REVIEW OF THE
CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY/
NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT 2003-2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This review of the Partnership Agreement between Charles Darwin University and the Northern Territory Government was completed by the Risk Management Services (RMS) Unit in the Department of the Chief Minister (DCM), in compliance with Clause 6.2 of the Agreement.

OVERALL FINDING

The overall finding of the review is that while the Partnership has made reasonable progress in achieving its objectives, further improvements need to be made. This review recommends a number of changes to its structural framework, performance reporting and other operational arrangements. The intention of these recommendations is to provide better alignment with strategic priorities and better focus for and application of limited resources.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION

The overall recommendation of the review is that Partnership be renewed and that improvements recommended in this report be incorporated in its management and operation.

GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Schedule Champions

Many champions have struggled with their role for a range of reasons. As a result, their performance as leaders of schedules has varied considerably during this first iteration of the Partnership Agreement. This report recommends (1) that the appointment of schedule champions be reviewed and adjustments made and (2) that all reasonable steps be taken to clarify the role of champion, reduce the tension of conflicting roles, and influence executive support for the role.

Reporting Requirements

Two key concerns are raised in this report (1) the reporting burden of champions and (2) the weakness of performance indicators which underpin performance reports. This report recommends that key elements of performance for Capacity Building and the Impact of Projects be incorporated in future performance reports at all levels.
Peak Group Arrangements

The Peak Group has performed well in identifying and implementing strategies that have and will continue to serve the Partnership well. These strategies have been firmly ‘bedded in’ and should now be manageable as part of normal operations for the Peak Group. This report recommends that the Peak Group continue to use these strategies and that the Secretariat simplify and improve the Peak Group meeting agendas/minutes.

Role of Secretariat

The great majority of those accessing secretariat support have been very happy with and thankful for the support that had been provided. However, a few key concerns were expressed. The secretariat (1) is too lean and (2) doesn’t always having the capacity/time to provide the support that may be required. This report recommends that the current approach to providing Secretarial Support be continued with the exception of communications and that communications be managed as a whole of Partnership support team.

PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES

All 8 projects seeking to procure services under the Partnership Agreement in the period that the general exemption has been in place (Jan 05 – Present): (1) complied with the requirements of the ‘Procurement Policy Under the Partnership Agreement’ apart from weaknesses in their ‘Scope of Work’ but (2) failed to comply fully with Procurement Review Board (PRB) Guidelines. This report recommends (1) that procurement information sessions continue for both NTG and CDU staff, (2) that these sessions be facilitated by relevant specialists, and (3) that key messages from these ‘information sessions’ be circulated to all Schedules/Projects.

BRANDING OF THE AGREEMENT

Views regarding the Partnership brand vary considerably with the great majority of feedback being less than enthusiastic. This report recommends (1) that the brand continue to be used internally and incorporated into the Partnership website, (2) that use of the brand be extended to external communications and (3) that further development of the brand should be guided by its relative priority within the broader communications strategy.

COMMUNICATION

While a Communication Strategy has been developed and a number of its key elements implemented, the overall view of champions and members was that communications still has a long way to go to effectively meet the needs of the Partnership. This report recommends (1) that the Communication Strategy continue to be improved, (2) that a ‘whole of partnership’ support team be formed to inform, shape and implement improvements, (3) that this team be championed by relevant specialists in DCM and CDU, and (4) this team be assisted in the development of engagement plans by industry/business specialists within DBERD.
OVERALL AND KEY OBJECTIVES

The great majority of those interviewed felt that the overall objective and key objectives of the Partnership remained relevant and that they did not need to be varied. However, this report found that they were no longer the most appropriate framework for the formation of schedules and projects. This report recommends that a new framework be adopted for the next iteration of the Partnership.

SCHEDULES: ORGANISATION, ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

A high level overview of schedule performance to date and their proposed future has been provided in the Review. A summary of these recommendations is provided below.
Specific Objective 1 - Governance Arrangements

1.1 Effectiveness of the Peak Group Arrangements:

*It is recommended that the:*

(a) Peak Group continues to manage their implementation strategies as part of their normal operations.
(b) Secretariat simplify and adopt better practices (including information mapping) for the production of Peak Group meeting agendas/minutes.

**Response:** (a) and (b) agreed in principle.

The Peak Group will continue its mode of operation of oversight and review, including monitoring to ensure strategies are progressing in a timely manner. Actual implementation occurs within the University and Agencies, rather than through the Peak Group.

The Peak Group indicated its satisfaction with the level of detail in agenda papers and minutes but also encouraged the Secretariat to consider additional information provided by Risk Management Services and incorporate into agenda papers and minutes, as appropriate.

1.2 Reporting requirements to the Peak Group, Cabinet and University Council

*It is recommended that the key elements of performance highlighted in the attached figure be incorporated in future performance reports at Project, Schedule and whole of Partnership levels.*

**Response:** not agreed.

The Peak Group recognises the importance of measuring the performance of activities under the Agreement. However, many of the existing and proposed schedules are centred on developmental activities where performance measurement is not always effective. When the schedule or project moves to the implementation stage, specific performance indicators will be developed as an integral part of the activity. Similarly, when the activity has been completed, or at appropriate milestones, a structured evaluation may be appropriate.
Schedule champions are strongly encouraged to develop robust performance indicators for their activities, being mindful not to increase bureaucracy and ensuring indicators are relevant to the stage of development of an activity. In order to assist with this, the Secretariat will provide Schedule champions with a pro forma for performance measurement under each Schedule. This will ensure that a uniform approach to reporting and evaluation is adopted, so that benchmark success indicators can be determined at the commencement of the second Partnership Agreement and consistent evaluation undertaken thereafter on an annual basis.

1.3 Schedule Champions as leaders of schedules

It is recommended that the Peak Group:
(a) take the opportunity, in moving to a new Partnership framework, to review the appointment of schedule champions and to make adjustments that are:
  • appropriate to the new framework and
  • provide for a better fit between an appointee’s core duties and the schedule they will champion.
(b) take all reasonable steps to:
  • clarify the role of champion,
  • reduce the tension between conflicting champion roles that may exist, and
  • influence executive support for the provision of formal time and recognition for the important work of champions

Response: (a) and (b) agreed.

Each champion’s Chief Executive/direct report at NTG/CDU will be consulted on the appointment by the relevant joint chair in order to promote the role of champions. The Peak Group will outline their expectations to the new champions and will meet with them in October 2006. Further, smaller groups of champions will meet with the Peak Group to discuss progress and forward directions at each of the Peak Group meetings.

1.4 Role of the Secretariat:

It is recommended that:
(a) the current approach to providing Secretariat support be continued with the exception of communications;
(b) a ‘whole of partnership’ support team be formed to manage communications;
(c) the relevant specialists from both the NTG and CDU be assigned as champions for this support team; and
(d) these champions form teams appropriate to the challenges they face.

Response: (a) agreed in part, (b) to (d) not agreed.

The Partnership Agreement is multi-faceted and evolving in nature so that messages and outcomes under the Agreement are best communicated by the Secretariat (in consultation with communications experts from both organisations). Further, during the Review process, the Secretariat has strengthened links between marketing and communications functions in both the University and Government. A solid working relationship is now in place between the Partnership Secretariat and the marketing and communications units in CDU and the Department of the Chief Minister (DCM), so that
Partnership activities are increasingly being positively promoted via a range of media channels. Communications is to remain as part of the Secretariat with regular meetings with the heads of communications at CDU and DCM.

**Specific Objective 2 - Procurement procedures: compliance and workability**

*It is recommended that:*

(a) Procurement ‘information sessions’ be arranged at least twice annually to cover changes in personnel.

(b) Both NTG and CDU staff involved with the procurement process attend these ‘information sessions’.

(c) Relevant procurement specialists be involved as facilitators for these ‘information sessions’.

(d) Particular emphasis be placed, in these ‘information sessions’, on the importance of fully addressing the ‘Scope of Work’ and of complying with relevant Procurement Guidelines.

(e) Key messages from these ‘information sessions’ be circulated to all Schedules / Projects through their Champions and to Agencies through their Corporate Service Executives.

**Response:** (a) to (e) agreed.

The Procurement information sessions should be targeted at specialist procurement/business development officers within each Agency and CDU with the expectation that information from the sessions will be passed on to line staff as part of the training function of the specialist procurement staff (ie, train the trainer). The Secretariat will also meet with the Procurement Liaison Director, Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development, to discuss further means of raising awareness of procurement processes under the Partnership Agreement to staff in CDU, NTG, and the wider community.

**Specific Objective 3 - Effectiveness of agreement branding**

*It is recommended that:*

(a) the brand continue to be used internally and incorporated into the design of the Partnership website;

(b) use of the brand be extended to external communications (including news articles / advertising); and

(c) further development of the brand should be guided by its relative priority within the broader communications strategy.

**Response:** (a) to (c) agreed.

The Peak Group agrees that the need to appropriately promote the benefits of working under the Partnership Agreement is of importance for CDU and the NTG.
Specific Objective 4 - Effectiveness of communication both internally and externally

It is recommended that:
(a) the Communication Strategy continue to be improved to:
- better meet internal communication needs;
- extend the external reach of the Partnership to key industry and business leaders;
- incorporate the development of engagement plans for key stakeholder groups;
- increase positive coverage of the Partnership in the local media;
- incorporate further appropriate development of the Partnership brand; and
- improve performance measures.
(b) a ‘whole of partnership’ support team be formed to inform, shape and implement these improvements;
(c) this team be championed by executives responsible for marketing and communications in the Department of the Chief Minister and Charles Darwin University; and
(d) this team be assisted in the development of engagement plans by industry/business specialists within DBERD.

Response: (a) agreed.

The Peak Group agrees the continued development and refinement of the Communication Strategy is a key component of achieving long-term positive outcomes under the Partnership Agreement. This strategy will continue to play an important role in ensuring there is widespread knowledge and understanding of the benefits to be derived from the Partnership Agreement.

This recommendation highlights the recognised need to extend the communication of the Partnership outward to targeted external stakeholders, including key industry and business groups and the wider community.

Engagement plans for key stakeholders should be developed by schedule champions in close liaison with the Secretariat as necessary.

Work on this recommendation has taken place prior to the Review, with the development of third party awareness sessions being flagged as a priority for the next phase in the communication strategy.

In addition, promotion of the Partnership Agreement through positive coverage in the NT News and other local media has been targeted by communications units in CDU and DCM as a key goal, and this is increasingly been achieved, as evidenced by the launch of both the Graduate School of Health Practice and the Bioscience North Australia Facility.

The Secretariat will continue to work with the heads of communications at CDU and DCM, as well as industry/business specialists to implement this recommendation.

(b) and (c) not agreed (see 1.4).
(d) agreed.
Specialist officers within DBERD will assist the Secretariat in the development of Partnership Agreement engagement plans for the business community, both regionally and nationally.

**Specific Objective 5 - Is there evidence that the existing overall objective and four key objectives should be varied?**

It is recommended that:
(a) the new framework be adopted for the next iteration of the Partnership;
(b) current schedules be incorporated within this new framework in a way that best suits their work to date, future potential and alignment with the strategic themes; and
(c) consideration be given as to whether or not the Partnership is in a position to and/or should be addressing those strategic themes that are not reflected in the current framework of schedules.

Response: (a) agreed, with modifications.

The Peak Group have carefully considered the review recommendations, and a new framework has been developed based on the Review’s proposed framework and the subsequent consultations within Government and the University.

The new framework enables the second Partnership Agreement to be active in Government core platforms, particularly the Economic Development Framework and the Chief Minister’s recently announced 20 Year Indigenous Generational Reform Plan. The framework also enables the University’s key priorities to be addressed under the Agreement.

(b) agreed.

The Secretariat will work with the new champions to develop schedules which will form part of the new Agreement, as well as incorporate existing active schedules within the revised framework as appropriate.

(c) agreed.

A revised Partnership framework will be developed to more accurately capture the strategic priorities faced by Government and University, as outlined under (a).
Specific Objective 6 - Organisation, achievements and outcomes of schedules

Overall Response: the recommendations for each schedule have been included in the proposed new framework and the commentary in the Review on Schedule performance will be included in the 2005/2006 Partnership Agreement Annual Report to University Council and Cabinet.

6.1.1 Schedule 1.1 - Government University Partnership

It is recommended that Schedule 1.1 be archived and that strategies developed under it continue to be part of the normal operations of the Peak Group.

Response: agreed.

6.1.2 Schedule 1.2 - Health and Community Services: Building Service Delivery Capacity in the NT

It is recommended that Schedule 1.2 be retained as a schedule in this next iteration of the Partnership and that they continue to take a leading role in shaping and informing strategies/projects that will encourage ‘healthier communities’ and strengthen research and teaching capacity in this priority area of need.

Response: agreed.

6.1.3 Schedule 1.3 - Strengthening Scientific Research Capacity in the Territory

It is recommended that Schedule 1.3 be reconstituted as a ‘whole of Partnership’ support team.

Response: not agreed.

No whole of Partnership support teams are to be created outside of the Secretariat. This schedule has made significant gains over the last three years and the members are working well together at project level. Research requirements do exist across the whole of Government and whole of the Partnership but to put responsibility at another level could mean individual schedules may not pursue research with the same vigour. The existing Schedule 1.3 will form part of the ‘Economic Development’ schedule in the new Agreement.

6.1.4 Schedule 1.4 - Supporting the Energy and Mining Industries

It is recommended that:
- the members of Schedule 1.4 focus their efforts on a few key projects that might assist in creating greater momentum;
- Schedule 1.4 be reconstituted as a ‘project team’ to progress these key projects; and
- This project team become part of new combined schedule ‘Economic & Social Development & The Territory Workforce’.
Response: agreed, in part.

The proposed schedule ‘Economic & Social Development & The Territory Workforce’ is far too broad in scope and has been broken down accordingly. The revised framework will allocate the existing Schedule 1.4 as a project under the ‘Economic Development’ schedule.

6.1.5 Schedule 1.5 - Supporting the Transport and Logistics Industries
Archived (November 2005)

Schedule previously archived.

6.1.6 Schedule 1.6 - Strengthening ICT Capacity and Building Business

It is recommended that:
- the members of Schedule 1.6 focus their efforts on a few key projects that might assist in creating further opportunities for remote area students;
- Schedule 1.6 be reconstituted as a ‘project team’ to progress these key projects; and
- this project team become part of new combined schedule ‘Economic & Social Development & The Territory Workforce’.

Response: agreed, in part.

The existing Schedule 1.6 to be reconstituted to progress key projects, but will be placed under the ‘Learning Environment’ schedule.

6.1.7 Schedule 1.7 - Developing the Defence Support Industry

It is recommended that:
- the members of Schedule 1.7 focus their efforts on progressing the ‘Defence Skills Training Network’ and other key projects that may emerge;
- Schedule 1.7 be reconstituted as a ‘project team’ to progress these key projects; and
- this project team become part of new combined schedule ‘Economic & Social Development & The Territory Workforce’.

Response: agreed, in part.

The existing Schedule 1.7 will be reconstituted to progress key projects, but will be placed under the ‘Economic Development’ schedule.

6.2.1 Schedule 2.1 - Strategic Territory Workforce Development

It is recommended that Schedules 2.1 and 2.2 be amalgamated and that they take a leading role in shaping and informing strategies/projects that will encourage ‘economic development’ and strengthen research and teaching capacity in this priority area of need.

Response: not agreed.

Schedule 2.1 is developing a growing body of work as well as strong collaborative links between the NT Government (especially OCPE) and CDU in the area of employment and recruitment in the NT Public Sector, with a particularly laudable focus on remote and Indigenous employment issues.
To amalgamate this schedule with Schedule 2.2 (Social and Economic Research) would risk devolving the focus and aims of the schedule. The strategic focus of Schedule 2.1 is quite different to that of Schedule 2.2, which captures research projects across a wide range of social and economic issues.

The existing Schedule 2.1 will be allocated as a project under the ‘Strong Regions’ schedule.

The existing Schedule 2.2 will be allocated as a project under the ‘Economic Development’ schedule.

6.2.2 Schedule 2.2 (old) - Producing Graduates in Hard to Recruit Areas

*Merged with Schedule 2.1 (December 2004).*

6.2.2 Schedule 2.2 (new) - Social and Economic Research

*It is recommended that Schedules 2.1 and 2.2 be amalgamated and that they take a leading role in shaping and informing strategies/projects that will encourage ‘economic development’ and strengthen research and teaching capacity in this priority area of need.*

**Response: not agreed (see 6.2.1).**

6.2.3 Enhancing Teacher Capability in ICT

*It is recommended that:*

- the members of Schedule 2.3 focus their efforts on the further incorporation of ICT units in relevant courses, and other key projects that will enhance the ‘learning environment’ of Territorians;
- Schedule 2.3 be reconstituted as a ‘project team’ to progress these key projects; and
- this project team become part of a new broad schedule focused on enhancing the ‘Learning Environment’ of Territorians and international students.

**Response: agreed.**

6.2.4 Schedule 2.4 (old) - Provision of Network Infrastructure to Regional Education Centres

*Merged with Schedule 1.6 (March 2004).*

6.2.4 Schedule 2.4 (new) - Addressing Family Violence

*It is recommended that:*

- the members of Schedule 2.4 continue to progress their key family violence projects;
- Schedule 2.4 be reconstituted as a ‘project team’ to progress these key projects; and
- this project team become part of a new broad schedule ‘Safe Communities’.

**Response: agreed.**
6.2.5 Schedule 2.5 - Finding Solutions: The Charles Darwin Symposia

It is recommended that Schedule 2.5 be reconstituted as a ‘whole of Partnership’ support team.

Response: not agreed.

The Symposia series will form part of the new schedule ‘Australian and Global Connections’, rather than as a ‘whole of partnership’ schedule.

6.2.6 Schedule 2.6 - Achieving Economic and Social Gain from Tropical Knowledge

It is recommended that:
• the members of Schedule 2.6 continue to progress key projects that will leverage tropical knowledge to encourage economic development in the NT; Schedule 2.6 be reconstituted as a ‘project team’ to progress these key projects; and this project team become part of new combined schedule ‘Economic & Social Development & The Territory Workforce’.

Response: agreed, in part.

The existing Schedule 2.6 will be reconstituted to progress key projects, but will be placed under the ‘Sustainable Terrestrial Resources’ schedule.

6.2.7 Schedule 2.7 - Achieving Economic and Social Gain from Desert Knowledge

It is recommended that:
• the members of Schedule 2.7 continue to progress key projects that will leverage desert knowledge to encourage economic development in the NT; Schedule 2.7 be reconstituted as a ‘project team’ to progress these key projects; and this project team become part of new combined schedule ‘Economic & Social Development & The Territory Workforce’.

Response: agreed.

The existing Schedule 2.7 will be reconstituted to progress key projects, but will be placed under the ‘Sustainable Terrestrial Resources’ schedule.

6.2.8 Strategic Research to Inform the Development of Business, Enterprise and Tourism

It is recommended that Schedule 2.8:
• be retained as a schedule in this next iteration of the Partnership; take a leading role in shaping and informing strategies / projects that will contribute to our ‘Territory lifestyle’ and strengthen research and teaching capacity in this priority area of need; and continue to play a leading role in tourism projects encouraging economic development.

Response: agreed, in part.
The existing Schedule 2.8 will become a project under the revised ‘Economic Development’ schedule.

6.3.1 Schedule 3.1 - Charles Darwin University

*It is recommended that Schedule 3.1 be retained as a schedule in this next iteration of the Partnership and that they focus on taking a leading role in shaping and informing strategies / projects that will enhance the ‘learning environment’ of Territorians and international students.*

Response: agreed.

To become a project under the ‘Learning Environment’ schedule, and to inform the strategic focus of the schedule.

6.3.2 Schedule 3.2 - Institute of Advanced Studies

*Merged with Schedule 3.1 (August 2004) - no response required.*

6.3.3 Schedule 3.3 - Building on Success: The Menzies School of Health Research

*Archived (December 2004) - no response required.*

6.3.4 Schedule 3.4 - Improving VET Delivery in the Territory

*It is recommended that:*

- the members of Schedule 3.4 continue to progress key projects that will enhance the vocational ‘learning environment’ of Territorians and thereby further opportunities;
- Schedule 3.4 be reconstituted as a ‘project team’ to progress these key projects; and
- this project team become part of a new broad schedule focused on enhancing the ‘learning environment’ of Territorians and international students.

Response: agreed.

Projects to be placed under the Learning Environment schedule.

6.3.5 Schedule 3.5 - Land Grant University

*Archived (March 2004) - no response required.*

6.3.6 Schedule 3.6 - International Education: Increasing the NT’s International Profile

*It is recommended that:*

- the members of Schedule 3.6 continue to progress key projects that will enhance the ‘learning environment’ of international students and increase the number of international students studying at Territory schools;
• Schedule 3.6 be reconstituted as a ‘project team’ to progress these key projects; and
• this project team become part of a new broad schedule focused on enhancing the ‘learning environment’ of Territorians and international students.

Response: agreed, in part.

International education and other forms of engagement with the international community, particularly in South East Asia, are priority issues for Charles Darwin University and the Northern Territory Government. As such, a schedule on ‘Australian and Global Connections’ will be added and the existing Schedule 3.6 will be incorporated at project level under this schedule. The Peak Group is aware that the Department of the Chief Minister has established a Chief Executives working group on international education and the outcomes of the group’s deliberations will form the strategic directions of this project.

6.4.1 Schedule 4.1 - Commercial Use of Native Species by Indigenous People

It is recommended that:
• the members of Schedule 4.1 continue to progress key projects that will enhance the commercial use of native species and thereby increase ‘indigenous choices’;
• Schedule 4.1 be reconstituted as a ‘project team’ to progress these key projects; and
• this project team become part of a new broad schedule focused on increasing the ‘indigenous choices’.

Response: agreed.

The new schedule ‘Indigenous Choices’ will be renamed to ‘Indigenous Opportunities’.

6.4.2 Schedule 4.2 - The National Accelerated Literacy Program

It is recommended that:
• the members of Schedule 4.2 continue to progress key projects that will enhance the ‘learning environment’ of Indigenous Territorians and thereby increase ‘indigenous choices’;
• Schedule 4.2 be reconstituted as a ‘project team’ to progress these key projects; and
• this project team become part of a new broad schedule focused on increasing the ‘indigenous choices’.

Response: agreed, in part.

The existing Schedule 4.2 is to be allocated at project level under the ‘Learning Environment’ schedule.
6.4.3 Schedule 4.3 - Youth Engagement - Indigenous Music Training

It is recommended that:
- the members of Schedule 4.3 continue to progress key projects that will enhance the musical ‘learning environment’ of Indigenous Territorians and thereby increase ‘indigenous choices’ when entering the music industry;
- Schedule 4.3 be reconstituted as a ‘project team’ to progress these key projects; and
- this project team become part of a new broad schedule focused on increasing the ‘indigenous choices’.

Response: not agreed.

The existing Schedule 4.3 to be placed as a project under the ‘Creative Industries’ schedule.

6.4.4 Schedule 4.4 - Indigenous Economic Development Taskforce

It is recommended that Schedule 4.4 be retained as a schedule in this next iteration of the Partnership and that it take a leading role in shaping and informing strategies/projects that will enhance ‘Indigenous choices’ in the Territory.

Response: agreed.

The proposed ‘Indigenous Choices’ schedule will need to be carefully developed in consultation with key stakeholders. The appropriate strategic focus on Indigenous economic development as opposed to the development of basic Indigenous needs is one which will need to be weighted carefully in the new structure.

6.4.5 Schedule 4.5 - Graduate Certificate in Community Development

Completed.

6.4.6 Schedule 4.6 - Indigenous Youth Leadership

It is recommended that:
- the members of Schedule 4.6 continue to progress key projects that will enhance the leadership development of Indigenous youth;
- Schedule 4.6 be reconstituted as a ‘project team’ to progress these key projects; and
- this project team become part of a new broad schedule focused on increasing ‘indigenous choices’.

Response: agreed.

However, this will need to examined in the context of comments at 6.4.4.