



Industry Skills Council
Community Services and Health
Industry Skills Council

Project to Develop a Competency Framework for Community Services Workers and Volunteers Working with Clients with Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) Needs

Background Document

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1. Introduction

The Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (the ISC) is the ministerial appointed body leading the development of an integrated approach to skills development for the Community Services & Health Industries.

Training Packages for Health (HLT07) and Community Services (CHC08), developed and maintained by the ISC, specify the national vocational qualifications and competencies for the workforce. The Packages provide a national skills framework for the industries. The vocational education and training (VET) system presents opportunities for far-reaching solutions to the challenges faced by our industries. The VET sector has the capacity to support health workforce growth through establishment of new roles, expansion of existing roles, increasing the number of qualified workers and easing skills supply pressure on higher education.

This project aligns with the mandate of the ISC to develop workplace-relevant competencies and qualifications to ensure that the VET services and products are appropriate, current and flexible to meet the myriad of skill/knowledge needs of the community services and health workforce.

The ISC will undertake this project as part of the continuous improvement of Training Packages and consistent with competency standards development methodologies outlined in the Training Package Development Handbook (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2007). The outcomes of the project will ensure a consistent methodology is applied to training and assessment of community services workers and relevant volunteers enabling them to develop enhanced language, literacy and numeracy skills for clients in community services sectors such as youth work, disability and social housing.

2. Background

Employing more than 1.1 million workers, the community services and health industries are the third largest employer in Australia which combined is now the fastest growing industry in Australia ahead of property and business services and retail. The ISC's Environmental Scan 2009 reports 50% of the health workforce and 79% of the community services workforce have either a VET qualification or do not hold post-school qualifications. This amounts to 665,000 workers' job roles being represented by the competencies and qualifications in HLT07 and CHC08.

A significant number of clients in the community services industry include those with low levels of language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) including those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and others from disadvantaged groups.

As part of a broader range of activities to enhance LLN skills in the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) has funded the ISC to develop a competency framework for community services workers and volunteers working with clients with LLN needs. These competencies will enable relevant community services workers and volunteers to provide LLN development services for clients in key sectors such as youth work, disability, social housing and employment services.

3. Overview and Scope of Work

The scope of the project will cover LLN specific competency unit(s), skill set(s) and/or qualification(s) for community service workers and volunteers with clients with LLN needs.

Specific outcomes of this work will include:

- Identifying the scope of work of volunteers and community services workers with clients with LLN needs. This includes identifying aspects of the roles already covered by existing competencies in the Community Services Training Package and against existing state-based qualifications (for example from NSW and WA).
- Further research and scoping of LLN-specific competency unit(s), skill set(s) and/or qualification(s) for community service workers and volunteers with clients with LLN needs.
- Development of new unit(s) of competency, skill set(s) and/or qualification(s) as informed by the scoping and research phase with required national stakeholder validation for addition to the CHC08 Community Services Training Package and/or the HLT07 Health Training Package if relevant.

Although there are essentially two outputs for this project – that is, a LLN-specific competency unit(s), skill set(s) and/or qualification(s) for community service workers with clients with LLN needs and a LLN-specific competency unit(s), skill set(s) and/or qualification(s) for volunteers with clients with LLN needs – the ISC is engaging in a single project to manage the process as there are synergies across specific stages of the project and it will be administratively more efficient and more cost-effective to dovetail project activities where possible.

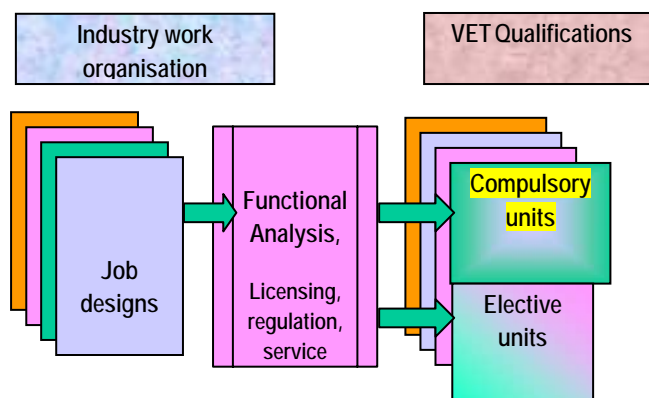
4. Methodology

This project will use a functional analysis approach to determine the scope of job roles and the competence required of volunteers and community services workers specifically in the delivery of services to clients with LLN needs.

Using a qualitative approach, the ISC project team will seek to validate and verify assumptions throughout the project by utilising Industry expertise through a variety of means including project governance, focus groups, surveys and other research. Competency development itself is preceded by a scoping study. This approach is consistent with the ISC's approach over several years to successfully map the qualifications and competencies in the Community Services and Health Training Packages.

As with all projects undertaken by the ISC, the project methodology addresses the range of different types of community services and health organisations, different professions and job roles as they relate to the proposed LLN unit(s) of competency, skill set(s) and/or qualification(s) in both the public and private sectors.

Diagram 1 - Industry Jobs & Qualifications
Not Symbolic: Direct Relationship



The proposed project methodology is designed to support the endorsement required for establishment of new national unit(s) of competency, skill set(s) and/or qualification(s). The development of units of competency will include a research/scoping phase followed by a development phase. The national Industry Reference Group (IRG) of key stakeholders will guide the project. The project will be managed by the ISC and undertaken by an ISC Project Coordinator and industry-specialist consultants (including those with LLN expertise and speciality) as required.

Synchronous Project Stages

As indicated in the Overview section, the ISC proposes to project-manage what are essentially two projects in the same timeframe (12 months) to facilitate the competency development process.

The ISC will engage with a single IRG to provide industry advice through the process. The Scoping stage of the project will cover research and consultation processes for both job roles

(volunteers and community services workers) and ensure that the results of the scoping will inform the development of the proposed new unit(s) competency, skill set(s) and/or qualification(s).

The Competency Development stage will be specific to the project output – that is, for the LLN-specific competency unit(s), skill set(s) and/or qualification(s) for community service workers and volunteers with clients with LLN needs.

The Stakeholder Consultation (Draft 1), Endorsement and Evaluation processes will be synchronous once more with the aim to submit all competency units and qualification/s to the National Quality Council (NQC) for endorsement in the same timeframe.

Industry Reference Group (IRG)

The IRG will guide the broad direction of the project and includes key stakeholders required to sign off the development work. IRG members provide access to national networks within their sector or constituency. IRG members would be drawn from relevant stakeholder groups including:

- Public sector employer including jurisdictional nominees
- Peak groups and associations
- Private sector employers
- Unions
- RTOs
- Other relevant Industry Skills Councils including IBSA
- Others as identified

The IRG will meet three to four times throughout the project.

Scoping

The scoping phase of the project is a research and consultation process to determine the job roles/functions to be subject to competency development. The scoping phase sets the direction of the project and informs the content of Draft 1.

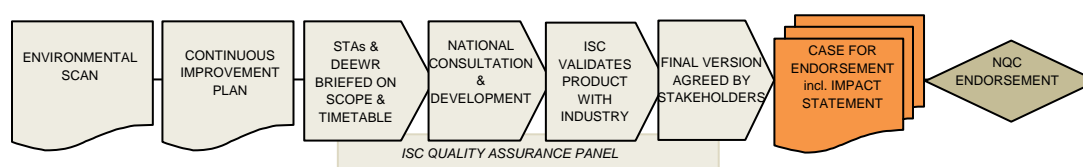
The following standard ISC desktop analysis criteria will be used to influence the methodology for the proposed development of a LLN-specific competency unit(s), skill set(s) and/or qualification(s) for community service workers and volunteers with clients with LLN needs.

1. Establish a database of audience and potential participants in the project
2. Determine the size and scope of the workforce to be addressed by the project
3. Interview staff, collect award definitions, pays rates, union coverage and job descriptions to obtain insight into the nature and functions of each job
4. Mapping exercises to determine job roles and any existing competencies that may meet the job role requirements
5. Undertake research to determine any existing qualifications, staff development or other training that exists related to the project endeavour
6. Utilise existing research reports and papers to develop background information for use in consultation tools to engage stakeholders.

Competency Development and Endorsement Process

From 2008 all new government recognised competency standards and qualifications included in the Health and Community Services Training Packages will be developed on a continuous improvement basis. The ISC produces an annual Environmental Scan outlining industry intelligence in relation to skill supply and demand, workforce development priorities, evaluation of existing Training Packages and recommendations for future competency standards and qualifications in a continuous improvement plan. The policy framework for this process is maintained by the Australian Government DEEWR and managed by the NQC (see diagram 2below).

Diagram 2 -2008 Training Packages Continuous Improvement Process



The following standard ISC stages will be applied, working with the Training Packages development framework and to meet the project outcome of validating the proposed LLN-specific competency unit(s), skill set(s) and/or qualification(s) for community service workers and volunteers with clients with LLN needs.

- (1) Testing developed indicators of competency against work roles and levelling against the AQF
- (2) Writing competency standards to reflect the indicators of competency
- (3) Validating the developed competencies with Industry stakeholders across Australia
- (4) Preparing case for endorsement for inclusion of new competencies in National Training Framework NQC and Ministerial endorsement
- (5) Providing implementation plan for endorsed competencies.

All relevant industry and government stakeholders will be included in the development phases of national consultation, validation, final agreement and endorsement.

It is essential that any proposed new competencies are mapped against other endorsed units of competency in other relevant areas, including across Training Packages. Some analysis on which competencies could be made available as electives would then be made with special consideration for the job outcomes for which they are intended and the levels at which they should be pitched.

The ISC is also aware that it is also important to identify aspects of volunteer and community services job roles already covered by existing State-based qualifications (for example from NSW and WA) in this project.

Endorsement of the developed qualification/s and units of competency will be as per the Continuous Improvement Process for Training Packages. Industry advice may include a recommendation to locate a qualification for a work in either (or both) the Community Services or Health Training Packages.

Timeline

The ISC proposes a 12-month time frame (December 2009 –December 2010) for the delivery of the proposed project outcomes. The table below provides an indicative timeframe for the project activities.

Project Activity	Time	Date
<p>Scoping and IRG establishment</p> <p>Key activities include: IRG identification; identification of the scope of workforce role; and specific recommendations for development of competencies.</p> <p>First IRG meeting – Scoping research to identify work roles and make recommendations for development of competencies.</p>	2 months	<p>December 2009 –January 2010</p> <p>9 February 2010</p>
Mapping of existing units of competencies and technical writing for preparation of draft competencies	3 months	February 2010 – April 2010
<p>Validation of draft competencies broadly with industry stakeholders</p> <p>Validation forums to promote engagement in the project</p>	2 months	May 2010 – June 2010
Final draft development, incorporating feedback from validation	3 months	July 2010 – September 2010
<p>Obtain support for endorsement from key industry stakeholders</p> <p>Obtain support from State Training Authorities and the ISC Board and submit to NQC for endorsement and for sign-off by State/Territory ministers for education</p>	3 months	October 2010 – December 2010