Young people who have not completed school, the long-term

1 McMahan, Mary, Shaping a career development culture: Quality standards, quality practice, quality outcomes , p 8
<http://www.careers.qut.edu.au/nfcp/> accessed 19/08/04

2 Plant, Peter, Quality in Careers Guidance, OECD, November 2001, p 15 and p 20. See also Hughes, Deirdre, M, Investing in Career: Prosperity for Citizens, Windfalls for Government, The Guidance Council, May 2004, www.guidancecouncil.com (accessed 19 August)

unemployed, women returning to work and casual low-skilled workers face the prospect of training with trepidation. Their aspiration is for a job, rarely a career—a term usually associated with middle-class professionals. Their previous experiences have often been negative and the notion of planning ahead alien.

Moreover, careers guidance is usually beyond their reach—a careers counsellor is not someone they often encounter in the services they do use; private counselling is too expensive and computer-based programs can be daunting, because these people do not have sophisticated IT skills and/or because they are not equipped with the answers the computer demands.

As the OECD review of Australia noted:

the extensive and at times seemingly exclusive focus on initial transitions to full-time work is not adequate in a world of work in which there is increasing and pervasive change. Some 70 percent of the Australians who will form the workforce in ten years' time are already in the workforce now; yet some of the occupations that will comprise this workforce do not yet exist, and others will have changed beyond recognition.³

The Australian Blueprint for Career Development took up this point, noting that those adults who have had access to careers guidance are most likely to be attached to tertiary education institutions, employment placement service providers, rehabilitation service providers, recruitment and outplacement specialists as well as career coaches and counsellors. In the changing world of work, this is no longer enough. More effort is required to help those adults who entered the workforce expecting to be in the same job all their working lives to adjust to the prospects of many changes in their career paths and the need to keep learning new skills and knowledge, whatever their place in the workplace hierarchy.⁴

However, as Mary McMahon sets out in her recent paper, *Shaping a career development culture*, this idea of lifelong need for career services has not taken sufficient hold, with most career guidance still focused on assisting young people's transitions from school to work and on adults registered as unemployed.⁵

Definitions

In today's changing world of work, careers are no longer (if they ever were) an ever-upward ladder of achievement in a given employment situation. Instead they are a part of a life journey with many twists and turns. Here is a current definition:

Career no longer refers to particular pathways through work or to an occupational title. Career is the sequence and variety of work roles (paid and unpaid), which one undertakes throughout a lifetime. More broadly, 'career' includes life roles, leisure activities, learning and work.⁶

Such a nuanced definition comes from within profession. But has it been absorbed by the ordinary worker, let alone the unemployed person, the prisoner, the housewife/husband? Would such people consider themselves eligible for careers guidance, defined as follows:

Careers guidance is the overarching term used to describe a comprehensive program that helps people to move—from a general understanding of the world of work and adult roles, to a specific understanding of the realistic options open to them. Whether delivered

3 OECD, *Review of Career Guidance Policies in Australia*, 2002, p 19

4 Miles Morgan, *The Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, 2003, pp 98-99

5 McMahon (2004) p 5

6 Blueprint, p 14

individually or in groups, or via hard copy or the electronic media, appropriately qualified staff provides career guidance with training in career guidance and counselling.⁷

This study sees guidance as a three-tiered service, providing information, advice and counselling, in a progression of increasing interaction with the individual concerned, in other words as a set of career development services, which will enable the individual to make decisions about their life, learning, and work in self-directed ways.⁸

The Policy Environment

Providing career development learning opportunities for people of all ages and in many varied settings across the nation is a particular challenge in a federal state. As Lynne Bezanson and Ralph Kellett (Canadian Career Development Foundation) have noted:

collaborative interactions of many players or stakeholders are necessary to create a coherent career information and guidance service delivery system. These interactions need to occur at the national, regional and local levels.⁹

The demand for an integrated approach is even more critical if it is to cater to working adults as well as young people just embarking on their tertiary studies or joining the workforce:

As people are expected to move in and out of learning and work, career information and guidance services need to be accessible at the points of movement over the life span. This suggests a requirement for more collaboration and policy continuity across large jurisdictions with responsibility for education, employment, lifelong learning and workforce development. Coherence and transparency will only be achieved when there is movement toward the implementation of fully integrated services at the local level.¹⁰

There is broad acceptance that the provision of careers guidance is a responsibility to be shared between the state, the individual, employers, education providers and social service agencies. Governments are acknowledging their role as leaders in setting policy frameworks and in providing all citizens with a certain level of access. At the same time, it is clear that that face-to-face guidance is an expensive service and one for which a sustainable funding model must be found.

In terms of the disengaged, as the OECD Review found there is potential to look beyond established players:

for many people who have been failed by the formal education and training system, adult and community education is a key access point for them to return to learning. In Victoria some preliminary steps are being taken to set up career libraries within ACE centres and to provide short training for staff to develop their potential guidance role. We suggest that development along these lines should be strongly encouraged.¹¹

It is the local, community level upon which this study will focus, recognising, however, that programs at the grassroots level can only be sustained within a framework of national leadership.

7 Miles Morgan, *Career Services in Australia—Supporting People’s Transitions Across the Lifespan*, 2002, p 15

8 Lorey, Barbara, *Lifecycling: The career journey throughout the lifespan*, Report on visit to England and Canada, 2000, p 9

9 Bezanson, Lynne and Kellett, Ralph, (Canadian Career Development Foundation) *Integrating Career Information and Guidance Services at a Local Level*, OECD November 2001, p 10

10 *ibid.*, p. 36

11 OECD Review of Career Guidance Policies in Australia (2002), p 21

Establishing a Model for Guidance at the Community Level

Two elements of the OECD review of particular relevance to this research are the need for policies which support local integration of services, using appropriate instruments for this purpose¹² and for more integration between services in the education sector and services in the employment sector. Support is needed where people learn, live and work and must be relevant to their community context.¹³

Extensive work in Australia on the *Australian Blueprint for Career Development* and more recently on standards for the profession emphasise the need for national coherence. Replication of models and systems in different states and the translation of national principles into local action will be issues considered in the project.

The Crossroads Model

These principles of local responses to issues, and of strong collaboration within a community, underpin the approach taken by the Victorian government funded project led by Morrison House (an ACE provider and RTO), *Crossroads: Careers Guidance in ACE for Victoria*. and conducted in several ACE clusters in the state. The ACE Career Guidance Cluster was set up in 2000. A member of each provider in the cluster of eight undertook the Graduate Certificate of Careers Counselling through RMIT University. Between 2001 and 2004 the cluster, now consisting of six providers, has offered a range of services to the local communities in which they operate such as open access to a small careers resource centre, careers workshops for the community, careers and life planning classes for certificate of general education for adults (CGEA) and vocational education and training (VET) students and/or one-to-one careers guidance for students and the local community.

In 2003 workshops throughout Victoria introduced a further 100 providers to the concept of careers guidance in the ACE sector. Several regional and rural ACE clusters have set up careers centres in their providers and five more people from ACE organisations have undergone careers guidance training through RMIT.

The cluster project is designed to develop a sustainable careers component in adult and community education (ACE) provision that will enhance community learning and vocational pathways and will inform program planning in ACE. The project is also striving to develop a strong career and life planning ethos to support lifelong learning through ACE. Its key facets include a website on ACE career guidance and life planning¹⁴; a manual for careers provision; and liaison with organisations at local, regional, Victorian, Australian and international levels. (This project represents one facet of that liaison.)

The Victorian *Crossroads* project places considerable emphasis on the individual as an active agent, aiming to equip each client with the skills to make their own decisions and to be able to carry these out. The assistance extended will depend on levels of skill (ability to use websites), self-esteem, learning styles and life circumstances such as family obligations and peer relationships.

12 Sweet, Richard, 'Career information, guidance and counselling services: policy perspectives', *Australian Journal of Career Development*, Winter 2001, Vol 10 (2) pp11-14

13 Bezanson and Kellett (2001) p 6

14 See <http://www.morrisonhouse.org/crossroads>

In the second phase of this research, it is intended to test the Crossroads model to see how it might be replicated to assist in addressing some of the issues identified in the 2002 Miles Morgan study as problem areas in Australia's career guidance offerings:

- ✧ greater collaboration between all levels of government
- ✧ agreed standards for career service providers working in varied settings
- ✧ strengthened community partnerships
- ✧ development of performance measures.¹⁵

It will do so cognisant of the fact that the ACE sector varies considerably across the nation and that in some states the model will need to be modified to fit local circumstances. Moreover, as is often noted in the literature, the role of an educational provider in career guidance services can raise issues of impartiality. The Crossroads project has addressed these in several communities by locating its service in the local library. More investigation is required into the most suitable neutral brokers in local communities.

Experience in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States informed the development of the Crossroads project as did the premise that learning is a crucial aspect in finding a suitable career and retaining it. The nexus between training and work is well-understood; however, the role of less formal learning is undervalued, as are the important issues of learning styles and barriers, which will often influence a successful outcome from training. Knowing more about these matters before learning options are selected can reduce drop-out rates both in training and in work.

Box 2: Growing Guidance in the Community

A UK project has tested the efficacy of placing independent brokers, known as community learning advisors, in areas of disadvantage. (N.B. The term 'community learning adviser' was not well understood). An important part of the brokerage role was to encourage local learning providers to find ways of offering a series of small steps to individuals to assist in their re-engagement. But it was found that while it is often possible to provide information, advice and guidance (IAG) and even 'first step' or 'taster' learning provision in community settings, progression will inevitably require individuals to move to mainstream provision at some stage. Barriers to this include: poor or expensive transport; poor or expensive child-care provision; lack of free or subsidised learning provision; lack of confidence and motivation, and the time needed to overcome these.

The dual role of the CLA in facilitating access to IAG services, and to appropriate learning opportunities, was seen as crucial in helping individuals to move on. However, there were issues to be dealt with:

- CLAs needed an in-depth knowledge of all local learning providers in order to maintain impartiality. This was a particular issue for CLAs managed by learning providers, who were fully aware of the provision made by the managing organisation, and had good contacts within it, but were not so familiar with the activities and potential of other providers.
- An equitable and impartial system for giving feedback to all local learning providers, not only to the managing organisations, was essential if the interests of the client were to be central.
- It was difficult to find sources of funding to develop suitable "next step" provision for the target groups.¹⁶

15 Miles Morgan, *Career Services in Australia*, p 8

16 Haughton, Lesley and Watts, Anthony, *Growing Guidance in the Community* --based on an evaluation of the first year of the Kent and Medway Information, Advice and Guidance Partnership. www.crac.org.uk accessed 11 August 2004

Learning Audit Tools

A second aspect of this research project will be the extent to which some kind of learning audit tool might assist those working with the disengaged to identify learning needs, barriers and preferences. This will take into account the findings of an Adult Learning Australia feasibility study¹⁷ which suggested there is wider scope for using such a tool within welfare agencies and the Job Network (i.e. on the front line). It will also consider work undertaken in the United Kingdom.

Box 3: A United Kingdom: Identifying Problems with Basic Skills

Many information, advice and guidance (IAG) workers - who are rarely basic skills specialists - are interested in tools which would help adult clients to think about whether their basic skills might affect learning or work options. IAG workers are beginning to explore whether and how they could help adults by using Fast-Track¹⁵, a tool developed by the Basic Skills Agency (BSA). Fast-Track is a screening test that takes 10 minutes to administer, can be used in 1:1 interviews and offers a conventional oral or written assessment model of an assessment based on focussed questioning. It can be used by the Careers Service, community outreach projects, probation officers, voluntary organisations and others. There are three versions of Fast-Track; an oral test, a written test, and a questionnaire. The Guidance Council is helping IAG organisations explore and evaluate these tools, in particular the questionnaire. And IAG workers are debating whether this screening model is right for them. Some would prefer to start from a different angle: help the client explore what she/he wants to change / achieve in her learning and work life, then think about whether strengthening her literacy/ numeracy skills will contribute to that.¹⁸

There is, however, still much work to be done to devise a tool which is appropriate, and to find a manageable way for it to be incorporated into current arrangements. Understanding more about adult learning principles could also be of assistance to careers guidance professionals and the tool could benefit from careers guidance practice and standards. The project aims to make recommendations about such a tool, after further consultation with stakeholders.

The research will also examine other services being offered with a view to seeing how these might improve or complement the Crossroads model. These might include:

- ✧ The Australian Blueprint pilot projects¹⁹
- ✧ Centrelink Career Information Centres
- ✧ Western Australian Government's *Profit from Experience*
- ✧ TAFE programs
- ✧ Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service Career Counselling Program
- ✧ INCOLINK services for construction workers
- ✧ Queensland State Government—*Back to Work* – IT training particularly in regional/remote; *Experience Pays* wage subsidy program and *Mature Age Entry Program* –in 13 TAFES with courses designed consistent with labour market and industry connections

17 Cross, John and Brennan, Barrie, *Working with Experience*, ALA, 2003

18 <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/LearningInfrastructureScreening> See also www.guidancecouncil.com. It is important to add a note of caution when devising such tools to be used with the disengaged. If these are seen by the client who feels disadvantaged in the job market, such as mature-aged job seekers, or who has had a history of failure within the system, or simply lacks confidence, as a test or an assessment may not harvest the right results, that is the constructive involvement of the client in identifying pathways and making decisions about how to proceed. (Correspondence from Barrie Brennan, 23 August, 2004)

19 See Appendix A for the essence of the *Blueprint*.

Target Groups

The primary concern of this research is to investigate how groups who are disengaged from the labour market and education systems can still get access to careers guidance, or perhaps better phrased, life/work planning skills. It will also examine the services offered to some groups already being offered assistance, with a view to making recommendations about how advice to these people, who are often resistant to learning and without 'career' ambitions, might be better tailored to achieve long-term successes. It will also consult these groups (under consideration are older people; women in transition; prisoners; people with poor language, literacy and numeracy)—using a focus group methodology.

There will not be a specific focus on Indigenous and youth at risk or people with disabilities although given that disengaged people often experience a multiplicity of barriers, the research is likely to touch upon these groups. The project will also liaise with other research being undertaken through NCVET.

It is clear that a 'one-size fits all' model is not appropriate and that taking into account personal circumstances is an essential element when dealing with these groups. Nevertheless, it is hoped the information gleaned from focus groups will be able to inform some general as well as specific conclusions.

Older Workers

Box 4: Older Workers in Paid Work

*Employment rates peak at 35-44 years for men and at 20-24 years for women.

*For persons aged 55+ they were a lot lower: 67.4% of men aged 55 to 59 were in paid work, compared with 86.6% of men aged 35 to 44 and 83.8% of those 45-54

*The rate for men 60-64 is half that for the prime age group.

*For women, 49.0% of women aged 55-59 were in paid employment in 2001, lagging well behind 45 to 54-year-olds, among whom 67.3% were in paid work.

Most people aged 45+ who are not in paid work are not actively seeking work. This phenomenon has been described as 'early exit' rather than 'early retirement', as the latter implies a voluntarily chosen state.²⁰

A great deal of research is underway examining the needs of mature-age workers, particularly those having difficulty remaining in or returning to the workforce. This project aims to focus on those who are not attuned to the possibility of receiving careers guidance as well as on programs tailored to assist mature workers. These groups need to be further broken down, given differences for men and women, between skills sets and so on.

For older men, for example, a 2000 study found unequivocally that:

a deficiency in labour demand [w]as the prime explanation for declining participation rates over time among older men. Reviewed as a whole, the evidence suggests that problems for older workers mainly arise if they are displaced from work. Where that occurs, the chances of their regaining work are considerably less for those who are younger. For many, displacement leads to prolonged periods of unemployment and exit from the labour force as they become disillusioned about the prospects of ever finding work. The threshold at which this age effect operates appears to be when people enter the latter half of their forties. Employers' (age-related) hiring preferences appear to be a major factor in explaining the outcomes observed.²¹

20 Cully, Mark, Older Workers, in Bowman, K (ed), *Equity in vocational education and training: Research readings*, NCVET, 2004

21 *ibid*, p 6

This has meant that most energy is directed at assisting the long-term unemployed. The further development on this aspect of the problem will be explored during this project. In addition to learning barriers to getting the requisite skills, older adults may lack confidence in attaining career satisfaction, especially should this mean changing careers, because of fear of financial loss, failure, etc.²²

Barry Golding's work on rural men's learning shows that most men express a clear preference for learning in less formal, practical, group setting, as well as wanting that learning delivered in familiar settings, usually within their own organisations (albeit not necessarily the workplace).²³ This raises questions about common practices of referring older unemployed people to structured, classroom-based retraining.

It is important also to consider the level and type of training provided to people in jobs, to ensure they are able to remain in employment—in the same position or in a new one, better geared to their circumstances in mature life.²⁴ This points to the need to engage employers in careers guidance as an element in their human resource development strategies as well as to the broader issue of encouraging positive attitudes about older people and their contribution to society.

There is some successful work being undertaken by the Western Australian government in assisting older workers to find employment (cf *Profit from Experience*). Given that the structure of community education is very different in Western Australia—and more formally integrated into the TAFE system—the project will investigate how lessons learned from both models might inform a more nationally applicable community careers/learning guidance model.

Women in Transition

Box 5: Broadening Horizons

In August 2003, 62.3% of women aged 15 to 64 years were in the labour force. In 2001, of those women not in the labour force, 57.2 % were engaged in home duties or caring for children, and another 14.7 % were undertaking some form of education. Among women with children under 15, those who were lone parents were less likely to be in the labour force than those in couple families (49 % compared to 61 % in June 2000). 72% of women are employed part-time. Australia has a highly gender segmented workforce.

In 2003, women comprised just over 13% of mining and construction workers, but 78% in health and community services, and 67 % in education. Similarly, women made up 26% of managers and administrators, and 10% of workers in trades and related areas, but 88% of advanced clerical and service workers. Women were also less likely than men to run their own unincorporated business (with or without employees).²⁵

Given that adult and community education (ACE) acts as an important enabler for women re-entering training, returning to work, developing new skills and pursuing leisure interests, this group will represent an important target group in the project. The project will consider both those women who are part of the system because they receive benefits—very often single supporting mothers—as well as those beyond the system. It is with this group that the role of the

22 Kerka, Sandra, *Career Exploration by Adults Practice Application Brief* no 14, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education, 2001

23 Golding, Barry, *Men's learning in small rural towns*, paper for Australian Learning Communities Network Conference, 2004, p 4

24 Cully (Bowman, 2004) notes that while older workers were less likely to report that the most recent training course had helped them to obtain a promotion or pay rise, they were more likely to be employed at the time of the survey. This suggests that this type of training (mostly employer provided) does give older workers some employment protection insurance. For those who were not employed while undertaking an external course, the age effect was much more pronounced, with the returns to training quite modest: just 12.6% reported that the course had helped them to obtain a job, p 17. Katrina Ball, *The training needs of older workers*, NCVET, 2000, notes that older people are interested in tactical training for specific skills rather than qualifications. p 7

25 www.women.gov.au (accessed 10 August 04)

less formal learning environment and community-based careers guidance will be tested. Another important aspect to explore are the ways in which pathways linking ACE and VET provision can be better developed and promoted to maximise opportunities for women.²⁶

The high instance of casual work available to women, particularly those in transition, provides scope to consider how learning/careers guidance can be offered to people without a single, permanent job—an increasingly prominent part of the job landscape. It also highlights the complex web of social and cultural influences on an individual's choice of work and life paths. Recognising and understanding these could help practitioners identify resources and methods to offset the barriers to career exploration.

Access to support services, such as childcare, is vital to support women's participation. Furthermore, women are more likely than men to experience difficulties paying for training to assist them in entering the workforce. This points to the need, already highlighted in the research, to include financial planning in careers development services.

Adults with Poor Literacy Skills

Box 6: Literacy: a Hidden Problem

Some 45% of Australians do not have adequate literacy and numeracy skills to operate effectively in the knowledge society. Those more likely to have the lowest level of skills:

- *are older (over 60% of 55 to 64-year-olds and three-quarters of 65 to 74-year-olds compared with around 36% of 20 to 24-year-olds)
- *are older women (c.70% of women aged 55 to 64 and 80% aged 65 to 74)
- *are 15 to 19-year-olds rather than people aged 20 to 44, particularly in the area of quantitative skills
- *left school early (c. 70%, compared with c. 35% who completed the highest level of secondary school)
- *are not in the labour force (two-thirds compared with c. 37% of those who are employed and c. 60% of the unemployed)
- * have a first language other than English and/or are Indigenous
- * live in New South Wales which has the largest proportion at level 1 on each literacy scale (22% compared with a national average of 19.5%). This is explained in part by the large proportion of people whose first language is not English
- * live outside capital cities
- * work in construction, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, manufacturing, and electricity, gas and water supply industries.²⁷

The changing nature of work makes the lack of literacy skills an increasing liability and a significant hindrance in progressing in or changing careers. Given the stigma often attaching to adult illiteracy, it has been found that community-based approaches are more effective in assisting people to tackle their literacy problems. These are able to address individual problems of self-esteem etc. and to accommodate a person's learning pace.

Attention is being paid within those industries where illiteracy is a particular problem, for example in the construction industry. It is possible that a closer association with careers guidance may encourage more people to return to learning.

26 Dickie, Mary and FitzGerald, Ingrid, *Choice, participation, outcomes Women in VET*, (Bowman 2004)

27 Sue Kilpatrick and Pat Millar, *People with poor language, literacy and numeracy skills A hidden equity group? Equity in vocational education and training: Research readings*, NCVET, 2003

The Victorian *Crossroads* project works in several locations, including areas heavily populated by women from non-English speaking backgrounds who may be literate in their language of origin but not yet competent in English. This will be one area in which we will conduct focus groups.

Professional Development for Career Guidance Practitioners

In most countries there is no mutual recognition of guidance qualifications between the education and labour market sectors, and no facility for progression from non-expert to expert guidance worker status. The development of progression paths might lead to more consistency in the services clients receive, and assist the development of more seamless guidance provision for clients within and across the education, training and employment sectors.²⁸

Addressing the lack of professional development in careers guidance is at the heart of the Crossroads project which saw six ACE practitioners gain a graduate certificate in careers

guidance from RMIT.²⁹ As has been suggested above, there is a need also to include other actors in the careers guidance loop: teachers, employers, social workers, employment brokers.

While much work is underway in discussing standards within the careers counselling profession³⁰ there appears to be scope to do a great deal more in raising awareness about careers information, advice and guidance, and about appropriate learning approaches across a broad spectrum. One tool which has been used in such circumstances is the questionnaire or structured conversation designed to alert people to their client's personal problems or achievements; their aspirations; learning styles and barriers and on. The ALA feasibility study mentioned above called this an Individual Learning Audit Process (ILAP).

There remains the question of how to reach those who are not within the system and do not identify themselves as clients of careers guidance professionals. Here, it would seem appropriate that greater effort be made to market the importance of careers/learning plans to intermediaries (parents, librarians, community leaders, learning champions) and to ensure that such people are aware of the range of information available. It may also be possible to introduce levels of training, for example, in how to access information and the use of ICT, to selected groups.³¹

Interaction between the profession and others who can be linked into a career development culture will be crucial. This is beginning through the current Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) initiative which will begin with a national forum for career practitioners and be followed by consultations across the country.³²

As is discussed in the OECD publication, *Career Guidance: New Ways Forward*, guidance can help assess learning needs and interests and put people in contact with learning providers so they can enrol in appropriate programs. Moreover, feedback from career guidance practitioners can encourage providers to meet needs of learners/potential learners by changing opening hours, modifying methods, offering new types of courses. Overall, this collaboration could increase

28 McCarthy, John, *The Skills, Training and Qualifications of Guidance Workers*. Nov 2001, p2

29 Lorey, Barbara, *At the Crossroads* (draft), *Guidelines for Developing Career Guidance and Pathways Planning Services in Adult Community Education (ACE) Providers in Victoria*, July 2004. Other ACE employees are currently studying for the graduate certificate.

30 McMahan, (2004)

31 McCarthy, p 15, p, 17

32 See <http://careers.qut.edu.au/nfcp/> (accessed 23 August 2004)

participation and reduce drop out.³³ It must be noted, however, that to reach the disengaged, it might be necessary to start at the informal learning level or to tailor formal VET programs to their age group, literacy level and so on. The recent announcement of a strategic alliance in the United Kingdom of the Guidance Council and the National Institute of Adult Community Education (NIACE) is recognition of the crucial nexus between career guidance and lifelong learning.³⁴

Funding Issues

Box 7: Investing in Career: Prosperity for Citizens, Windfalls for Government

A report commissioned by the UK Guidance Council suggests that a one percentage point increase in productivity through better matching of individual skills and workforce requirements could generate as much as £10.6 billion annually in increased gross domestic production. And a one percentage point increase in efficiencies through having more students engaging in learning related to their aspirations and goals would translate to £494 million annually being better invested.³⁵

The emergence of electronic information sources has greatly influenced the careers guidance landscape. Looking for a job on-line is now common practice. Self-assessment tools also abound. The new technologies have made it possible for governments and the private sector to offer to job seekers a wealth of free information sources. But are these accessible to the disengaged? And are they enough for others?

There is evidence that ICT based services may increase rather than reduce the demand for face-to-face services—and therefore lead to greater frustration if these services are not available. Furthermore, it is clear that the most effective models of delivery are those which interweave information sources with human interaction, particularly when dealing with people those who have poor IT skills, low self-esteem and few career aspirations.³⁶

This raises the tricky question of who will, and how to, meet demand for guidance and when to start charging for what can become an intensive case management task. The Crossroads project is working on this issue and will be the basis for investigating the scope for broadening its model of initial ‘free’ advice (i.e. free to the client but subsidised by the agencies or volunteered) combined with continuing fee-for-service sessions (in small groups or one-on-one). Further investigation into effective screening processes may also be required, particularly for those who are not entitled to job seeking services through unemployment benefits or social welfare payments.

Much of the above underlines the important role of coordination between agencies and sectors to ensure that the disengaged are identified and reached, either by employing different techniques within existing projects, or by marketing³⁷ and offering careers guidance in places and ways which will attract them.

Coordination, marketing and confidence building take time and also need money. Allocating funds to these pursuits remains one of the major challenges in equipping communities to build their own capacity to serve their populations.

33 OECD, *Career Guidance: New Ways Forward*, 2003, p45

34 See joint announcement 4 August 2004 www.guidancecouncil.com (accessed 19 August 2004)

35 Investing in Career:

36 Watts, Anthony, *The role of information and communication technologies in an integrated career information and guidance system.*, OECD, November 2001, p 10

37 Blueprint: p 76 notes that ‘Often, the very people who need the services most are not aware of what it is that a career development program can offer. It is important, therefore, [to be] active in marketing to those who are likely to be in particular need of your services; including all young people, people who are socially isolated such as dislocated workers, and adults wishing to return to the workforce.’

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Appendix A: A Blueprint

The Australian Blueprint for Career Development assumes the following:

- ✧ life, learning and work, though sometimes distinct, are not separate;
- ✧ life, learning and work are best designed in harmony; and
- ✧ life, learning and work can be designed (recognising that not all designs come to fruition) and re-designed.

The Blueprint:

- ✧ identifies and elaborates the eleven career competencies that all Australians need to build their careers. These competencies are grouped across three key areas – personal management, learning and work exploration, and career building – and expanded through performance indicators...
- ✧ provides a process for planning, implementing, developing/redesigning, and evaluating career programs and resources that will help Australians acquire the above competencies in a variety of settings.
- ✧ provides a common language for career development initiatives throughout the country, and across the lifespan of individuals. Ultimately this will assist individuals to move seamlessly from one career development setting. It will also enable governments to monitor access to services more effectively, while at the same time allowing sufficient flexibility at the local level to ensure that career development services reflect local needs.
- ✧ enables career resource producers to design products, programs and services that address specific competencies. This will allow purchasers of these products to identify which competencies are addressed in the products they are buying.

The Blueprint's broad scope means that it can be used by everyone from curriculum developers, teachers and adult educators, policy analysts and career resource producers, to work experience coordinators and career and employment counsellors.³⁸

38 http://www.dest.gov.au/directory/c_and_t.htm (accessed 17 august 2004)

Appendix B: Research Questions

As part of the multi-method approach taken in the project, the researchers used questionnaires and interviews with a diversity of carefully selected stakeholders; and structured conversations with potential users of a community-based service (focus groups were conducted in Gunnedah, western New South Wales; in Fremantle and Midland, on the outskirts of Perth; and in several suburbs of Melbourne).

The stakeholder questionnaire was sent to 64 individuals or organisations, (from all states and territories and representative of policy, research and delivery agencies and included people in career development, employment services, community development and in the manufacturing and construction industries). To ensure sampling breadth, a further 15 people were interviewed during the course of fieldwork. The overall response rate was a pleasing, well-spread 44 percent (nil response from ACT and Northern Territory) with many people preferring a face-to-face/telephone interview rather than the questionnaire. Nineteen respondents represented the delivery area (e.g. career development practitioners, Job Network providers; educational institutions); 13 were in policy positions and three were researchers.

The discussion groups were held in Gunnedah, Perth and Melbourne. Participants were identified through learning community and other networks and from the literature review. The majority of the 42 group participants were women needing to return to the workforce: predominantly over 40 years old, with low educational attainment, varied work experience and facing a personal or health crisis. Others consulted included long-term unemployed men, a State Emergency Service training group of men and women from 18 to 60 years of age, and a group of more highly educated people wishing to change career direction.

The stakeholder questionnaire and discussion group questions are attached.

Stakeholder Questionnaire

Consent Form

I understand the nature of the research and agree to participate in the project.

Signed:

Date:

Printed name and position:

.....

I wish to be kept informed about this research. *Please check the box* Yes No

If yes, please provide contact details:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

NB These questionnaires will be stored with other data collected during the research. Findings will be presented in the final report, to be published, but the identity of participants will not be disclosed. The privacy of personal information will be safeguarded.

Participation in the questionnaire is voluntary. You also have the right to withdraw from the research at anytime.

If you wish to discuss with an independent person a complaint relating to the conduct of the project or your rights as a participant, you should contact:

Hugh Guthrie
Manager, Teaching and Learning Theme
National Centre for Vocational Education Research
Ph: 08 8230 8400
Email: hugh.guthrie@ncver.edu.au

Filling out this questionnaire

Please check the boxes or use the space provided to write in your answers. If you need space, please do not hesitate to add extra pages. If you would prefer to use an electronic version of the questionnaire, please contact Francesca Beddie at fbeddie@ozemail.com.au

1. Nature of your interest in careers development

a) The sector in which you work. *Please choose from the following:*

- Commonwealth Government State Government
 Local Government
- University TAFE Private VET provider
- ACE Library
- For-profit employment service provider Not for Profit organisation
 Construction industry Manufacturing industry
 Other industry
- Professional association Peak body
 Consultant Other

b) Your main area of engagement with careers development. *Please select one of the following:*

- Policy Provision Research

If you or your organisation delivers careers information, advice or guidance to your employees or clients please go to question two. If not, proceed to question three.

2. Your clients/employees

NB Our research is concentrating on groups who are not readily able to obtain careers guidance because they are not in employment; do not perceive themselves able to pursue a career or to change careers; are reluctant to use existing services; have learning or other barriers; etc. We will refer to these people as 'disengaged' (but not necessarily 'disadvantaged') and ask that you complete this questionnaire with that group in mind.

a) Age: Please indicate the percentage of your clients/employees who fall into the following age ranges:

< 25 ...% 25-40 ...% 41-60 ...% Over 60 ...%

Age of those you consider disengaged

< 25 ...% 25-40 ...% 41-60 ...% Over 60 ...%

b) Gender balance: Percentage male clients/employees ...%
or percentage female ...%

Gender of those you consider disengaged: Male ...%
or female ...%

c) Source of referral of your client:

- Job Network Centrelink Other welfare agency Employer
- Teacher Spouse Health worker Librarian Friend
- Advertisement Internet site

If none in the list, please specify: ...

d) Employment status of your disengaged clients:

How many are employed? ...

If employed, how many have full-time jobs (35+ hours a week)? ...

How many have permanent part-time jobs? ...

How many are casual workers? ...

How many work in a volunteer capacity and why? ...

How many are unemployed? ...

Length of unemployment? ...

How many, if any, previous jobs have they held? ...

How long were they unemployed before making contact with a careers guidance service? ...

Please state the reasons for the onset of unemployment and for continued unemployment. Please also tell us what reasons they gave for seeking to re-engage with employment or education and training?

e) Learning profile of your disengaged clients

Highest level of schooling:

Year 12 or equivalent Year 11 Year 10 Year 9 Year 8 or below

Qualifications: None Statement of Attainment Certificate of Competency

Certificate I Certificate II Certificate III Certificate IV Diploma

Advanced Diploma Bachelor Degree or higher

Please specify any non-accredited learning: ...

What mode of learning is most often sought/preferred by your disengaged clients?

Classroom learning On-the-job learning Small group learning

One-to-one learning Distance learning Online learning

Please comment on the accessibility, suitability and quality of training provided to your client -- on-the-job, in TAFE or another VET provider, in adult and community education, elsewhere.

f) Please give your observations about the needs of your disengaged clients in relation to careers information/guidance. E.g. Understanding of what employment means, how to apply for jobs and identify aptitude, knowledge of what careers development/learning opportunities exist, educational, financial and personal capacity to pursue these alone or with assistance.

c) Please give your observations about your disengaged clients' needs and characteristics in relation to careers information/guidance:

3. Definitions

Career no longer refers to particular pathways through work or to an occupational title. Career is the sequence and variety of work roles (paid and unpaid), which one undertakes throughout a lifetime. More broadly, 'career' includes life roles, leisure activities, learning and work.

Miles Morgan, *Career Services in Australia*, 2002, p 15

a) Is 'career' the right word to apply when trying to reach the disengaged? Why/why not? What other terms might be appropriate?

4. Learning

Making the right choice about learning involves more than simply taking into account the subject matter of the learning activity. It requires careful consideration of learning preferences, of barriers to formal learning activity, and the identification of the potential to develop new skills or knowledge. (Adult Learning Australia, *Working from Experience*, 2003)

a) Please comment on the role of learning preferences (e.g. learning at work, in the classroom, in small groups, online) in career pathways?

b) How do you identify learning barriers experienced by your disengaged clients?

c) Should assisting disengaged clients to acquire learning skills be a central element in guidance? If yes, how are advisors equipped to do this? If no, why not?

d) How could an assessment of individual learning styles be helpful in Job Network providers/TAFE/elsewhere?

e) How might informal and non-accredited learning acquired by disengaged people be better recognised?

f) Do you have views on current recognition of prior learning (RPL) arrangements? How accessible are these to disengaged clients?

5. Delivery models

Australian governments are paying increased attention to careers guidance, particularly for young people in transition from school to work. However, in the rapidly changing world of work and with an ageing population, it will be increasingly important to ensure access to good quality and affordable careers guidance to all Australians across their lifespan.

a) What should be the balance between information (printed resources and online), advisory (classroom-based and individual advice) and guidance services (one-to-one or group counselling) about learning and careers?

b) What systems of referral are needed?

c) What resources are required from the state, the individual, industry, the community to support community-based careers guidance? How could existing funding be used more flexibly to meet local need?

d) What sort of delivery models work for community-based careers guidance? (e.g. those managed by government agencies/the community sector/private advisors/partnerships)

e) Are work experience opportunities (e.g. job placements; job shadowing) and the provision of mentors valuable to adults? If yes, how do you think these should operate? If no, why not?

f) What systems exist (or should exist) at the community level to enable effective information sharing about local skills and learning needs/opportunities? How are/would these be accessible to the disengaged?

g) Do you have examples of good practice or lessons learned for assisting older workers and women returning to the workforce shape their future pathways? If so, can you provide contact details for particular people or organisations?

6. Professional development

A key element in the Victorian community-based careers guidance model (the *Crossroads* project described above) has been the professional development of workers in the adult and community education sector. The career industry is also embarking on an intensive effort to define standards for the profession and the industry.

a) Would you support a tiered structure of careers advisors, from those able to offer preliminary information and referrals to the disengaged to those providing professional counselling services? If yes, what would you recommend? If no, please elaborate and move on to Question 7

b) Should there be formal qualifications for community-based careers advisors, and if so, who should regulate these?

c) Do community education and other service providers need heightened awareness of careers information and guidance? If so, how can this be achieved?

7. Australian Blueprint

If you are familiar with the Australian Blueprint for Career Development (see http://www.dest.gov.au/directory/c_and_t.htm) we would like to know your views on the following. **If not, please check this box and proceed to the final question:**

a) How can the principles about careers guidance across the lifespan enunciated in the *Blueprint* be best disseminated in community-based organisations (eg libraries, doctor's surgeries, childcare centres)?

b) To what extent does the Blueprint distinguish clearly enough the needs of present-day adults, rather than seeing adults as the end product of the current generation of adolescents?

8. Additional comments

Thank you very much for participating in this survey.

Francesca Beddie

PO Box 1757

Queanbeyan, NSW, 2620

Group Discussion Questions

GROUP DISCUSSION:

HOW EASY IS IT TO FIND ADVICE ABOUT A JOB, A TRAINING COURSE, OTHER OPPORTUNITIES?

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) has funded us to see what you need to find the right information and guidance about learning, training, career and job options.

We'd like to hear your story—what you love doing, what you do do, what you'd love to do next. And then explore how you might find the right information or training to put you on a new path.

We'd also like to hear about your experiences in the workplace and in the community and what you think of the services provided in your area to help with job searching, training and other support.

Who are we? Francesca Beddie is an independent researcher (and former executive director of Adult Learning Australia). Barb Lorey works at Morrison House, an adult and community education provider in outer Melbourne. She offers careers advice and guidance about learning, training and employment opportunities in the local region.

To make sure that everyone who participates in this research has a say, groups are limited to 10 people. Those who do participate will receive a certificate of participation and a brief introduction to the careers and learning guidance available near you.

Ethical research principles make it necessary for us to make sure you understand the nature of this project and that you are certain you are happy to participate. Please sign the consent form before we start the discussion.

QUESTIONS FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUPS

1. Could you give us some background about yourself? For example, where you went to school, what sort of work/hobbies you have.
2. Could you tell us how you have gone about making decisions on learning and work?
3. Have you ever decided to take a new direction in life?
 - a) If so, how have various people and agencies assisted you?
 - b) If not, how would you find out what's available to help you get started in a new direction?
4. Where would you prefer to seek advice?
5. Do you know people who haven't been able to get into new learning, courses or work? What do you think stops them?