



6 February 2013

Mr David Clapham,  
Senior Policy Officer,  
Community Sector Reform Program,  
Community Services Directorate.

**Re: Sector Development and the Community Sector Reform Program**

Dear David,

The Youth Coalition of the ACT and Families ACT appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the Sector Development and the Community Sector Reform Program proposal.

Clearly the development of the modules is at a conceptual stage and without the fine detail our capacity to comment is limited. So for example determining the exact content of each module is obviously a substantial piece of work and following from this choice of trainers/facilitators is a critical concern. We trust there will be future opportunities for feedback as the modules are developed.

We believe that for this initiative to have real impact both sector staff and their government counterparts who manage and deliver services need to be involved. Real reform is dependent on the relationship between the two parties. This will be promoted by shared participation in training.

Our feedback on the proposed training modules is as follows:

**Collaboration as a Core Skill**

We agree that collaboration is a skill which needs to be taught. At present there appears to be a perception that meeting together is collaborating. This module needs to capture the complexity of partnership while being accessible.

**Strategic Alliances**

We have some difficulty with the juxtaposition of this module against that of collaboration. While it is essential to be strategic, we are concerned that strategic alliances may convey a sense of partnerships which exclude or are at the expense of other organisations.

**Working with Government**

The ACT Social Compact makes it clear that Government - Community Sector relationship should be equitable. Both Government and the sector operate under constraints and each party needs to understand the other's position. We suggest renaming this "Government Community Relations – working under the Social Compact". This is an excellent opportunity to lay the foundations for collaboration, involving government and sector stakeholders in the module.

## **Framework for Secondments, Mentoring and Cross Fertilisation**

This idea has a great deal of merit, however in developing the framework the differing requirements of agencies need to be accommodated. Factors to be considered include size and multi-disciplinary settings.

- **Which parts of the sector do you think will most benefit from sector development of this kind? and,**
- **Are there parts of the sector that should receive more or less focus from the sector development program?**

Our view is that the greatest support should be provided to the smallest organisations. Smaller organisations are frequently innovators and need to be supported to ensure the vibrancy and diversity of the sector. Development opportunities provide the best chance of equity in an environment where larger organisations currently have major advantages.

- **Are there skills or development areas that should be considered as a part of this program which are not included?**

There are undoubtedly areas not covered, but we would assume that the development process will evolve over time. The currently identified areas are a good start.

- **What are the barriers or hurdles that might prevent parts of the sector from engaging with a sector development program of this kind?**

There are a range of practical issues that may constrain participation including: lack of adequate notice of training dates, too many full day commitments, choice of venues where parking is difficult/costly, the need for/cost of backfilling positions to allow staff attendance.

In conclusion we are aware that one of the difficulties of developing the modules is that the intended participants will have differing levels of skill and experience. Training needs to cater for these differences and ensure participants are challenged.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss any of the issues identified here further, please do not hesitate to contact either Families ACT or the Youth Coalition of the ACT, details provided below.

Yours sincerely,

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Families ACT is the peak body for the Family Support Sector in the ACT.

The Youth Coalition is the peak youth affairs body in the ACT and is responsible for representing the interests of people aged between 12 and 25 years of age, and those who work with them.