
**PREFERRED STANDARDS TO SUPPORT
NATIONAL COOPERATION IN APPLYING
TECHNOLOGY TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING**

2000

**COMMUNICATION
PLAN**

**J L HENRY
PROJECT MANAGER**

**FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL
COLLABORATION IN FLEXIBLE LEARNING IN
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
2000-2004**

**AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL TRAINING AUTHORITY
STRATEGY 2000 PROJECT 2/5.1**

flexiblelearning.net.au



This document forms part of a series of reports on
Preferred Standards to Support National Cooperation in Applying Technology to
Vocational Education and Training

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

All reports and consolidated recommendations are available at
<http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au>

Copyright Australian National Training Authority

2000

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
Abstract	1
Recommendations	1
INTRODUCTION	4
Description of Project	4
Purpose of Communication Plan	6
Basic Strategy	7
BACKGROUND	7
Vision	7
Benefits of Using Standards in the Delivery of Online Training	8
Survey	9
Scope of Preferred Standards	10
PROCESS	10
ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION PLAN	11
Target Audience	11
Permanent Web Site	11
Road Shows	12
Online Shows	14
Bake Offs	15
Showcases	16
Appellation Scheme	17
Development System	17
Permanent Contact Point	19
Preparation of Communications	19
Communication Media	19
Content of Communications	21
FUNDING	22
LABOUR	23

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Abstract

The Project *Preferred Standards to Support National Cooperation in Applying Technology to Vocational Education and Training* was part of the Australian National Training Authority's *Strategy 2000*, which commenced the implementation of the *Framework for National Collaboration in Flexible Learning in Vocational Education and Training 2000-2004*, which, in turn, supports the broader scope of the *National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training*.

The Project considered six areas of standards relevant to the online delivery of training.

The Communication Plan is initially intended to guide the use of a sum of money that has been set aside for communicating the results of the Preferred Standards 2000 Project.

Further funding will be available from a pool of money allocated for publicity associated with Strategy 2001 projects.

The Communication Plan includes recommendations on target audience, web site development, road shows, online shows, bake offs, showcases, appellation scheme, development system, permanent contact point, email announcements, newsletter articles, flyers, conference presentations, and public relations.

The body of the document explains how and by whom the recommendations will be implemented.

An indicative budget is provided.

Recommendations

Permanent Preferred Standards Web Site to be established based on material in the Year 2000 Project Web Site.

Preferred Standards Road Shows to be staged on a continuing basis to provide tangible proof of the benefits of using the Preferred Standards.

Preferred Standards Online Shows to be set up and made available to provide focussed demonstrations on demand.

Preferred Standards Bake Offs to be initiated to bring competing manufacturers together with

training practitioners in order to demonstrate interoperability of technologies for the online delivery of training.

Project Manager to approach relevant manufacturers to arrange an initial Preferred Standards Bake Off on topics of mutual interest to the manufacturers and Training Organisations.

Appropriate training products to be selected as Preferred Standards Showcases, commencing with Toolbox products.

Project Managers of the Preferred Standards and Toolbox Projects and the Manager of Australian Training Products to liaise further in relation to Preferred Standards documentation specifically targeted at the needs of Toolbox developers and in relation to publicity of mutual benefit.

Preferred Standards Appellation Scheme to be commenced in order to promote the use of the Preferred Standards by allowing conforming training products to display an appropriate brand.

Preferred Standards Development System to be set up to test all aspects of the Preferred Standards, produce material for the Preferred Standards Web Site, develop and present the Preferred Standards Road Shows, construct the Preferred Standards Online Shows, assist with the Preferred Standards Bake Offs, test training products for acceptance as Preferred Standards Showcases, and test training products for branding under the Preferred Standards Appellation Scheme.

Permanent contact point, in the form of an email address and/or a telephone number to be established for questions related to the Preferred Standards.

All communications to refer to the permanent Preferred Standards Web Site and contact points.

Public relations consultant to be appointed to assist with the preparation of written materials, graphics for the permanent Preferred Standards Web Site, and the brand for the Preferred Standards Appellation Scheme.

Email to be used to notify Training Organisations of the web site and the benefits of using the Preferred Standards. Emails to be sent using the resources of the organisations who participated in the Preferred Standards Project.

Articles to be prepared for regular newsletters for Training Organisations. Articles initially to be prepared by the Project Manager, the public relations consultant, and the editors of the respective newsletters.

Flyers to be included with regular mail-outs for Training Organisations. Steering Committee

members to provide the initial suggestions on appropriate mail-outs. Flyers to be prepared by the public relations consultant using information supplied by the Project Manager.

Training Organisations and relevant regulatory, advisory, and industry organisations to be asked to include links from their respective web sites to the Preferred Standards Web Site.

An expert from the Preferred Standards 2000 Project to give presentations at relevant conferences.

Implementation of the Communication Plan to be commenced immediately with the \$10,000 made available in conjunction with the Year 2000 Preferred Standards Project.

A substantial portion of the \$400,000 allocated in the year 2001 for communications (related to all Strategy 2001 Projects) to be used for the Communication Plan. *Substantial* means concomitant with the Preferred Standards Project's status as the only Strategy 2000 Project with recommendations to be sent to Australian National Training Authority CEOs.

An on going budget to be allocated for maintenance of the Preferred Standards Web Site, operation of the Preferred Standards Development System, and further communication activities.

EdNA VET Advisory Group to approach the Department of Employment and Training with a view to securing the services of the current Project Manager to commence the implementation of the Communication Plan.

INTRODUCTION

Description of Project

The Project *Preferred Standards to Support National Cooperation in Applying Technology to Vocational Education and Training* was part of the Australian National Training Authority's *Strategy 2000*, which commenced the implementation of the *Framework for National Collaboration in Flexible Learning in Vocational Education and Training 2000-2004*, which, in turn, supports the broader scope of the *National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training*.

The Project considered six areas of standards relevant to the online delivery of training.

The six standards areas were

management systems (including data storage and transmission, training delivery platforms, and training management platforms) - AVETMISS, IMS, AICC, etc,

groupware(document management, workflow management, scheduling, calendar, chat, application sharing, whiteboard, forums, email) - ODMA, ODMA workflow extensions, Workflow Coalition distributed workflow architecture, iCalendar, vCalendar, T120, vCard, SMTP, IMAP4, MIME, etc

web protocols - XML, HTML, HTTP, Java, Javascript, etc

multimedia - delivery standards: SDP, RTSP, H320, H323, gateways for H320 and H323, RTCP, RTP, HTTP; coordination standards: SMIL; encoding standards: hinted quicktime, ASF; compression schemes: H261, sorensen, etc, data types: MPEG, AVI, AU, GIF, JPEG, PDF, etc

resource locator technologies (meta data, search engines, and directory services) - LDAP, X400, X500, Dublin Core, EdNA Metadata, IMS Metadata, etc, and

hardware(for client computers) - processor power, main memory, disk storage, monitor resolution, graphics memory, modem speeds, etc.

For each of these standards areas, the Project produced recommendations on

preferred standards,

emerging standards requiring further attention,

operational guidelines, and

continuing work.

A *User Guide* has been prepared. This is intended to describe how the recommendations on preferred standards and operational guidelines should be employed by practitioners. It includes recommendations for tender documents, funding submissions, grant scheme guidelines, and communications.

A *Communication Plan* has also been prepared (this document). This is initially intended to guide the use of a sum of money that has been set aside for communicating the results of the Preferred Standards 2000 Project. The Communication Plan includes recommendations on target audience, web site development, road shows, online shows, bake offs, showcases, development system, appellation scheme, permanent contact point, email announcements, newsletter articles, flyers, conference presentations, and public relations. An indicative budget is provided.

A Project Web Site has been set up. It is available at <http://flexiblelearning.net.au/standards/navigation/home.shtml>.

A survey was conducted to gather information on the implementation of Preferred Standards produced by a project run in 1998. A report on the survey is available and it includes recommendations to address perceived problems in the implementation of Preferred Standards. Example problems are confusion between standards and brands, lack of communication of Preferred Standards to practitioners, currency of Preferred Standards, and difficulty in supporting open standards.

A number of needs for further work beyond the scope the Preferred Standards Project were identified during the course of the Project. These are the subject of recommendations in a separate report on *Proposed Projects*.

The results of the Project are described in eleven reports

Summary and Recommendation,

Management Systems,

Groupware,

Multimedia,

Web Protocols,

Resource Locator Technologies,

Hardware,

User Guide,

Communication Plan (this document),

Survey Report, and

Proposed Projects.

All reports are available on the Project Web Site.

Purpose of Communication Plan

The purpose of the Communication Plan is to

create an awareness of the Preferred Standards within the Vocational Education and Training community,

share, extend, and gain support for the vision of a nationally agreed, standards-based environment for the use of online training experiences,

explain the benefits of using standards in the online delivery of training,

redress the lack of information identified by the *Survey*,

make the standards available to practitioners in a form that is easily understood and can be continually updated,

provide practitioners with a contact point for feedback, further information, and clarification regarding the Preferred Standards, and

ensure a return on the investment in the Preferred Standards Project by encouraging Training Organisations to realise the benefits of using the Preferred Standards.

Basic Strategy

The basic strategy underlying the *Communication Plan* involves

demonstration of

all claimed benefits of using the Preferred Standards,

all issues requiring explanation, and

method of using Preferred Standards,

utilisation of

existing communication channels, and

labour volunteered by the State Training Agencies.

The essential plank of the strategy is to provide tangible proof of all postulates in the form of demonstrations that involve the target audience.

BACKGROUND

Vision

The Project established a shared vision of a nationally agreed, standards-based environment for the use of online training experiences in which

provision of flexible training in a manner that best suits requirements can be accomplished with an eclectic mix of products from competing manufacturers,

a complete range of training experiences is available online (including text-based information, whiteboard, live and recorded video and audio presentations, chat sessions, email, visualisation, and collaboration on projects),

both competition and cooperation among training organisations is possible on an agreed technological basis to the best advantage of the Australian Vocational Education and Training System as a whole,

access to online training is available for all Australians on a generic client platform of choice (i.e. learners have a choice of which products to purchase in order to set up a

workstation that can be used to access online training),

transfer of clients among training organisations is facilitated by standards for the transfer of records concerning progress and results,

training needs of clients can be met in a manner consistent with the requirements of place, time, working arrangements, and particular equity group,

students can interact with instructors and other students in both a synchronous and asynchronous manner,

seamless interaction of products from different manufacturers is made possible by agreed operational guidelines, and

the Australian Vocational Education and Training system is a highly competitive player on the international stage.

The Communication Plan will share this vision with the wider online training community.

Benefits of Using Standards in the Delivery of Online Training

The Preferred Standards are relevant to circumstances where national cooperation is agreed to be desirable. Such circumstances could include

development of reusable training materials for national use (e.g. Toolboxes),

joint delivery of courses and training programs,

national purchasing arrangements, and

installation of national infrastructure.

The Preferred Standards are relevant to individual Training Organisations in circumstance where they wish to

improve services to students by using an optimal mix of products from different manufacturers,

reduce development and delivery costs by using the most cost effective mix of products from different manufacturers,

make their systems scalable,

future-proof their systems by enabling substitution of individual components as required,

hire staff with appropriate knowledge to contribute to the planning, development, and operation of online training systems,

compete in the international arena on a basis at least equal to the overseas competition, and

attract students by offering online learning that can be accessed using hardware and software readily available to students.

The Communication Plan will explain these benefits to Training Organisations involved, or intending to become involved, in online training.

The Communication Plan will ensure a return on the investment in the Preferred Standards Project by encouraging Training Organisations to realise the benefits of using the Preferred Standards.

Survey

A survey of the use the 1998 version of the Preferred Standards was undertaken as part of the Year 2000 Preferred Standards Project.

The survey uncovered some problems related to lack of information and understanding. These are

lack of awareness of Preferred Standards,

misunderstanding about the difference between products and standards,

lack of understanding of the Preferred Standards, and

possible conflict between the Preferred Standards and local arrangements.

The Communication Plan will redress these problems by providing appropriate information and explanation about the Preferred Standards.

Scope of Preferred Standards

The Preferred Standards relate to delivery and management of online training.

The recommendations are not intended to replace State and Territory whole of government arrangements that have been established for other purposes.

It is important that the standards are called *Preferred Standards*. In accepting the recommendations, Australian National Training Authority CEOs in no way agree to use them under all circumstances.

The recommendations are particularly aimed at online learning. They are intended to indicate the standards required in client hardware and software used by students. They are not intended to influence SOEs (Standard Operating Environments) used by staff for administrative purposes.

The Project was concerned with standards applicable to the delivery of online training to students. The Project did not consider standards for the administration of students or finances.

It is important that the Communication Plan explains the scope of the Preferred Standards. This will focus attention on matters of importance and avoid confusion with areas outside the scope.

PROCESS

The following process gave rise to this edition of the Communication Plan

the Project Manager formulated some initial ideas and discussed them with the Consultants, DSTC Pty Ltd,

the Consultants produced an initial draft,

the initial draft was circulated to members of the Preferred Standards Project Steering Committee for comment,

the draft was refined,

the draft was presented to and discussed by the Steering Committee at a meeting on 4th October, 2000,

the draft was further modified to incorporate comments,

the Steering Committee again discussed the Plan at its final meeting on 3rd November,

the Consultants incorporated the requirements of the Steering Committee, and

the Project Manager created a new version to focus solely on communication issues, to include extra communication mechanisms, and to explain how the proposed mechanisms might be implemented.

ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION PLAN

Target Audience

The target audience comprises

Registered Training Organisations,

other training organisations,

State Training Agencies,

Australian National Training Authority,

Industry Training Councils,

developers of training products, and

manufacturers of resources used to create and deliver training products.

Permanent Web Site

It is recommended that a permanent Preferred Standards Web Site be established.

This Web Site will be continually updated and will present information on the current status of the Preferred Standards.

The permanent Preferred Standards Web Site will be in addition to project web sites. Project web sites will continue to exist for each separate Preferred Standards Project. Projects have been, or are being, run in 1997, 1998, 2000, and 2001. The project web sites will contain information about the persons involved, procedures adopted, and decisions reached within the individual projects.

A simple and effective way to establish the permanent Preferred Standards Web Site would be to adapt the web site prepared for the Year 2000 Preferred Standards Project and then maintain

it on a continuing basis. The Year 2000 web site contains a user friendly table that relates the Preferred Standards and Operational Guidelines to the circumstances in which they are relevant. There is a *User Guide* which describes the way in which the Preferred Standards are intended to be used. There are background papers on each of the six standards areas considered. The table, user guide, and background papers could be progressively updated and maintained as the official version of the information.

A suitable location for the permanent Preferred Standards Web Site is within the flexiblelearning.net.au domain. This is where the existing web site for the Year 2000 Preferred Standards Project resides.

The address of the existing web site is appropriate for the address of the permanent Preferred Standards Web Site. The current address contains nothing referring to the Year 2000. A new address could be created for material referring specifically to the Year 2000 project. The new address would still be within the flexiblelearning.net.au domain.

This approach will involve very little expense. The existing server will host the permanent Preferred Standards Web Site without noticeable increase in cost. The Project Manager could make the new permanent Preferred Standards Web Site with about one week's labour. Some supportive graphics could be developed by a graphics or public relations agency for about \$1,000.

Road Shows

Demonstrations have already proved very effective in communicating facts related to the Preferred Standards. The Steering Committee was impressed with some brief demonstrations mounted by DSTC Pty Ltd, the Consultants for the Year 2000 Preferred Standards Project. The consultants showed the simplicity of using XML to pass information among different training management systems. They demonstrated the power of using the SMIL language to choreograph multimedia presentations. A demonstration of DSTC's learning management system was also given.

Preferred Standards Road Shows will take focussed demonstrations around the nation.

The Preferred Standards Road Shows will target some vital areas of information transfer including

difference between standards and products,

benefits of using Preferred Standards,

method of utilising the Preferred Standards *User Guide*, and

approach to realisation of the shared vision for online training in Australia.

Appropriate demonstrations for the Road Shows involve such areas as

transfer of student records among disparate systems using XML,

transfer of test results from a training delivery system to a learning management system using the IMS Learning Test Interoperability Specification,

web interface to training delivery and management systems using standard HTML,

packaging of disparate learning objects into a coherent whole using the IMS Content Packaging Specification and the Sharable Courseware Object Reference Model (SCORM),

access to directory services through client products from different manufacturers using Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP),

exchange of personal address information between address books of different manufacturers using vCard,

exchange of appointment information between calendar applications of different manufacturers using iCalendar,

video conferencing, whiteboard, and application sharing among PCs using H.323 and T.120,

joint authoring using WEBDAV,

distributed processing using Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP),

multimedia streaming between servers and clients of different manufacturers using RTSP, RTP, and RTCP,

combination and coordination of multimedia components from different manufacturers using SMIL,

capabilities of different CODECs (compression technology), and

virtual reality technology.

The Project Manager has developed demonstrations of multimedia standards including streaming, SMIL, and CODECs.

Road Shows are the most practical method of selling the use of the Preferred Standards. This is because they provide tangible proof of the benefits in a way that actively involves the audience. The Preferred Standards Road Shows will demonstrate the benefits of using standards to allow interoperability among products from competing manufacturers. Travelling road shows have the potential to reach a large number of practitioners and decision makers in a very practical manner.

It is recommended that Preferred Standards Road Shows be staged on an ongoing basis.

The cost of each Road Show will depend on the scope, duration, venues, and source of labour. Demonstrations of about a third of the suggested areas could be developed with consultant fees of about \$15,000. It would cost about \$10,000 in travel expenses for two persons to visit all capital cities to conduct each Road Show. If consultants were used for the visits, then fees of say \$10,000 each would apply. These costs assume that EdNA VET Advisory Group members would assist by providing the venues for the Road Shows and making the invitations. Costs will be further reduced if some of the labour can be provided by the State Training Agencies.

Online Shows

The Preferred Standards Road Shows will be complemented by continuously available online demonstrations. These will be used both in self serve mode and in demonstrator led mode. The demonstrator led mode could provide some of the same benefits as the Preferred Standards Road Shows but without the need to transport equipment. The demonstrator could be present via video or audio conferencing in order to eliminate travel costs.

The Preferred Standards Online Shows cannot completely obviate the need for the Road Shows. This is because a Road Show is far more tangible in the sense that the participants can see all of the equipment that is involved.

It is recommended that Preferred Standards Online Shows be set up and made available to provide focussed demonstrations on demand.

The Preferred Standards Online Shows will target the same areas of information transfer as the Preferred Standards Road Shows, i.e.

difference between standards and products,

benefits of using Preferred Standards,

method of utilising the Preferred Standards *User Guide*, and

approach to realisation of the shared vision for online training in Australia.

Costs will be minimal. The content of the demonstrations will have been developed for the Preferred Standards Road Shows. The demonstrations will be hosted on the web server used for the permanent Preferred Standards Web Site and on a commercial streaming server. The web material will be an integral part of the Preferred Standards Web Site and will impose no more load on the web server than any other part of the web site. The use of a commercial streaming server would cost less than \$200 per month because the streaming material would be limited to sizes appropriate for demonstrations. For example, a service from Telstra Big Pond could comprise Web Actions account (\$110 set up plus \$55 per month) and streaming account with 50Mb storage, 500Mb streaming transfer per month, and up to five simultaneous clients (\$55 set up plus \$137 per month).

Bake Offs

A *bake off* is an event at which manufacturers of products demonstrate compliance of their products with standards by showing their interoperability with products from other manufacturers.

The Preferred Standards Bake Offs will bring competing manufacturers together with training practitioners in order to demonstrate technologies for the online delivery of training.

Standards to be tested at Preferred Standards Bake Offs will focus on those specifically related to education and training. Other arrangements exist for bake offs in connection with more generic standards. Standards specifically related to education and training include

Sharable Courseware Object Reference Model (SCORM),

IMS Content Packaging Specification,

IMS Learning Test Interoperability Specification,

IMS Enterprise Systems Specification, and

XML in training related applications.

The Preferred Standards Bake Offs are an essential element in the Communication Plan. One reason is that they focus on interoperability and it is interoperability that provides most of the benefits of using the Preferred Standards. Another reason is that they provide direct contact with

manufacturers in a practical arena.

There should be no direct cost associated with Preferred Standards Bake Offs. It is assumed that EdNA VET Advisory Group members will provide venues and that manufacturers will provide the remaining requirements.

It is recommended that the Project Manager approach relevant manufacturers to arrange an initial Preferred Standards Bake Off on topics of mutual interest to the manufacturers and Training Organisations.

Showcases

It is recommended that appropriate training products be selected and publicised as showcases for the benefits of using Preferred Standards.

An obvious primary target for a Preferred Standards Showcase is the Toolbox set being progressively developed as part of the Framework for National Collaboration. The Project Manager has been in contact with the Toolbox management team in this regard. Another Strategy 2000 Project, *Toolbox Evaluation*, is currently investigating factors that have militated against the take up of Toolboxes and is expected to reinforce the need for Toolboxes to adhere to the Preferred Standards.

There may be a need for some limited digesting of the Preferred Standards to provide documentation specifically targeted at the needs of Toolbox developers. It is recommended that the Project Managers of the Preferred Standards and Toolbox Projects liaise further in this regard.

Publicity would come from three main sources

the Preferred Standards Web Site (which could refer to particular Toolboxes as showcasing particular uses of particular standards),

Toolbox presentations conducted by Australian Training Products, and

the use of Toolboxes in practice.

The Project Manager will need to liaise with Australian Training Products and the Toolbox Project to arrange for publicity of mutual benefit to all parties.

Both needs for liaison can be satisfied with travelling costs of about \$1,500 for the Project Manager.

Appellation Scheme

An appellation scheme would promote the use of the Preferred Standards by allowing conforming training products to display an appropriate brand. It is recommended that a Preferred Standards Appellation Scheme be commenced.

Compliance would be in accordance with the spirit of the Preferred Standards rather than in accordance with a draconian suite of pedantic tests. In other words, compliance would refer to the use of the Preferred Standards in a manner that achieves the benefits associated with the use of the Preferred Standards.

Capital costs associated with the scheme will be limited to the design of a suitable brand - say about \$1,000. It is expected that the preparation of guidelines and evaluation criteria will be carried out either by the current Project Manager or as part of a future Preferred Standards Project.

Operational costs will be associated with the testing and administration of the Preferred Standards Appellation Scheme. A reference committee will be required and the Preferred Standards Steering Committee in existence at any time could serve the purpose. It is expected that the evaluation of each product will require one or two days labour by a suitably qualified person (i.e. more than a few hours and less than a week).

A nominal charge could eventually be levied for appellation. Initially, it is proposed that the cost be absorbed by the Project Manager's organisation. This will enable costs to be established and a price to be struck. It will also allow the scheme to gather momentum before a charge is levied.

The Preferred Standards Appellation Scheme will be publicised at no extra cost through the channels proposed for general communication related to Preferred Standards.

Development System

It is recommended that a development system be set up to enable the development, testing, and demonstration of aspects of the Preferred Standards.

Such a development system is essential to make the benefits of using the Preferred Standards tangible and observable by practitioners and decision makers.

The Preferred Standards Development System would be used to

produce material for the Preferred Standards Web Site,

develop and present the Preferred Standards Road Shows,
construct the Preferred Standards Online Shows,
assist with the Preferred Standards Bake Offs,
test training products for acceptance as Preferred Standards Showcases, and
test training products for branding under the Preferred Standards Appellation Scheme.

Without the Preferred Standards Development System, these elements of the Communication Plan cannot proceed as planned.

A base Preferred Standards Development System would be quite inexpensive. The Project Manager can already demonstrate many of the Preferred Standards in action using free software and private equipment of his own. These demonstrations could be made available in the Project Manager's office with the acquisition of the following equipment

server computer to run the Unix (free Linux) operating system (\$5,000),
Linux operating system CD (\$150),
two computer cameras (\$400),
three low power IBM style PCs (hand-me-downs from the Project Manager's organisation),
one fast IBM style PC (Project Manager's PC),
one Macintosh style PC (one currently used to operate scanner),
multimedia editing software (US\$29), and
various items of free software.

To be specifically relevant to current developments such as Toolboxes, the Preferred Standards Development System will require software such as

Authorware (\$1,000 educational edition),
Toolbook Instructor (\$1,500 educational edition),

Web CT (free demonstration hosting service available), and
Blackboard (free demonstration hosting service available).

The Preferred Standards Development System will be used to set up demonstrations for the Preferred Standards Road Shows. In order that these demonstrations can be transported to Road Show locations, a dedicated laptop computer is required. This will cost about \$6,000. The laptop will run the Unix operating system to provide server functions and will therefore be dedicated to this purpose.

Permanent Contact Point

It is recommended that a permanent contact point be established for questions related to the Preferred Standards.

The permanent contact point will be an email address and/or a telephone number. The email address and telephone would be redirected as required so that an appropriate person would receive the communications. For example, it could be a duty of the Project Manager of the time during the time that a Preferred Standards Project was running. At other times, a possibility would be for the EdNA VET Advisory Group Secretariat to receive enquiries and pass them on to an appropriate person or forum.

Preparation of Communications

All communications should refer to the permanent Preferred Standards Web Site and contact point.

A public relations consultant should be appointed to assist with the preparation of written materials, graphics for the permanent Preferred Standards Web Site, and the brand for the Preferred Standards Appellation Scheme.

An initial budget of \$5,000 is recommended for the public relations consultant.

The Project Manager will obtain offers, appoint the consultant, and arrange a contract.

Communication Media

It is recommended that email be used to notify Training Organisations of the web site and the benefits of using the Preferred Standards. Possible sources of email lists include

National Training Information System (NTIS),

ACPET (Association of Private Providers),
Industry Training Councils,
Adult Learning Australia,
State Training Agency records of training organisations within their jurisdictions,
mailing lists for events such as Networking 2000, and
mailing lists of relevant professional organisations.

It is proposed that the emails be sent using the resources of the State and Territory Training Agencies, the Australian National Training Authority, and the EdNA VET Advisory Group Secretariat. These organisations have been directly involved with the Preferred Standards Project.

It is recommended that articles be prepared for regular newsletters for Training Organisations. In the first instance, members of the Steering Committee could be asked to put the Project Manager in contact with the editors of the training newsletters for their respective departments. The articles will be prepared by the Project Manager, the public relations consultant, and the editors of the respective newsletters.

It is recommended that flyers be included with regular mail-outs for Training Organisations. The flyers would contain information about current Preferred Standards projects, the permanent web site, benefits of using Preferred Standards, take up of Preferred Standards, demonstrations of interoperability, relevant presentations, and other promotional material. Again, the Steering Committee members could be asked to provide the initial suggestions on appropriate mail-outs. The flyers will be prepared by the public relations consultant using information supplied by the Project Manager.

It is recommended that Training Organisations and relevant regulatory, advisory, and industry organisations be asked to include links from their respective web sites to the Preferred Standards Web Site. Such a request could be included in the flyers suggested above.

It is recommended that an expert from the Preferred Standards 2000 Project give presentations at relevant conferences.

Costs associated with these communications will be approximately as follows (in addition to the public relations consultant proposed above)

email - no identifiable cost to Communication Plan,

articles - no identifiable cost to Communication Plan,

flyers - \$2,000 each run (printing),

web links - no identifiable cost to Communication Plan,

presentations - \$2,000 each (travel and registration),

Content of Communications

All communications will refer to the permanent Preferred Standards Web Site and contact point.

Problems uncovered by the survey of the use of the 1998 version of the Preferred Standards will be addressed as follows

lack of awareness of Preferred Standards to be addressed by publicity to raise the awareness,

misunderstanding about the difference between products and standards to be mitigated with relevant educational material and demonstrations,

lack of understanding of the Preferred Standards to be reduced with appropriate explanation and demonstrations, and

possible conflict between the Preferred Standards and local arrangements to be resolved by explanation of the scope of the Preferred Standards (as in *Scope of Recommendations* earlier in this report) and further collaboration among the relevant jurisdictions.

Communications will also make announcements about

Preferred Standards Road Show schedules and contents,

Preferred Standards Bake Off plans, schedules, and results,

new products afforded Preferred Standards Showcase status,

products branded under the Preferred Standards Appellation Scheme,
work with the Preferred Standards Development System, and
conference presentations.

An important issue to be addressed by the Preferred Standards Road Shows, the Preferred Standards Web Site, and any direct communications is the difference between standards and product brands. Misunderstanding about this difference is hindering the understanding of the use and benefits of the Preferred Standards. The Project Manager has heard such statements as “How can you have standards when the states are using different products” and “Blackboard is taking over from Web CT as the standard.” Statements such as these demonstrate the problems that the misunderstanding creates.

FUNDING

The Steering Committee recommends that implementation of the Communication Plan be commenced immediately with the \$10,000 made available in conjunction with the Year 2000 Preferred Standards Project.

The funding is to be allocated approximately as follows

design of web site graphics by PR consultant - \$1,000,
design of appellation brand by PR consultant - \$1,000,
editing of emails, flyers, and articles by PR consultant - \$3,000,
travel by Project Manager in relation to Toolboxes - \$1,500,
printing of flyers first edition - \$2,000,
first conference presentation - \$2,000, and
contingencies - \$500.

A further source of funding is the \$400,000 allocated in the year 2001 for communications related to all Strategy 2001 Projects. As the Preferred Standards Project is the only one with recommendations to be sent to Australian National Training Authority CEOs, it is expected that a concomitant share of the communications budget will be allocated to Preferred Standards.

This funding could be used for the conduct of Preferred Standards Road Shows, commencement of the Preferred Standards Online Show, future operation of the Preferred Standards Appellation Scheme, setting up of the Preferred Standards Demonstration System, subsequent editions of flyers, further conference presentations, and work with vendors of software and hardware. The immediate need is for \$15,000 to commence the setting up of the Preferred Standards Development System. About \$40,000 is required for the first Road Show.

It is recommended that an on going budget be allocated for maintenance of the Preferred Standards Web Site, hosting of the Preferred Standards Online Show, operation of the Preferred Standards Development System, and further communication activities.

LABOUR

It is recommended that the EdNA VET Advisory Group approach the Department of Employment and Training with a view to securing the services of the current Project Manager to commence the implementation of the Communication Plan.

Initial implementation is to involve

- setting up the permanent Preferred Standards Web Site,
- arranging the first Preferred Standards Road Show,
- constructing the initial Preferred Standards Online Show,
- arranging the first Preferred Standards Bake Off,
- liaison with the Toolbox Project,
- preparing guidelines, procedures, and costs for the Preferred Standards Appellation Scheme,
- setting up the Preferred Standards Development System, and
- employment of the public relations consultant.