



**National Council of
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**Submission to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) on the
Consultation Document: Adult and Community Education (ACE)
Funding Framework**

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The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organization representing 41 nationally organized societies. It has 33 branches throughout the country attended by representatives of those societies and some 150 other societies. The Council's function is to serve women, the family and the community at local, national and international levels through research, study, discussion and action. NCWNZ has a longstanding history of encouraging the promotion of social and health issues, particularly as they affect women.

The Adult and Community Education (ACE) Funding Framework Consultation Document is of great interest and concern to NCWNZ members in particular because of the membership's interest in education at all levels, and because 76% of those who attend current community education courses are women (p.2 *ACE Funding Framework Consultation Document*).

Members of the NCWNZ Education Standing Committee have reported the importance of ACE in encouraging women to further their education through lifelong learning. In many cases women gain the confidence they need to undertake skill and qualification courses by first experiencing success and social satisfaction through the hobby-type courses which may not attract funding under the new funding system. For example, one recent immigrant joined a patchwork quilt making class, not because she was interested in quilt-making but because she could practice her English and form contacts in a non-threatening setting. Others join dance, yoga and fitness classes to improve physical and mental health.

High fees for non-funded courses would act as a barrier to many women on low incomes. Members are concerned that the benefits of social interaction and community building may be underestimated in evaluating the worth of courses which may not appear to meet directly TEC's five priorities.

Having said this, NCWNZ members are aware that changes are necessary to encourage more Maori and Pacific Islands' people to gain the benefits of participation since a mere 4% of Maori and 2% of Pacific Islands people attend school or tertiary based ACE courses. The NCWNZ strongly supports the thrust of the proposed reforms to enable Maori and Pacific Islands men and women to access funding for courses which are controlled by their own people and held in places in which they feel safe and comfortable.

NCWNZ is also supportive of the general aims of the funding framework to improve ACE quality, national co-ordination, accountability for the use of public money, and to meet the five ACE priorities.





THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT: APPENDIX 1 SUBMISSION SHEET

Key Questions TEC are particularly interested in your views on are:

1. Do you agree that providers should be responsible for identifying learning needs? If not why not?

Yes, in general. Providers should be responsible for identifying learning needs as this is part of building community, and providers have the practical task of finding teachers and resources for courses. Guidelines for the identification of learning needs, which TEC intends to provide, will be helpful if they are defined broadly enough to acknowledge the work-life balance and social needs of all New Zealanders.

2. Do you agree with the proposal that any ACE programme or activity that makes an identifiable contribution to ACE priorities should be eligible for funding, but that ACE activities and programmes should be funded at varying levels that broadly reflect the contribution they make towards achieving ACE priorities? If not, why not?

NCWNZ agrees that any ACE programme or activity should be eligible and that the principle of variable funding should prevail. However as intimated in the introduction to this submission, NCWNZ believes that the 'contribution they make towards achieving ACE priorities' should be interpreted broadly to include encouraging 'beginner', new start learners, developing social and life skills, and raising confidence. This is particularly relevant to the social cohesion priority. The Raising Foundation Skills priority is narrowly defined in terms of language and numeracy. Some NCWNZ members noted that foundation skills should include self-management (basic organizational skills).

3. Do you agree with the approach proposed under which providers would assess their own activities and programmes for fit with priorities? Does the assessment tool outlined provide a simple and useful tool for making such assessments? If not, why not?

The assessment tool outlined is helpful and appears to be relatively easy to complete. However it does indicate the problem of subjectiveness in assessing relevance in terms of the funding criteria. It could be argued that Guitar for Beginners (Example 2, p. 47) could target learners whose initial learning was unsuccessful and could raise foundation skills since the classes are noted to be challenging, requiring self-discipline and follow-up written and practical work. It would be helpful if the Examples included two cases for each example. One showing how Guitar for Beginners would qualify for funding (for example targeting 16 – 19 year old school drop-outs) and one showing how Guitar for Beginners would qualify for less funding (for example targeting recreation groups as part of attaining a better Work-Life Balance).

4. Do you agree providers should be bulk funded based on an aggregated assessment of their individual learning activities and programmes with ACE priorities? If not, why not?

Yes.

5. Do you agree that specific funding for coordinators should be phased out to reflect the incorporation of the current coordinator funding into base rates for all providers? If not, why not?

No. Some NCWNZ members expressed concern that if coordinators were not funded specifically, many experienced teacher-coordinators would not continue (because they would not necessarily be paid at their teacher salary rate as at present). This could mean that inexperienced, poorly paid



coordinators would struggle to meet the ACE goals for efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. A great deal of sophisticated administrative work is involved in running courses for 200,000+ people per year, keeping records and meeting compliance and monitoring requirements.

6. Do you agree that ACE activities that support sector capability and development should be reviewed to ensure they are directly contributing to ACE priorities?

Yes, provided that this can be done without the building up of major, expensive infrastructure.

7. Do you agree that additional funding should be made available on a case by case basis to meet specific costs associated with particular learning contexts and modes of delivery that focus on meeting an identified priority need? If not, why not?

Yes.

8. Do you agree that only activities and programmes that directly focus on priorities should be eligible for this additional funding? If not, why not?

No. Courses which have an indirect focus on priorities should be eligible for additional funding provided that providers are able to make a convincing case. Such cases could include course participants who are just starting out to build up confidence to go further in skill/knowledge development, home care-givers who need the opportunities to extend social contacts for their mental and physical health (work-life balance), and people in very low-socio-economic areas where even low fees are too high. The requirement for aligning courses and priorities would enable providers to develop a more in-depth understanding of the new ACE priorities.

9. Do you agree with the proposal that a specific amount should be reserved for small providers and administered through lead providers? If not, why not?

Certainly. Many NCWNZ members are rural or small town dwellers for whom ACE is particularly important for social contacts and social cohesion.

10. What support (not just funding) would community groups and emerging providers need? What support services should be provided by 'lead providers' and which should be provided in other ways, e.g. by Networks?

Community groups and emerging providers would need local TEC Helplines for quick response to problems or queries related to funding, and web-site lists of available tutors or visiting experts related to the five priority areas. Networks might be the best source of assistance here. Community groups and emerging providers would also need Internet access to a central 'library' of resources such as videos, CDs, DVDs and print material for which TEC's ACE organizational centre would meet copyright costs from the ACE budget. 'Lead providers' such as ACE Centers, tertiary ACE providers and so on might be able to provide assistance through offering services available for purchase from a provider's bulk budget.

11. Does the proposed approach to phasing in the new framework strike the right balance between giving providers time to adapt and achieving sufficient progress towards a greater focus on ACE priorities? If not, why not?

Probably not in every case. Another year of transition may be necessary in some parts of the country. The one-size-fits-all may not be appropriate for smaller areas and some schools or centres which rely on ACE funds to contribute to maintenance of buildings and equipment. ACE is



costly for schools in terms of lighting, heating – especially in the South Island, wear and tear plus security and many only break-even in operating ACE. Such schools may need a more generous phasing in period. Therefore, NCWNZ recommends that there should be more flexibility in the phasing in of the new funding arrangements.

12. Section 2 sets out four criteria against which to assess the proposed model: The funding framework should:

- **maximize provision in line with ACE priorities**
- **support a diverse range of providers and learning approaches**
- **be transparent and equitable**
- **support a smooth transition from current ACE provision to an ACE sector more closely aligned with government priorities.**

Does the overall approach proposed strike an appropriate balance across these criteria? If not why not?

The four criteria should be considered in the light of the 2004 Work-Life Balance Project. ACE is important for the Life part of that project.

The contestable nature of the funding arrangement needs to be monitored for its impact on the whole existing ACE scene. The proposed trend to increase diversity of providers will have a major impact on school providers. While it is an admirable ideal to pursue such diversity, it is important to remember that ACE is often an add-on for schools involving much work, small profits, and considerable expenses. If schools ceased to offer ACE there could be costs to the nation in terms of the best use of the nation's educational plant, access to teacher talent and the loss of a tradition that has worked well in many respects for many years. Several members reported that some schools had indicated that they would 'pull out' if the administration and work load became too great.

The 2001 Working Party Report of the Adult Education and Community Learning Working Party: *Towards a Learning Society: The Role of Adult Community Education* highlighted the fact that a major problem existed in unequal participation in ACE. NCWNZ considers that the problem of unequal participation in ACE needs to be addressed but should not be solved by the destruction of other equally important community needs.

NCWNZ welcomes the Consultation Document, and the opportunity to reflect upon and respond to this important document.

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