

**Flexible**  

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**Learning**  

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**Business**  

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**Planning**  

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**Framework**

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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*

## What does the Flexible Learning Business Planning Framework aim to do?

The Flexible Learning Business Planning Framework – the *Framework* – aims to support the sustainable development of flexible learning within the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Sector.

Broadly, the Framework is designed to help users (i.e. people working for training providers including managers, teachers and trainers) to: -

- Reinforce flexible learning as a conventional option for learners and teachers and trainers
- Establish flexible learning as an integral part of their organisation's delivery capability
- Build the capability (i.e. knowledge, skills and systems) needed to develop flexible learning
- Develop a client/market driven approach to flexible learning
- Foster effective collaboration and flourishing sectoral partnerships
- Identify and attain the benefits (financial and others) associated with flexible learning

More specifically, the Framework will help users to :-

- Create effective alignment between their organisation's strategic priorities and flexible learning opportunities
- Prepare a coherent "business case" that can be used to gain support and justify the resources needed to develop and deliver flexible learning opportunities they are considering
- Deliver and promote flexible learning to current, or potential, clients
- Improve the processes associated with the development of flexible learning

## Flexible Learning - What is it?

Essentially, flexible learning expands choice on what, when, where and how people learn. It is a learner-centred approach to education and training that covers a range of delivery modes, including distance education, mixed-mode delivery, e-learning, online learning, self-paced and self-directed learning.

Flexible learning is any approach which:

- is based on the skill needs and delivery requirements of clients, not the interests of trainers or providers
- gives clients as much control as possible over what, when, where and how they learn
- makes use of the delivery methods most useful for the clients - including e-learning.

### Why is it important?

'Flexibility' is a key concept underpinning the national training system. Employers and industry in general need to have access to training that suits their business environment.

Students are increasingly drawn to education and training pathways that help them balance their work, life and education commitments.

### What are the benefits of flexible learning?

Flexible learning offers benefits to training organisations, learners, and employers.

- **Training organisations** can gain a competitive advantage by providing flexible learning options to clients. This may include opening up new markets in delivery of training in international, national regional and remote areas.
- **Education and training professionals** are excited by the possibilities for learners that flexible learning provides and by the increased skills-base they are acquiring.
- Many **learners** have better experiences and outcomes from flexible learning than from more traditional approaches. Students learn in different ways, and flexible learning allows them to access training that best suits their learning style. Flexible learning also opens up a range of learning options and increases accessibility helping to make training more equitable.
- **Employers** benefit from flexible learning, as they are able to integrate training into their workplace in a way that suits their operations.

Appendix I provides information about the Australian Flexible Learning Framework, which has been designed to help the vocational education and training sector take up flexible learning.

## What the Flexible Learning Business Planning Framework does, and does not

The Framework provides users with a strategic, and ordered approach, to the development of flexible learning.

The Framework focuses on identifying, and addressing, the needs of *markets* - a group of learners, or clients, with whom the *training provider* is currently working with or may potentially work with and the needs of training providers.

The Framework recognises that the diversity of markets, and training providers, means there can be no one "best way" of developing flexible learning. Given this diversity the Framework:

Does	Does not
✓ provide a strategic approach	✗ provide a set methodology
✓ provide a structured guide	✗ provide a detailed manual
✓ foster thinking and inquiry	✗ provide a set of answers

The Framework encourages users to consider a range of issues relevant to the development of flexible learning including:

Issue	Training Provider Considerations
Strategic Planning	Aligning flexible delivery with strategic issues and priorities
Market Understanding*	Identifying and addressing the needs of markets
Communication	Communicating the benefits of flexible learning
Capability Development	Attaining the capability required to develop flexible learning
Financial Analysis	Identifying and appraising associated costs and returns
Collaboration	Using collaboration to support flexible learning
Project Management	Delivering the desired benefits
Performance Management	Evaluating the impact of flexible learning
Continuous Improvement	Improving the development of flexible learning

## How is the Flexible Learning Business Planning Framework Organised?

The Framework is organised into the following key elements.

### Ideas and Solutions

Users typically start with an *Idea*. In the context of the Framework an *Idea* is an opportunity to address the needs of a group of learners.

The Framework helps users to move from an *Idea* to a *Solution*. In the context of the Framework, a *Solution* is the combination of materials and delivery mechanisms intended to meet the needs of a group of learners.

The Framework is designed to help users to **identify, appraise, develop, promote, deliver, evaluate and improve** a *Solution*.

### Sections

To do this the Framework is organised into a series of sequential *Sections*. Each Section focuses the user on group of related issues.

Sections	Focuses the user on...
1. Identifying Strategic Relevance	Identifying an Ideas strategic importance and attaining broad support
2. Preparing a Business Case	Appraising the viability of a Solution and developing a clear Business Case
3. Promoting & Developing the Solution	Effectively developing and promoting a Solution
4. Delivering & Evaluating the Solution	Effectively delivering the solution and evaluating its impact
5. Continuous Improvement	Improving the development and delivery of flexible learning

### Inquiry Areas

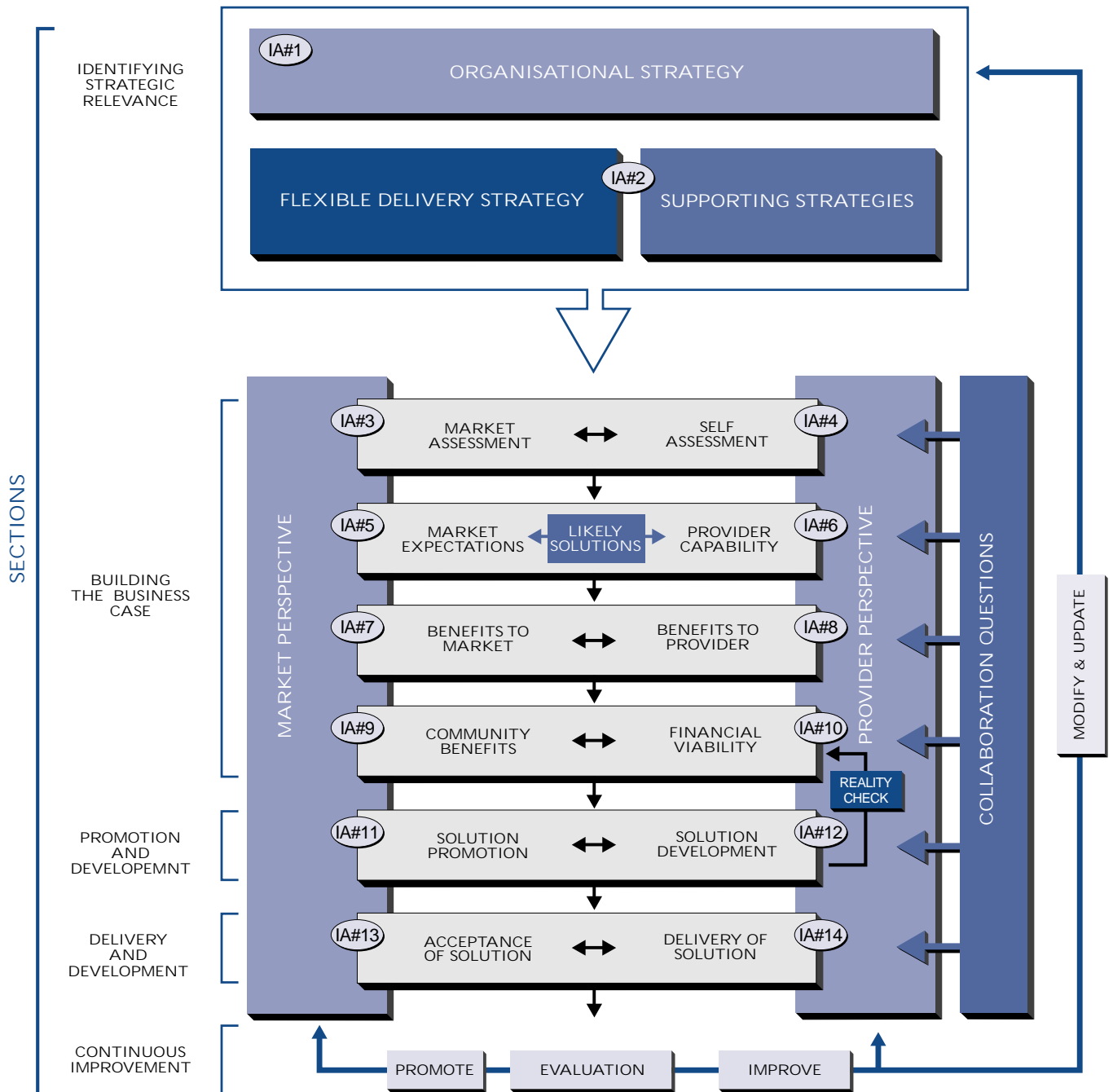
Most Sections of the Framework have a set of "Inquiry Areas" that are designed to encourage the consideration of a:

- Market perspective that focuses users on issues relevant to external parties such as markets, clients and communities, and a
- Training Provider perspective that focuses users on issues relevant to their own organisation

### Collaboration Questions

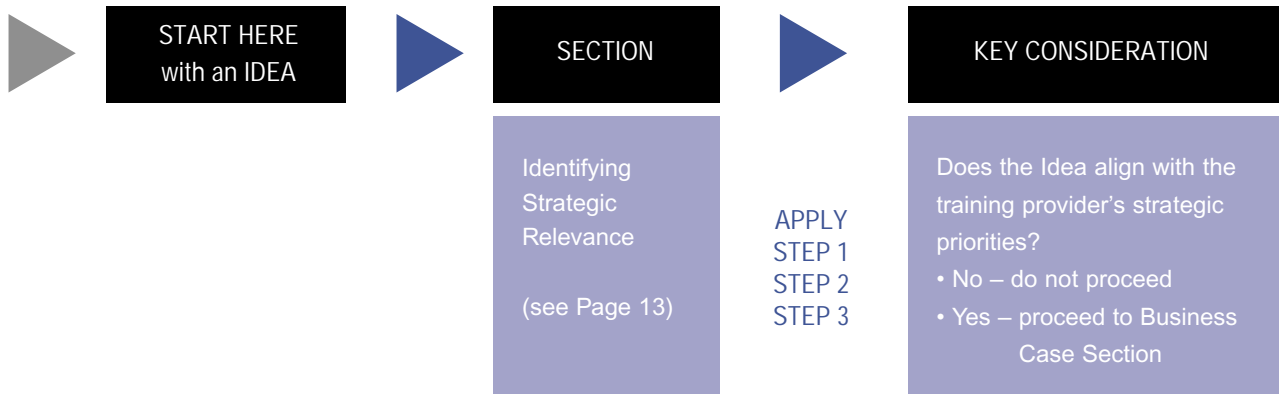
Each Section encourages the user to consider where, and how, collaboration with others (either from within their organisation or from outside) could support the development of flexible learning.

## Flexible Learning Business Planning Framework



# Using the Flexible Learning Business Planning Framework

The Framework is an ordered process that starts with an Idea.



## Step 1. Consider the issues in the Inquiry Area

Each Section suggests a number of relevant issues for consideration in the Inquiry Area. The user controls the extent of inquiry; when users have satisfied their investigation of an issue they move on. If users are not able to satisfy their concerns then this may indicate the need for more detailed analysis or expertise.

## Step 2. Document the considerations

Recording the considerations from each Section is essential as this documentation (i) is an input for subsequent Sections, and (ii) provides users with a means to articulate their assumptions and requirements to others.

## Step 3. Determine if proceeding is worthwhile

The Framework is designed to help users determine if the flexible learning solution they are considering is worthwhile committing resources to. Should the consideration of the issues indicate that a solution is :

- Not Worthwhile proceed no further with this Idea, move to another Idea
- Worthwhile move to the next Section and repeat the above steps

<b>APPRAISE</b> the Solution's viability	?	Building a Business Case (see Page 16)	APPLY STEPS 1-3	Able to make a sound Business Case? • No - do not proceed • Yes - commit resources and proceed to <i>Solution Promotion and Development</i> Section
<b>PROMOTE &amp; DEVELOP</b> the Solution	?	Promoting & Developing the Solution (see Page 27)	APPLY STEPS 1-3	Solution can deliver required benefits? • No - revise Business Case • Yes - proceed to <i>Solution Evaluation and Delivery</i> Section
<b>DELIVER &amp; EVALUATE</b> the Solution	?	Delivering & Evaluating the Solution (see Page 30)	APPLY STEPS 1-3	Solution has delivered required benefits? • No - revise Solution Promotion and Development • Yes - proceed to <i>Continuous Improvement</i> Section
<b>IMPROVE</b> the process	?	Continuous Improvement (see Page 32)	APPLY STEPS 1-3	Identify and implement opportunities for improvement



# The Flexible Learning Business Planning Framework in Action – A Case Study

## THE ELECTRONIC DELIVERY CENTRE

### Background

A metropolitan Training Provider has been delivering public training courses in basic ICT (Information and Communication Technology) applications (i.e. word processing, spreadsheets, and graphics) for some time. During this period it has established an Electronic Learning Centre (ELC) at which course participants complete such training. The utilisation (and associated financial returns) from the ELC is variable.

A major market for these courses has been employees from small to medium size enterprises (SME's). The Training Provider has been aware for some time that many such learners are unable to attend training at the ELC due to the fact that they are unable to be away from the SME for any extended period of time. The Training Provider Idea was to use flexible learning to deliver such training with the ELC being a resource centre that learners could use as required.

### Identifying Strategic Relevance

Offering ICT skills training is consistent with the Training Provider's strategic priorities as are the potential benefits associated with servicing the SME market (i.e. potential revenues and growing the profile and reputation of the Training Provider). The capabilities required to develop and deliver ICT related training, and operate the ELC, are consistent with the capabilities the organisation wishes to develop and promote.

The Idea was supported by dedicated "flexible learning" team that the Training Provider has put into place as part of its flexible learning strategy.

There was a growing awareness of the need for the Training Provider's HR (Human Resources) and ICT strategies to provide improved support for flexible learning.

		YES	NO
STA Policy	The Idea is consistent with the relevant STA policy	N/A	
Strategic Priorities	The Idea is consistent with the organisations strategic priorities	✓	
Flexible Learning	The Idea is supported by the organisation's Flexible Learning Strategy	✓	
Supporting Strategies	The Idea is supported by the organisation's Marketing, ICT and HR strategies - <i>needs improvement</i>		✓
Broad Support	The Idea is likely to have broad support from the organisation	✓	

## Building a Business Case

### *Market Appraisal and Knowledge:*

The target market was SME employees. Flexible learning was seen to be of potential value to the market as it could enable easier access to ICT training. There were a number of other providers of ICT training but there were no flexible learning options available.

The market was seen to be attractive due to its size and growth (i.e. more SME's are investing in ICT) however it was felt that the Training Provider would need to capture a reasonable share of the market in order to generate the desired financial returns. The market's access to technology was seen to be improving and that email was a growing communication channel.

The market had little experience with flexible learning however the option of accessing the ELC was seen as a factor that could ease market concerns relating to flexible learning.

The Training Provider had significant experience in the ICT training market although its profile needed to improve in order to attract new clients. Given the Training Provider's experience with the market and its investment in the ELC, the development required to put a flexible learning solution into place was seen to be achievable.

**Summary** The market was an attractive one and the Training Provider had relevant experience – proceed the Idea to the consideration of Needs and Capability Appraisal

### *Needs and Capability Appraisal*

The market wanted to improve its ICT skills in order to make better use of its expanding investment in ICT. The key barrier for many individuals in the market was access to training due to the difficulty of SME's being able to release people for extended periods of time. Flexible delivery could improve the market's access but many individuals would be concerned about their ability to learn outside of a traditional classroom setting.

### *Likely Solution*

The likely solution involved online delivery of ICT training with learners having access to the ELC for support if required. Individuals would also be able to access training at their own pace at the ELC. There could be staged development of a range of current courses and/or course elements as online options. Additional ELCs could be established in other locations over time to improve market reach and support market growth.

The key capability gaps were seen to be in the areas of staff capability and marketing. Teaching staff had varied experience with, and commitment to, flexible learning. There was a need to put into place a program to promote the benefits of flexible learning to the teaching staff and to review relevant HR policies to enable greater flexibility in staff deployment. More marketing resources were required to reach the market and there was a need for more effective collaboration with the Training Provider's marketing area. These gaps could be realistically met.

**Summary** The market's needs could be more effectively addressed via flexible learning and there was a high likelihood that the necessary capability could be acquired. Proceed to the consideration of Benefits and Risks.

### *Benefits and Risk Appraisal*

The key benefit for the market was improved ICT skills through improved access to training. Given that course fees were to remain about the same then the market was likely to perceive greater value attached to a flexible learning solution. The access to the ELC was seen to have much potential to address the markets concerns about self-managed learning. The anticipated benefits for the Training Provider were market and revenue growth, improved staff capability and an improved market profile and reputation.

The risks were seen to be associated with gaining a greater degree of staff commitment and securing the required market share. These risks were seen to be manageable as the solution could be developed and implemented in stages. The key area of collaboration required to manage the risk was with the Training Provider's marketing area. The Training Provider could also consider collaborating with the major suppliers of ICT hardware or applications with a view to helping them to promote their products and secure a financially attractive purchase price for such items.

**Summary** The benefits were attractive to both the market and the Training Provider and the associated concerns and risks were manageable.

### *Community and Financial Appraisal*

The solution had positive benefits for the community and the local economy and would grow the small business community's confidence in flexible learning.

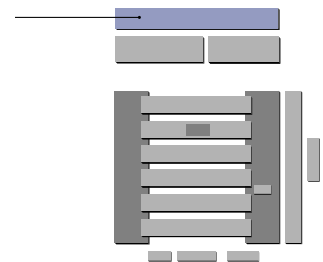
A budget was prepared for the development of the various stages of the solution as well as the cost of establishing additional ELCs and improved marketing. Cash flow was seen to be immediate given that the market would pay a course fee up front. Funding, of at least the initial stages, would come from the margins of current sales and the funding of further stages would be dependent on the volume of sales created (i.e. the greater/faster the volume of sales the sooner the next stages could be funded).

<b>Business Case Checklist</b>		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Market Appraisal and Knowledge</b>			
Is this an attractive market?		✓	
Is the solution consistent with strategic priorities?		✓	
Will the Idea receive broad support?		✓	
Is collaboration required?		✓	
proceed to <b>Needs &amp; Capability Appraisal?</b>		✓	
<b>Needs &amp; Capability Appraisal</b>			
Will flexible learning meet market's needs?		✓	
Can key characteristics of potential solution be adequately articulated?		✓	
Can required capability be achieved?		✓	
Is such capability consistent with strategic priorities?		✓	
Is collaboration required?		Likely	
proceed to <b>Benefits &amp; Risk Appraisal?</b>		✓	
<b>Benefits &amp; Risk Appraisal</b>			
Are there attractive benefits for the market?		✓	
Are benefits consistent with organisation's strategic priorities?		✓	
Can associated risks be managed?		✓	
Is collaboration required?		Likely	
proceed to <b>Community &amp; Financial Appraisal?</b>		✓	
<b>Community &amp; Financial Appraisal</b>			
Does solution add value to community and/or sector?		✓	
Is it financially viable?		✓	
Is collaboration required?		✓	
proceed to next Section: <b>Solution Promotion &amp; Development?</b>		✓	

## SECTION 1 – Identifying Strategic Relevance

This Section of the Framework focuses users on considering how their Idea relates to their organisation’s strategic priorities.

By the end of this Section users will have identified the relevance of their Idea, the likelihood of gaining broad support for the Idea and, based on the level of relevance and support, whether proceeding to developing a Business Case and moving the Idea forward to becoming a Solution is worthwhile.



IA#1

### *Inquiry Area #1 – Strategic Overview*

This Inquiry Area encourages the user to consider the strategic context in which their Idea will need to exist.

#### **State Training Authorities**

State Training Authorities (STA) have an important influence on the likelihood of an Idea for flexible learning moving forward. Users should check relevant STA policies, guidelines and requirements with respect to the use of flexible learning and their Idea.

#### **Strategic Priorities**

An Idea that is relevant to an organisation’s strategic priorities is more likely to attract backing and resources because it is seen to support the organisation’s desired outcomes.

<b>Strategic Priorities Checklist</b>		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Target Markets</b>	What is the intended market for the Idea? Document this.		
	Is the intended market consistent with the markets being targeted by the organisation?		
<b>Desired *Benefits</b>	What benefits for the market, and the organisation, are likely to be generated by the Idea? Document this.		
	Broadly, are the Idea’s likely benefits consistent with those the organisation desires to gain for itself and its target markets?		
<b>Desired Capabilities</b>	What capabilities (i.e. knowledge, skills, systems, processes) are likely to be required to deliver the Idea? Document this.		
	Are the required capabilities consistent with the capabilities that the organisation desires to gain?		

\*Note - Benefits can be financial, non-financial, tangible or intangible.

If the Idea is consistent with the organisations Target Markets, Desired Benefits and Desired Capabilities it has potential to gain support and required resources – proceed to the next ***Inquiry Area #2 – Related Strategies.***

**IA#2**

***Inquiry Area #2 – Related Strategies***

An Idea for flexible learning is more likely to gain support if the organisation has considered the issues associated with flexible learning and developed appropriate strategic priorities.

This Inquiry Area encourages the user to consider the strategies within their own organisation that are related to flexible learning.



**Flexible Learning**

An Idea for flexible learning is more likely to prosper where an organisation has identified and articulated its direction and priorities with respect to flexible learning overall.

<b>Strategic Priorities Checklist</b>		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Capability</b>	Has the capability (i.e. knowledge, skills, systems, processes) needed to support flexible learning been identified and articulated?		
	Are there strategies in place to acquire such capability?		
	Are the benefits of flexible learning being promoted within the organisation?		
<b>Market Readiness</b>	Are there strategies in place to foster market, or learner, readiness and acceptance for flexible learning?		
<b>Knowledge Management</b>	Are there strategies in place to enable the identification, storage and distribution of the knowledge needed to facilitate the development of flexible learning?		
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Has the infrastructure needed to support the development of flexible learning been identified?		
	Are there plans to put the required infrastructure into place?		
<b>Administration and Support</b>	Have the administration and support processes for those markets that utilise flexible learning been identified?		

If the issues above have been identified and articulated then it is more likely that an Idea for flexible learning will gain attention and support.

Should the consideration of the above issues indicate NO in the main then it is likely that an Idea for flexible learning will struggle to move forward. The user should encourage their organisation to develop an appropriate flexible learning strategy

## Supporting Strategies

A range of organisational strategies impact upon flexible learning. If these strategies support the needs of flexible learning then an Idea for flexible learning is more likely to move forward.

Supporting Strategies Checklist		YES	NO
Marketing Strategy	Does the organisation have a marketing strategy?		
	Has the marketing strategy included marketing the benefits of flexible learning?		
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy	Does the organisation have an information technology and communication (ICT) strategy?		
	Does the ICT strategy support the needs of flexible learning?		
Human Resources (HR) Strategy	Does the organisation have a Human Resources (HR) Strategy?		
	Does the HR strategy address the recruitment, development and recognition of staff with capabilities relating to flexible learning?		

If the issues above have been identified and articulated then it is more likely that an Idea for flexible learning will gain attention and support.

Should the consideration of the above issues indicate in the main NO then it is likely that an Idea for flexible learning will struggle to move forward. The user should encourage their organisation to develop appropriate supporting strategies.

### Summary - Strategic Relevance

Users are encouraged to use the table below to summarise the Strategic Relevance of the Idea.

		YES	NO
STA Policy	The Idea is consistent with the relevant STA policy		
Strategic Priorities	The Idea is consistent with the organisations strategic priorities		
Flexible Learning	The Idea is supported by the organisation's Flexible Learning Strategy		
Supporting Strategies	The Idea is supported by the organisation's Marketing, ICT and HR strategies		
Broad Support	The Idea is likely to have broad support from the organisation		

Does this summary indicate that the Idea will gain the support that warrants it to be moved forward to become a Likely Solution? Move on to the next Section – the **Building of a Business Case**.

## SECTION 2 – Building a Business Case

This Section of the Framework looks at the likelihood of an Idea of strategic relevance moving through to become an actual Solution *before* the commitment of any resources. The Section encourages users to develop a business case for a Solution that can enable the ready communication of the Solution’s benefits and requirements to others.

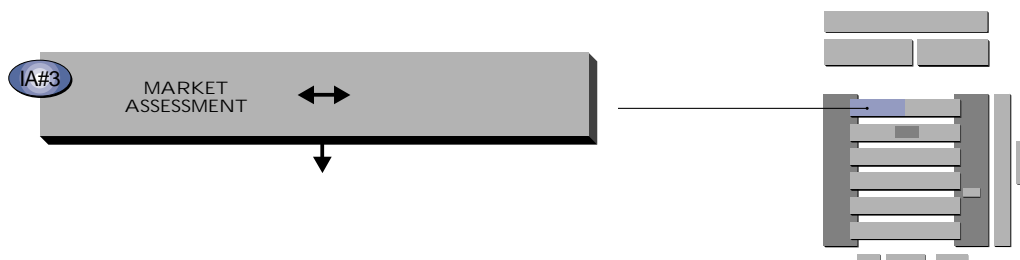
The Section consists of four sequential elements:

- *Market Appraisal and Knowledge* - Considers the market’s attractiveness and fit
- *Needs & Capability Appraisal* - Considers the markets needs and the Training Providers ability to service the market
- *Benefits & Risk Appraisal* - Considers the associated benefits and risks
- *Community & Financial Appraisal* - Considers the likely community and financial returns

These elements build upon one another to help the user to build a comprehensive Business Case. Each element also concludes with a consideration of whether moving to the next element is warranted. Given such a structured approach users should feel confident about any solution that does emerge from this Section.

### Market Appraisal and Knowledge

This element encourages the user to define the market they are targeting and appraise its relevance and attractiveness.



### IA#3

#### Inquiry Area #3 - Market Appraisal

##### Defining the Market

This inquiry area requires the user to broadly define the market for which the Idea is intended and to broadly consider the value the market would place on flexible learning.

<b>Can You -</b>	
Describe the intended market for the Idea?	
	Document this
Describe why flexible learning would be of value to this market?	
	Document this

If the user is unable to document the above then further investigation may be required – (see also Collaboration page 18).

If these considerations indicate that flexible learning is of potential value to the market move on to **Market Attractiveness**.



## Market Attractiveness

This area encourages the user to consider the attractiveness of the market to the Training Provider.

Use the table below to help consider the market attractiveness.

		YES	UNSURE	NO
Potential	Does the markets size warrant attention?			
	Is the market growing?			
	Document: The markets size and growth			
Competition	Are other training providers already serving this market?			
	Are there any potential barriers to entering this market?			
	Will entering this market help to enter other markets?			
	Document: The competitors and barriers			
Profitability	Is flexible learning likely to be affordable for the market?			
	Is the potential revenue to be gained from servicing this market attractive?			
	Can the revenues be secured sooner rather than later?			
	Document: The potential revenue and profitability			
Readiness	Does the market have experience with flexible learning?			
	Does the market have access to relevant technology?			
	Does the market appreciate the benefits of flexible learning?			
	Document: The level of market readiness			
Accessibility	Can the market be easily contacted and/or communicated with			
	Document: The available communication channels and their likely effectiveness			

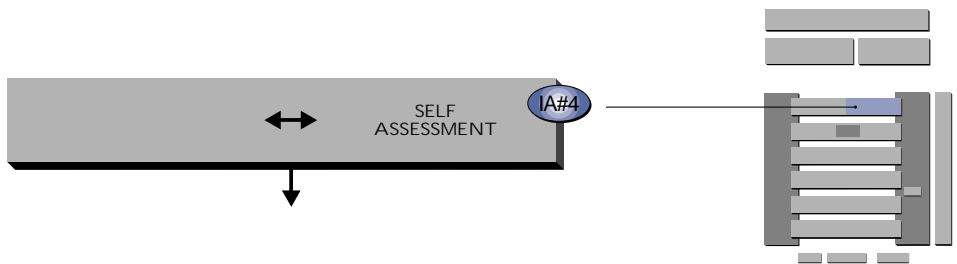
If the user is unable to document the above then further investigation may be required – (see also Collaboration page 18)

If these considerations indicate that the market is attractive and warrants further attention move on to Inquiry **Area # 4 Self Appraisal**.

**IA#4**

**Inquiry Area #4 - Self Appraisal**

This Inquiry Area focuses on the capacity of the Training Provider to service the intended market.



		YES	UNSURE	NO
Experience & Knowledge	Do we have experience in this market?			
	Do we have access to relevant market data?			
	Document the experience and available information			
Profile & Reputation	Do we have a profile in the market?			
	Do we have a positive reputation with the market?			
	Are there other training providers with a more positive profile and reputation in the market?			
	Are we able to improve the market's current level of satisfaction?			
	Document the profile and reputation			

**Collaboration**

Addressing the issues posed in the Inquiry Area may require collaboration. Are there others from the organisation with relevant knowledge and/or experience whom could help i.e. other teachers/trainers who have worked with this type of market, marketing people, ICT people? Are there people from outside the organisation who could help?

**Summary - Market Appraisal and Knowledge**

Use the table below to summarise the considerations relating to Market Appraisal and Knowledge.

		YES	NO
The market sees flexible learning to be of value			
The market is attractive to the training provider			
The training provider has the experience to service the market			

If these considerations indicate that the market warrants further attention move on to the next element - **Needs & Capability Appraisal**.

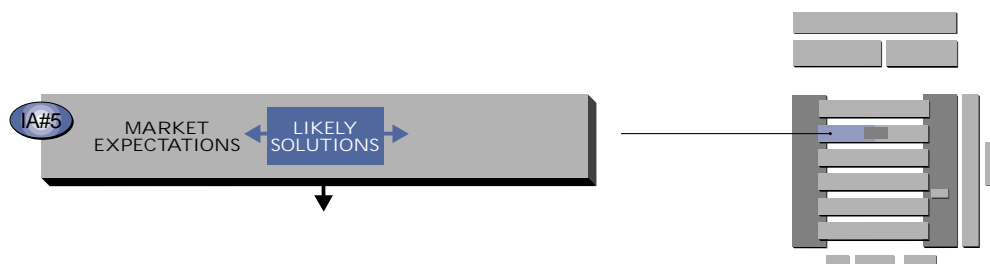
## Needs & Capability Appraisal

Up unto this point the user has been considering the issues as they relate to an Idea. This element encourages the user to:

- make a more detailed appraisal of market expectations
- scope the key features of a Likely Solution that would be required to meet such expectations, and
- review the Training Provider's capability to deliver the Likely Solution.

IA#5

### Inquiry Area #5 - Market Expectations



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the market trying to achieve; what outcomes are they interested in?</li> <li>• If they are pursuing a formal qualification to what end will this qualification be used?</li> <li>• What barriers does the market have to address to achieve such outcomes?</li> </ul>	Document these considerations
Given such outcomes and barriers, what are the market's needs; what are the priorities?	Document these considerations
How would a flexible learning solution address these needs?	Document these considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What concerns does the market associate with a flexible learning solution? (i.e. quality of training outcomes, recognition of qualification)</li> <li>• What concerns does the market associate with the Training Provider? (i.e. product performance, reliability, access, costs)</li> </ul>	Document these considerations

### Likely Solution

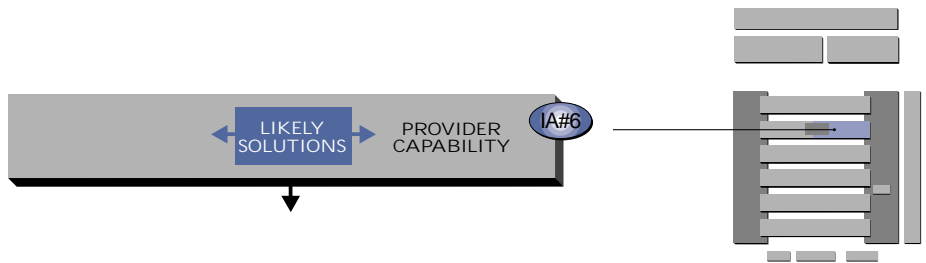
At this point there is a need to expand upon the Idea and consider the characteristics of a solution that is likely to address the market's needs.

Understanding the key characteristics of a likely solution will enable an appraisal of a range of associated issues.

Likely Solution	What are the key characteristics of a likely flexible learning solution that would be attractive to the market?	Document these considerations
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**IA#6**

**Inquiry Area #6 - Provider Capability**



This Inquiry Area focuses on identifying the capability associated with developing and delivering the Likely Solution.

**Areas of Capability**

The following key areas of capability can impact the development and delivery of a flexible learning solution. A review of capability should be completed for each area that is seen to be relevant to the Likely Solution.

<i>People</i>	We can:	YES	NO
Teaching & Training Staff	Develop the solution		
	Deliver the solution		
Administration & Support	Provide appropriate technical support		
	Provide appropriate administrative support		
<b>*Organisational Systems</b>			
Project Management	Track progress and resources being used		
Knowledge Management	Capture, store and distribute the knowledge associated with the development and delivery of the solution		
Market Knowledge	Capture, store and distribute customer information		
Financial Information	Track spending and revenues		
Asset Management	Track the location and condition of physical assets		
Performance Management	Evaluate and track staff performance		
<b>Marketing</b>			
Communication & promotion	Promote the solution and communicate relevant information		
<b>ICT Infrastructure</b>			
Learning Platform	Provide an online platform for access and delivery		
Applications & content	Provide relevant applications and/or content		

\* Organisational Systems refer to the ability to gather, analyse, store and distribute information

### Other issues

	YES	NO
Are there any other organisational barriers with regard to the development and delivery of the potential flexible learning solution?		
Can these barriers be effectively addressed?		
Document these barriers		
Will the "Supporting Strategies" contribute to the development of required capabilities? (see page 15)		
Document this support		
Is it likely that the resources required to address any capability gaps can be secured?		
Document the required resources		
Can the capability gaps be addressed in a reasonable timeframe that would enable the opportunities being presented in the market to be attained?		
Document the likely timeframe		
Will the required capabilities needed for this Likely Solution support the development and delivery of other flexible learning solutions?		
Document what these are likely to be		

### Gaps

Based on the above review are there any gaps in the capability needed to deliver the Likely Solution? Document this.

Are the gaps considered:

*critical* (i.e. threatens ability to deliver - must be addressed immediately)?

or

*tolerable* (i.e. limits ability to deliver - needs to be addressed in the near future)?

### Collaboration

Would collaboration enable the gaps to be addressed in an effective and timely manner the gaps; if so with whom? Document this.

### Overall Appraisal - Needs & Capability

Use the table below to summarise the considerations relating to Needs and Capability.

	YES	NO
The market has needs that can be addressed via flexible learning		
A Likely Solution, that is attractive to the market, can be described		
The Training Provider can develop the capability to deliver the Likely Solution		

If these considerations indicate that the market warrants further attention move on to the next element - **Benefits & Risk Appraisal.**

## Benefits & Risk Appraisal

This element encourages users to consider the:

- potential benefits for both the market and the organisation
- risks associated with such benefits and the ability to manage them.

IA#7

### Inquiry Area #7 - Benefits to the Market



This Inquiry Area encourages the user to consider the benefits that are of value to the market.



\*tangible and/or intangible

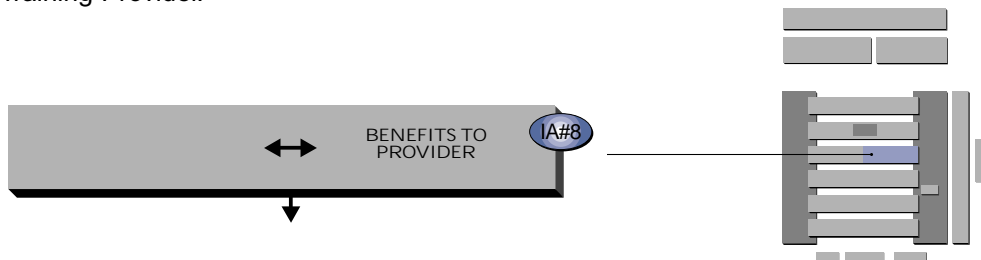
	YES	NO
Does the Likely Solution offer these benefits?		
Can the Likely Solution be provided within the costs that the market can carry?		
Will the combination of benefits and costs associated with the solution represent value to the market (i.e. do the benefits outweigh the costs)?		
Will this value be perceived to be superior to what is being offered by other training providers?		
Will the market associate any risks or concerns with the Likely Solution?		
Document these		
Can these risks or concerns be eased?		
Document how this can be achieved		

If these considerations indicate that the benefits are of value to the market move on to - **Benefits to the Training Provider.**

**IA#8**

**Inquiry Area #8 - Benefits to the Training Provider**

This Inquiry Area encourages the user to consider the specific benefits that are of value to the Training Provider.



What *benefits will the Likely Solution generate for the Training Provider?	YES	NO
Enhanced Reputation for the Training Provider		
Enhanced Reputation for flexible learning		
Stronger Research and Development?		
Enhanced Product Range?		
Improved ICT Capability?		
Increased Income?		
Reduced Costs?		
Better Market Reach/Profile?		
Stronger Business/Commercial Focus?		
*Note: not intended to be an exhaustive list; users may identify other relevant benefits		
Are these benefits consistent with the Training Provider's strategic priorities? (see page 13)		
Does the Likely Solution pose any risks for the Training Provider?		
Document these		
Can these risks be readily managed?		
Document how this can be achieved		

**Collaboration - Benefits & Risk Appraisal**

Would collaboration support the Training Providers ability to harness the benefits and address the risks; if so with whom? - Document this

**Overall Appraisal - Benefits & Risk Appraisal**

The table below summarises the considerations relating to Benefits & Risk Appraisal

	YES	NO
Can the benefits of value to the market be delivered		
Can any concerns that the market may have be eased		
Will the Likely Solution deliver benefits for the Training Provider?		
Can the Training Provider manage any associated risks?		

If these considerations indicate that the Likely Solution warrants further attention move on to the next element - **Community & Financial Appraisal.**

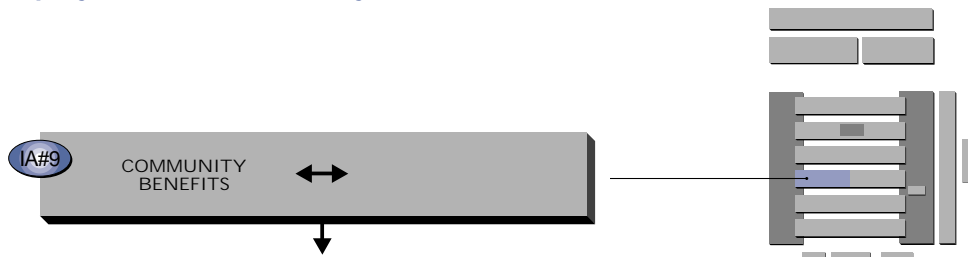
## Community & Financial Appraisal

This element encourages users to consider the:

- value of the Likely Solution to the broader community, and the
- financial viability of the Likely Solution.

IA#9

### Inquiry Area #9 - Community Benefits



Adding value to the community is consistent with the mission of many training providers. This Inquiry Area encourages the user to consider the impact of the Likely Solution on the broader community

Does the Likely Solution add *value to the broader community through	YES	NO
Improved VET solutions/products?		
Improved VET skills/knowledge?		
Improved access to VET?		
Enhance reputation of VET		
Enhanced reputation of flexible learning?		
Enhanced reputation of flexible learning providers?		
Social/Cultural Benefits?		
Market growth?		
Infrastructure development?		

\* not intended to be an exhaustive list; users may identify other items of relevant value

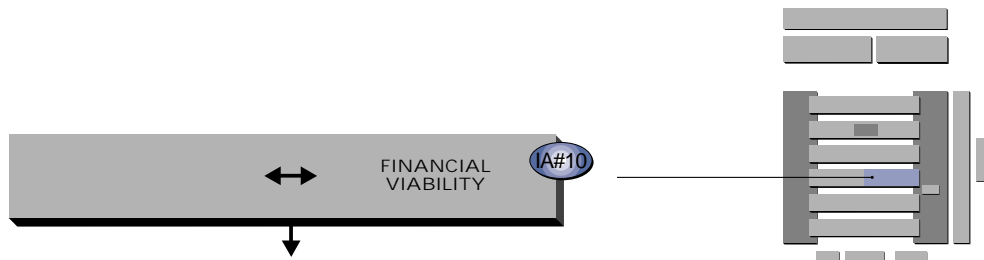
If the Likely Solution adds value to the broader community move on to the next Inquiry Area - **Financial Viability**.



**IA#10**

**Inquiry Area #10 - Financial Viability**

The Framework encourages users to consider the full costs of developing and delivering the Likely Solution, and the revenues it will generate.



The Framework does not assume that the Likely Solution *has* to generate a financial profit. The Training Provider may be satisfied with a breakeven result, or even a loss may be acceptable if the non-financial benefits are of a meaningful and worthwhile value.

What are the likely costs; including:		
• Solution development	Develop a draft budget	
• Solution maintenance/improvement		
• Change management		
• Administration		
• Marketing		
• How will the funding of such costs be achieved?	Document this	
• Will implementation of the Likely Solution produce a cash flow?		
• If the project is to be funded from this cash flow – how will it be funded until a positive cash flow is achieved?		
• Will the financial returns from the implementation of the Likely Solution enable ongoing development and improvement of the solution?		
• If the solution does not return a financial profit but the Training Provider still desires to gain the other benefits it offers how will the project be funded?		
Will an investment in the development of the Likely Solution enable other opportunities in the market (or other markets) to be pursued?	Yes?	No?
Document these opportunities		
Does the Likely Solution offer a better "return on investment" than other Ideas?	Yes?	No?
Document other Ideas that may be considered		

### Collaboration - Community & Financial Appraisal

Would collaboration reduce costs and/or enhance the likelihood of securing the required revenue or funding; if so with whom? - Document this

### Overall Appraisal- Community & Financial Appraisal

Use the table below to summarise the considerations relating to Needs and Capability.

The Likely Solution:	YES	NO
Offers value to the broader community		
Is projected to be financially viable		
Represents a better return than other opportunities		

### Building the Business Case - Checklist

The following checklist provides a summary of the key issues in the Building the Business Case Section and provides users with an overview of their consideration of the various elements and issues.

Market Appraisal and Knowledge	YES	NO
Is this an attractive market?		
Is the Idea consistent with strategic priorities?		
Will the Idea receive broad support?		
Is collaboration required?		
proceed to <i>Needs &amp; Capability Appraisal?</i>		
Needs & Capability Appraisal		
Will flexible learning meet market's needs?		
Can key characteristics of potential solution be adequately articulated?		
Can required capability be achieved?		
Is such capability consistent with strategic priorities?		
Is collaboration required?		
proceed to <i>Benefits &amp; Risk Appraisal?</i>		
Benefits & Risk Appraisal		
Are there attractive benefits for the market?		
Are benefits consistent with Training Provider's strategic priorities?		
Can associated risks be managed?		
Is collaboration required?		
proceed to <i>Community &amp; Financial Appraisal?</i>		
Community & Financial Appraisal		
Does the Likely Solution add value to community and/or sector?		
Is it financially viable?		
Is collaboration required?		
proceed to next Section: <i>Solution Promotion &amp; Development?</i>		

## SECTION 3 – Promoting and Developing the Solution

This Section of the Framework encourages a consideration of the issues associated with the promotion and development of the Likely Solution into an actual Solution to be delivered to the market.

This Section also includes a "Reality Check" that provides an opportunity to review the reliability of the assumptions from the Business Case.

IA#11

### Inquiry Area #11 - Solution Promotion



The effective promotion of the solution is important, particularly if the market has had little experience with regard to flexible learning.

Effective promotion will:

- Enable the market to more readily appreciate the benefits, or availability, of the solution and there by speed up their take-up of the Solution
- Speed up the realisation of desired benefits including cash flow by reducing the time lag between the completion of Solution development and its uptake by the market.

An effective Promotional Strategy should address extending the market's awareness through:

- The market's preferred channels of communication
  - (Users should refer to their documentation re *Market Attractiveness – Accessibility*)
- What benefits will be communicated to the market
  - (Users should refer to their documentation re *Benefits to the Market*)
- The market's concerns
  - (Users should refer to their documentation re *Benefits to the Market*)
  - what features of the solution can be emphasised to ease these concerns
- How the solution be effectively introduced to the market
  - Can the solution be effectively piloted?
  - Can the pilot be used to finalise the solution's design?
  - Can pilot participants feedback be used to promote the solution?
- Where and how the market can access the Solution
- Coordination with the development of the solution i.e. how can awareness be maximised to coincide with the broad launch of the Solution

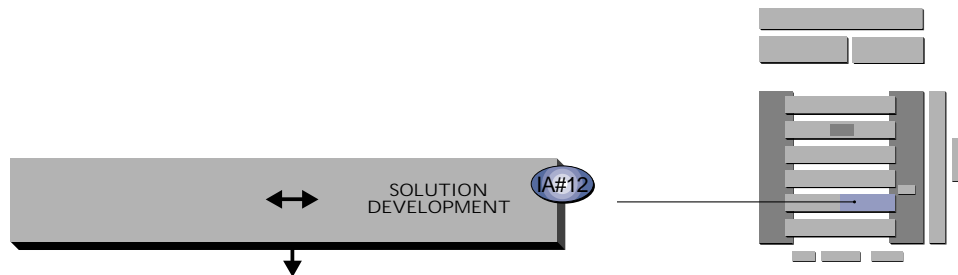
A Promotional Strategy should also consider the needs of the Training Provider staff and reinforce the benefits that the Training Provider, and the broader community will experience

- (Users should refer to their documentation re *Benefits to the Training Provider and Community Benefits*)

## IA#12

### *Inquiry Area #12 - - Solution Development*

The development of the Solution will need to ensure that the specifications required to deliver the expected benefits have been identified and incorporated into the project management process.



#### **Solution Specifications**

Solution development should begin with a specification of the specific benefits to be delivered and at what cost? (See page 25 - Draft Budget) – Document this.

#### **Project Plan**

A project plan is needed to manage what must be done to deliver the desired benefits and costs; in preparing the project plan users should consider:

- Having milestones, timelines and responsibilities
  - Are the timelines consistent with market expectation about when they can access the solution?
- Ensuring the developers understand the market's requirements – use the documentation from the Business Case
- Having a quality assurance methodology – in its most basic terms this should involve an assessment of the milestones - i.e. have the desired outcomes associated with the milestones been achieved?
- Identifying how the delivery of the desired benefits (for the market, training provider and the community as identified in the Business Case) will be measured and evaluated?
  - these measures will be incorporated into the next Section

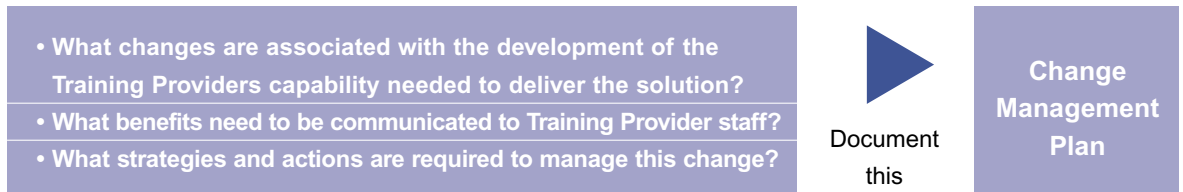
Use the documentation of the above to develop a Project Plan

#### **Reality Check**

- Can the required benefits be delivered within the budgeted costs?
- Is there a need to modify the benefits to be delivered to meet the budget?
- What impact on the market will any changes have?
- Should the development of the solution be postponed/cancelled?

## Change Management

The development of the capability required to develop and deliver the solution represents some change for the Training Provider.



## Collaboration - Solution Promotion and Development

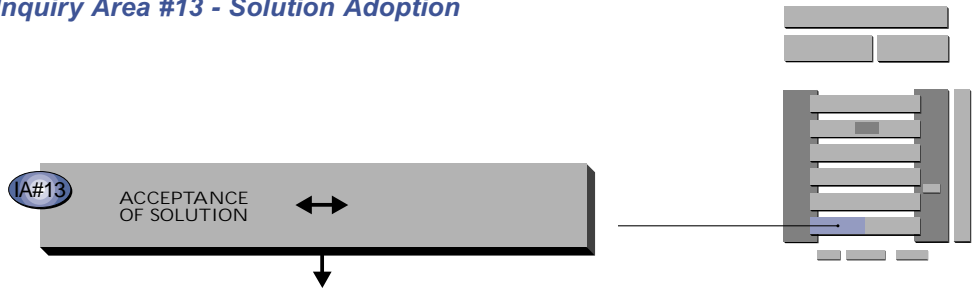
Would collaboration support effective promotion and solution development; if so with whom?  
Document this.

## SECTION 4 – Delivering and Evaluating the Solution

This Section of the Framework encourages the consideration of issues associated with the delivery and evaluation of the required flexible delivery solution.

### IA#13

#### Inquiry Area #13 - Solution Adoption

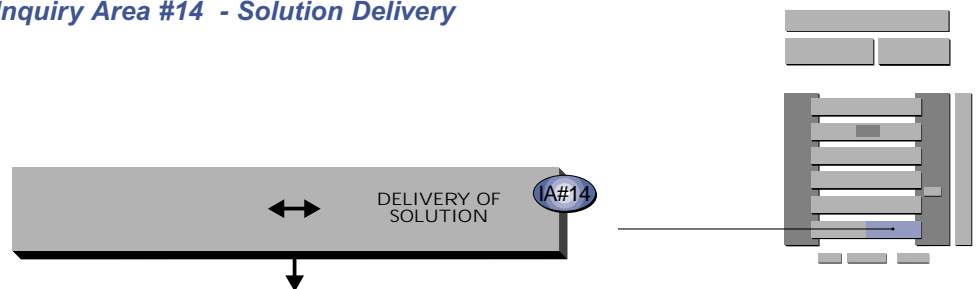


Users should consider how they are going to encourage the market to adopt the solution, particularly if the market that has had minimal experience with flexible learning.

- Can there be some form of induction process so that the market will have more familiarity with, and appreciation of flexible learning prior to using the solution?
- What would this process involve – document this

### IA#14

#### Inquiry Area #14 - Solution Delivery



This Inquiry Area encourages users to consider issues relating to the deliver and evaluation of the solution.

#### Delivery

At this point

- The solution has been developed, including perhaps a pilot with feedback
- A promotional strategy has been developed, and ideally is already underway
- A change management strategy has been developed, and ideally is already underway
- An induction process has been developed

Given the above delivery becomes a function of coordination of the above activities

- Users should consider incorporating these into an overall *Implementation Strategy* – document this.

## Evaluation

Evaluation is critical to the overall successful delivery of the solution

- Evaluation mechanisms should be incorporated into the solution – users should refer to their documentation re *Solution Development*.
- Evaluation should involve:
  - An assessment of whether the solution was delivered as per the intended design
  - The degree to which the desired benefits were achieved – for both the market and the training provider
  - The markets satisfaction with the solution

Evaluation should proceed as per the identified requirements

- Users may consider incorporating evaluation into the Implementation Strategy

The outcomes of the evaluation need to be incorporated into an improvement process – move on to the next Section – *Continuous Improvement*

## SECTION 5 – Continuous Improvement

This Section of the Framework encourages users to consider how the feedback from the evaluation of the solution can be incorporated into improvement opportunities.

### Using the Evaluation Feedback

A number of scenarios may evolve from the evaluation including the following

Design Followed	Benefits Achieved	Market Satisfaction	Suggests
Yes	Yes	Positive	Solution design and delivery are ideal - reinforce
Yes	Yes	Neutral to Negative	Review: • Mix of benefits being delivered • Solution design
Yes	No	Neutral to Negative	Review: • Solution design
No	Yes	Positive	Identify what changes were made to design and incorporate into a new design

When using the evaluation feedback users should consider the following

- *Timeliness* – the closer the feedback is to the event the more likely it will be understood and opportunities identified
- *Constructive approach* – the review of the feedback should focus on a review of the achievement of the desired outcomes and the identification of improvement opportunities not on identifying fault as this will lessen the likelihood of open involvement and the identification of improvement opportunities

### Improvement Opportunities

A review of the evaluation feedback will identify improvement opportunities. Users should consider the implications for the various Sections of the Framework i.e.

Section	Are there opportunities to
Strategic Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review or reinforce the Training Providers                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ strategic priorities?</li> <li>◦ flexible learning strategy?</li> <li>◦ relevant support strategies?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the understanding of the market eg needs, desired benefits, readiness etc?</li> <li>• Review the benefits desired by the Training Provider?</li> </ul>
Solution Promotion and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce the value of the solution to the market</li> <li>• Improve the solutions design?</li> </ul>
Solution Delivery and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve market familiarity?</li> <li>• Improve solution delivery?</li> </ul>



## APPENDIX I

### Where do I start?

A national initiative, the Australian Flexible Learning Framework (Framework), has been designed to help the vocational education and training (VET) sector take up flexible learning.

A range of products, services and resources has been developed under the Framework that are designed to help registered training organisations (RTO) implement flexible learning practices.

### Products, services and resources that can assist you

The Framework provides access to an innovative range of e-learning tools and interactive resources, support networks, professional development funding and opportunities, and useful research information.

Most Framework products and services are available free of charge to training organisations and can be accessed from **flexiblelearning.net.au**

### E-learning tools and resources

- **Skills Assessment for Computer Based Learning:** a resource that enables RTOs to assess a learner's computer skills prior to enrolment
- **Toolboxes:** web-based learning materials to support online delivery of qualifications from recognised training packages. Toolboxes can be purchased for less than \$400
- **Building Blocks to Reality:** a virtual building training resource for building and construction learners
- **NurseryLive!:** an e-learning resource featuring an interactive simulation of the daily operations of a wholesale production nursery
- **Assessment Generator:** a web-based resource to construct and manage assessment plans and tools in compliance with Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) requirements.

### Professional development services

- **Australian Flexible Learning Community:** an online learning community for VET practitioners
- **LearnScope:** team-based professional development funding to help RTOs gain skills and capabilities in new learning technologies
- **Flexible Learning Leaders:** funding for individual VET practitioners to expand their knowledge and skills in flexible learning
- **Flexways:** a web-based tool to help you identify your professional development needs in flexible learning
- **NET\*Working conference:** an annual national conference designed to inspire the VET sector to embrace flexible learning practices

### Access to flexible learning information, tools and resources

- **EdNA VET Online website:** a directory and database of more than 15,000 quality assured Australian education and training related resources
- **Online Guide to Resource Catalogues:** a guide to the major catalogues of publicly-funded VET resources

### Developers' support products

- **Access and Equity in Online Learning:** practical tools to ensure inclusive delivery of online learning
- **Legal Issues in Flexible Learning:** information on legal issues in flexible learning

### Business planning tools

- **Flexibility through Online Learning:** a summary of the results of research findings on a range of online learning and delivery issues in Australia
- **Flexible Learning Business Planning Framework:** a framework for the development and delivery of effective and sustainable flexible delivery solutions.
- **Quality Auditing in Online Learning Guidelines:** guidelines for both Australian Quality Training Framework auditors and registered training organisations involved in the auditing process

Further to the above, the Framework has produced a number of case studies that put flexible learning into practice. These 'real life' case studies can be accessed at:

**[flexiblelearning.net.au/resources/casestudies.htm](http://flexiblelearning.net.au/resources/casestudies.htm)**

### More information

**For more information** about the Australian Flexible Learning Framework and its products and services, phone **(07) 3247 5511**, visit **[flexiblelearning.net.au](http://flexiblelearning.net.au)** or email **[enquiries@flexiblelearning.net.au](mailto:enquiries@flexiblelearning.net.au)**

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