

Workforce Development Forum 7-8 April 2011, held at University House, ANU, Canberra

“Innovation and Local Government”

Outcomes of facilitated session (8 April) led by Paul Bateson, Program Co-ordinator Innovation and Best Practice, ACELG

What are the obstacles or barriers to local government becoming more innovative for workforce development?

- Confusion about risk management versus risk aversion
- Having to look internationally for examples
- No external pressure i.e. fiscal, legislative
- Not “sexy” enough (perception)
- Not attracting the “right” people
- Council processes inhibits innovation
- Statutory and regulatory environment
- Human resources
- Elected representatives
- Talking down successes by State-Territory governments
- Focus too much on negatives
- Capacity for risk taking/research versus public accountability
- Fear of community reaction
- Pressures encourage “blandness”
- Recognition of actual innovation
- No wider appreciation
- Leadership/culture

Examples of innovation in local government workforce development:

- Salisbury including
 - Leadership: innovation principles
 - Flexibility
 - On-line training
- Pressure = innovation and thinking outside the box
 - e.g. NT remote councils
 - Offshore outsourcing – challenge as to it being ethically naive? Or is it innovative?
- SmartBoards communication tool (East Arnhem Shire Council)
- Secondments
- Port Stephens including
 - Short-term contracts for ageing population
 - Engagement strategy
 - Systematic improvement of OFI data-base
- WBC Alliance (group of central-west NSW councils)
- Richmond Valley Council – Doolan Deck Modular Bridge commercial enterprise spin-off (Coraki Factory)
- Eaglehawk Recycling Shop community enterprise
- Social procurement development
 - 7-8 pilot projects in VIC
 - Facilitation of commercial business units in NSW/QLD

- Marion City Council “In the Drivers Seat” and leadership programs

Tools or assistance needed by those involved in local government workforce development?

- Encouragement and guidelines
- Recognition of “smaller” innovations to help overcome the culture of reticence
- “Ask your mates” by IPWEA
- Sharing the steps (including problems along the way) to success
- Measurement tools
- Workforce metrics
- Implementing learning partners
- In-house workforce expertise e.g. business strategist
- Celebrating success
- Awards
- Communication of ways to overcome constraints
- Investigate other forms of incentives
- Networks
- Communication across sector and professions