
Implementation Plan 2004

Australian Flexible Learning Framework for the
National Vocational Education and Training System
2000-2004

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An initiative within the Australian Flexible Learning Framework for the National Vocational Education and Training System 2000-2004

Managed by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group on behalf of the Commonwealth, all States and Territories in conjunction with ANTA



The Implementation Plan 2004 can be viewed and downloaded at <http://flexiblelearning.net.au>

The companion document, *Australian Flexible Learning Framework for the National Vocational Education and Training System 2000-2004*, is also available at the above URL.

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e-learning for innovation

Our understanding of how the new economy works has grown exponentially over the past decade. We are now much clearer about the centrality of knowledge creation, diffusion and use, and of the way information and communications technologies contribute to this process. We have come to see that innovation, and the technological and organisational changes associated with it, are the key drivers of the nation's long-run prosperity.

The innovation agenda in Australia has been building for some time. Back in 1994 (the same year that all States and Territories agreed to create a truly national VET system), the Business Council of Australia's Innovation Study Commission specifically linked the growth in innovation to, amongst other things, fundamental changes in management practices.

....innovation in Australia is about people and enterprises, not about science and technology. For the vast majority of enterprises, science and technology are vital tools that need to be applied effectively and developed selectively. But for these enterprises, innovation is more a matter of flexible, productive and focused employee relations in a workplace than it is the result of technological resources or the impact of science and technology policies.¹

In the decade since then, a great deal of work has been undertaken at national and state levels and internationally to understand the innovation-driven nature of the new "learning" economy. Research consistently tells us that successful innovation systems depend on the capability of nations, firms and communities to manage knowledge, complex interactions and institutions; that is, on their capacities to learn.

There is no simple recipe for establishing a national innovation system. Each country has to find its own way. In Australia, we have recognised that prosperity for all depends not simply on how we structure the business and social fundamentals but on how well we

provide support for (and the performance of) innovative and entrepreneurial activities throughout the economy; how well we manage the stocks and flows of skills and knowledge of all Australians; and on the pervasiveness of ICT use within the economy and society.

The VET system plays a key supporting and enabling role within Australia's national innovation system alongside universities, schools, specialist research institutions and consultancies. Traditionally VET has been viewed somewhat simplistically as a supplier of intermediate-level workforce skills and knowledge, but its role is far broader. With its unique focus on learning by doing and by facilitating cross-firm and cross-community interactions and collaboration, vocational education and training is not only a user of knowledge created by others - it is also a generator of new knowledge and innovation. In addition, it is a key institution for diffusing new knowledge and innovation through firms, industry clusters and networks, and within and between communities.

The Australian Flexible Learning Framework makes a special contribution to strengthening the ability of the VET system to support Australia's national innovation system.

- ? By creating, using and diffusing more innovative, flexible and accessible training products and services, the Framework develops the stock and flow of human capital in Australia, thus strengthening the innovative capacities of firms, industries and communities.
- ? By enabling the VET system to adopt leading-edge technology-enabled management processes, training tools and techniques, and professional development responses, the Framework is building the capacity of the VET system itself to be more innovative pedagogically, managerially and technically.
- ? By promoting the take-up of e-learning and compellingly advocating the mainstreaming of e-learning, the Framework stimulates the diffusion of ICT throughout the economy and society.

¹ Business Council of Australia (1994) *Managing the Innovating Enterprise*.

- ? By systematically identifying and then removing structural and organisational barriers to the take-up of e-learning, the Framework is helping the VET system to become more flexible and responsive to the needs of clients.
- ? By facilitating cross-border collaborations and interactions between and amongst VET systems, training providers, firms, industry networks, communities and VET professionals, the Framework promotes the sharing and exchange of knowledge, networking and collaboration - all critical to innovation.

Through excellent collaboration amongst all States and Territories, in partnership with ANTA and the Australian Government, the Framework has been in the vanguard of VET innovation and has made a significant contribution to a knowledge-based society and economy. In its fifth year, the Framework builds on its achievements to date yet boldly drives the flexible agenda forward into as yet unexplored territory.

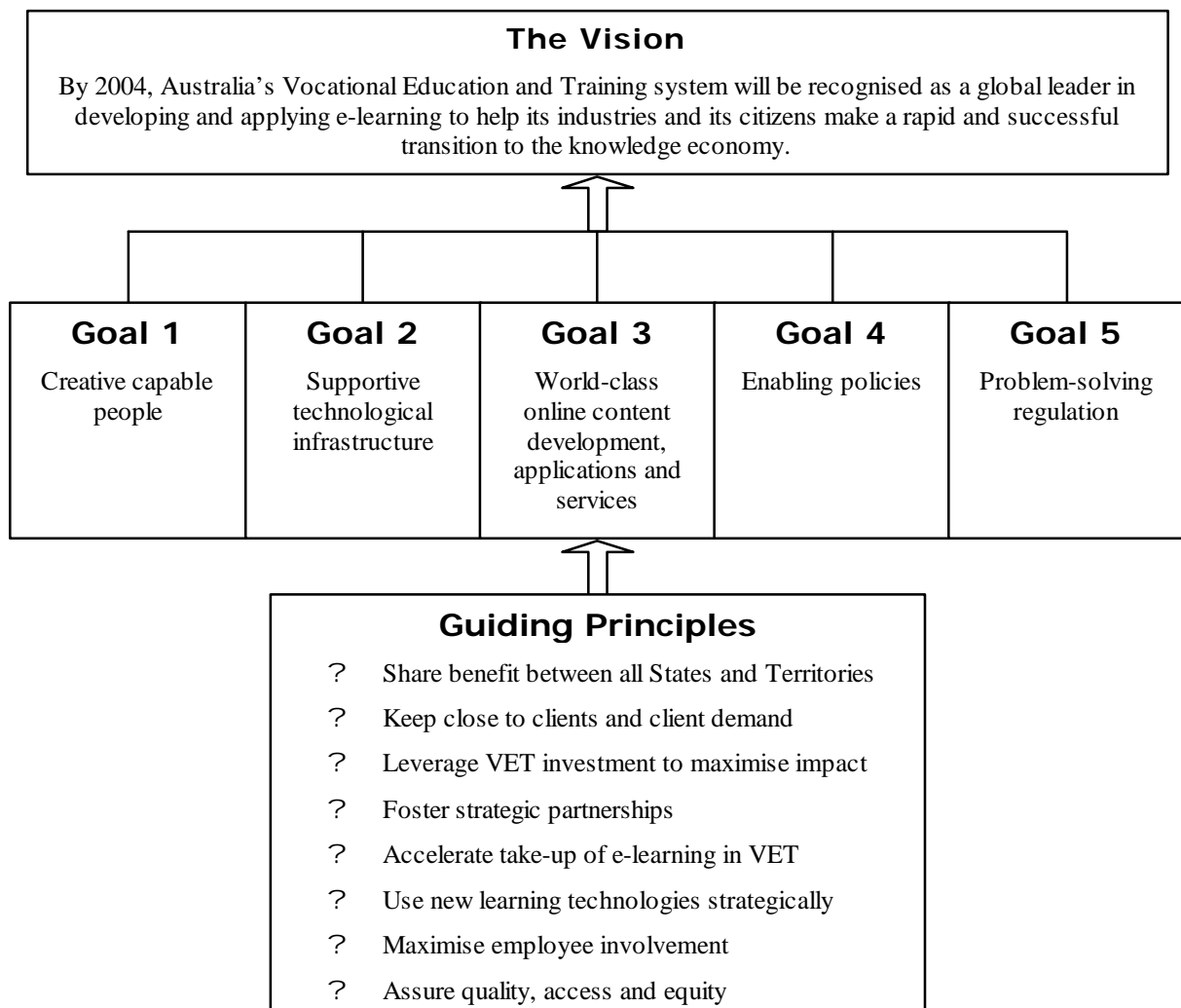
On behalf of ANTA CEOs, I urge all stakeholders in and beyond the VET system to continue to shape and benefit from Framework activities and to use it as a guide to a more innovative Australia.

Jim Davidson
Chairperson, Flexible Learning Advisory Group

The Australian Flexible Learning Framework 2000-2004

The Australian Flexible Learning Framework (Framework) was approved by ANTA CEOs in 1999 and implementation commenced in 2000 with the purpose of helping the national VET system become more flexible and responsive to the needs of its clients. In many ways it is a radical approach. The Australian Government, the States and Territories and ANTA, agreed that specific funds would be allocated to achieve a national vision and national goals. This allocation is based on the belief that cooperative action will deliver a stronger national VET system and better value for money for all rather than individual efforts within a single jurisdiction or organisation. Funding is drawn from capital funds in recognition that in the knowledge economy and society, infrastructure means more than tangible physical assets such as buildings and equipment and that it includes intangible assets such as people, systems, processes, relationships and intellectual property.

The Framework was conceived as a living document. Since its adoption four years ago it has been regularly reviewed and updated in the light of experience, new knowledge and changing contexts. In 2003 some significant changes were made in response to the rapidly changing environment for e-learning. The Framework's vision was updated, a new system of program management was introduced and greater emphasis was placed on innovative applications of technology to enhance flexibility in the national VET system. For 2004, the Framework's Vision, Goals and Guiding Principles remain unchanged.



Much has been achieved in the past four years

Through the Framework, much has been achieved at multiple levels to make VET more flexible through, in particular, the application of multiple technologies.

AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL

? Through a range of Framework initiatives, awareness, understanding and take-up of flexible learning and its potential is spreading throughout the VET system including public, enterprise and private RTOs. In a sample of 5,889 businesses surveyed by the ABS in July 2002, 37.8% of those providing structured training to employees were using electronic learning arrangements to do so, an increase of 15.9% on the previous financial year.¹ However, this varies very significantly between industries as the table below indicates.

Use of Electronic Learning Arrangements, Employers that provided structured training to employees 2001-2002, by Industry (a)

INDUSTRY	Did not use electronic learning arrangements %	Used electronic learning arrangements (b) %	CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS FINANCIAL YEAR			Number of employers '000
			Increased %	No change/ decreased %	Total %	
Mining	70.3	*29.7	**18.5	81.5	100.0	1.0
Manufacturing	71.0	29.0	*16.3	83.7	100.0	20.4
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	64.0	36.0	12.3	87.7	100.0	0.6
Construction	78.1	*21.9	*10.2	89.8	100.0	42.1
Wholesale Trade	55.5	44.5	18.4	81.5	100.0	18.3
Retail Trade	71.9	28.1	*10.0	90.0	100.0	37.7
Accommodation, Cafes & Restaurants	81.7	**18.3	**15.6	84.4	100.0	12.7
Transport & Storage	*26.4	73.6	*44.1	*55.9	100.0	*5.3
Communication Services	**7.6	92.4	**29.9	70.1	100.0	*1.7
Finance & Insurance	47.0	53.0	*25.6	74.4	100.0	11.3

¹ ABS (2003) *Employer Training Expenditure and Practices, Australia 2001-2002*, 6362.0

Property & Business Services	51.7	48.3	19.8	80.2	100.0	61.7
Government Administration & Defence	43.2	56.8	33.1	66.9	100.0	1.4
Education	50.4	49.6	*14.4	85.6	100.0	8.2
Health & Community Services	52.4	47.6	*18.2	81.8	100.0	28.7
Cultural & Recreational Services	81.8	18.2	**8.1	91.9	100.0	7.4
Personal & Other Services	63.7	*36.3	**7.7	92.3	100.0	17.1
All Industries	62.2	37.8	15.9	84.1	100.0	275.6

(a) Electronic learning refers to training where a computer or audio/visual broadcast technology is used as the primary medium for instruction.

(b) For some or all of the structured training provided

Source: ABS, Employer Training Expenditure and Practices, Australia 2001-2002, 6362.0

? While employers are using a range of traditional methods to deliver structured training, 33% of them are also using computer-assisted structured training arrangements.

Employers that Provided Structured Training 2001-2002

	Employer Size			Employers that provided structured training
	Less than 20 employees	20-99 employees	100 or more employees	
Structured training arrangements	%	%	%	%
Structured on-the-job training	50.8	80.2	92.8	54.8
Internal workshops, lectures, etc.	36.8	72.6	88.2	41.7
External workshops, lectures, etc.	74.6	85.4	94.5	76.2
Computer-assisted structured training (a)	31.2	42.4	61.3	33.1
Audiovisual	9.9	19.3	28.3	11.3
Correspondence	11.3	16.8	33.2	12.4
Total (b)	100.0	100.0	100.0	

-
- * estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution
 - ** estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use
 - (a) Computer-assisted training refers to training where a computer is the primary medium for instruction, including: training conducted via a computer network; self-paced training using software packages and CD-ROMS; and online training delivered internally or by external training providers.
 - (b) Employers could use more than one type of structured training arrangement and therefore components do not sum to total.

Source: ABS, Employer Training Expenditure and Practices, Australia 2001-2002, 6362.0

- ? The National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE) Index shows that in the 12 months to December 2001, 23% of Australians were using the Internet to access education services. The Index also shows that the disparity in access between males and females was smallest in Australia of all 14 countries in the Index, with 73% of males and 72% of females having access to the Internet. Similarly, the gap in access to the Internet in Australia by age group is slight.²
- ? The production of new learning systems, new business and management models, the promotion of attitudinal and behavioural change amongst providers and developing the skills of VET professionals have all enhanced the motivation and strengthened the capacity of the VET system to respond in flexible ways to client need.
- ? The national Framework has helped build cross-sectoral pathways and encouraged cross-sectoral resource and knowledge sharing. Through Framework activity, the VET sector is increasingly able to develop and articulate a national position on a range of issues associated with technological advancement such as digital rights management, access to bandwidth, preferred standards for technology infrastructure as well as Learning Object repositories, and to work with other sectors to translate these positions into policy.

AT THE TECHNOLOGICAL LEVEL

The Framework is having a positive impact on the technological base of VET systems and organisations.

- ? Each year, benchmarks for reasonable technology levels in training organisations have been reviewed through the Framework. In turn, this has caused training providers and VET systems to re-think their technological infrastructure and encouraged technological upgrading to maximise the use of available national products and services. States and Territories are also beginning to informally benchmark their infrastructure against each other, indirectly encouraging greater national consistency in technological capability. However, there are still significant differences in technological infrastructure between jurisdictions which limit the capacity of all Australians to benefit equally from Framework products and services.
- ? A national approach to bandwidth access is being pursued, based on a comprehensive national stakeholder and issues analysis, with the twin aims of extending the reach of communications technology to more remote areas and extending the capacity for rich media to be channelled effectively to all.

² NOIE (2002) *The Current State Of Play: Australia's Scorecard*, National Office for the Information Economy, April 2002

- ? Difficult technical, semantic and legal issues relating to the transfer of resources between networks and information sites are being addressed through a number of Framework initiatives.
- ? Framework innovation projects have been encouraging test technology with some very promising examples emerging.

AT THE PRACTICE LEVEL

- ? Since 1999, more than 13,500 people have participated in 1,240 LearnScope projects, significantly increasing the capability of the VET system to plan for, develop and use flexible learning approaches and tools.
- ? Nearly 150 VET professionals have participated in the Flexible Learning Leaders project and its predecessors, progressively fostering a national network of staff highly skilled in pedagogical, technical and managerial aspects of flexible learning. The 2002 evaluation indicates that 90% of organisations that have had a Flexible Learning Leader have an increased capacity for flexible learning.
- ? Participation in NET*Working Conferences has risen from 300 face to face plus 250 online in 1997 to 763 face to face and 2,600 online in 2002, an increase of 600 from 2000.
- ? 3,413 VET practitioners are registered members of the Australian Flexible Learning Community (an increase of almost 200% since May 2002).
- ? Since 2000, the Toolbox initiative has completed 74 comprehensive web-based learning products to support VET programs, most of which support Training Package qualifications while others support equity groups.
- ? In 2002, the first year of the national Toolbox Champion project, over 3,000 people participated in professional development to increase their skills in the educational, technical and organisational aspects of implementing flexible e-learning approaches.
- ? Statistics show a marked increase in the number of people accessing the Framework's website (flexiblelearning.net.au) and the linked websites of Framework programs and projects.

AT STATE AND TERRITORY LEVEL AND IN ACE

States and Territories and the ACE sector have also found that significant benefits flow to them from national collaboration for flexible learning. These benefits include the following.

- ? Pooling of resources at a national level has achieved considerable efficiencies. It has enabled all States and Territories to benefit from a deeper, richer collection of flexible products, services, standards, prototypes and research while reducing duplication of effort.
- ? The existence of a national Framework ensures that all jurisdictions (including ACE and private providers) have equitable access to a wider resource and knowledge pool from which to draw. It also counters the tendency towards insularity, especially in larger States/Territories which have a sufficient resource base to "go it alone".
- ? The ability to leverage State/Territory effort off national Framework initiatives, most particularly for smaller States/Territories and ACE, has allowed faster systems development, driven up the quality of e-learning products and services across Australia and helped create a bigger pool of VET professionals able to design, implement and manage flexible learning approaches than would be possible if each State/Territory were acting individually.

Important lessons have been learned along the way

Almost everything has changed over the past four years since the Framework was first conceived. New technologies, changing government policy, changing business environments and practices, changing community expectations and growing recognition of the factors which help or hinder flexible provision have all had a major impact on how flexible learning is understood and implemented. Framework, program and project evaluations, combined with FLAG's strategic review and planning processes, have yielded important lessons and each year these have been incorporated into the activities undertaken through the Framework. Some of the key lessons learned have included the following:

- ? Action to improve the supply of e-learning products and services must be accompanied by action to identify, stimulate and respond to the demand for e-learning products and services from enterprises, communities, as well as from individual learners. Clients (individuals and enterprises) must play a major role in steering the design, development and application of flexible products and services for the VET sector. The needs of specific market segments must be understood and targeted with customisable e-learning products and services.
- ? Although e-learning is just one way to achieve greater flexibility in VET and is most likely to be used as part of a blended approach to teaching, learning and assessment, its capacity to completely transform the business of VET in the long-run must not be under-estimated. The early distinction between e-learning and e-business in VET has become increasingly irrelevant as new technologies simultaneously transform the process of teaching, learning and assessment and transform the systems which support and help manage vocational education and training.
- ? Major change strategies need to establish baselines and indicators at the outset from which progress can be monitored and impact assessed. Where, as in the case of flexible learning, it is extremely difficult to establish cause and effect, proxy indicators should be chosen which will inform a results-driven approach to change.
- ? The goodwill and hard work demonstrated by many individual flexible learning practitioners is necessary but not sufficient to ensure that the capabilities of the VET system and VET practitioners are strengthened and that sustainable change is achieved. The active engagement with flexible learning by managers and policy-makers at all levels and in all jurisdictions is essential.
- ? National collaboration to achieve significant system change can yield benefits greater than the sum of the benefits that can be achieved by individual jurisdictions or organisations acting alone. However, in a federal system, this incurs considerable transaction costs which must continue to be managed carefully to avoid inefficiencies.
- ? The development of highly innovative and relevant e-learning resources needs to be accompanied by cost-effective systems for ensuring their accessibility, interoperability, quality and application.

New developments must be considered

The original vision and goals underpinning the Framework have proved remarkably durable over time, despite a rapidly changing context. However, there have been important developments over the past year in particular which are reflected in Framework priorities and activities in 2004.

THE NATIONAL VET STRATEGY 2004-2010

In 2003 the Ministerial Council (MINCO) approved the National Strategy for vocational education and training 2004-2010. The vision which will guide the development of VET over the next seven years is:

VET works for Australian businesses - making businesses internationally competitive

VET works for people - giving Australians world-class skills and knowledge

VET works for communities - building inclusive and sustainable communities

The National Strategy for 2004-2010 will pursue four objectives.

1. Industry will have a highly skilled workforce to support strong performance in the global economy.
2. Employers and individuals will be at the centre of vocational education and training.
3. Communities and regions will be strengthened economically and socially through learning and employment.
4. Indigenous Australians will have skills for viable jobs and their learning culture will be shared.

This national strategy is more far-reaching than the previous two strategies. It has a longer time-frame. It is broader in that it does not apply just to education and training but to employment, regional development, environmental sustainability, innovation, social inclusion and other portfolios. It opens new possibilities for partnerships between spheres of government, non government and private organisations to plan and provide vocational education and training. It is more clearly focused on the multiple and diverse needs of businesses, individuals, and communities, needs of clients, and aims to make vocational education and training fully client-driven. It provides the basis for innovation and more customised services and products in a rapidly changing world. And it is inclusive, so that the VET system can respond to the needs of people facing barriers to learning due to disability, age, gender, cultural difference, language, literacy, numeracy, cost, unemployment, imprisonment or isolation.

Flexible learning initiatives within Implementation Plan 2004 reflect and actively support this new vision and objectives for the national VET system. In particular, the Framework emphasises the critical role flexible learning must play in creating a national VET system which supports innovation.

STATE AND TERRITORY POLICY PRIORITIES

One of the unique features of the Framework is that national initiatives are increasingly integrated not only with national priorities, systems and processes but also with State and Territory priorities, systems and practices. The goals and objectives of the Framework are now embedded in all State/Territory strategies in some form, with particular emphasis on professional development, technological infrastructure, policy settings and learningware/content development.

Just as national priorities have shifted and are now reflected in the new National Strategy for VET, so too the priorities of States and Territories are being re-shaped and these too need to be reflected

within Framework initiatives. Key policy priorities which are generally common across all jurisdictions include the following:

- ? All States/Territories conceptualise flexible learning as fundamental system change, although not always explicitly.
- ? VET is no longer seen and managed as a stand-alone sector but rather as an integral part of lifelong learning. This is driving efforts to achieve more and better cross-sectoral collaboration to improve lifelong learning pathways generally and, in particular, post-compulsory pathways.
- ? VET is also increasingly expected to play a proactive role in social and economic life beyond the confines of the education and training sector. In an increasingly inter-dependent world, all governments are seeking a greater level of coherence in public policy. This is the result of the growing complexity of many policy issues, the interdependence of policy problems and their solutions, the gap between policy formulation and policy implementation, a better informed electorate with rising expectations, the intractability of some policy problems (such as youth at risk and Indigenous education and employment), and the fragmentation of public policy along departmental and government portfolio lines within a Westminster system of governance.
- ? Growing emphasis is being placed on increasing the quality and quantity of vocational learning provision to rural and regional communities using multiple technologies.
- ? The potential of e-learning to generate efficiencies in resource development and acquisition, in training support and delivery and the management of training need to be more fully exploited.
- ? e-learning should be more closely linked to various e-business/ e-government initiatives and, in some instances, to industry development strategies.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Australians are major adopters of information economy enabling technologies such as the Internet, computers, and mobile telephones, and are increasingly using the Internet for a wide range of activities associated with their day-to-day lives. On the NOIE Index, which benchmarks the progress in the Information Economy of 14 key countries, Australia now ranks third and is in close range of the Index leaders, USA and Sweden.

However, technological progress is a continuous process of experimentation and the search for new technological capabilities to solve business problems. The rise of linked high-speed data networks and the associated fall in costs of data transmission have made new applications possible, and these in turn have been driven by the search for new applications. Technologies are increasingly embedded in conventional products and services, and increasingly invisible in the process. In time, it will be almost meaningless to speak of the Internet economy. Broadband into homes and wireless voice networks are already a reality for some, although Australia has a long way to go in access to broadband. Predictions about the next wave of technologies have limited value in this fluid and fast-changing environment. However, what is certain is that interaction between business responding to market forces and technological innovation will be an ongoing process. This means that Framework initiatives will have to get closer to these market forces and closer to the clients for technology-enabled learning.

CHANGING VET PRACTICE

Many of the old certainties about vocational knowledge, skill and learning are fast disappearing in the face of profound economic and social changes arising from globalisation and international capital flows; changing industry structures and dynamics; changes to the organisation of work, the design of jobs and the content of occupations; technological change; the ageing of the population; changing community expectations; and rising social aspirations. These multi-faceted changes have created pressures worldwide for new and more integrated approaches to the way vocational teaching, learning and assessment is organised, practised and managed. In Australia there has been

a sustained attempt over a period of 15 years to fashion national, state and local responses to these global and national pressures.

A recent literature review commissioned by ANTA has highlighted the significant implications of this changed environment for pedagogical practices and strategies in VET and for the way the VET system is organised and managed. In particular it emphasised that these developments place “...much greater responsibility on the increasingly diverse group of practitioners who are now involved in preparing, delivering and managing VET programs at the local level.”³

All VET practitioners are experiencing these new pressures and new responsibilities. Increasingly, they are expected to hold the professional knowledge and skills necessary to design, deliver and assess training which is learner-centred, work-centred and attribute-focused.⁴ Inevitably, this means that all VET practitioners – not just specialists - will be expected to have a sophisticated professional repertoire which includes instructional design, flexible learning practices and strategies and the application of technologies to support and manage vocational learning.

As a consequence of these developments, flexible learning has assumed a new significance and even greater urgency. It is clearly a mainstream issue for VET and for ACE. In 2004, the Framework will build on and diversify its strategies to develop organisational and individual capacity amongst training providers to help them apply flexible learning to vocational practice in multiple contexts.

Framework Priorities for 2004

In response to the changing environment in and beyond VET, the Framework will continue to develop the capabilities of VET professionals to anticipate and respond to these new developments. In addition, Framework programs and projects supported in 2004 are required to demonstrate that they are contributing to better outcomes in one or more of the following priority areas:

- ? Active engagement of industries and enterprises in designing, developing and applying flexible learning solutions to significant business problems, reflected in increased application of flexible learning approaches in workplaces and significant increase in participation in Framework initiatives by industry and enterprise personnel.
- ? A diverse range of flexible learning solutions to meet the needs of Indigenous Australians, reflected in the take-up of flexible learning solutions by Indigenous Australians across the nation.
- ? A diverse range of flexible learning solutions to meet the needs of people in rural and remote communities, reflected in the number and range of people from those communities accessing flexible vocational learning.
- ? Cross-sectoral collaboration for lifelong flexible learning with particular attention to innovations which increase access to vocational learning opportunities for young people in the 15-19 years age group.
- ? Practical partnerships between the VET system and other portfolio areas including regional, industry and community development, local government, environmental sustainability, innovation, and social inclusion to improve the accessibility, relevance and efficiency of VET,

³ Chappell, C., Hawke, G., Rhodes, C. & Solomon, N. (2003) “High Level Review of Training Packages: Phase One Report”, ANTA, Brisbane, p.13

⁴ Chappell et al (2003:14) use *attribute* as a collective term encompassing a variety of generic, key and employability skills as well as other qualities, attitudes and dispositions.

reflected in increased take-up of flexible learning within those portfolios and the allocation of additional funds through those portfolios to flexible learning.

- ? Increased exchange of Australian-made e-learning resources across State/Territory borders and exploring new export opportunities.

In addition, the management of the Framework at national and State/Territory level will be streamlined and strengthened in 2004 with a view to:

- ? ensuring that clients (businesses, individuals and communities) play a key role in steering Framework initiatives at all levels;
- ? increasing efficiency by improving decision-making, reducing transaction costs and duplication and eliminating parallel processes wherever possible; and
- ? increasing accountability for achieving results.

2005 and beyond

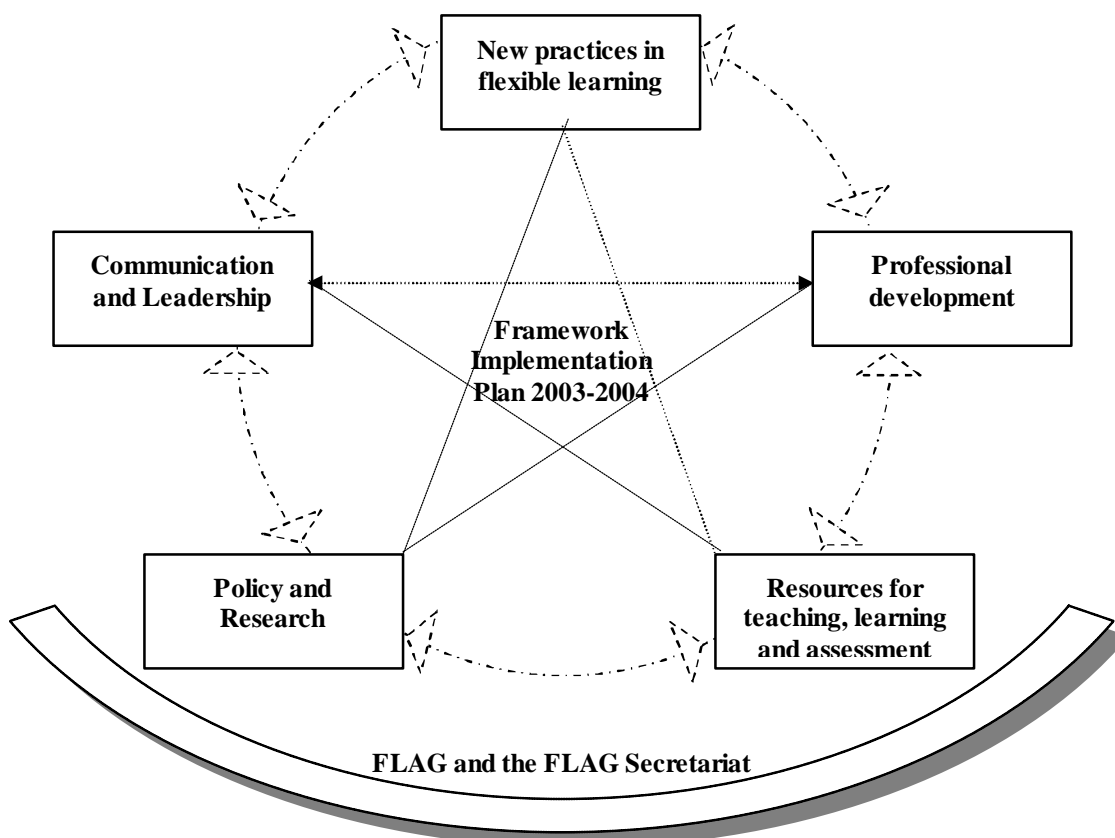
The current Australian Flexible Learning Framework draws to a close in December 2004. The Phase Two evaluation of the Framework, due to be completed in the first quarter of 2004, will identify the impacts, strengths and weaknesses of the Framework and comment on the sustainability of the benefits of the national Framework beyond 2004. These findings will be incorporated in the implementation of the Framework in the second half of 2004. Together with the outcomes of FLAG's own planning and review processes, these findings will also inform the ANTA CEO decision as to whether national collaborative effort for flexible learning should continue in some form in the period 2005-2007.

FLAG began to address the issue of the future of national collaboration for flexible learning during 2003 and a process of stakeholder consultation will be launched at the NET*Working 2003 conference. This process will continue in the first half of 2004 with further stakeholder consultation to identify what still needs to be done at a national level to ensure that e-learning actively supports Australian businesses, individuals and communities.

Framework Programs 2004

Since January 2003, FLAG has implemented a tightly targeted program management model to provide a strong strategic focus to Framework investment, ensure that the various Framework initiatives are coordinated, risk is managed effectively and to enable more efficient use of resources through better project prioritisation and integration.

The program management model introduced in 2003 has proved to be an efficient and effective approach to managing the Framework initiatives. Therefore this remains essentially the same for 2004, although there have been some internal adjustments.⁵



Each program is led by a member of FLAG who serves as Program Director and who chairs the Program Steering Group, ensuring effective national focus and coordination. Each program is supported by a Program Leader reporting to the Program Director and the Program Steering Group. In order to get even closer to its industry clients, all Program Steering Groups in 2004 include members drawn from and able to liaise with industry. In 2004 FLAG will continue the process of streamlining program management arrangements to reduce transaction costs and speed up the time to market of Framework products and services.

⁵ The main changes are that Framework management is no longer a separate program. The role of the FLAG Secretariat in supporting Framework implementation has been distinguished from the role of Program Leaders within each of the five programs. The Advocacy project which was within the Communication and Leadership program has been re-located to the Policy and Research Program.

Program 1: New practices in flexible learning

Program Objectives	<p>To pioneer innovative, practical and sustainable approaches to e-learning in workplaces, communities and training organisations. The program will achieve this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? funding a small number of high quality demonstration projects which potentially have broad application across an industry or across the VET sector; and ? fostering collaboration between VET providers, industries, enterprises /or community organisations to develop and/or apply e-learning solutions to significant training and development problems.
Program Director	Stuart Young, Western Australia
Program Leader	<p>Melanie Sorensen Phone: (08) 9229 5331 email: melanie.sorensen@westone.wa.gov.au</p>
Budget 2004	\$950,000
Program Priorities 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Approaches, models and products developed in 2003 demonstration projects will be made widely available and used throughout the VET sector. ? Increasing the innovative use of e-learning in workplaces. ? Increasing the application of e-learning to Indigenous communities and in rural and remote communities. ? Stronger collaboration between industries, communities and VET providers. ? Commissioning of projects to drive innovation in specific areas of need.
Indicative projects 2004	<p>Projects will be determined through an open selection process early in 2004. Guidelines for projects selection will reflect priorities consistent with the VET National Strategy 2004-2010 as agreed by FLAG.</p>

Program 2: Professional development

Program Objective	To increase the capacity of the VET sector to respond to the needs of clients for flexible vocational learning. The program will achieve this by providing learning opportunities to individuals and groups that will help them integrate e-learning approaches into their work and encourage them to share their knowledge with other VET professionals.
Program Director	Graeme Dobbs, NSW
Program Leader	Robby Weatherley Phone: (02) 9448 2310 email: robby.weatherley@det.nsw.edu.au
Budget 2004	\$5,260,000
Program Priorities 2004	? Broadening the pool of skilled practitioners able to incorporate e-learning approaches into the delivery of products and services to clients by explicitly targeting (a) training and development personnel in companies and (b) fields of VET practice with low take-up of flexible approaches and limited participation in Framework activities in the past. ? Strengthening the links between professional development, organisational change and State/Territory directions.
Indicative projects 2004	LearnScope will continue to support work-based e-learning projects for VET practitioners and managers working in the public, private and community sectors. It will continue to be driven at State and Territory level, with some national coordination and support.
	The Australian Flexible Learning Community project will continue to encourage the development of sustainable networks and communities of practice across the VET sector for the purpose of facilitating transfer of knowledge and skills across geographically dispersed workplaces and individuals.
	NET*Working 2004. The NET*Working 2004 conference will be held in November in conjunction with a national Flexible Learning Week. It will be primarily a professional development event but also support activities under the Communication and Leadership program and State/Territory-based flexible learning initiatives. It will provide an opportunity to share knowledge about flexible learning across all parts of the sector, to showcase Framework products and services and review achievements of the Framework over the period 2000-2004.

Program 3: Resources for teaching, learning and assessment

Program Objective	<p>To enhance the availability, quality, interoperability and use of teaching, learning and assessment resources to support e-learning within the VET sector. The program will achieve this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? developing training resources featuring learning object approaches; ? supporting the uptake of national e-learning products; ? disseminating the learnings from past product development activities; ? developing and trialling the use of learning object repositories; ? promoting and maintaining an up-to-date reference source on interoperability issues; ? further developing the VET resource directory on EdNA Online linked to cross-sectoral interoperability initiatives; ? producing practitioner support materials relating to e-learning formats and contexts; and ? developing a management plan for sustaining training resources produced by the Framework, beyond 2004.
Program Director	Rodney Spark, Victoria
Program Leader	<p>Vivienne Blanksby Phone: (03) 9637 2809 email: blanksby.vivienne.l@edumail.vic.gov.au</p>
Budget 2004	\$4,200,000
Program Priorities 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Ensure e-learning resources meet the needs of VET clients, including enterprises and equity groups, with a particular focus on indigenous learners. ? Improve the relevance, quality, accessibility and utility of e-learning resources available to VET providers. ? Expand the range of teaching, learning and assessment resources available to VET providers to support e-learning. ? Facilitate the adoption of consistent technical standards and interoperability protocols by VET organisations and agencies across Australia.
Indicative projects 2004	<p>Quality e-learning resources. This project is the main vehicle for development and promotion of e-learning resources and includes the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Developing suites of learning objects in priority industry and equity areas, including trials of recommended content packaging specifications from the 2003 VET Learning Object Repository project. These would be smaller products than Toolboxes, demonstrating interoperable formats, and maintaining educational intent and completed by December 2004. ? Repackaging learning object groupings from existing Toolbox products around generic and common skills areas (e.g. OH&S, workplace communication, using information etc). ? Continuing the Toolbox Champions service, focusing on extending long term competence of service users. ? Conducting an audit of Toolbox and other online resource usage to identify

	<p>extent of take-up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Documenting, publishing and conducting workshops on the learnings from the Toolbox experience– including quality assurance processes, educational strategies, accessibility, usability and interoperability. ? Organising delivery trials of Indigenous Equity Toolboxes including professional development and documentation of outcomes. ? Project management, marketing, help desk, product testing and maintenance.
	<p>Learning Object Implementation. The use of learning objects is efficient for developers and organisations in terms of data management, and will be facilitated through this project. Where relevant, VET partnerships with enterprises or equity organisations will be sought for trial activities. The project includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? redeveloping the Toolbox digital repository based on learning object research; ? supporting the establishment or adaptation of learning object repositories using the VET LO guidelines, through a range of projects at state, institutional and other levels, using VET structures and platforms; ? establishing trials researching trainers’ and students’ usage of learning objects, and sharing of resources between repositories; and ? contributing and responding to national interoperability initiatives including the work of ANTA and the AICTEC Standards Sub-Committee.
	<p>Interoperability. In 2003, this project commenced the development of a VET interoperability framework, through exploring and documenting key examples of interoperability solutions related to resource access. In 2004 the project focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? wide dissemination of the interoperability solutions and case studies from 2003 across states, within institutions and relevant industry organisations; ? researching needs and extending the interoperability framework into other areas; ? a watching brief and help desk for interoperability issues; ? review and update of the existing framework with appropriate standards; and ? contributing and responding to national interoperability initiatives including the work of ANTA and the AICTEC Standards Sub-Committee.
	<p>The EdNA-VET Online project will maintain the relevance of the EdNA Online site for the VET sector. This project was evaluated in 2003. It found significant growth in VET and ACE usage of the EdNA Online site since 2001 but recommends some changes in approach to promotional activity including stronger support for practitioners and smaller RTOs. Main activities for 2004 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? VET resources directory, newsletters and event publicity; ? enhanced promotion to practitioners, and to regions, ACE and smaller RTOs; ? promotion and support of Community Workspaces especially to ACE and smaller organisations; ? continue the development of relationships with other VET sites to share information and news through RSS feeds; ? maintain, develop and communicate EdNA’s work on open standards and interoperability in technical architecture, collaborating with other projects within the program and elsewhere in the sector;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? provide leadership and consultancy on metadata, harvesting of resources, federated search and open source standards; and ? contribute and respond to national interoperability initiatives including the work of ANTA and the AICTEC Standards Sub-Committee.
	<p>E-learning and assessment strategies. This project aims to expand VET practitioners' understanding of e-learning formats and contexts, through the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? developing a learning and assessment task gallery and exchange service; ? providing support materials for using the Web in the classroom; ? providing guidance on specialised learning and assessment topics including automated assessment and Recognition of Prior Learning; and ? trialling the application of the learning objects standards arising from the VET learning object repository project to the products of this project.
	<p>Management of teaching and learning assets. This project will identify the assets created by government funding for flexible learning and develop a long-term sustainability strategy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? creating a user-friendly interface to the diverse range of teaching and learning resources; ? aligning and where possible integrating existing repositories; ? collaborating with ANTA through its Training Materials and Intellectual Property Review, to ensure consistent outcomes; and ? determining the ongoing resource implications.

Program 4: Policy and research

Program Objective	To ensure that e-learning is supported by sound public policy and that the Framework's products, services, operations and future development are evidence-based.
Program Director	Nancye Stanelis, South Australia
Program Leader	Ros Gill Phone: 08 8177 3477 Email: rosgill@tafe.sa.edu.au
Budget 2004	\$660,000
Program Priorities 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Funding new research activities (including literature reviews and longitudinal studies) which will support the take-up of e-learning in workplaces. ? Identifying barriers to the take-up of e-learning by Indigenous learners and identifying practical solutions to overcome them. ? Improving linkages between research and policy on e-learning and between Framework research activities and those of other research institutions in and beyond the VET sector. ? Supporting, monitoring and advising on research on national and international trends, emerging issues, client needs and challenges that are likely to affect the future of e-learning in the Australian VET system.
Indicative projects 2004	<p>Research and dissemination. A range of leading-edge research activities of various types will be supported in 2004 and these will include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Research projects; ? Just-in-time briefings on recent research findings, issues and trends for policy-makers and e-learning practitioners; ? Case studies of good practice from within Framework initiatives; and ? Dissemination strategies which engage stakeholders, especially industry stakeholders in considering the implications of research findings for VET.
	<p>Issues management. This project will identify existing and new issues for the VET sector arising from the various Framework projects and the evolution of the information economy. In response, it will develop papers and options and implement suitably targeted strategies to create a supportive policy and regulatory environment. This project will focus on policies and regulations related to bandwidth, privacy, security, new property rights and responsibilities necessary for the training market to function effectively and in consonance with the values and purposes of the Australian VET system.⁶</p>

⁶ In previous years, this project was known as the Advocacy and Issues Management Project. In 2003 it was located within the Communication and Leadership Program but has been relocated to the Policy and Research Program for 2004 to give a stronger policy platform for Framework implementation.

Program 5: Communication and leadership

Program Objective	To maximise awareness of, commitment to and take-up of e-learning across the VET sector.
Program Director	Peter Le Cornu, ACT
Program Leader	Jenny Dodd Phone: (02) 6207 4955 email: jenny.dodd@cit.act.edu.au
Budget 2004	\$3,180,000
Program Priorities 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? To increase awareness throughout the VET system of the opportunities, challenges and benefits of e-learning. ? To increase take-up of e-learning across a broad spectrum of the VET community including enterprises, learners, training organisations and policy-makers. ? To advocate for organisational, policy and regulatory changes necessary for the full integration of e-learning into VET delivery and business practices.
Indicative projects 2004	<p>Flexible Learning Leaders. In 2004, 64 Flexible Learning Leaders will participate in this project, a 60% increase from 2003 and 2002 in recognition of their pivotal role in the implementation of flexible learning. In 2004, Flexible Learning Leaders will be expected to play a stronger role in leading and managing change in their organisations and in their States and Territories. Special measures will be taken to ensure that Flexible Learning Leaders are drawn from all States and Territories and from ACE; that the group includes innovators, implementers and organisational change agents; and that the group include people drawn from enterprise RTOs, other relevant industry organisations and from previously underrepresented areas including trade training.</p>
	<p>National promotion and communication. Since States and Territories have a key role in promoting the benefits and applications of e-learning within their jurisdictions, funds will be allocated to each State/Territory to enhance state-wide promotion and increase take-up of e-learning by VET providers within the jurisdiction. The role of State/Territory Communications Officers will be expanded to include direct support to VET providers in demonstrating how Framework products, services and resources can assist the implementation of flexible learning. These activities will be coordinated through a national team which will develop national promotional materials, undertake Australia-wide promotional activities so that they add value to State and Territory initiatives and do not duplicate individual project initiatives. The national team will work with all Framework projects so that all project-based dissemination and communication strategies will be consistent with and not duplicate promotion and communication activities at national or state level. This project will also conduct a national promotion strategy to industry about the increased capability of the sector to deliver flexible learning in order to drive industry demand for flexible learning options.</p>

	Website management. This project will continue to develop the flexiblelearning.net.au website, including hosting, content updating and knowledge management.
	Resource management. This project is responsible for the management of Framework products, services and resources including maintenance, review and access via flexiblelearning.net.au. It will also manage the implementation of the recommendations from the Resources Review Project and the Product and Service Market Research Project conducted in 2003, it will further reflect the outcomes of the Knowledge Management strategy developed in 2003.

FLAG and the FLAG Secretariat

FLAG

Since 1996, the Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG) has been the lead national body driving the development and implementation of flexible learning in the VET sector.⁷

FLAG is a strategically-focused group of senior VET officers tasked to advise ANTA CEOs, the ANTA Board, the Australian Government's Department of Education, Science and Training, the Board of education.au limited and the Australian Information and Communication Technologies in Education Committee (AICTEC) on national issues related to the directions and priorities for flexible learning in VET, with particular reference to e-learning technologies. In all of its activities, FLAG includes consideration of the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector and its needs.

Following the endorsement by ANTA CEOs in August 1999 of what is now known as the Australian Flexible Learning Framework for National Vocational Education and Training 2000-2004, FLAG was also given the task of leading national collaboration for flexible and e-learning learning in VET through its next phase of development and of ensuring that the Framework is managed effectively.

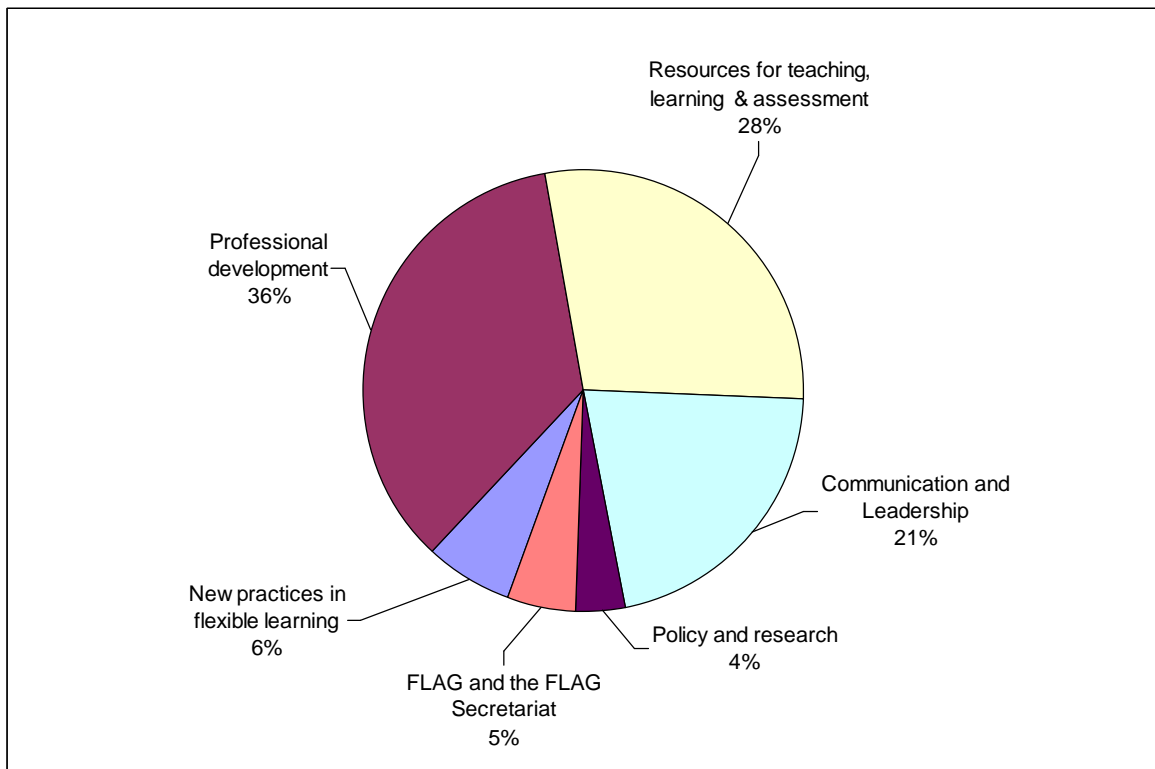
FLAG SECRETARIAT

The FLAG Secretariat provides support for and coordination of the work of FLAG, including the implementation of FLAG decisions, managing the annual strategic planning process, preparing major reports to ANTA CEOs and managing evaluation activities. It is a distributed Secretariat comprising a national group based in Melbourne linked with State, Territory and ACE officers who provide practical support to FLAG members in undertaking their national responsibilities.

⁷ FLAG began its life in 1996 as the Education Network Australia Vocational Education and Training Advisory Group (EdNA VET Advisory Group or EVAG) as a sub-committee of the Australian Information and Communication Technologies in Education Committee (AICTEC) - formerly the EdNA Reference Committee. Initially, its role was to advise the AICTEC on VET sector perspectives and responses to national policy issues related to the use of online technologies and on strategic development of the EdNA Directory service in relation to the needs of the VET sector. At the EVAG meeting held in March 2001, members voted to change the name to the FLAG, to better reflect the overall directions of the Advisory Group.

Budget Summary - 2004 Programs

PROGRAM	Budget 2004
1 New practices in flexible learning	950,000
2 Professional development	5,260,000
3 Resources for teaching, learning & assessment	4,200,000
4 Policy and research	660,000
5 Communication and Leadership	3,180,000
Sub- total	14,250,000
FLAG and the FLAG Secretariat ⁸	750,000
TOTAL	\$15,000,000



⁸ These funds include funding the operations of the National Secretariat, FLAG review and planning activities and \$295,650 for staff support for FLAG members in each State / Territory and in ACE. Funds for Program Leaders are included in the budget for each program.