

**Adult and community education
organisations' views about successful
strategies for diversity and
engagement:
A study of the wider Waikato region**

Created for the

ACE/TEC Hamilton Network

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Executive summary

This report details a research project conducted by the ACE/TEC network and funded by the Tertiary Education Commission's Professional Development Fund. This project was supported by members of the Thames/Coromandel, King Country (Te Kuiti, Otorohanga, Pio Pio [TOP]) ACE /TEC Networks and several other significant agencies in the Hamilton area.

The funding supported a project to:

- create and disseminate a durable, flexible model which the ACE/TEC Network and other organisations can adapt and apply to
 - foster participation in ACE activities by a diverse and broadly based group of learners, educators and providers
 - actively engage with TEC and other government agencies.

The focused research question which guided this study was:

What are the views of those who work in organisations about the strategies they use successfully to foster participation by diverse groups of learners, educators and providers and/or to actively engage with TEC and other government agencies?

The project began in January 2008 and was completed in August 2008. Adrienne Heath, as the main researcher conducted interviews with 15 people each representing a different organisation. Adrienne and Joyce conducted 2 focus groups with a total of 31 people representing approximately 15 additional organisations.

This report can be read as the results of a research project. However, more importantly, the selected findings outline specific strategies (and sub-themes) which organisations can use to foster more diverse participation and to actively engage with TEC and other government agencies. The three key strategies are to deliver on identifiable mandates, create focussed relationships and to plan purposefully. These strategies are supplemented in the discussion

chapter by other strategies and points for discussion which could be held by ACE/TEC or other organisations.

This entire report will be on the ACE Aotearoa website (<http://www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/>) by the end of October, 2008. ACE Aotearoa will also host an associated handbook manual for facilitators to run a workshop in which ACE/TEC networks and other organisations can self-assess and improve their diversity and engagement (available by the end of 2008).

We wish to take this opportunity to thank the umbrella organisations, agencies and individuals who helped us to locate organisations which had successfully improved their diversity and engagement. Our thanks too to the respondents who gave so willingly of their time and energy during the interviews and focus groups. Finally, a thank you to the TEC/ACE network members for their support, enthusiasm and many hours of unpaid work which made this project possible.

Kia ora

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Chapter 1: Background

Introduction

Late in 2007, the Tertiary Education Commission made available \$30,000 to Adult and Community Education/Tertiary Education Commission (ACE/TEC) Networks for professional development projects.

The Hamilton based meeting of the Waikato ACE/TEC Network discussed possible projects at an early spring 2007 meeting. The discussion turned to 'needs' and what would best serve 'the needs' of the Network. There was some discussion of conducting a 'needs assessment' but slowly it became obvious that we had a long standing need in the Network. As we looked around the room, it was clear that despite its energetic attempts, the Network was not a diverse nor engaged Network.

The Network had yet to fulfil its potential to either foster participation by a diverse and broadly based group of ACE learners, educators and providers or to actively engage with TEC. We could have bragged that our activities attracted adult educators from the Coromandel, King Country and South Waikato Networks as well as representatives from government and non-government agencies and some community and volunteer groups. We could have reported that we were working hard to engage with Maori and Pacific learners. However, as a Network and as individuals within organisations, we believed that we could do better. Furthermore, we knew that this was an issue faced by other Networks as well.

Conversely, we knew anecdotally that both the Network and some of the providers in the wider Waikato region had experienced scattered success with improving diverse participation and engagement with government agencies. As well, we were aware that some providers who did not attend the Network or did not attend regularly had success in terms of both these elements.

It became obvious that organisations both within and outside the Network had much to

learn from each other. Indeed, we knew that we had to learn from each other if our ACE/TEC Network and its providers were to provide ACE equitably to adult learners in New Zealand Aotearoa.

The direction of our considerations was fostered by TEC's comments in its document *ACE Networks Information for Providers* (February 2004). It stated that ACE/TEC Networks' basic purpose was to "build local ACE sector capacity." Two key characteristics for successful Networks were embedded within the document:

- Participation by a diverse and broadly based group of ACE learners, educators and providers
- Active engagement with TEC

In the first instance, broader participation was linked to enhanced capability, effectiveness, efficiency, collaboration, and equal inclusion for all. In the second instance, active engagement with TEC was linked to ownership of change, open, two-way communications, input into TEC developments, full consultation and respectful exchanges of ideas.

Research question

Against the above context, in November 2007 the Network applied for TEC's PD funding to support a \$30,00 project to:

create and disseminate a durable, flexible model which the ACE/TEC Network and other organisations can adapt and apply to

- foster participation in ACE activities by a diverse and broadly based group of learners, educators and providers
- actively engage with TEC and other government agencies

We hoped that it would be possible, using the insights and experience of our Network to engage with those beyond our Network such as government and non-government agencies and community and volunteer networks. We believed that the project would help to build a broader and more inclusive 'whanau of adult educators,' who would carry out their adult

education activities as part of broadly based, collaborative, inter-dependent advocacy rather than as solitary and technical tasks.

We knew that there was a need to have adult educators see themselves as learners in a whanau who are active, engaged agents, actors and citizens. Such a whanau would connect individuals with each other and also connect learners, educators and providers with relevant policies, discussion documents and shared strategies for change.

Ultimately, we had a desire to live up to the Maori name for the Hamilton ACE/TEC Network: Pa Harakeke. Pa harakeke symbolises the binding of generations in a caring embrace from the youngest shoot in the centre to the elder leaves protecting the inner whanau. More significantly it is about the importance of people in the first instance.

Initial steps

In December 2007, TEC notified the Network that they had received \$30,000 (\$32,000 was requested, \$30,000 was the maximum amount awarded) for a proposal to be completed, ideally, by June 30, 2008.

In February 2008, a request for proposals was advertised widely through email and personal contacts. By the closing date of mid-February no proposals had been received. Some of those who enquired spoke of the tight timeline within which to complete the project and low level of funding as disincentives. The Network put out a call for applications, via the same systems, short listed two possible candidates and selected Adrienne Heath, who had recently completed her Master of Education.

As the key researcher, Adrienne's contract began on April 28, 2008. She was supervised by Associate Professor Joyce Stalker who researches adult education at the School of Education, University of Waikato. Adrienne was located at the Centre for Continuing Education, University of Waikato which also handled the basic administrative details for the project.

Chapter 2: Research Design

Introduction

The purpose of this Chapter is to detail the research project. It includes an explanation for the choice of a qualitative approach, the processes of data collection and analysis, ethical issues and limitations of the study.

The Qualitative approach

The approach used for this research project was qualitative rather than quantitative, that is, data were collected in a descriptive, rather than numerical form. Qualitative research was selected because of its three key strengths.

Firstly, qualitative research is concerned with understanding individuals' perceptions of the world around them (Bell, 1999). It affords us holistic understandings about an individual's viewpoint and their own meaning of situations and their life worlds as they experience them on a day to day basis (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000).

A second feature of qualitative research is to provide a voice for the respondents. As Schratz (1993) observed in his investigation of the development of qualitative research in education, when researchers begin to pay more attention to the original voices, they make room for a more expansive view of social reality. What is clear according to Sherman and Webb (1988) is that it is important to have those who are studied "speak for themselves" (p. 5).

A third reason to employ a qualitative method relates to its ability to gather data which can result in rich or 'thick' descriptions of the focus question. Rich or 'thick' description according to Merriam "means the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated" (2001, p. 29-30). Such 'thick' descriptions help us to understand phenomenon and their complexities, hidden assumptions and presumptions.

Data collection

Interviews, focus groups and collection of documentation

The processes of data collection for this research were threefold. First, Adrienne conducted and recorded 15 semi-structured interviews. Second, Adrienne and Joyce conducted 2 focus groups. Third, Adrienne received documentation from organisations (eg: mission statements, policies).

Interviews enhance the relationship between the researcher and respondents (Bishop, 1997). Semi-structured interviewing requires the interviewer to have a flexible interview guide, (see Appendices) directly related to the research question, yet to allow for the opportunity for both respondent and researcher to explore various other aspects related to the research topic (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000; Merriam, 2001; Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). The semi-structured “interview is an open situation, having greater flexibility and freedom” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 273) which gives “the researcher more of an insight into the meaning and significance of what is happening” to those participating in the research (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p. 44).

There are a number of advantages in gathering data through semi-structured interviews. These include the respondent communicating in a language that is natural to them; there is more equality between the researcher and respondent; and hypothetical questions can be asked within the interview to encourage respondents to speculate about possible outcomes (Burns, 2000; Merriam, 2001).

Focus groups are similar to interviews, but are made up of two or more respondents from the respondent organisation. These groups provide the interviewer with a variety of views as each individual will have different views. This type of data collection affords the interviewer the opportunity to access incredibly rich data from the respondent organisation.

Collection of documents, in this study were supplementary to the interviews and focus groups. They can be used as a source of data in and of themselves but in this study they provided background information within which respondents' comments could be placed. They were not actively sought out, but rather volunteered at the time of the interview.

Those who have a quantitative orientation often question the validity and reliability of qualitative research. Although space limitations prevent a full explanation here, suffice it to say that rigorous qualitative research is equally as valid and reliable as quantitative research. Validity in the qualitative sense, requires an “interview ... based on a carefully designed structure...” (Best & Kuhn, 1993, p. 254). An organised, structured interview process in which the “researcher (is) self-monitoring...exposes all phases of the research activity to continual questioning and re-evaluation” (Burns, 2000, p. 419) This avoids “a tendency for the interviewer to see the respondent in her own image... to seek answers that support her preconceived notions; misinterpretations on the part of the interviewer of what the respondent is saying; misunderstandings on the part of the respondent of what is being asked” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 121).

In order to address validity in this research we followed the guidelines above and also used a semi-structured interview process which was led by a guided interview question schedule (see Appendix C). The interview questions were developed around the basic research question and probed respondents’ views of successful strategies.

Reliability pertains to the “the consistency of response” (Best & Kahn, 1993, p. 254) and the replicability of the study (Burns, 2000), that is, its dependability, stability, consistency and accuracy. To ensure reliability in the first instance, most of the questions in this study were restated in an altered form later in the interview process. In the second instance, the full explanation of the study in this report helps to ensure its replicability.

Additional data, such as strategic plans, mission statements and reports relating to the organisation were offered by some of the respondents at the time of the interview. We collected these in order to gain further insight and information about the organisations who were participating in this research project.

Identification of suitable respondents

For the interviews, suitable organisations, which were either diverse or engaged, and respondents inside them were identified via a cross-referencing technique. Initial contact was made with ‘umbrella’ organisations (see Appendices). Some of these recommended potential diverse or engaged organisations and the individuals within them who they thought might be appropriate to interview (see Appendices). All of these recommended

organisations/individuals were located within the Waikato region, that is, an area that stretched from Huntly to Te Kuiti, Raglan to Rotorua and included the Coromandel. Ideally one or more ‘umbrella’ organisation recommended the same organisations/individuals, but this was the case in only a few cases.

Once organisations/individuals were identified, contact was made by either telephone or email to arrange the interview. A brief description of the research was provided at this point in time so the respondents were aware of the focus of the research. The respondents elected a time for the interview and all interviews were conducted at their place of work, or where some of the adult and community education classes were held for that organisation.

Prior to the interview commencing each respondent was given a consent form (see Appendices) to read and sign. It detailed the research project and ethical considerations. The respondents were given the opportunity to discuss these with the interviewer. All of the respondents signed the consent forms in the interviewer’s presence.

The 15 one hour long semi-structured interviews were recorded digitally as a “convenient and inexpensive” way to proceed with the interview process (Best & Kahn, 1992, p. 253). Throughout the interview process the interviewer unobtrusively took brief notes which “are a useful supplement to record non-verbal activity” (Burns, 2000, p. 429).

For the two focus groups, a different approach was taken. They were conducted after the interviews were completed. The first group of 16 was composed of the local ACE/TEC Network group. There was a brief power point presentation of the draft findings to date, the presentation of a model based on responses in the individual interviews (see Appendices Model I) and a brief discussion of the model. Notes were taken of the comments made during the discussion.

The second group resulted from an invitation promoted broadly by the ACE/TEC Network to attend a ½ day workshop entitled: *Tips and Tricks: Your strategies go national*. In the second focus group of 15, there was a brief presentation of the draft findings to date, an activity based on the presentation of a simplified matrix model (see Appendices Model II). The activity focussed on organisations’ representatives at the workshop identifying the current and ideal location for their organisation. This generated much useful discussion about

the strategies to bridge the gap between the current and future situations. Notes were taken of the questions and comments made during the session.

The respondents

In this study, the respondents were a mixture of ages and genders. Each was involved as a manager, director or programme co-ordinator for an organisation that was involved in the delivery of adult and community education. The respondents identified themselves as coming from a range of ethnic backgrounds, including Maori, Samoan and New Zealand/Pakeha. They were drawn from rural/urban, large/small organisations.

For the purposes of this paper we have provided the organisation for which the respondents work with pseudonyms. The organisations interviewed primarily for their divergent strategies were: Dill, Daffodil, Dandelion, Daisy, Dewberry, Daphne, Delphinium, The organisations interviewed primarily for their engagement strategies were: Elderflower, Elm, Echinacea, Edelweiss, Erica, Endive, Eucalyptus and Earlycheer. The selection of these plant names as pseudonyms was deliberate as Adult and Community Education focuses on the nurturing of learners from the tiniest seedling to the fully developed plant. Each of these organisations is dedicated to nurturing the learners and educators who participate within their organisation. Below is a brief description of each organisation.

- Dill is a small organisation located in Hamilton. This organisation works with many of the diverse community groups “to enhance personal and community well-being, empowerment and positive change.”
- Daffodil is a medium sized organisation located in central Hamilton. This organisation actively encourages people from the diverse adult and community groups within Hamilton to become involved by “going out to different communities.”
- Dandelion is a large organisation that is located in Hamilton. This organisation has a specific focus around catering for the diverse adult communities within Hamilton. The organisation tends to “look for diversity a lot, because in looking for diversity and the differences between people that’s one of the best ways of making sure that you’re focusing on them.”

- Daisy is a medium sized organisation located in Hamilton that also caters for the wider Waikato region. This organisation works with a large diverse community within the wider Waikato that is part of a national body. This organisation has a strong focus on “the way in which we communicate with the people that we cater for.”
- Dewberry is a medium sized organisation located in rural Waikato. This organisation not only encourages diverse participation in the community where it is located but also those surrounding rural communities as well. The organisations values kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga and whakawhanaunatanga as these “allow you to value relationships and to support peoples’ uniqueness.”
- Daphne is a medium sized organisation located in Hamilton that also caters for some of those within the rural areas surrounding Hamilton. This organisation grew out of a need within the diverse communities that it serves. The organisation focuses on knowing the community, “people underestimate the importance of knowing your community you know, that is absolutely central.”
- Delphinium is a medium sized organisation with a central office in Hamilton and branch offices throughout the wider Waikato region. This organisation works with diverse adult and community groups as “diversity is right throughout everything, it’s um, it’s woven right throughout the whole fabric of our lives.”
- Elderflower is a medium sized organisation located in central Hamilton. Again, this organisation works with many of the diverse adult and community groups in Hamilton, and some of those within the rural areas surrounding Hamilton. It is engaged with a number of agencies with whom it “works side-by-side, collaboratively”, including government agencies.
- Elm is a large organisation located in located in rural Waikato. This organisation does provide learning opportunities for the diverse community where it is located as well as some of those people from neighbouring rural adult communities. Engagement with various government agencies allows easy access to “resources that are connected straight to the documents (government policy documents).”
- Echinacea is a large organisation located in Hamilton. This organisation is involved in providing opportunities for learning opportunities for adult communities within Hamilton.

Engagement for this organisation provides the opportunity to “bring agencies together, so whether they’re government or local...I always bring a community representative as part of, because it gets their view in it.”

- Edelweiss is a medium sized organisation located in Hamilton. This organisation focuses on catering for the various diverse communities it was established to assist. Engagement with government agencies is viewed as a key to it being able to access resources in order to create “an empowered community.”
- Erica is a small organisation located in rural Waikato. This organisation takes its responsibility to cater for diversity within the local communities very seriously. In terms of engagement with government agencies the focus is on attending “the network meetings.”
- Endive is a medium sized organisation located in rural Waikato. The organisation has always focused on creating opportunities for diverse communities within the area in which the organisation is located. The organisation is engaged with government agencies in order to make “adult/tertiary training relevant to the district...and give effect to the TEC strategies.”
- Eucalyptus is a medium sized organisation located in Hamilton. It concentrates on catering for the diverse adult community that it was originally established to support. Engagement with government agencies solidified once the organisation was recognised as being able to “meet our outcomes” in terms of various contractual agreements.
- Earlycheer is a small organisation located in rural Waikato. The organisation is always investigating new and exciting ways it might best cater to the diverse needs of the local and surrounding adult and community groups. This organisation views engagement with government agencies as “a requirement, not only a requirement but I think it’s necessary if we’re going to thrive particularly given we are a small community.”

Data Analysis

The data gathering process resulted in “large amounts of contextually laden, subjective, and richly detailed data” (Bryne, 2001, p. 904). The first task once data gathering was completed was to transcribe the interviews, as “there is the potential for massive data loss, distortion and the reduction of complexity” (Cohen, et al., 2000, p. 281). The interviews were transcribed as soon as possible following each individual interview process. One organisation took the opportunity to read through the transcribed paragraphs, sentences, phrases and words from the interview. They made no changes. Notes from the focus groups were added to the data.

It is suggested by Aronson (1994), Burns (2000), and Bryne (2001) that the purpose of data analysis is to find the meaning in the data, through thematic, systematic arrangement and presentation of the data. It is, in other words, “a form of classifying content” (Burns, 2000, p. 432). The analysis of data involved reading through the interview transcripts and focus group notes four to five times and selecting out paragraphs, sentences, phrases and words which were relevant to the research question. These were coded and highlighted (in a colour-coded and numerical fashion). They were classified and re-classified until eventually three firm categories of strategies emerged. These were then illustrated by selecting individual respondent’s quotes which best represented the theme (Aronson, 1994). The three themes that resulted from the data analysis process are presented as strategies in the next section.

Ethical Issues

There was one prominent ethical issue to be addressed within this piece of research: the respondents’ right to confidentiality, privacy and anonymity. This was particularly important in this study—one conducted within the limits of the Waikato region where organisations and individuals within ACE could have known each other well. These circumstances could have lead to interviews in which the respondents softened their comments or chose not to answer some questions.

Thus, respondents were assured of their anonymity and that the information shared within the interview process would remain confidential and private. Cohen et al. (2000) suggest that under such circumstances that “although researchers know who has provided the

information given, they will in no way make the connection known publicly; the boundaries surrounding the shared secret will be protected” (p. 62).

Cohen et al. (2000) found that “consent ... protects and respects the right of self-determination” (p. 51). This is important as the interview process required a good rapport that was built on understanding and trust. As researchers, we addressed this issue by interviewing the respondents in a private place suggested by each of them. Prior to the interview commencing, we outlined the ways in which we would attempt to preserve each respondents’ anonymity. Respondents signed a form, and kept its duplicate, indicating that their anonymity was assured. The respondents’ only shared personal information that they felt was relevant to the study. Once the interview had taken place we created pseudonyms for the organisations the respondents represented. These were used at all times.

Limitations

The main limitation of this research relates primarily to the timeframe and funding of the research. The contract with TEC was awarded in December 2007, the summer intervened, a researcher had to be found and the research project really only began in April 2008. It had to be completed by June 2008. All of this had to be done by a small group of committed but voluntary ACE/TEC network members who had full time work commitments. The project was funded to \$30,000, which was not sufficient to attract professional researchers/consultants who could work independently.

In sum, this project had to be a short-term study, that is, “an investigation that may take several weeks or months” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 174). This had several implications for the study.

First, and most importantly, the time and funding restrictions meant that partnership research approaches were not possible. Action research, kaupapa Maori, participatory, grassroots, collaborative research approaches are more suited to research in the ACE sector. However, they take more time and money than were available to this project.

Second, it was not possible within the limited timeframe to undertake a literature review on which to base interview questions. Such a review would have guided the creation of more targeted and relevant questions.

Third, the project was limited to a snap-shot view in relation to the research question. Although much funded research is of this kind, a more longitudinal approach often can yield deeper understandings of complex issues.

Summary

This study selected a qualitative approach as the most appropriate research approach to collect the data required. Interviews and focus groups were the key methods of collecting data. Umbrella organisations were approached for the names of organisations/individuals which they thought successfully had diverse participation or engaged with government agencies.

In total, 15 individuals were interviewed and 2 focus groups of 31 people were held. Data was thoroughly analysed and strong themes of strategies identified. The key ethical issue in this study was to ensure anonymity and methods were put in place to ensure that happened.

Despite the limitations of funding and restricted time, the research yielded some very strong and useful strategies. These are detailed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Selected Findings

Introduction

The findings that are selected and presented within any qualitative study are the result of careful gathering and analysis of information. The strategies in this chapter represent the dominant views of the respondents in response to the research question. Not all respondents held each view and not all respondents held all views. However, overall, the strategies and their sub-themes below were strongly evident in the interviews.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the key strategies that resulted from the analysis of data gathered during the interview process. The respondents and focus groups responded to questions relating to the research question:

What are the views of those who work in organisations about the strategies they use successfully to foster diverse and broad based groups of learners, educators and providers and/or to actively engage with TEC and other government agencies?

Each respondent provided information that related to the experiences s/he had as adult and community education providers. It was explained in the previous chapter that respondents were provided with pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity. These pseudonyms derive from plant species commonly grown in New Zealand/Aotearoa. They start with either a D or an E, reflecting the two strands of the research, D for diversity and E for engagement.

The respondents' responses were recorded and paragraphs, sentences, phrases and words formed the transcriptions. As explained in the previous chapter we read and re-read the transcribed interviews in order to identify themes that were a feature of all of the respondent's responses.

From these, we identified three main themes focussed on strategies; these represent the respondents' views. The three themes overlapped at times, however, for the purposes of this report they were treated as separate categories. The desirable 'strategies' were inseparable in

terms of fostering diverse participation and effective engagement. They were: deliver on identifiable mandates, create focused relationships and plan purposefully. Below, the strategies are explained and presented with illustrative quotes from the respondents.

Strategy 1: Deliver on identifiable mandates

In this strategy, organisations spoke of two aspects of this strategy which drove them toward diversity and engagement. The first sub-theme was the need to meet the communities' needs. Within this sub-theme the respondents' stressed the importance of consulting the community, encouraging discussion in the community and keeping the community informed of developments in relation to adult and community programmes.

The second sub-theme discussed was the requirement to meet government demands. The data revealed the necessity to meet the outcomes that were part of the contract, to work within the changes in TEC structures at the regional level and deal effectively with inherent power differentials between adult and community education organisation and government agencies.

Meet community needs

In this first sub-theme the organisations highlighted the ways they meet the needs of their communities through consultation, discussion and keeping informed about their surrounding communities. The organisations highlighted the need to keep 'in touch with the community' as their organisations are there to respond to community needs.

The first and most prominent aspect of the sub-theme is the link between the organisation and the community with which they are working. Dandelion called this "community engagement." The link between the organisation and community is kept alive as "we consult with the wider community (Delphinium)." Daisy highlighted that "the community's changing all the time and I think all we can really do is keep getting out there are seeing what the community is."

The type of consultation that took place differed for each organisation however the main feature of consultation was meeting with the community and attempting to meet the needs of that community. Dewberry "work from the community development model and responding to community need" while they believed that with "a clear mandate from all of the diverse communities as to what it is that they need and want...well you can't go wrong."

Edelweiss identified themselves as a “community organisation, in that our door is open.” Likewise, Daphne had a “real connection to our various communities” as they were involved in many community activities. In terms of communicating with the community, Daisy indicated that “communicating to the community, making them aware and informed of what we’re doing” assisted in keeping the level of consultation high. In support of this Elm stated that “they tell us what’s happening out there in the community...so that’s how we, that helps me develop the next lot of programmes.” Dandelion highlighted that “the centre co-ordinator spends a lot of time talking to groups about what their needs might be” while Erica stated that “it’s important that the person you do get as the community co-ordinator gets out into the community.”

Erica also discussed the importance of talking “to different groups in the community” in order to learning about what “we can do to support or to provide education.” When groups talked about providing support Dewberry highlighted that they “are not telling people what to do. We are always endeavouring to support organisations” out there in the community. Daisy functioned similarly. They said that they are “community driven” and we are “listening to the people that we’re supposed to be catering for.” Dandelion summed up by saying that it is important to do “something that they want...listen to those voices” of those in the community.

The second prominent aspect of this sub-theme is closely associated to meeting the “needs of the community (Dill).” This aspect parallels the one above but explicitly talks of needs. Daffodil stated “we are here to meet a need in our community” while Elm “develop programmes because of a need.” Similarly, Elderflower talked about “taking care of the needs of the separate groups” as “we are a community response.”

There were a number of approaches that the organisations used in order to meet the needs of the communities around them. Dewberry mentioned that they do “stuff in the community” and the individuals from communities “needs to be represented in the decision making” around adult and community education. Elm has a strategy whereby “we do actually have an advisory group for both places where the community comes and that’s how we get our needs analysis.” In terms of meeting the needs of the community Erica run a lot of classes “in the community...at a time which is suitable for a lot of retired folk or non-working people.”

One of the reasons that Daisy focused on catering for community need was because “our community actually pushed for this organisation to be started” so “it’s giving the people the freedom to do what they want to do.” A further reason to focus on community needs was presented by Dewberry as “community workers (are) doing a whole bunch of stuff in town and outlying areas” which catered for the various community’s needs. Echinacea indicated that “if you follow through what you say you’re going to do, especially for community” then you will meet the communities’ needs.

Satisfy government demands

In the second sub-theme the organisations provided feedback on the specific government demands that they are required to meet, that is, mandates they must fulfil. These seemed to define for them their interest in diversity and engagement. Most of these demands were raised in relation to contracts, the issues relating to changes in TEC structure at the regional level and inherent power differentials between adult and community education organisation and government agencies.

The first and most prominent aspect of this sub-theme relates to contractual arrangements with government agencies in general. When questioned about government agencies the main focus of comments was the contractual arrangements and obligations placed upon the organisations. One of the main contractual demands related to accountability. Earlycheer believed that accountability “is something we are expected to do...it’s not an option” and Dewberry highlighted the necessity to “have clear accountability as where money comes in and where money goes out.” Another focus of accountability related to the outcomes required by government agencies. Daphne stated “our services or our contracts have specific criteria...ministerially driven outcomes” that were formulated out of policies “conceived down in the Ministry.”

Accountability for Eucalyptus meant that “government departments actually want to see that statistical data, they want to see value for money...it’s all outcome(s) based.” This organisation had “a number of contracts with those (various) government agencies” and had observed that “it (engagement) keeps going because we meet our outcomes basically we exceed our outcomes...because of the credibility we have as an organisation it’s actually easy to engage.” Endive also stated that “levels of engagement with government agencies would depend on funding levels” thus indicating that those with higher levels of funding will have

higher levels of engagement. They went on to state that engagement with stakeholders as a “mandatory process...we must show that we’re working collaboratively within our community...and again that’s externally driven by the funders” who were government agencies. Edelweiss also mentioned the requirement to “work to a business model” as “everybody’s got to account in the same way.” This was then linked back to the requirement to be accountable and meet certain outcomes.

The second aspect to this sub-theme of government demands relates to how the structural changes in TEC that have occurred recently make strategies to foster diversity or encourage engagement very difficult. Many of the organisations involved in this study received a substantial amount of funding for their adult and community education programmes from the TEC. A number of organisations commented on the restructuring that had taken place and the negative outcomes of that restructuring. Earlycheer raised the idea that “having that person there, having that tangible person that you build your relationship with...you can ask for help or ask to clarify or really explain to you what tertiary education commission wants from you” was now missing due to the re-centralisation of TEC services. Supporting this Endive stated “we did get a lot of information through our TEC rep about different strategies...you got the feeling for something that was (a) government directive, it wasn’t just TEC which was one government department. You were getting the impression that this is what’s happening in the tertiary sector.”

Erica noted that regular attendance at all TEC meetings had “been quite good because they’ve been a place where a) you can interact with the other people in the network and b) with someone from TEC.” With the removal of the TEC regional offices many of the organisations were uncertain about the level of support they would now receive from TEC. Dewberry said “in our experience the further away people get from what’s happening the less possibility there is for stuff to actually um, occur.” Elm felt that they had “to keep being the detective to find out how you engage with the TEC”, as “TEC’s got the funding but they’re hard to engage with.” “I think until we get some other link back or some other link comes into place” then engagement with TEC will continue to be a battle for Earlycheer, and indeed many of the other organisations involved in this study.

The third aspect of this sub-theme continues the story of difficulties connecting with government agencies, specifically TEC. It relates to the inherent power differentials between

adult and community education organisation and government agencies. Again, these differentials defined strategies for engagement. Delphinium noted that where government agencies are concerned “there’s much more of a hierarchy...government is more of a structured organisation you know it’s there for the role as opposed to the people or the client group.” Edelweiss supported this statement as “you don’t engage equally with a funder. There’s a huge power differential that’s unavoidable.” In terms of funding from government agencies Eucalyptus drew the analogy between the donkey and the carrot; “government departments have the resourcing and the funding so they dangle the carrot. We have to see how high we can jump to get a bite of it.”

Strategy 2: Create focused relationships

Throughout the course of the interviews the women and men negotiated their way around two sub-themes about relationships. The first sub-theme of this strategy revolved around the formation of effective, purposeful relationships. These relationships were focused on acquiring knowledge, creating successful working collaborations and networking for the benefit of the organisation.

The second sub-theme related to the idea of forming affective, personal relationships. Discussion about these types of relationships indicated that they were based on concepts such as face-to-face connection, respect, friendship, trust, love and the sharing of similar values and philosophies.

Establish effective, purposeful relationships

In the first sub-theme, the respondents highlighted that effective, purposeful relationships encompass the ideas of networking and collaborating together, as well as acquiring knowledge. These types of relationships might appear to be similar to the affective, personal relationships however the effective, purposeful relationships are retained to benefit the organisation not necessarily the individual. They were business-like, militaristic and deliberately planned and structured relationships.

The first and most prominent aspect of effective, purposeful relationships is the dominance of collaboration and networking. Dewberry stated that they “create relationships

with agencies... (and) manage relationships over time to ensure that collectively (that) we can achieve the primary goal, delivery of successful courses” whilst Echinacea mentioned “bringing organisations together, making them link for community needs.” This type of collaboration is strategic and at the same time obviously benefits the community. Elderflower presented a similar scenario as “(we) ensure that we are working with them (other organisations/agencies) positively and making sure there’s no gaps...it’s about working collaboratively for the safety of the people.” Endive talked about “the people that are going to come along to meetings all the time” and “being able to know you can work with them on a project.” Similarly, Daphne emphasised the need to create “those types of alliances that, you know, that would actually progress things” while Elm had looked at ways “to get (yourself) onto various groups to make that (results) happen.”

For these organisations, these relationships were focused on achieving results in terms of programmes and projects. Elm also stressed that “community people in key jobs know each other and meet” to keep the level of collaboration high between community organisations. Collaboration and networking are related concepts, and according to Elderflower “networking can never be underestimated” when working in a community based organisation. Similarly, Daffodil mentioned that “us non-for-profit groups have huge email networks” so they can keep informed about funding rounds and other information that is essential to their survival. Daisy also linked networking to funding as we work closely with other organisations and those “networks get our resources.”

Linkages and linking services is the second feature of the first aspect of establishing effective, purposeful relationships. Dandelion talked about “linking services together” through networking and collaboration, while Erica discussed the need to “see how linkages can” be of benefit to the communities within small towns. Edelweiss “invite people in” to their organisation and Endive “promote their group to all new education providers” in order to make sure links are made with different organisations involved in adult and community education.

The second aspect of the sub-theme, ‘establish effective, purposeful relationships’ is the acquisition of knowledge through network’s effective collaboration. The most significant part of this aspect was considered by Earlycheer to be “dealing with the people who you felt could provide you with the answers.” In support Dill stated that it was essential to “contact

people who have the knowledge” whereas Echinacea indicated that through networks people “definitely come with knowledge...from their agency.” Erica highlighted that “it takes a while to get to know what connections you can make...but as soon as you start talking to others they pass on ideas” or knowledge. This knowledge can then be utilised by the receiving organisations for their benefit. One outcome according to Endive is a sense of trust between those organisations and agencies that are collaborating and networking “’cause we obviously must trust each other to share the information.” Through the sharing of knowledge Elm stressed that those who may not have been “ready yet to go into formal education” might now feel that success at that formal level is an option as organisations are sharing knowledge to assist in the education pathways for such individuals.

Foster affective, personal relationships

In the second sub-theme, as mentioned above, the respondent organisations talked about the affective, personal nature of some of their relationships. These relationships were revealed as being face-to-face, warm and generous in their character. Words such as trust, friendship, respect, passion, love and the idea of shared values and philosophies were at the forefront of discussions about these this type of relationship.

The first and most prominent aspect of the sub-theme ‘foster affective, personal relationships’, relates to personal communication as part of the relationship. In terms of “building and maintaining relationships” Echinacea and Elm highlighted the need to get “out there face-to-face” as well as providing “emotional support and emotional growth, and valuing and supporting others (Elm).” Continuing the idea of face-to-face communications, Daffodil stated that part of the co-ordinators’ “role is to get out and talk to groups...chatting builds a relationship and builds trust”. This links with the ideas expressed by organisations in the first aspect of the sub-theme. Earlycheer also talked about being proactive and “moving about these (community) circles as well. It’s touching base with them all personally.” The co-ordinator needs to provide “the community with a human face.” Elm also indicated that an important element of the affective, personal relationship was “being able to have that open door and being able to offer an ear” to encourage personal communication.

A further type of personal communication which some of the respondents mentioned related to advertising. Erica highlighted the need to “keep publicity out in the community...I’ve gone for big adverts and we put out displays of stuff” while Earlycheer

also used the “local newspaper to set up editorials to get the message out to people.” Both of these organisations noted an increased interest in their respective programmes following the use of editorials in their local newspaper. Eucalyptus used a similar approach, “we have a bi-monthly newsletter and on the back of the newsletter it always has an update on all our community classes we’re running so we keep people well informed of what it is we’re doing...we also have an annual presentation” of awards and certificates.

The second aspect of the first sub-theme related to respect, trust and the sharing of values and philosophies. Daphne captured the idea that it’s about “respecting people and their worldview...it’s all about looking after relationships.” Daisy indicated the need to make sure people both inside and outside of the organisation “trust the person that they’re gonna be dealing with” as without this trust there can be no affective relationship. Dewberry stated that “generally valuing relationships” encompasses the concept of “ensuring there’s integrity and goodwill” while Edelweiss said they believe “that relationships are the important thing we’ve got”; that valuing relationships is “a philosophy...of how you should treat other people.” Daphne highlighted the need for “understanding...people’s philosophical viewpoints” in order to realise “what are (the) common shared values.” Dill summarised what other organisations had said when they stated that affective, personal relationships are formed on the basis of an “underlying commonality, passion or shared interest.”

Delphinium noted that in terms of affective, personal relationships an “organisation’s most important assets are their people that work for them.” This was supported by Elderflower’s statement that “commitment of the people” helps with the success of an organisation’s relationships. Earlycheer stated that “(we’re) always seeking to help other providers” in terms of tutors, supporting the idea that people are essential in the affective, personal relationship. An appropriate summarising statement about the affective, personal relationship was made by Dill; “you have to know that people, you can’t have a relationship with the organisation, it’s a relationship with the people who work in the organisation...we’re in the people business.”

Strategy 3: Plan purposefully

During the interview process the women and men described two aspects of this strategy. The first was the need to plan in a deliberate way. The second sub-theme discussed the need to allow planning to take place organically.

Create deliberate structures and systems

In this first sub-theme the organisations highlighted the ways in which they had consciously targeted particular individuals and organisations that might be able to assist the growth of their organisation. It became apparent throughout the analysis of the data that the deliberate planning took place in two ways, through internal and external actions. Organisations took time to plan deliberate ways to increase their dynamism internally through the appointment of personal with specific skill sets, expertise and knowledge. Similarly, organisations planned deliberate ways to enhance their stature with external providers and agencies.

Internal

The first and most prominent aspect of creating deliberate internal structures and systems was internal planning, that is, the organisations' focus on employing and/or acquiring the services of the 'right' people. When talking about this deliberate plan Daffodil, Eucalyptus and Edelweiss commented on the need to "make sure you have the right staff." Specifically, Daffodil highlighted the need for the Board to have "a certain skill set." Eucalyptus acknowledged that "some of those (Board members) have been government department managers, regional managers, DHB managers" whereas Edelweiss said that their Trust "always had...the bank manager and the lawyer." Dandelion observed that currently "50 % of our Board" were from ethnically diverse backgrounds. This enhances the organisation's ability to effectively cater for the diverse communities with which it was established to work.

Another important element of this aspect of deliberate planning was the need for "proper systems, processes and policies (Daisy)" which can be helpful for the internal structure of the organisation. Edelweiss also stated structures that were understood by the

people “make sense to people” within the organisation. Dandelion clearly felt that when “you have people employed from a specific culture the use from that specific culture goes up.” This reflected that organisation’s strategy to “cater to groups that are not already catered to.” Taking this a step further, Daphne “recruit from the different communities” so “they’re able to speak their own language, understand the background of their people” so they are better able to deliver services to their diverse communities.

The second prominent aspect of the of deliberate structures and systems which were internal was a focus on policy documents, including strategic plans and mission statements. When questioned about who devised these strategies the overwhelming response was “management.” Daphne said that “management formulates” the strategies following feedback from staff. What flowed out of the strategies that management devise was a “strategic plan that drives us as an organisation... (and) out of that comes our business plan, our annual business plan.” When discussing the strategic plans and associated policy documents the respondents tended to be in agreement over the necessity to conduct reviews regularly. Edelweiss “go through (our) policies once a year” while Dewberry indicated “continual revision around strategic gals and mission statement(s)” was essential. Similarly, some commented on their regular reflection on the mission statement and strategies which assists in “looking for gaps (Daphne)” and keeping our values “in alignment with out mission and vision (Delphinium).”

External

The first dominant aspect in the facet of this sub-theme, deliberate external planning, was the organisations’ focus on effective links between themselves and other providers or agencies. Some organisations including Eucalyptus had a mission statement that talked about building relationships “with external providers as well as government departments.” This organisation stressed that they had “good engagement happening and... (we) talk about how we can actually have some agreed outcomes” in the contracts we have with these agencies. Dewberry used a deliberate strategy to belong to “national federations and organisations to get all the information” while Echinacea maintained “link(s) with some sort of management” within government agencies. A result of this deliberate plan was that “you(r) service appears to be comfortable and hopefully effortlessly provided (Edelweiss).”

A second aspect of deliberate external planning related to the concept of knowledge, both gathering knowledge for and sharing knowledge with external providers, agencies or organisations. In gathering knowledge about the organisation and those it provided for, Daisy stated that putting “our findings and everything” together made “it easier to prove” that further support was required from external agencies. Sharing knowledge at “strategy meetings” assisted Endive in the development of their marketing plan while “linking knowledge” about agencies was important for Echinacea.

Plan organically

In this second sub-theme organisations talked about their adoption of planning purposefully using an organic model. This type of planning was often described as fluid, evolutionary and requiring creative energy. Dandelion mentioned that they were “an organic organisation...something that can grow and change” and “work in a um very fluid environment.” Similarly, Dandelion mentioned the organisation’s ability to “evolve easily...we could change, if not overnight, over a financial year.” Dewberry’s programmes grew “organically through the year” as they used community response from the advertising in the monthly paper to structure what was eventually offered.

Another feature of planning organically was the concept of trial and error. Dill emphasised the importance of “being creative and having creative energy” in relation to the development of programmes and projects. In terms of creativity, Edelweiss highlighted that “you have to have things come unstuck really sometimes to recreate something better” as things can happen that we “hadn’t quite envisaged.” An example of planning organically was raised by Dill during the interview. This organisation was in receipt of an adult education programme that they were not currently offering. When these programmes were donated, fully intact, the organisation advertised the programme and there was an enormous response from the local community. To the respondents, this scenario typified the way one can plan purposefully using an organic model.

Summary

Throughout this chapter we have presented three strategies: deliver an identifiable mandate, create focused relationships and plan purposefully. Within these strategies, sub-themes were also identified. These strategies and their sub-themes represented the dominant views of the respondents about the research question. The strategies did overlap at times, however, for the purposes of this report they were treated as separate categories.

Chapter 4: Discussion

Introduction

In the previous chapter we presented selected findings that flowed from the analysis of the interviews. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss aspects of the findings that were particularly interesting and seem important to explore further. We will present four main categories within this chapter: Confused use of terms, the double-edged sword of engagement with government agencies, the burdens of working in the business model and lack of awareness of the connections between the effective, purposeful and affective, personal relationships. Each of the categories will be discussed in relation to the findings presented in the previous chapter and give suggestions of ways forward. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the chapter.

Confused use of terms

In this first category, we intend to highlight the different understandings of terms and the discrepancies in their usages. The terms that will be discussed here are diversity, engagement, community and needs. During the interview process these terms were used regularly and with confidence by the respondents. However, during the data analysis it became apparent that the respondents used these terms in differing ways from the interviewer, TEC and, in many cases, from each other.

Diversity

Diversity is a popular term that is commonly used instead of words such as variety, multiplicity, assortment, range, and mixture. The word diversity when used in general discussion in the interviews was often equated to difference, usually in terms of culture, ethnicity, gender, age and physical and mental ability. It was used in reference to learners, educators and providers.

Respondents used the term diversity in three clear ways. The first might be thought of as in a narrow sense. In these instances the respondents saw their organisation as legitimately focused solely on a particular group. However, they identified the organisation as diverse in various other ways. For example, an organisation could be involved in the provision of ACE for single mothers. In this instance, all of the participants were required to be single mothers, but they could be diverse, for example, in their ages, number of children, socio-economic levels. In other words, these organisations cultivated multiple differences inside their focused organisation.

In the second case, diversity was used in what might be thought of as a wider sense. In these instances, the respondents did not place any limitations on those who could be involved as learners, educators or providers of ACE. Indeed, these organisations often cultivated alliances with many different groups outside their organisation in order to bring them into the organisation as full and active participants.

The third use of diversity used the term in a way that suggested disconnection. In these instances, the respondents saw their organisation as diverse if it associated with or had close liaisons with organisations which were unlike them. In other words, a white Pakeha organisation could call itself diverse if it had funding, relational or support relationships with a Maori or Pacific Island organisation. The relationship could be inter-dependent and mutually gratifying or based in an asymmetrical power relationship.

It is clear from the above, that there is no universal understanding of the term diversity. This creates an interesting dilemma/opportunity for the sector. On the one hand, it can take advantage of this ambiguity. Since, it is unclear what the expectations are from government agencies in relation to the provision for diversity, it could use the range of 'definitions' of diversity above to argue that it is satisfying demands for diversity. This can be problematic however, for it might allow organisations to hide behind a definition of diversity which could disguise their preference for funding groups that are already strong and resilient, rather than follow the traditional ACE path of working with those who are disenfranchised.

On the other hand, this confusion offers a good opportunity for the sector, under the leadership of ACE Aotearoa to create some clear and uniquely New Zealand Aotearoa definitions for the sector. This could result in some definitions which make achieving government goals/targets much more meaningful and easier for all. More importantly, it

could also result in organisations making clear commitments to include and give power to disadvantaged groups.

Engagement

The term engagement was not used in uniform ways during the interview process. Respondents tended to use engagement interchangeably with words and ideas such as collaboration, consultation, supportive, mutually beneficial, equal, reciprocal, and involving high levels of integrity. The discussion around the concept of engagement often moved freely between engagement with government agencies and the communities with which the organisations worked. Therefore, at times it was unclear whether these descriptors of engagement were linked to the type of engagement the respondents had or desired to have with their communities or if they were related to engagement with government agencies.

In the first case, ACE organisations clearly believed that engagement with their ‘communities’ was important to ACE organisations. This ‘engagement’ was driven by their desire, and in some cases a government requirement. Whichever was the case, there was a sincere desire to engage effectively with the community where they provided ACE. Often this seemed to mean that they would meet physically with the local community. These opportunities to meet with the community opened up the possibilities to have dialogue, to discuss what it was the community wanted or needed as part of the ACE programme. This type of community engagement reflected concepts of partnership, equality and collaboration.

In the second case, when reflecting on engagement with government agencies, respondents spoke of a very different type of engagement based in the power differentials between government agencies and ACE organisations. Unfortunately the respondents tended to feel the power differential as very real and a negative experience for them. The respondents recognised the power differential as a very powerful aspect of their engagement with government agencies. They observed that power differentials meant that engagement between government agencies and organisations was very one-sided, as the organisations were often reliant on funding from the government agencies. It was, in other words, a forced, structured engagement in which their reliance on funding meant that they had to ‘jump’ when the government agencies said to ‘jump’.

This muddy understanding of an important term is more than just an inconvenience. It has serious implications for the sector. First, lacking a specific and clear understanding of the term, ACE organisations understandably may not effectively engage with government agencies. They thus may struggle to fulfil the requirement of government agencies for engagement with their communities and with the agencies. This could potentially lead to ACE organisations missing out on important funding and resources and more importantly, a clearly articulated voice to which government agencies listen respectfully. What ACE organisations need is not just a clarification of this term, but to implement the strategies outlined in the Selected Findings chapter of this report. These will help them to take clear steps forward to achieve full and meaningful engagement with both their local communities and government agencies.

Second, the lack of a clear understanding of the term engagement is a barrier to ACE organisations examining their own power relationships with organisations they fund, support and advise. Interestingly, the respondents did not see themselves as engaged in situations of differential power relationships with other organisations in the same way that they were engaged in differential power relationships with government organisations. This was despite the reality that some respondents' organisations had greater resources, funding ability and general support to give to smaller, more vulnerable organisations. A fuller understanding of those relationships is necessary to give good insights into the real needs and interests of the community. Organisations need to understand their own roles, both real and potential, in maintaining or changing the location of the disadvantaged, displaced, disenfranchised and dispossessed.

Community

The respondents used four distinct and very different ways to describe the term community. First, community was inward looking. It described those within the organisation, those who were volunteers, employed, or involved in any way, shape or form with that organisations provision of ACE. Second, the respondents used the term community to describe the people that came into their organisation to seek out ACE. Third, community was used to describe the people who resided in the geographic area within which the ACE organisation was located, where the programmes were offered. Fourth, community was used to describe groups with unique or special focuses within the geographic community. An

example might be a specific ethnic or cultural group, or a particular age group of people within the wider community.

It is not surprising that the concept of community is muddy. It has a long history internationally and it has seldom been clarified in the contemporary New Zealand Aotearoa context (Craig, & Munford, 1996). TEC has done little to help, saying that community in the context of the priority “Strengthening communities by meeting community learning needs” “may refer to a group of people based on interest, need, ethnicity or area” (TEC, 2005). Although overlapping with the sector’s understanding of the term, TEC clearly has a much more narrow view of community than the sector.

Such confusion may create problems. When seeking resources and/or funding the providers of ACE programmes are required to complete forms detailing the community for whom they provide the programmes. If there is no clear, shared understanding of what ‘community’ means between government agencies and ACE providers, ACE providers may not secure enough resources to continue to function. Eventually, the provision of ACE to their communities may be threatened due to a lack of clarity surrounding the term community.

The confusion also presents opportunities. On the one hand, as with the term diversity, the sector can take advantage of this ambiguity and use the range of ‘definitions’ of community above to argue that they are satisfying demands to work with community. This might allow for a wide range of projects to be initiated and particular disenfranchised groups to be more strongly targeted.

On the other hand, this confusion offers, once again, a good opportunity for the sector, under the leadership of ACE Aotearoa to create some clear and uniquely New Zealand Aotearoa definitions for the sector. This could be done collaboratively with TEC and result in definitions which make achieving government goals/targets easier for all. More importantly, it could also result in organisations making clear commitments to include and give power to less privileged groups.

Needs

Although this was not a research project about respondents’ views of needs, the concept dominated the interviews. Respondents consistently expressed a desire and commitment to

meet the needs of the people in their communities. Additionally, they appeared to understand that they were required to provide programmes to meet the needs of the community in which they were located. Almost inevitably the concept of needs assessment flowed from the discussion about needs.

When talking about needs and needs assessment, the respondents focused on the concepts of consultation, discussion and collaboration within the community. Many of the respondents indicated that they gleaned information about the needs of the community through public consultation, discussions with community groups and collaboration with other education providers in their communities. When questioned further about their 'needs assessment' respondents used needs as a synonym for words such as gaps, desires, and wants. It seemed that the respondents were attempting to identify where the community was at present and what the current gaps were for them.

Each of the organisations had its own method of consultation, discussion and collaboration with the communities with which they were working. They seemed confident about the meaning of needs and how to gather information about the needs of the community.

It is not surprising that needs figured large in the respondents' answers, given that TEC has defined one of the government's five priorities for ACE is "strengthening communities by meeting identified community learning needs." (TEC, 2005). What this research showed, however was that if based on muddy understandings of needs and needs assessment, ACE providers are unlikely to adequately fulfil the demands of TEC.

Needs (the gap between the present situation and the desired future situation) were confused with desires and wants. The focus tended to be more short than long term, resulting in particular kinds of programmes and limited visions rather than a longer term, strong economic, political, social and cultural agenda. Assessment of needs was similarly reduced to fairly straightforward techniques. For example, manipulation of the available data generated by health, education and other social service providers was not usually considered. Concerns for ethical or the tenets of rigorous research were seldom raised.

In sum, the respondents knew that they were expected to understand needs and implement needs assessments yet had limited understandings of the technical expertise and deeper knowledge required. It follows that ACE providers need to have the opportunity to be

trained to strengthen their capability to undertake the level of rigorous research necessary to do a needs assessment and their capacity to understand the broader contextual issues. The ACE sector is clearly committed to its communities and delivering meaningful programmes and campaigns, and it deserves that kind of support.

In summary, the terms diversity, engagement, community and needs are currently defined in multiple and confused ways by the respondents. As a result, communication within the sector and between the sector and government agencies are likely often to be at cross-purposes. This is problematic because the terms are integral to strong performance by the sector. As well, clearly articulated terms with shared understandings are essential for organisations to receive, and ensure maximum impact on, government funding and policy formation.

Although the ACE sector could use this study and its definitions, as outlined above, in defence of its many and varied activities, it might be a more productive path to use them as a base to create shared understandings of the terms in the New Zealand Aotearoa context.

The double-edged sword of engagement with government agencies

Respondents had strong feelings about their engagement with government agencies and more specifically with the TEC. These had an impact on their three key strategies (to deliver on identifiable mandates, create focussed relationships and plan purposefully). Basically respondents felt that engagement with government agencies was a double-edged sword. On one hand, there were the enticements, often in the form of adequate funding and resources. On the other hand, there was entrapment into the many demands and requirements that resulted from an acquisition of funding and resources. Throughout the discussion below, we link these two categories to diversity, engagement with community and needs of the community.

Enticement

The key enticements to engage with government agencies were clearly funding and resources. ACE providers viewed these as vital, and they were often the only reason that they engaged with government agencies. Evidence provided by the respondents revealed that government agencies, in many organisations, were the primary providers of financial support. The only other source of funding for many ACE providers were local philanthropic trusts.

Enticements were directly related to diversity and needs, since the funding applications for government agencies organisations required applicants to indicate the level of diversity of the learners, as well as how they intended to meet the needs of the community. The enticements thus both reflected and guided the way the organisation intended to use the funding and other resources. Therefore, the respondents voices were united when associating funding and resources with ‘enticements’ to engage with government agencies.

Entrapment

Entrapment was also part of the respondents’ experiences of engaging with government agencies. It was a negative experience related directly to accessing funding and resources. It acted as a barrier to their engagement with government agencies, particularly TEC and had four aspects: the requirement to fill in particular forms, the need to meet specific outcomes, the feeling of having ‘sold out’ and the difficulty of funding silos.

The first aspect of entrapment concerned the requirement to complete unavoidable, sometimes onerous, funding application and report forms. The respondents noted that too-often these forms were extremely detailed and complex information was required. In some cases, the forms were so difficult that they required someone with specific knowledge of the application forms to make their case for funding attractive. The pressure to know how to fill in forms was immense and some organisations felt that it was better to only complete the forms of those government agencies where they knew that they could ‘tick all the right boxes’.

A second aspect of entrapment was the requirement to identify and/or meet specific outcomes. Respondents stated that once the organisation had secured funding, it was then expected to report back to the government agency in terms of meeting the required outcomes. This was often done by completing a further set of forms. Much of this reporting related to levels of participant diversity, reporting on the diverse nature of those who participated in the

programmes. Respondents did not question that focus on diversity, but were clearly unhappy with the amount of form completion and also the restrictions created by the rules and regulations of the entire process.

The third aspect of entrapment focused on some organisation's feeling of having 'sold out' when attempting to form and sustain relationships with government agencies and in particular the TEC. Some felt that they had 'sold out' when they engaged with them, that is, they met the needs of the agencies rather than addressed their key priority to meet the needs of the regional community.

Respondents felt that they had to embrace government agencies' policies, procedures and directives, yet there was a strong sense that government agencies were too far removed from 'our communities'. The respondents felt that government agencies and employees in Wellington did not necessarily understand the requirements in communities within the wider Waikato. This sentiment, that TEC was too far removed from the local realities was voiced strongly in relation to the re-structuring of the TEC, removing the regional offices had moved the TEC people from where the education programmes were actually taking place.

This feeling of having 'sold out' also was connected to the focus of many of the organisations on affective personal relationships, being friends and building trust and confidence with all people involved with the organisation. In order to access funding to meet the needs of the community the organisations felt that they had to engage in effective, purposeful relationships with government agencies. This too could feel like a 'sell out' of their key values.

The respondents drew a line in the sand about 'selling out'. They revealed that if the focus area stipulated by the government agency did not match the needs of the community then they would not 'sell-out' just to secure the funding. In these situations, organisations would target philanthropic funding opportunities as an alternative. The core business of the respondents was to meet the needs of the community so 'selling-out' was not an option, whatever the 'enticement'.

The fourth and final aspect of entrapment concerns respondents' feeling that they could get trapped into funding silos. These often placed limitations on the programmes and extent of the programmes that their organisations could offer. Silos are frequently associated with

grain storage, but the word is also used to describe an underground cavity where a guided missile is kept prepared for firing. This second description better reflected how the respondents viewed funding silos. The government agencies provided the torch to light the guided missile and were in control of the button to make it fly. There was a good deal of frustration because funds were provided for particular priorities or programmes and could not be used for alternative programmes.

Respondents also noted that they had contracts with a number of government agencies, each which had its own silo of priorities and expected outcomes for the programmes they funded. Funding was approved and 'earmarked' for specific programmes of ACE and could not be diverted for any other programmes that the organisation might be offering. Respondents reflected that if they were not working in these closely defined areas then they struggled to secure funding.

They felt that this limited the provision of flexible and appropriate ACE programmes in their communities. This could be described as 'prescription funding'; the doctor prescribes fund to fix the illness in the individual but misses the virus flourishing in the community. This approach both reflected and guided how funding was allocated to ACE providers as well as the expected outcomes. Respondents felt that if they were able to utilise funds in a more general way, they would be able to offer programmes and campaigns with a wider scope and that were more spontaneous, flexible and appropriate, to spread funds, to link programmes in a holistic way and thus meet the needs of the community in a more efficient way.

In one respect this response is somewhat confusing as we might expect that the priorities for the sector, which are very global, could be reinterpreted in more specific ways suited to the local community. What is not clear is to what extent that the global priorities are made more narrow in funding applications, that organisations lack the 'policy-speak' skills to manipulate global priorities into local ones.

In summary, there was a view that although funding from government agencies was an enticement, it often had too many strings attached — it was a form of entrapment. There were four elements to entrapment: the requirement to fill in particular forms, the need to meet specific outcomes, the feeling of having 'sold out' and the difficulty of funding silos. This concept starts to explain why the level of engagement that organisations have with communities can be far higher than their level of engagement with government agencies.

None the less, the notion of entrapment is a dangerous one, since it appears that some organisations avoid engaging with government agencies in order to avoid entrapment.

Clearly, it is not the intention of government agencies to be seen as barriers to the successful delivery of useful ACE programmes and campaigns. There are three ways in which government agencies could assist providers of ACE programmes in relation to the entrapment scenarios. Firstly, funding application and reporting forms across various agencies and departments need to be standardized. This can only occur when government agencies acknowledge that they are providing ACE programmes and campaigns. It is blatantly obvious that ACE is happening in many government agencies beyond TEC, yet those activities are largely unmonitored by the government as ACE provision. If identified, the agencies could then work to standardise the community funding application and reporting forms across various agencies and departments.

Secondly, with regard to meeting specific, narrowly defined outcomes, government agencies could negotiate required, yet flexible, outcomes with each of the providers who receive funding from them, that is, assist organisations to identify outcomes and to make their applications. It might be useful to focus on re-interpreting the local priorities so they sit inside the global priorities for the sector. After all, ACE organisations have a high level of understanding of their communities through their regular and frequent consultation and government agencies have expertise in the policy-speak required in forms and reports.

These actions on the part of the government agencies could encourage the organisations to feel more comfortable about engaging with government agencies. This is essential for both government agencies, like TEC, and the ACE sector. If ACE is to deliver meaningful programmes and campaigns, partnership relationships are needed both in relation to the acquisition/dissemination of funding and resources and in relation to policy formation and implementation.

Finally, in terms of both enticement and entrapment ACE organisations need to consider their own roles and the ways in which they construct enticements and demands for outcomes from smaller organisations which they fund/support. Like TEC, ACE organisations can create enticements and demands that can be used to enhance the outcomes for the disenfranchised. This is an opportunity and a responsibility which was not acknowledged by the respondents.

The burdens of working with the business model

There was a strong sense among the respondents that they were suffering from the effects of working with a government imposed business model. There was a strong tendency to identify it as the catalyst for much of their isolation, competition and burn out.

Respondents believed that the adoption of a business model had been encouraged/forced upon them by government agencies and could provide security to some ACE organisation, yet increase the competitive context, sometimes to the disadvantage of others. For example, firstly, an ACE organisation would identify the community's needs through consultation and discussion. Secondly, it would apply for funding, most likely from a government agency. A vital part of being awarded the funding was agreeing to meet certain outcomes. Thirdly, the ACE organisation would report on the outcomes. Once this cycle had been completed successfully that ACE organisation would be in an excellent position to be awarded further funding from that government agency and possibly others. Throughout this process it is in the ACE organisation's best interests to play its cards close to its chest, to keep information to itself about tutors, funding applications and where and how it might acquire any other resources.

The respondents tended to view the business cycle above as possibly meeting the needs of the community but coming at a too-high cost in terms of isolation and competition. These two concepts were often closely associated. Firstly, those who talked about working in isolation tended to be those who were offering quite unique ACE programmes or those who were situated in smaller rural centres. Isolation often took the guise of having limited access to people and financial resources, reduced levels of support from other ACE providers and opportunities to collaborate and network with other ACE providers. Secondly, competition, or working in competition was linked to sourcing tutors, funding and sharing of resources between ACE organisations

In some cases, ACE organisations turned their backs on the isolating and competitive business cycle, believing that it went against the character of ACE organisations and the spirit of adult and community education. Ironically, those organisations that turned their backs on

the business model were then marginalised by lack of resources and funding and entered into a world of isolation and competition.

The third by-product of the business model was high levels of burnout and exhaustion. Many responsibilities fell to a few, many of whom were employed in a voluntary capacity in their organisation. The burnout and exhaustion seemed to be commonly a result of long hours of dedicated work, many of them without pay. Those who were employed in a paid capacity within ACE organisations were not often well paid, and many were employed on a part time basis. Respondents spoke of themselves as responsible for providing a service to the community and unable to turn a 'blind eye' or to 'switch off' to that need.

It followed that many of the ACE providers spoke of a high turnover of staff due to burnout and exhaustion. An observation made by respondents was that the completion of funding applications required specific knowledge and those people became overburdened. If there were lower staff turnover there would potentially be more institutional knowledge in relation to funding applications and requirements aligned to engagement with government agencies. Respondents also commented on the resources that staff took with them when they left an organisation. If there were fewer staff turnovers, resources would remain with the organisation, not leave with the staff member.

Respondents talked of colleagues and friends who had been 'struck out' by burnout and exhaustion due to the lack of support, both personal and financial. The lack of personal support was often linked back to the few opportunities to collaborate, network and share information and resources with others who were working in the ACE sector. The lack of financial support was associated with limited funding for programmes outside of special, narrow priority areas set out by government agencies.

In sum, the business model, required by government agencies was seen to have negative consequences of isolation, competitiveness and burnout. What is interesting here is the underlying and persistent tone. There is a sense in which the observations about the burdens of working within the business model is the view one might expect to be held by 'victims' who have little power or control over the direction of their organisations. It is not that the resultant isolation, competition and burnout do not exist. They most certainly do, but

there is an implicit suggestion that the sector is powerless, not an active agent in its engagement with government. This flavour is also evident in the discussion above about entrapment. It was reinforced in interviews and focus groups where respondents clearly found it difficult to move beyond identifying barriers and obstacles to naming successful strategies.

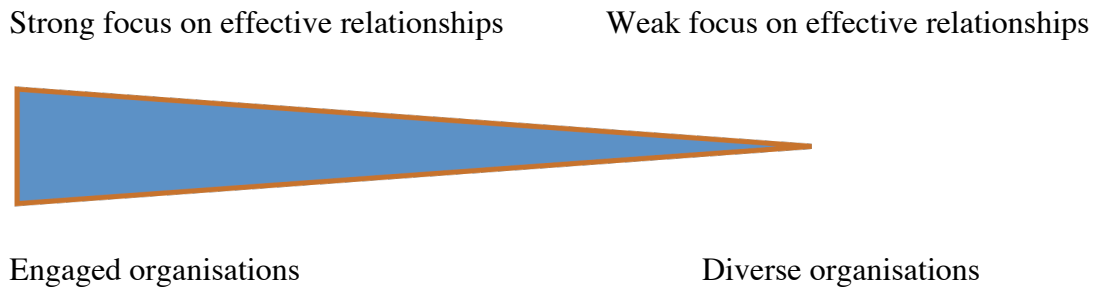
Some might argue that this self-identity is a realistic one, that the ACE sector does not have agency, power or influence. Others however, could point to the recent research which details the economic value of the sector and realise that power does lie within the sector (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2008)—it just has not been fully utilised. Organisations seem to struggle along, as noted above, in silos.

What seems to be missing is a clear, concrete, strong and confident voice which represents the sector. There are two directions forward. First, the sector can make clear, concrete and very co-ordinated arguments through a representative body like ACE Aotearoa. In the above, for example, increased funding was often seen as the solution. However, this is a familiar refrain for government agencies and without a strong voice from a representative umbrella organisation like ACE Aotearoa, a demand can become a quiet whisper.

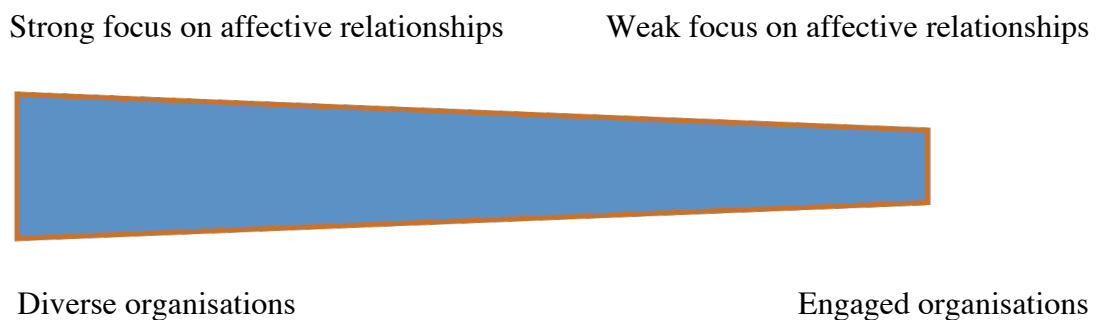
Second, unions can offer the sector a second strong negotiating voice in addition to ACE Aotearoa's voice. Some parts of the not-for-profit sector, which include ACE organisations, already are being organised by enthusiastic unions. The sector is overdue to consider the implications of remaining under-unionized, especially in view of its historically strong relationships with unions. In relation to burnout, for example, unions have a mandate to secure decent wages, work-life balance and health and safety in the workplace.

Lack of awareness of the connection between the effective, purposeful and affective, personal relationships.

It was interesting to observe the ACE organisations which were very focused on the effective, purposeful relationships tended to be those that we interviewed primarily in relation to the engagement strand of the research question.



Conversely, the ACE organisations that focused on the affective, personal relationships tended to be those that were interviewed primarily in relation to the diversity strand of the research question.



As we noted in the previous Chapter, effective, purposeful relationships encompass structural ideas such as networking, collaboration and the acquisition of knowledge. These three ideas are planned and arranged to benefit the ACE organisation. An effective, purposeful relationship is often established by the ACE organisation with government agencies. The relationship revolves around the ACE organisation's ability to uncover useful information and knowledge about things such as funding applications.

Affective, personal relationships are more focused on the individual including face-to-face discussions, friendship and shared values and philosophies. These may be planned but more often they are the result of learning about an individual through interaction over a period of time. They are founded in personal interactions and connectedness. This converges with a commonly held view that people involved in ACE organisations often see themselves as warm, caring and dedicated to meeting the needs of their communities. The ideal is often

presented as a great deal of camaraderie between the individuals and groups involved in the planning and delivery of ACE programmes.

Although these two types of relationship each have a distinct focus, what is interesting is the extent to which the affective relationship is very evident in both. On the one hand, even when an organisation had highly functional, organised relationships they also highly valued and desired affective, personal relationships with the government agencies. This is problematic, for it can be very difficult to establish personal relationships with people in government agencies. They often have a high turnover of personnel, are located geographically at some distance and have personnel who are extremely busy with multiple responsibilities.

On the other hand, organisations that had highly personal connections with other organisations were not so concerned to establish effective and functional relationships with government agencies. This too is problematic, for government agencies have processes and procedures which require a high level of understanding, efficiency and effectiveness. Cutting oneself off from those agencies is a dubious option as they provide funding, resources and create policies.

What is needed is an acknowledgement of the value of both kinds of relationships and capability building in both. It is important, as the respondents revealed, to recognise the benefits that each of the two types of relationships may have for ACE organisations.

In sum, both effective, purposeful and affective, personal relationships rely on the formation of a connection between individuals. Each has implications for the strength and impact of an ACE organisation, and each needs to be part of the set of skills an organisation has.

Summary

This chapter discussed aspects of the findings that were particularly interesting and seem important to explore in further detail: Confused use of terms, the double-edged sword of engagement with government agencies, the burdens of working in the business model and lack of awareness of the connections between the effective, purposeful and affective personal relationships. Suggestions for ways forward were included in each aspect.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This report has detailed the research project funded by the TEC through the Hamilton ACE/TEC network. Its purpose was to create and disseminate a durable, flexible model which the ACE/TEC Network and other organisations can adapt and apply to

- foster participation in ACE activities by a diverse and broadly based group of learners, educators and providers
- actively engage with TEC and other government agencies

Embedded in the Selected Findings and the Discussion Chapters were numerous suggestions for specific ways to achieve those objectives.

An important further step has been taken by the Hamilton ACE/TEC network. They have extended this project and prepared a workshop handbook for ACE/TEC networks and other organisations. It is a manual for facilitators to run a workshop in which ACE/TEC networks and other organisations can self-assess and improve their diversity and engagement. The handbook will be available on the ACE Aotearoa website by the end of 2008.

Against that background, it now becomes the responsibility of key players and organisations within the sector to facilitate the dissemination and implementation of that handbook and the strategies outlined in this study. Clearly three key actors in any plans to improve diversity and engagement would be TEC, ACE Aotearoa and ACE/TEC networks. TEC is one of the main government bodies creating policy for the sector, ACE Aotearoa is the umbrella organisation for the sector and the ACE/TEC networks are intermediaries between TEC and many of the ACE communities. The challenge for these key players and for ACE organisations is to begin the collaborative processes to move the sector toward objectives which are often applauded but seldom achieved.

Ki te whai koe i te mohiotanga, ka puta ko te matauranga

If you seek the answers, you will bare the fruits of knowledge,

If you follow the knowledge you will have enlightenment toward understanding.

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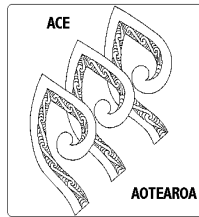
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Appendices

A: List of umbrella organisations approached

- ACE Aotearoa*
- City and District Councils
 - •Hamilton*, Hauraki*, Matamata/Piako, Thames Valley, Waitomo*, South Waikato*, Waipa
- Trust Waikato*
- Social Services Waikato*
- Local Parliamentarians*
- Government agencies
 - •MSD, TPK, TEC

* = Provided name of organisation/individuals in organisations for interview

B: Consent form**ACE AOTEAROA INCORPORATED**

HAMILTON BRANCH

c/- Continuing Education

University of Waikato

Private Bag 3105

Hamilton

aheath@waikato.ac.nz

---- 2008

The Hamilton Adult and Community Education and Tertiary Education Commission (ACE/TEC) Network have been funded by TEC to conduct an important Professional Development Research Project. Basically, we are interested in how to more successfully

- foster participation in ACE activities by a diverse and broadly based group of learners, educators and providers
- actively engage with TEC and other government agencies.

As I said during our phone conversation, your organization has been identified as an organization that has successfully increased diverse participation or engaged with government agencies.

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me about the strategies that lead to this situation. I appreciate you taking the time to share your knowledge, views and thoughts with me.

I envisage having a 1 hour long, taped conversation with you or a small focus group from your organization about your thoughts and views, at a time which is convenient for both of us. I will bring with me to our conversation more detailed written information and consent forms for this research project.

PLEASE NOTE:

- I will do my best to preserve your anonymity and that of your organisation.
- You are able to withdraw from the project at any time up until the first draft has been completed.
- The information you provide will be securely stored and used only for the purposes of this research project.
- General research results will form the basis of public and/or conference publications and presentations.

- In any publications and presentations your anonymity and that of your organisation will be preserved.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me (see below) or my supervisor for this research project Associate Professor Joyce Stalker (838 4466 extn 8257).

Many thanks for your support.

Adrienne Heath

Email: ah Heath@waikato.ac.nz

CONSENT FORM

Date

Dear.....

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an important Professional Development Research Project conducted by the Hamilton Adult and Community Education and Tertiary Education Commission (ACE/TEC) Network. Basically, we are interested in how to more successfully

- foster participation in ACE activities by a diverse and broadly based group of learners, educators and providers
- actively engage with TEC and other government agencies.

I appreciate you taking the time to share your knowledge, views and thoughts with me.

PLEASE NOTE:

- I will do my best to preserve your anonymity and that of your organisation.
- You are able to withdraw from the project at any time up until the first draft has been completed.
- The information you provide will be securely stored and used only for the purposes of this research project.
- General research results will form the basis of public and/or conference publications and presentations.
- In any publications and presentations your anonymity and that of your organisation will be preserved.

I would appreciate your co-operation in signing the attached form. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me (see below) or my supervisor for this research project Associate Professor Joyce Stalker (838 4466 extn 8257).

Yours truly,

Adrienne Heath

Email: aheath@waikato.ac.nz

RESPONDENT TO KEEP THE ABOVE SECTION

INTERVIEWER TO KEEP THE SECTION BELOW

This research project is part of an important Professional Development Research Project conducted by the Hamilton Adult and Community Education and Tertiary Education Commission (ACE/TEC) Network. Basically, we are interested in how to more successfully

- foster participation in ACE activities by a diverse and broadly based group of learners, educators and providers
- actively engage with TEC and other government agencies.

I understand the nature of this research project and understand that:

- Every effort will be made to preserve my anonymity and that of my organisation.
- I am able to withdraw from the project at any time up until the first draft has been completed.
- The information I provide will be securely stored and used only for the purposes of this research project.
- General research results will form the basis of public and/or conference publications and presentations.
- In any publications and presentations my anonymity and that of your organisation will be preserved.

I agree to participate in this research project.

Name (printed)

Signed..... Date.....

C: Interview guides

Engagement guide

WARM UP

- How long have you been associated with this organisation?
- What is your role in this organisation? How long have you been in this role?
- Are you aware that you have this reputation?
- What is your understanding of engagement?
- What are your views about the meaning of engagement?

GENERAL

- How did you get this reputation? Why your organisation and not others? Is there something particular you did?
- Did the concept of engagement come out of a specific drive? (Was there a catalyst, a moment, or a person?)
- Why do you focus on engagement? What is the impetus that keeps driving this organisation to focus on engagement?
- What do you do that fosters engagement? Is it the programmes, the space/ambiance, workshops or a combination of elements?
- Where do you have your engagement? Who with?
- Do other organisations network with you – is your engagement a result of networking? Why did you earn this privileged position? Why do they come to you?
- What do you do to maintain or further develop your engagement? Do you track your level of engagement?
- Do you have a mission statement, charter and/or strategic plan? Have these had an influence on the level of engagement within the organisation?
- Are there any things that inhibit the level of engagement with government agencies?

STRATEGIES

- What advice would you give to other organisations that are looking to develop and foster engagement?
- Can you give me an idea of the order or priority you would suggest to a new organisation when attempting to focus on engagement?
- Who created your strategies that assist with the focus on engagement? Who continues to keep the idea of engagement alive?
- How do you know when your strategies are effective? How do you know when you need to make changes to your strategies?
- Which strategies do you see as being the most successful? Why?

- Have there been times when engagement was not present or the strategies for engagement were not effective?
- Do you have different strategies for the different groups of people that your organisation caters for?
- Are there any enticements to encourage your organisation and others to cater for engagement?
- How do you access the resources you require to support your strategies for engagement?
- Does the organisation view it's most valuable resources being human or financial OR both?

Diversity guide

WARM UP

- How long have you been associated with this organisation?
- What is your role in this organisation? How long have you been in this role?
- Are you aware that you have this reputation?
- What is your understanding of diversity?
- What are your views about the meaning of diversity?

GENERAL

- How did you get this reputation? Why your organisation and not others? Is there something particular you did?
- Did the concept of diversity come out of a specific drive? (Was there a catalyst, a moment, or a person?)
- Why do you cater for diversity? What is the impetus that keeps driving this organisation to cater for diversity?
- What do you do that fosters diversity? Is it the programmes, the space/ambiance, workshops or a combination of elements?
- Where do you have your diversity? At what level – learners, educators, management or governance? Which of these plays a critical role in fostering diversity?
- Do other organisations refer people to you – is your diversity a result of referrals? Why did you earn this privileged position? Why do they come to you?
- What do you do to maintain or further develop your diversity?
- Do you have a mission statement, charter and/or strategic plan? Have these had an influence on the level of diversity within the organisation?
- Are there any things that inhibit the level of diversity within this organisation?

STRATEGIES

- What advice would you give to other organisations that are looking to develop and foster diversity?
- Can you give me an idea of the order or priority you would suggest to a new organisation when attempting to cater for diversity?
- Who created your strategies that assist with catering and fostering diversity? Who continues to keep the idea of diversity alive?
- How do you know when your strategies are effective? How do you know when you need to make changes to your strategies?
- Which strategies do you see as being the most successful? Why?
- Have there been times when diversity was not present or the strategies for diversity were not effective?
- Do you have different strategies for the different groups of people that your organisation caters for?
- Are there any enticements to encourage your organisation and others to cater for diversity?

- How do you access the resources you require to support your strategies for diversity?
- Does the organisation view it's most valuable resources being human or financial OR both?