

Executive Summary

>>> Career Development and Skill Service
Final Report

CAREER PLANNING



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Prepared for



Prepared by



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Executive Summary

This report details the concept and plan for the Career Development & Skills Service (CDSS) within the G21 Region - an integrated service which encourages collaboration between service providers to better meet the needs of jobseekers and employers. It is regionally focused and will ensure that clients and service providers are informed and coordinated to meet specific regional demand for stronger outcomes.

The report has been produced as the final stage of a project funded under the Australian Government's Innovative Regions Centre program, administered by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.

The project has been approved due to a recognition by the Federal Government that G21 is a region undergoing fundamental change in its economy, and that this is presenting significant challenges for both employers and those seeking work.

This project has been developed through a consultative process of engagement with a number of different stakeholders, as well as through desktop research. Two regional forums have been held, 25 stakeholders have been interviewed, and surveys have been conducted with a total of 96 employers and 65 jobseekers.

The Labour Market

In trying to identify how best to respond in times of both high and low unemployment, it is important to understand the labour market. In order to analyse and address local labour market issues, it is necessary to context the local labour market in terms of what is happening on a global and national basis.

The concept of a centralised support mechanism for career and skill development has been promoted within the G21 region for a number of years. The previous careers and skills related research projects (reviewed in the project Interim Report) were conducted during a time of low unemployment and worsening skills shortages. Since then, the global financial crisis has made its impact on the international and local scene. Whilst this may seem to indicate that the skills issue is no longer relevant, it is important to keep two things in mind. Firstly, most financial experts forecast that the economy will improve in the next year or so and we shall find ourselves back in a skills shortage environment. Secondly, higher unemployment does not mean that there is less need for assistance. In fact, this is a critical time for relevant and timely careers and skills advice to prepare both industry and jobseekers for the return of economic prosperity.

In both the United States and Britain, job losses are spread across all sectors. Those who are already long-term unemployed as well as older workers and young people entering the labour market are expected to be hardest hit.

According to ABS statistics, 'The number of unemployed people in Australia increased by 17.4% between August 2008 and January 2009. Over this time, the unemployment rate increased from 4.1% to 4.8%'¹.

¹ Neville, Ivan 18 February 2009, *Employment Trends and the Australian Labour Market: A presentation to the Local Government Skills Forum*, www.workplace.gov.au/.../Localgovernmentsskillsforum18Feb.pps

The Australian Government has been building a culture of closer cooperation with the various State and Local Governments. This has been occurring through the work of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), which is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia, comprising the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

Through COAG, the Federal Government has negotiated a number of National Partnerships with the State Governments. These have included:

- National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development
- National Partnership on Low SocioEconomic Status School Communities National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality
- National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership Agreement on Productivity Places Program
- National Partnership Agreement on Nation Building and Jobs Plan
- National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions

The Federal and State Governments are currently negotiating the arrangements for delivery of a number of these initiatives.

As well as being a partner in the above Commonwealth initiatives, the Victorian State Government has also been proactive in developing a number of broad reaching programs. These include:

- Moving Forward in Provincial Victoria (2005)
- Securing Jobs for Your Future - Skills for Victoria (2008)
- Skills For Growth
- Back to Work

Data provided by the City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) shows that 427 jobs were lost in the 2007/08 financial year, a further 641 in the 2008/09 financial year, and 246 already in the first three months of the current financial year². It should be noted, however, that these figures do not include the many individuals laid off by small and micro businesses, where formal redundancy processes are not in place. Whilst a number of new jobs were also created within that same period, many of those retrenched do not have the required skills to take up these opportunities.

According to the 2006 ABS Census, the G21 Region, which comprises the five Local Government Areas of City of Greater Geelong, Surfcoast Shire, Golden Plains Shire, Colac Otway Shire and Borough of Queenscliff had a total population of 259,014. There is a diverse industry mix within the region, with the major industries being manufacturing, retail, health and social assistance, construction, and education and training.

When examining the data by Labour Force Region, the Barwon-Western District, which contains G21, shows the following area profile:

- Working Age Population (15-64) : 262 100
- Employment Rate (15-64) : 72.5%

² COGG, September 2009, *Confidential Labour Market Information*
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- Unemployment Rate : 5.7%
- Participation Rate : 65.7%
- Teenage Full-Time UE Rate (15-19) : 23.1%
- Teenage Full-Time UE to Population Ratio : 4.2%³.

This compares to a State unemployment rate of 5.8% and a national unemployment rate of 5.8%. This would appear to demonstrate that the G21 Region is not suffering any hardships in the current economic climate, but is actually doing better than the State and National economies. However, within G21, there are a number of pockets of significant disadvantage such as Corio/Norlane and Whittington, which show a much higher unemployment situation than other parts of the Region. In fact, a recent research report shows that Corio/Norlane's unemployment rate is between two to three times that for the City of Greater Geelong.

The imbalance between advantaged and disadvantaged sectors of the G21 Region is also borne out by an examination of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Indices for Areas (SEIFA) data. According to the SEIFA data, Colac Otway Shire shows a much higher level of disadvantage than other parts of the G21 Region. Whilst the City of Greater Geelong appears to be relatively advantaged according to the overall LGA SEIFA score, in fact there are significant pockets of high disadvantage within the boundaries. This is particularly noticeable in the Whittington and Corio/Norlane areas. Whittington and Norlane in particular face high disadvantage and low educational attainment, with Norlane rating as the third most highly disadvantaged suburb in Victoria.

The ABS *Melbourne: A Social Atlas* (2008)⁴, analyses both Melbourne and Geelong data from the 2006 Census (see the Geelong data at Appendix 3). With regard to educational levels, the Atlas reports that: 'At the 2006 Census, there were 33,740 people in the Geelong labour force whose highest level of non-school qualification was Certificate III or higher. This represented 48.9% of the labour force, much higher than in 2001 (41.9%). Low proportions of people with Certificate III or higher qualifications were located in the northern suburbs of Corio and Norlane; and Whittington, in the south-east'⁵.

The vast majority of the working population are employees, with a much lesser number owning their own businesses. Most respondents to the 2006 Census self-identified as not in the labour force (almost 60,000); working full-time (approximately 51,000); or working part-time (approximately 38,000).

Industry perspectives

The input of employers was sought through a number of different mechanisms. Firstly, employers were invited to attend both the Shaping Our Futures Together forum and the later region wide forum. At the Shaping Our Futures Together forum, employers were invited to complete a questionnaire about their organisational issues. To gain additional information, a representative from a major employer association was interviewed, and two surveys were also undertaken to canvas employer views. The second employer survey, which had a total of seventy-one responses, included employers from a wide variety of industries.

³ <http://www.workplace.gov.au/lmip/LabourForceData/Victoria/BarwonWesternDistrict/>. Area Profile Source : ABS *Labour Force Survey*. Data are three month averages to July 2009 except for the teenage full-time unemployment rate and teenage full-time unemployment to population ratio which are 12 month averages to July 2009

⁴ [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/062B721F17B868F1CA25740E00797EED/\\$File/20302_2006.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/062B721F17B868F1CA25740E00797EED/$File/20302_2006.pdf)

⁵ *ibid*, p. 87

Industries which are underperforming within the G21 Region are mainly focused in the manufacturing sector, with retail and hospitality also at the lower end, and it is these sectors which have experienced the greatest difficulty in being able to retain staff during the economic downturn.

When asked to identify the biggest challenge facing their businesses during the economic downturn, the major responses included:

1. Lower Sales Volume / Low Demand (38%)
2. Maintaining Profitability or Viability (18%)
3. Retaining Current Workforce (6%)
4. Securing alternate markets
5. Competition
6. Coping with high demand

Interestingly enough, a number of respondents identified no increased pressure on their businesses as a result of the economic crisis.

80% of employers expect their businesses to grow as the economy returns to growth, with positive responses received from all sectors except Education and Government Administration which do not expect to be impacted.

The following were identified as skills in decreasing demand by those employers who attended the Shaping Our Futures Together forum:

- Manufacturing of 'old' technologies/products
- Adoption of technology solutions will continue to reduce the number of administrative roles
- Project management , IT skills
- Administration
- Engineering/production workers
- Researchers

When asked to identify 'growing and sustainable industries' which were already established in the G21 Region, the high priority industry sectors voted by participants at the forum were Health Sector (Including Aged Care); Education Sector (including Child Care); Transport & Logistics; Construction; and Tourism & Hospitality. Forum attendees were also asked which 'new opportunities in new industries' were likely to become important within the region. These included Sustainability-Related Industries; Social Capital Related Industries; New Technologies; New Manufacturing; ICT Related Industries; and Transport & Logistics.

When asked about their experiences with regard to seeking employment, jobseekers identified the following challenges

- Age as a barrier
- Lack of experience
- Difficulty in understanding the process of finding a job
- Not having the right qualification
- Finding the job I prefer
- Not having the right skills
- Not having a car or license

When asked about the type of work they were seeking, most jobseekers wanted to find a job which was similar to previous work they had done.

Jobseekers believed that employers were looking for:

- Experience
- Qualifications
- Excellent communication skills
- Computer skills
- Team oriented
- Reliability

Employers advised that entry level staff are the main target for recruitment. The positions varied across industries, but included drivers, technicians, shop floor operators, tradespersons, drivers, nursing, front-of-house (hospitality), sales positions, office positions, labouring and customer service. Only a few employers nominated management and project positions as being needed.

The major strategies which have been of most assistance to employers in sourcing appropriately skilled staff included word of mouth, internal promotions and newspaper advertising, with recruitment agencies rating third lowest. This would indicate that there is room for significant improvement by these agencies in meeting employer needs, and the CDSS could be used as a facilitator in bringing these two groups together to develop appropriate strategies.

41% of employers felt that staff will need to be up-skilled or retrained to take advantage of the opportunities. Most employers felt that training would occur through both informal on-the-job training and RTO gained qualifications.

As the economy returns to growth, the gap between the needs of employers and the capabilities of jobseekers will again return the G21 Region to a skills shortage situation and both employers and jobseekers will need additional help from Job Services Australia and other recruitment agencies, in conjunction with RTOs, to source and train suitable staff. Most employers felt that they were aware of the various agencies working in this area. However, the information available to employers about their services was not rated as highly. It is not sufficient for employers to simply know that there are recruitment and training providers in the Region. They also need to have a clear picture of the specific services provided by these agencies. The CDSS will be a vehicle for gathering and disseminating this data.

If employers do not really understand the services which are available to them, then it is not surprising that they do not rate those services highly in meeting their needs. More appropriate information about how agencies can tailor their services to meet those needs will be an important first step. Better communication between these two sectors is also needed.

Jobseekers had a more positive opinion on the information available to them and its usefulness. Given the fact that these survey respondents were all registered with a Job Services Australia provider, this is not so surprising. It will be useful for the CDSS to test this awareness with individuals who have not yet entered the system. Both employers and jobseekers supported more centralised, simpler and responsive processes in meeting their needs.

The CDSS Model

As a result of the data collected during the project consultations, a CDSS model has been developed and endorsed by stakeholders. The model contains five elements:

1. A 'First Stop Shop'
2. A structured network
3. Outreach services
4. A website
5. Connections to other networks

The 'heart' of the model lies with a physical presence for the CDSS. This building will give an identity to the CDSS and provide a central point of personal contact, particularly for employer clients. The First Stop Shop will also give a 'face' to the structured network of service providers.

Currently G21 and the SGRLLEN have committed to co-locating with the CDSS, with United Way also intending to locate in the building. G21, the SGRLLEN and United Way will bring extensive networks of industry, education/training and community members into the Centre. Other agencies are also being invited to co-locate with the group.

For those service providers which are not in a position to co-locate, the building will also have a 'hot desk' capacity to allow for a visiting presence from member agencies. Facilities will also include meeting rooms, training facilities, and consultation rooms for use by CDSS members.

The intent is to have the First Stop Shop located within a precinct with other related agencies and a suitable location has been identified in Geelong West. This precinct will give an 'identity' to the careers and skills sector.

Sitting 'underneath' the physical shop front presence is the structured network which was described in the Interim Report. The Network is designed to bring all relevant service delivery agencies together in a more formal, structured way than is currently the case in the Region, where networks are formed on an ad hoc, informal basis based on personal relationships.

Whilst the physical presence provides meaningful support and a physical meeting point to the regional coordination of services, the structured network will provide the mechanism to leverage that support and include those contestable stakeholders and services where co-location is not feasible or practical. The structured network will allow for collaboration on large projects, regional delivery, service marketing, as well as the capacity for a more regionally informed service network.

The CDSS Coordinator for the network will be located in the CDSS building and will encourage network members to maintain a visiting or advertising presence in the building. An area will also be set aside for 'hot desk' use by agencies wishing to use the premises for client contacts. Network events such as meetings, professional development activities, etc. can also be held at the CDSS.

The CDSS network offers a platform for a unified, consolidated approach to servicing a range of clients and for supporting both the service delivery agencies and the region as whole in developing comprehensive strategies to deal with local labour market issues.

Some of the industry sectors which need to be invited to become members of the CDSS include:

- Job Services Australia providers
- Other recruitment agencies
- Public and private Registered Training Organisations
- Public and private secondary schools
- Universities operating in the Region
- Youth service providers
- Industry peak bodies
- Other employer organisations
- Individual employers where appropriate
- Community/welfare agencies where appropriate
- Federal, State and Local Governments
- Other Government funded agencies, such as the library network
- Neighbourhood houses
- Private organisations which have an interest in the careers and skills sector

Many of the organisations from these sectors have attended the forums and/or taken part in interviews and surveys for the project, so are aware of the CDSS and its potential. However, it will be necessary to ensure that the 'message' continues to be spread throughout the Region in order to ensure that all relevant agencies/organisations are invited to participate. To this end, it will be important to develop relevant marketing material about the entity and its work (see the CDSS Revised Business Plan).

Corio/Norlane, Torquay, Golden Plains Shire and Colac/Otway Shire have all been identified by various stakeholders as needing additional servicing to that already provided by local agencies.

At the moment, outreach activities are conducted by a number of providers. However, this is done on an individual 'as needs' agency basis. The CDSS network model will enable a more coordinated approach to outreach services with the capacity to co-brand or represent multiple services.

It will also be important for the CDSS to have a 'virtual' (ie. on-line) presence to complement the physical one. The website will have two functions. The first relates to assistance to clients. This area will contain a variety of important information for both jobseekers and employers, and act as a means to direct individuals to the most relevant source for their enquiry through an extensive, but easy to navigate, link system. Whilst a number of sites are available for individual services at a national and state level, this site will be specifically for the regional contacts and service providers. This provides a meaningful explanation of 'who's who' in the regional delivery of CDSS services and the menu of options available to various jobseekers and employers.

The second function of the website will be as a communication mechanism for CDSS members. This section of the site will have the usual chat facilities and bulletin boards for information updates, but will also have a portal facility whereby documents can be shared and 'virtual' meetings conducted. This will form part of the overall communication plan for the CDSS.

As has been acknowledged by project participants, like all regional centres, the G21 Region is highly networked and most of the work happens through these networks. The major problem is that most of the networks are informal and rely on personal relationships. Where there are formal networks, there is often overlap and duplication which occurs because each network tends to operate in isolation from the others, despite the fact that many have common membership.

As well as the proposed CDSS network, there are a number of other networks in the Region, working in related spaces. These include the G21 Economic Development Pillar, the G21 Education and Training Pillar and the G21 Skills Taskforce. It will be important to ensure that the CDSS does not, at best, duplicate the work of these other groups or, at worst, work against them. At the outset, therefore, there will be a process put in place to link these groups together. This will be through having some common representation which will be a conduit for sharing information and ideas, as well as through having established communication and reporting protocols in place.

The Work of the CDSS

As mentioned previously, there will need to be a 'what's in it for me' value proposition for organisations and individuals to become members of the CDSS. Project participants identified a number of areas where the CDSS could value add. These included:

- Careers/skills advice and assistance for clients through a more integrated network with better communication processes and more timely information sharing.
- Provision of careers counselling. This was seen as one of the most significant gaps in service availability to clients within the Region.
- building partnerships through identifying and engaging new stakeholders, and facilitating networks
- sourcing and disseminating relevant data to stakeholders
- providing a 'voice' to advocate on behalf of network members and their clients
- promoting and modelling best practices
- providing an environment where providers and industry can come together

With regard to employers, respondents felt that the CDSS could provide information, link employers with schools and other relevant providers, and provide a central point of contact for employers

The final area identified as a 'value add' for the CDSS was in its ability to source and distribute labour market research, involving both the dissemination of national and State information to CDSS members, and the collection and analysis of local labour market information, which will be used in determining local strategies.

The CDSS will also have an active role in supporting members' goals. This will occur through a range of strategies, including working with members to identify tender opportunities and bring together interested agencies to develop consortia bids; facilitating member involvement in projects of major Regional significance; and through providing members with a range of professional development opportunities.

Structure and Governance

In order for the CDSS to function effectively, it will be important for it to have a sound structure and effective processes in place. Conscious of the many stakeholders involved, the CDSS will require a consultative, transparent governance arrangement to oversight the entity and its members.

In order to initiate the CDSS it was considered necessary to bring together a temporary working group of volunteers to develop some of the documentation and processes which will be needed by the organisation. Working group members have contributed extensively to the development of a governance structure and documentation.

In deciding on the best structure for the CDSS, there has been a recognition that an auspicing agency will be required to oversight its operations. There has been widespread support for that role to be taken on by the G21 Region Alliance and G21 has agreed to this strategy. G21 has a strong history of managing networked groups, as can be seen from the success of its Pillar structures. G21 has also been auspicing the G21 Skills Taskforce and this group will be subsumed into the CDSS.

The CDSS will sit within the framework of the G21 Education and Training Pillar as its connection to the G21 Board and will also have strong links to the G21 Economic Development Pillar.

In developing the structure for the CDSS, potential members have been asked to sign a Letter of Intent demonstrating the level of involvement they wish to have with the CDSS. Various levels of commitment range from being a member of the network through to co-locating in the First Stop Shop.

Whilst it will be important for the CDSS to have an independent manager who can bring together members for cooperative work, the Committee of Management needs to be representative of the member sectors.

As such, the decision has been made for the Committee of Management to have the following structure:

- G21 Board - 1 position
- Recruitment agencies - 3 positions
- Employers/industry - 5 positions
- Educators - 4 positions
- Careers advisors - 2 positions
- Academic/research - 1 position
- Key networks - 1 position
- Local Government - 2 positions
- State/Federal Government - 2 positions
- Community - 3 positions
- G21 CEO/CDSS Director - 2 positions

It is expected that the broad nature of representation on the Committee of Management will ensure that a Region wide perspective is taken on the issues and projects which will be addressed through the CDSS membership.

At this stage, a decision has been made to keep the CDSS Working Group operational until the end of 2009. This will give time for elections to be held for the Committee of Management which will take up its new role at the beginning of 2010.

The workings of the CDSS and its Committee of Management will be defined by the CDSS Charter. The original intent of the project was to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which would detail the legal and financial expectations of the CDSS partners. However, with the agreement of G21 to

become the auspicing agency and to take on the fiscal responsibility for the CDSS, the development of an MOU was not seen as appropriate.

Instead, a Charter has been developed by the CDSS Working Group and this has now been ratified by the CDSS members. The Charter sets out the aims and objectives of the CDSS and describes the operations and structure of the entity. It also defines the structure and election process for the Committee of Management.

Funding

In order for the CDSS to be successful, there will need to be an investment made at the initiation stage, as well as consideration given to how the entity will be sustainable over the long term. Many of the CDSS members are funded through Government contracts, and these do not allow for direct funding of the CDSS by its members. Alternative sources of funding will therefore need to be identified. There are three potential sources from which this funding could come:

1. Government funding - this might come from Federal, State or Local Government.
2. Funding from philanthropic groups.
3. Fee for service activities which could generate funding to be used to advance the aims and objectives of the CDSS.

The initial establishment of the CDSS will require funding for a number of items. These include:

- capital funding for leasing and fitout of premises
- funding for ICT infrastructure
- funding for salaries and oncosts for CDSS staff

Estimates show that, in order to initiate and establish the CDSS over a four year funding cycle, the following funding is required:

1. Lease costs for co-located building - 600-800 m ² @ \$175.00/m ² x 4 years	\$560,000
2. Less lease contribution by SGRLLEN and G21 - \$70,000pa x 4 years	\$280,000-
3. Relocation and fitout costs	\$100,000
4. Website development and management for 4 years	\$ 45,000
5. Salaries and on-cost for Network Manager, Careers Advisor and CDSS receptionist for first four years	\$580,000

This means that the total funds sought total approximately \$1,005,000 (see the revised Business Plan for full details).

The funding source which had been identified for this component of the CDSS was the Federal Government's Jobs Fund. However, this program has recently been refocused, and work will need to be done to ensure that the CDSS meets the new eligibility criteria.

The second source of potential funding is the State Government's Interdepartmental Committee which has been established to work with G21 on implementing its priority projects, one of which is the CDSS. State Government Departments which might be approached for funding include the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD).

The third potential source of funding is through one of the various philanthropic foundations. The process involves identifying a suitable philanthropic group which may be interested in providing funding assistance for the CDSS and then making an application to them.

The final source of potential funding for the CDSS is through fee for service activities. These might include:

- careers counselling services for Job Services Australia clients
- careers counselling service for members of the public
- rental of training and meeting rooms within the First Stop Shop
- undertaking commercial research projects which may be funded by Government Departments or industry bodies
- the sale of local labour market information to non-members of the CDSS.

The range of fee for service activities needs to be explored and developed further in order to ensure that the CDSS is best placed to maintain its financial sustainability into the future.

CDSS Action Plan

In order expedite the effective implementation of the CDSS a number of activities will need to be undertaken in the first year of operation. Below is a suggested action plan:

1. Finalise arrangements for, and conduct, Committee of Management elections.
2. Follow up with stakeholders for return of Letters of Intent and Member Profiles.
3. Identify additional stakeholders who should be part of the CDSS and invite them to join.
4. Identify an appropriate resource to develop a new, more appropriate name, 'brand', 'image' and marketing plan for the CDSS. This might be done through the Gordon Institute's Marketing course as was done with the development of the G21 Skills Taskforce's Employers' Helping Hand.
5. Source funding and web developer to begin building the CDSS website.
6. Establish protocols for communication with other relevant networks.
7. Establish reporting requirements with G21 and the G21 Education and Training Pillar.
8. Meet with representatives from various sectors to identify:
 - a. What assistance or support they would like from the CDSS to improve their service delivery, eg. what strategies would assist the secondary school careers teachers to improve the advice they are able to give to their students?
 - b. What support they are prepared to offer other members of the CDSS.
 - c. What projects they would like to see implemented and how they would like to be involved.
 - d. How best to manage the outreach programs for various locations.

9. Identify sources of local labour market information which is already being collected and negotiate with those agencies for CDSS access to that information.
10. Identify gaps in the availability of local labour market information and negotiate with CDSS members to develop strategies to address these gaps.
11. Develop a process for storage, analysis and dissemination of local labour market information.
12. Identify major projects with which the CDSS might be involved and source appropriate funding and member consortia for them.

This CDSS project has been the culmination of a number of years of work through a range of preceding projects, which have been detailed in the project Interim Report. With the change of Federal Government and a more intense focus on how Governments can work more closely with local communities, the time is now right for the G21 Region to move forward with the implementation of the CDSS.

In developing the CDSS, it will be critical to ensure that everything possible is done to build on the excellent work which has already been undertaken by a range of agencies to build stronger relationships. This will need to continue in an environment of goodwill and cooperation if the CDSS is to realise its potential as the facilitating entity for a more vibrant and integrated careers and skills sector within the G21 Region.



