

2009

# South Australian Broadband Education for Non Profits

A thorough project description, highlights, achievements, lessons learnt and associated documentation



# Overview

The Non Profit sector consists of over 59,000 financially active organisations and contributes over 4.1% of Australia's GDP (\$43 Billion). Employing 890,000 Australians the sector provides a range of support services to communities ranging from disability, indigenous, charities, unemployment, small business, substance abuse and homelessness to name but a few. Whilst metropolitan Non Profits have increased access to emerging technologies their country counterparts are unable to access the training and support needed to increase their potential impact on their local communities.

As part of the Connect Australia package, the Broadband Development element was provided to enhance the understanding of, access to and the use of broadband in regional, remote and rural communities throughout Australia.

The South Australian Broadband Education for Non Profits program was designed to increase the capacity of the sector and embrace the multiple emerging broadband technologies. This would have a direct impact on escalating the take up of broadband services and provide a wealth of new tools to support better services.

These technologies included:

- Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)
- Website development
- Audio and Video Conferencing
- Online portals
- Education and training services
- Remote mentoring and service management
- Using the web as an information source
- Using the web to enhance community communication
- Using the web to create new income streams



# Activities

## Initial Year 1 Activity Plan milestones as per funding agreement schedule

- **Establish the position of Project Officer**  
BPO commenced employment on 09/11/07.
- **Establish communication protocols for the project with DCITA and BPM**  
Orientation meetings held with Broadband Project Manager (BPM) and contact established with DCITA (DBCDE) Project Manager.
- **Participate in DCITA baseline data collection for the program**  
This requirement was never formalised by DCITA (DBCDE) and therefore no data was collected.
- **Establish detailed timeline for project activities**  
Timelines established in line with activity periods and reporting schedules.
- **Meet with stakeholders and jointly establish an ongoing approach to using stakeholder feedback and engagement throughout the life of the project including SA BPM and BPOs**  
Fortnightly internal meetings with Project Manager and CEO were established. Monthly meetings were held with BPM, BroadbandSA, DFEEST and fellow Broadband Project Officers (BPO).
- **At least 1 meeting with stakeholders. Jointly establish an ongoing project approach to using stakeholder feedback and engagement throughout the life of the project including SA BPM and BPOs leading to a shared strategy and update to Activity Plan as appropriate**  
The project itself was modified as time progressed in line with direct feedback from key stakeholders, the sector and clients. Through regular updates, meetings, conferences and community events the BPO established a greater understanding of the needs for technology by Not for Profits (NFP) across the State.

- **Develop and establish website information and resources to support the project**

A website with contact details, program objectives and educational material was published and maintained. Once a greater understanding of the sector and emerging technologies were adopted, a fully functioning blog was set up as not only a demonstration of blogging technology but provided an up to date diary of project events.

- **Awareness of VoIP telephony – Educational workshops in 8 communities. At least 50% of participants report plans to commence use of VoIP or increase use in 12 months**

It was established early on in the project that these percentages were unachievable. Whilst larger NFP's were capable of adopting VoIP technology the smaller services showed interest but committing to a change in their use of telecommunications over the next 12 months was somewhat doubtful. There are a variety of issues surrounding VoIP technologies especially in remote and rural communities where support services were limited.

- **Audio and video conferencing – Educational workshops in 8 communities. At least 25% of participants report plans to commence use of audio/video conferencing or increase in the next 12 months**

Whilst there was interest in the use of audio and video conferencing from the sector it was futile to suggest that 25% of participants would adopt this technology. With the lack of decent broadband services in remote locations the possibility of meeting these milestones would have been minimal.

- **Use of shared portals – Create 1 portal, 50% of participants report use of portal at least monthly**

There were already several portals in place focusing their content towards the NFP sector including the Connecting Up Australia website that provides up to date information regarding technology. The ability to monitor participant's activities engaging with the portals was unobtainable. The officer continued to contribute information to the sector throughout the project.

- **Education and training services – Preparation of a Guide to Online education and training for Non Profits**

It was not practical to prepare a guide when several well established websites provided up to date online education and training services. The officer provided up to date information throughout the project relating to Outback Connect, VolunteeringSA training services and provided training in the use of open source video training programs.

- **Remote mentoring and services management in the use of technology**

The Officer maintained contact throughout the project with key groups of NFP organisations and leading services. Contact details were always provided and regular phone and Skype sessions were provided for remote mentoring and information regarding broadband technologies.

- **Using the web as an information resource – Educational workshops in 8 communities**

This was a focus point with all workshops, meetings and consulting work done within the sector. Demonstrating the use of the web was a vital part of the role.

- **Using the web to enhance community communication– Educational workshops in 8 communities**

Through a variety of methods including training and information sessions, one on one discussion, open days and conferences the sector was provided with up to date information relating to improving their communication standards using broadband technology. One of the key points of interest was the expansive use of Web 2.0 technologies that were emerging as a low cost and easily maintainable method of increasing the online communication with their communities.

- **Using the web to create new income streams– Educational workshops in 8 communities**

This was found to be a difficult area to promote considering a majority of NFP services did not provide 'retail' sales as one of their methods of funding. Whilst larger charities etc. did use these streams they were quite well established in this area already and it was a hard sell to get smaller NFP's to consider moving into this area.

- **Review of year one project outcomes and identify directions for year 2 activities**

## Modified Year 1 Activity Plan milestones as per funding agreement schedule

After a greater understanding of the sector was established the initial activity plan was modified and approved to focus on key areas that would be embraced by the sector.

- **Establish the position of Project Officer**
- **Establish communication protocols for the project with DCITA and BPM**
- **Participate in DCITA baseline data collection for the program**
- **Establish detailed timeline for project activities**
- **Meet with stakeholders and jointly establish an ongoing approach to using stakeholder feedback and engagement throughout the life of the project including SA BPM and BPOs**
- **At least 1 meeting with stakeholders. Jointly establish an ongoing project approach to using stakeholder feedback and engagement throughout the life of the project including SA BPM and BPOs leading to a shared strategy and update to Activity Plan as appropriate**
- **Develop and establish website information and resources to support the project**
- **Conduct 2 X 1 day workshops covering several technologies including VoIP, audio/video conferencing, web use and e-business/presence. Participants will include a grouping of key rural South Australian not for profit organisations. Participants will report back on**
  - a. **the effectiveness of these presentations**
  - b. **whether they have a broadband connection,**
  - c. **whether they have access to a broadband connection**
  - d. **whether the technologies are relevant whether they would increase the use of these technologies in the next 12 months**

These were held in several locations around the State and aimed at providing a range of subjects relating to broadband technology. There was a focus on SA Volunteer Resource Centers that were already established groups of NFP's throughout the State. As the role became clearer these workshop were tailored more from general feedback prior to the events and focused on the technologies most accepted by each community. Web 2.0 technologies became one of the most prevalent requested topics as they became more accepted worldwide.

## Year 2 Activity Plan milestones as per funding agreement schedule

- **Meet with stakeholders and jointly establish an ongoing approach to using stakeholder feedback and engagement throughout the life of the project including SA BPM and BPOs – Stakeholder meetings 10%**

One of the highlights of the project was working with the other Officers and pooling resources to achieve greater outcomes. Local knowledge is a key aspect with providing targeted relevant education services and building strong beneficial relationships with stakeholders is vital for success. The BPM provided us with a conduit to the state Government's activities and was a source of local telecommunication information including linking us with other programs and services relating to broadband technology.

- **Maintain website information and resources to support the project and blog detailing project activity – Well maintained website with current resources 10%**

The website provided the contact details, program objectives, broadband technology information and links to relevant websites dealing directly with individual technologies and associated government programs. The blog was used to highlight specific activities of the Officer and combined with a short narrative, pictures of the many workshops, events and open days organised throughout the project.

- **Meet with individual NFP's/ community services to discuss broadband accessibility, technology and training needs – Identify individual needs and develop solutions 40%**

During the last 4 activity periods the BPO met with in excess of 20 NFP organisations per activity period. These varied between one on one discussion to large community open days (Untangling the Web) and covered most regional centres across the State. The 'Untangling the Web' events attracted a wide variety of local community members representing multiple NFP organisations.

- **Identify, propose and develop major projects – Work with NFP's and community groups to develop major projects to address needs 20%**

Throughout the project certain centres demonstrated a need for intervention to provide them with expanded broadband services and technologies. Several projects were instigated and

developed by the BPO depending on availability and sustainability. Some of these reached their final milestones whilst other stalled usually due to lack of funds and resources.

- **Work collaboratively – Support and coordinate events with SA BPO’s and DFEEST (BroadbandSA) to promote projects 10%**

This activity was best demonstrated by the ‘Untangling the Web’ events. During the second year 5 of these events were organised by 3 of the BPO’s and were extremely successful. Throughout the project the BPO’s attended one another’s events and provided support to promote and develop each event.

- **Networking and promotion of the project – Attend relevant telecommunications and broadband events to promote the project and its goals 10%**

The BPO attended all related events within SA to promote the project. This included presenting at the ATUG road show events, SA Telecommunication Consumer Group and the Yorke Peninsular Connected@Yorke event. Where possible the BPO also attended the ATUG, Commsday and ACCAN conferences.



# Benefits

There were a variety of benefits to be found from this project however the key deliverables were:

## Increased uptake of broadband services

In many cases justifying the cost of a broadband service outweighed the need. A common use for an internet connection was to access email and general web browsing. Throughout this project Non Profits were able to see the potential of increasing network speeds to open up undeveloped resources and access a wealth of online opportunities. This of course directly helped expand the rollout and investment in telecommunications infrastructure, employment opportunities, enhanced education resources, health and emergency services to regions.

Educating people on not only the technology but offering impartial advice and mentoring in regards to what connection they can access and what would benefit them the most allows Non Profits to take full advantage of the potential benefits. This is achieved from one on one discussion as to the direction of the organisation, the support available, the training needed, the costs involved and the ongoing maintenance required.

There have been multiple rollouts of wireless broadband technology throughout South Australia over the project period and this has brought about the potential of increasing access speeds in areas that had limited choice amongst providers. Throughout the project it was identified that there was a lack of understanding in regards to wireless technology and increasingly discussions were based on what could now be achieved with the freedom of being wireless.

## Expanded understanding of broadband technology

This was the main aim of the project and was a clear benefit to all of those that participated. The reluctance to accept new technology is usually based on pre conceived ideas and lack of training. Without adequate intervention through programs like this many smaller community services will continue using entrenched methods and potentially miss out on the many benefits broadband technology can provide.

Tailored information sessions followed up by dedicated support networks allows even the most hardened client to be drawn towards the resources that can be accessed and developed to improve services. Combining local knowledge and sourcing a local 'champion' helps break down barriers and contributes to a healthy take up of emerging technologies.

## Enhanced Productivity

One of the main attributes of faster broadband is the extra services it can provide. Through these technologies the roles of NFP's can be enhanced with a greater online presence, increased accessibility

and scope, more efficient use of information and has demonstrated a direct effect on long term economical growth in the region.

By embracing technologies such as VoIP and video conferencing NFP organisations can reduce their communication costs, improve their in-house training sessions and access online training programs. Travelling between rural centres ties up a lot of resources, increases the organisations carbon footprint and wastes hours of employee’s time. Meeting online is now achievable for smaller organisations and has improved in its reliability in conjunction with increased access speeds and refined technology.

### Long term economic benefits

As demonstrated through the Yorke Peninsula WiMAX rollout the overall impact on local productivity can outweigh the initial set up costs, ongoing development and maintenance. Opening up local businesses to the world market through accessible and affordable broadband speeds can provide a variety of positive outcomes including enhanced export opportunities, sustainable employment, improved local services and increased productivity which of course all have a direct impact on sustained economic benefits for the region.



# Learning

## Building Relationships

It is without a doubt that you must engage with the local community and understand their needs and desires for there to be any success in the uptake of a technology project. Each region has its own issues and attempts to provide them with education sessions will require a tailored approach to maximise the potential positive outcomes. You cannot just book a venue, advertise in the local paper and hope people will turn up.

This was most prevalent amongst the indigenous communities in remote areas. These communities have the most basic of services provided and without some ground work you cannot hope to be of any benefit to increase their uptake of broadband services. Without a substantial and dedicated effort to build trust and understanding these communities are falling further behind in the uptake of emerging technology.

## The local champion

One of the best methods to gain people's attention is to seek out and gain a firm alliance with a local champion. These people are usually passionate about their work and actively play a major role within communities to bring about change. Local champions are usually attached to most community services in the area, know the right people to talk to and bring about a positive reaction from the community.

Sometimes the local champion is a group of individuals who have already taken the leap, embraced the technology and now enjoy the many benefits it brings to their organisation. Demonstrating their story to other communities, services and individuals allows people to see the efforts required and potential outcomes they can enjoy by taking the first step.

## Educating communities

At the start of the project the aim was to provide multiple education sessions covering all of the technologies available. Whilst this achieved some benefits to the participants they voiced several issues:

- 1) Due to the fixed content some found it wasn't relative to their needs
- 2) Felt that there was a lack of computer support in the area to maintain new ideas
- 3) Some of the technologies required more support than they could afford
- 4) Difficulties in taking time off/providing staff for the education sessions
- 5) Unable to access broadband services in the local area
- 6) Satellite services unable to handle high bandwidth technologies such as video conferencing
- 7) Expensive connection plans in remote areas being seen as

It was after this initial period that meeting one on one with Non Profits was instigated to completely tailor the approach to Non Profits and this contributed to a much more positive response. This tailored

approach addressed the previous problems however lacked the impact on the community as would be desired.

The BPO's begun discussions on providing open days (Untangling The Web) to address some of the shortcomings of previous education methods and focused on communities that had already shown to require extra education. Aimed at drawing in large numbers of people and allowing them the choice of one on one, small and large group formats, these days were well embraced wherever they were held.

The formats for these open days were:

- 1) Providing BPO's to talk one on one with attendees to discuss their issues with broadband. This broke down issue with people concerned about asking question in front of a group
- 2) Conducting small focused presentation sessions on popular subjects. Usually these covered things like Skype, blogging, Facebook and other web 2.0 platforms
- 3) If there was enough interest in the local area providing professional presenters to handle large groups on things like online security, EBay and online child safety to name a few
- 4) Using local entities to engage with local media outlets and communities
- 5) Using existing networks to promote the events to the local community
- 6) Providing a free service with impartial advice and content flexibility

## Lack of support

One of the greatest hurdles for many Non Profits and remote communities in general is accessing affordable and sustainable support services. You cannot expect a healthy take up of technology without someone to keep it functioning especially when it is a crucial part of day to day business. For example people were hesitant to embrace VoIP as a telecommunications option due to its history of being unreliable and expensive to maintain. Skype however was much easier to promote as it required minimal set up and made the task of incorporating it into a business fairly straight forward with negligible impact on day to day activities.



