School Career Development Service

BENCHMARKING RESOURCE

Contents

What are career development services?

Career development services are defined in the National Career Development Strategy 2013 as including career education, career exploration, career information, career advice and career guidance. In a school setting, career development services can be provided by professional or teaching staff in a variety of ways and settings, for example: individual counselling sessions between a career development practitioner and a student; classroom learning that is made relevant to potential careers; experiential learning; careers information days; production of up to date careers information; or discussions with industry, educational and employer representatives.

What is this resource?

This resource has been developed for principals and leadership teams of schools to help them get the best value and outcomes from their career development services. The resource describes the features of a contemporary school-based career development service and sets out progressive performance benchmarks that enable schools to review their service delivery.

Schools can use this resource repeatedly as a quality improvement tool, to stimulate thinking about the aims of their career development service, how to achieve these aims, and how to continue to meet the changing career development needs of students within a rapidly changing world of work.

Although this resource is intended to be used by schools, the main elements could be adapted and customised for use in other sectors.

What underpins this resource?

FOR **STUDENTS** – THE WORLD OF WORK IS CHANGING

The Australian workforce of the future will need to be larger, more flexible, and more highly skilled and qualified in order to maintain our economic growth and prosperity.

As adults, our students will need to keep pace with changing technology and industries, be able to seize new employment opportunities or be entrepreneurial in creating new business or self-employment ventures. Our students are unlikely to follow a single career trajectory across their lifetime, but will have multiple job changes and be working in an increasingly casualised and part-time workforce. They will need not only professional or technical skills, but general employability skills and adaptive capacity.

Multiple career changes will mean that students need to be able to manage lifelong learning. Increasingly, the ability to make good study and career choices, navigate career changes, and make the best use of a person's skills will be essential for both individual prosperity and national productivity.

High quality career development services can prepare students to manage these challenges and navigate the world of work.

FOR **SCHOOLS** – THE NATURE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT SERVICES IS CHANGING

The aim of contemporary career development services is no longer to assist students to make a single career choice, but to equip them with career self-management skills that will enable them to respond flexibly to changing opportunities and circumstances across their lifetime.

In this changing environment, career development practitioners may work within a wider student services support team, potentially comprising counsellors, transitions teachers, vocational education teachers or work placement coordinators. They may need to share functions and work in a multi-disciplinary way. Contemporary career development practitioners may be expected to:

- support students to make informed choices about future work or study and understand the general skills and self-management capacity they will need to achieve this
- have knowledge in diverse employment trends and career pathways
- hold professional qualifications and memberships
- provide more in-depth counselling for students with higher needs

- work not just within the career development service, but work effectively with teaching staff to promote career learning in the classroom context
- respond to an increasing emphasis on work placements and work-based learning while managing attendant risks, safety and legal complexities
- keep pace with technology and integrate it effectively into career development services
- build relationships not just across the school organisation but with employers, industry, vocational education and training institutions, universities, parents and the local community to make the career service as relevant as possible to students and their community.

Rising expectations of career development practitioners sit alongside an increasingly constrained fiscal environment in which all services are expected to demonstrate tangible results and value for money. This challenge applies not only to career development services but across many other service industries.

FOR THE **SERVICE INDUSTRIES** – NEW APPROACHES ARE BEING DEVELOPED

While the world of work has changed, so too have approaches to service provision. Across sectors as diverse as health, education, training, family support, early childhood and disabilities, many services have reconfigured their delivery along a continuum of support to make the most of scarce resources and best meet client needs.

This type of approach to service delivery is often based on a platform of low cost, universally accessible services or information, freeing up resources to respond to more complex client need and more costly service interventions. This may be represented as a service "pyramid" or, to use a health care term, a "triage" model of service provision. Active input from key stakeholders and clients is also a feature of this type of approach.

Just as many other service industries have had to rethink their service delivery, so too has the career development industry. In a school setting, a pyramid type approach might mean that general career education and information is integrated into the classroom setting, with more intensive career support provided by career development practitioners and targeted to those students who need it most.

Effective career development services are based on strong links to industry, tertiary education centres and employers. They also recognise and involve others that shape students' thinking about career options, such as parents, teaching staff, other students and the local community.

Service aims and objectives

Priorities and available resources

Service delivery

Specialist and in-depth assistance

Base level assistance

Self-help information & tools

Strong leadership support

Stakeholder and client input

Why might you review your school's approach to career development service delivery?

Schools, students and their stakeholders can benefit from an approach to career development that is based on the latest thinking about the nature of careers, and about how to deliver services in a way that more effectively meets school and student needs. For schools, this may mean that:

- **Students** are more motivated because they will have a clearer goal in mind in terms of their subject selection or further education and training.
- **The school community, especially parents,** are better informed and more involved in student career development, and are influencing students' career development in positive and realistic ways.
- **Career development practitioners** support more students, and support them better, by having a clear continuum of services on offer – providing less costly and less intensive services to those students who might just need information or referral, supporting parents, teaching staff and industry partners to play a greater role in career development, and targeting their specialist skills for those students that need more intensive guidance.
- **School leaders** have confidence that their career development service offers quality outcomes for its students and is a potential point of differentiation in marketing to its current and prospective parents and students.

The benefits of good career development services in schools can also reach beyond the school itself and support better transitions for students. This may mean that:

- Students transitioning to other **educational and training pathways** will be more motivated and will have a better match between their interests and capabilities and their areas of study or training.
- Students transitioning to **employment** will be better suited to their role and clear about why they have chosen that job.

What is the focus of this resource?

This resource draws on common elements of business improvement models to help schools reflect on their service approach and identify opportunities for improvement. The resource also assists in identifying existing good practice and making it more explicit within the organisation.

Business improvement reviews commonly focus on elements such as: business aims, clients, staff and skills, technology, resources and stakeholder relationships. Consideration of these elements is very relevant to the delivery of effective, contemporary career development services, and therefore forms the basis of this resource.

Business improvement reviews also often focus on organisational governance systems such as business planning, reporting and accountability, compliance with legislation, and risk management. As these types of governance systems are generally well established in a school environment, they have not been included as part of the resource's focus.

With these well used business review processes in mind, the resource has been structured around four elements and nine outcome statements.

ELEMENT	OUTCOMES
1. Service aims and objectives	Service aims and objectives are based on identified student and organisational needs
	Service design supports the aims and objectives
2. Student focus	Student outcomes are defined and monitored
	The service responds to diversity, actively promotes its services and engages with difficult to reach or at risk students
3. People and resources	Resources are appropriately targeted to student need
	Staff performance is linked to the aims and objectives of the service
	Information and technology used by the service is contemporary and supports the service aims and objectives
4. Partnerships and community participation	The service builds and maintains partnerships to support career development
	The service is informed by input from the broader community

For each outcome statement, there is a set of progressive performance criteria to help schools think about how their career development service is performing. Criteria for each outcome are described on a progressive scale:

- "developing"– a service has systems in place relating to the outcome
- "establishing"– the service is also delivered by career development practitioners who have a clear understanding of how and why the systems were developed and how they are used to achieve expected outcomes
- "embedding"– the role and strategic value of the service is evident in: a focus on career development across the wider organisation; the understanding of staff and/or other stakeholders outside the service; and consideration of the service in organisational planning and review.

The criteria are flexible and describe outcomes rather than prescriptive processes, which means that they can be fulfilled in a variety of ways to meet organisational and student needs.

How should my school use this resource?

The resource is designed to be used flexibly by schools, but some suggested steps to consider are outlined below. The steps below are typical of business improvement processes in any industry or sector. At the back of this document you'll find two worksheets to help you work through and record the outcomes of your review.

1. WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED?

   Deciding who will be involved and who will be responsible might involve:

   - forming a team offering a variety of perspectives. For example, include someone from the school leadership, such as the principal or a deputy-principal, the line manager of the career development practitioner/s, all career development practitioners, and some general teaching staff.
   - considering whether to appoint an external reviewer to work with the team. The benefit of an internal review is that it can be less daunting and the results may be more likely to be accepted within the organisation. Conversely, an outsider may offer more challenging and objective insights and bring useful perspectives from other sectors.

   - considering your key clients and stakeholders. You might establish a stakeholder reference group to provide guidance and input to the review. For example, including students, parents, community, employer, industry and higher education representatives is likely to offer rich feedback and insights, particularly in relation to the elements in the resource that focus on partnerships, community participation and responding to diversity.

2. WHERE ARE WE NOW?

   Establishing a baseline might involve:

   - asking the members of the project team to work through the resource individually to assess the school's career development services.
   - consulting with the stakeholder reference group if you've appointed one, to invite external feedback and student feedback.
   - bringing the project team together to "triangulate" the different assessments and build a consensus view about an overall assessment of where the career development service currently sits along the progressive performance criteria in the resource.

3. WHERE DO WE WANT TO GET TO AND WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT?

Agreeing on a vision might involve:

- drawing on the progressive performance criteria for ideas about what your career development service might look like if it was fully embedded and integrated into the school. Agree on a vision for what you want the career development service to look like in the future.

- prioritising the elements and outcomes that are most important for your school. In deciding this, you could take a risk management approach and identify the areas that pose the greatest risk if they are not improved, and focus on these areas. Alternatively, you could focus on the areas that were rated most poorly against the progressive performance criteria and focus efforts on these areas first.

- determining what is possible based on the vision, the priority areas for attention, and available resources.

4. WHAT WILL WE DO?

Planning next steps might involve:

- developing a plan with clear actions, timeframes, and assigned responsibilities for each action so everyone is clear about who needs to do what, and when.

5. HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN WE'VE ACHIEVED WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO?

Developing systems for monitoring and review might involve:

- determining service standards and performance indicators in order to monitor and measure progress in implementing the action plan. The resource provides some guidance in thinking about performance criteria, but it will be important for the school to develop some key performance indicators relevant to your school environment.

- considering a mix of quantitative measures that will tell you how much you're doing, and qualitative measures that will tell you more about how well you're doing it.

- agreeing on a monitoring and reporting system so everyone can keep track of progress, and agree on reporting intervals. You could align them to other school reporting timeframes. For example, if quarterly reports to the leadership team are prepared about other aspects of school business, it would make sense to build in quarterly reporting on career development services.

6. DO IT ALL AGAIN!

Agree on a timeframe to conduct another self-assessment using the resource. Review the service at regular intervals as a continuous improvement activity and to position the service to respond to changing circumstances and emerging issues over the longer term.

Benchmarking outcomes for school career development services

ELEMENT 1 – SERVICE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

OUTCOME	WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IF YOUR SERVICE IS…		
	…Developing	**…Establishing**	**…Embedding**
a. Service aims and objectives are based on identified student and organisational needs	The service has aims and objectives that are informed by analysis of student career development needs The service aims and objectives link to the wider business of the school and are reflected in key school corporate documents	…and career development staff can describe how student needs analysis shapes the service aims and objectives …and career development staff can explain how the service contributes to the wider aims of the school	…and teachers can describe how the career development service results in wider benefit for student learning (e.g. better subject selection, more motivated students) …and the leadership team can outline the value of the career development service in contributing to the wider aims of the school (e.g. learning and retention, successful transition to further study or employment)
b. Service design supports the overall aims and objectives	There is a documented career development service model that is designed to meet identified student and organisational needs and support the achievement of defined student outcomes described in element 2	…and career development staff can explain how the service has been designed to efficiently meet the needs of all students and what evidence has informed the design (for example, using the triage/pyramid model to explain which elements of the service are offered universally, which elements are targeted to specific groups of students and why, and which elements are targeted to specific individuals that may benefit from more intensive support and why)	…and career development staff can outline how the service model and its various programs have been reviewed and reconfigured in response to changing student needs …and teachers demonstrate a clear understanding of the service model and how they can refer students to different elements of the service according to need …and the leadership team can provide examples of changes to the service model that they have supported in order to respond to changing student needs

ELEMENT 2 – STUDENT FOCUS

OUTCOME	WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IF YOUR SERVICE IS…		
	...Developing	**...Establishing**	**...Embedding**
a. Student outcomes are defined and monitored	Expected student career self-management outcomes are defined and documented Systems are in place to monitor and review student outcomes at regular intervals Student destination data is collected annually to monitor post-school student outcomes	...and career development staff can explain how the student outcomes have been developed and how they link to evidence-based career self-management competencies (e.g. the Australian Blueprint for Career Development, the Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework) …and career development staff can describe how student outcomes are measured and monitored ...and career development staff can describe how the review of student outcomes (including destination data) has resulted in service changes or improvements	...and career development staff can describe how monitoring and review of student outcomes has influenced wider school practice ...and teaching staff can describe how they are involved in monitoring student career outcomes and provide examples of how they have responded to issues identified through this process or influenced changes to the career service ...and the leadership team can describe how they use reports about student outcomes and destination data to support changes or improvements to the career development service

ELEMENT 2 – STUDENT FOCUS (continued)

OUTCOME	WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IF YOUR SERVICE IS…		
	…Developing	…Establishing	…Embedding
b. The service responds to diversity, actively promotes its services and engages with difficult to reach or at risk students	Data is collected about student diversity including identification as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, cultural background, language/s spoken at home and disabilities Systems are in place to identify students disengaged from education and training or at risk of disengaging Information about career development services is provided to students	…and career development staff can describe how they use information about student diversity to tailor promotional materials about the service and can provide evidence to support the distribution channels used …and career development staff can describe outreach strategies used to connect with students at risk and the evidence to support the selected strategies …and career development staff can describe how they monitor the effectiveness of the service in meeting the diverse needs of students and engaging at risk students	…and career development staff can describe strategies used to remove systemic barriers that might need to be addressed before students can access career development services (e.g. adaptive modifications to facilitate participation by a student with disabilities, access to child care for young parents, referral for financial assistance to enable further study or training) …and career development staff can describe how they have reviewed or evaluated their service's information, promotion and outreach strategies and how the results have been used to improve the service …and teaching staff have an understanding of the diverse student population, and can describe how they have supported students to access targeted career development services where appropriate …and the organisational leadership communicates its expectation of inclusive service delivery and can describe how the outcomes of inclusion strategies are used to inform future plans

ELEMENT 3 – PEOPLE AND RESOURCES

OUTCOME	WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IF YOUR SERVICE IS…		
	...Developing	...Establishing	...Embedding
a) Resources are appropriately targeted to student need	There is a documented methodology for allocating resources to different elements of the service and to individual students or cohorts of students The resource allocation methodologies support the service aims and objectives described in element 1 and expected student outcomes described in element 2	…and career development staff can explain the basis for the resource allocation methodology and how it supports efficient use of resources …and career development staff can describe how the resource allocation methods are monitored and reviewed in relation to achieving student outcomes	…and career development staff can give examples of changes that have been made to resource allocations across the different elements of the service and how these changes respond to monitoring and review findings …and the leadership team can give examples of changes to resourcing arrangements that they have supported to improve student career self-management outcomes

ELEMENT 3 – PEOPLE AND RESOURCES (continued)

OUTCOME	WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IF YOUR SERVICE IS…		
	…Developing	**…Establishing**	**…Embedding**
b) Staff performance is linked to the aims & objectives of the service	Career development staff performance agreements link to the aims and objectives of the service Career development staff have relevant experience and qualifications	…and managers can describe how career development position descriptions and performance agreements have been developed and how the required skills, knowledge and competencies link to the aims and objectives of the service …and career development staff belong to a Career Industry Council of Australia Member Association, meet membership requirements and the Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners …and career development staff can describe initiatives they have implemented to build the career development skills of general teaching staff	…and managers can give examples of how all staff position descriptions and performance agreements (career development staff and teaching staff) have been reviewed to improve student career development …managers can give examples of how they support continuing professional development for career development staff, in line with professional standards …and teachers can describe the benefits of professional development and learning opportunities provided by the career development service …and the leadership team communicates its expectations that all staff have a shared responsibility to promote career development and this is clear in all performance agreements

ELEMENT 3 – PEOPLE AND RESOURCES (continued)

OUTCOME	WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IF YOUR SERVICE IS…		
	…Developing	**…Establishing**	**…Embedding**
c) Information and technology used by the service is contemporary and supports the service aims and objectives	Up to date information about education, training, occupations, industry and the labour market, is available, uses plain English and contains explanatory material to assist users to relate the information to exploring career options Information is distributed through a variety of channels Technology used by the service supports the service aims and objectives in element 1 and expected student outcomes in element 2 The effective use of technology is included in career development staff position descriptions and professional development activities where appropriate	…and career development staff can describe the systems used to regularly update and verify the information products with reliable sources …and career development staff can give examples of tailoring and targeting information products and distribution channels to meet the needs of differing student groups …and career development staff can explain how and why systems, devices and applications are selected and used to support the service aims and objectives and student outcomes ….and career development staff can give examples of initiatives they have implemented to support general teaching staff in using career development information and technology in class settings	…and teaching staff can describe how they use careers information developed by career development staff and integrate it into their subject areas …and students can demonstrate that they are able to find and use career information as they explore future career options …and career development staff monitor digital trends and can give examples of where they have worked with other teaching staff to select new technology that integrates career education into the context of wider learning outcomes and subject areas

ELEMENT 4 – PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

OUTCOME	WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IF YOUR SERVICE IS…		
	...Developing	...Establishing	...Embedding
a) The service builds and maintains partnerships to support career development	The service builds and maintains partnerships with other stakeholders – such as education and training providers, employers, industry groups, and support services (e.g. disability agencies, migrant or refugee services) – to support student career development	…and career development staff can describe how partner organisations support student career development outcomes through information, advice, experiential learning and work placements …and career development staff can describe how the composition of the partnership network reflects the needs and aspirations of the student population	…and network partners can give examples of how they have supported career development for students ….and teaching staff can describe how they have linked the "real life" information and experiences offered to students by network partners into their subject matter and classroom …and the leadership team can give examples of new partnerships it has brokered to support the career development service, and the outcomes achieved from the partnerships
b) The service is informed by input from the broader community	Promotional material about the career development service is distributed to parents and/or others who have an influence on students' career decisions All promotional material includes information about how parents and interested local community members can make contact with, and provide feedback or suggestions about, the service	…and the service can describe regular initiatives to build the skills of parents and the wider community to support student career development and understand and interpret careers information ...and the service can describe how it has used feedback and input from parents and the wider community to help shape the service and involve the community in student career development …and the service encourages participation by representative parents and local community groups to support outcome 2b	…and parents and others report that they feel confident in accessing and interpreting impartial and up to date careers information to support students to make decisions about study, work or career …and parents and community members can describe changes that have resulted from them providing input or feedback about the service …and career development staff can give examples of how the service has improved its response to diverse student groups including students at risk as a result of parental and community input

Review template

Below is a simple template for recording your review progress against each outcome.

Outcome:

	At which stage of the scale is your service currently? (i.e. developing, establishing or embedding?)	What evidence do you have of this?
Where are we now?		

	At which stage of the scale would you like your service to be? (i.e. developing, establishing or embedding?)	How will you know when you get there? (i.e. what KPIs or other measurements will you use?)
Where do we want to be?		

Outcome:

	What is the risk if the school does not address this?	Where should action on this sit in relation to other priorities?
How important is this?		

	What actions are required?	Who is responsible for these actions and over what timeframe?
How will we get there?		

Worksheet for rating your career development service against the performance criteria

ELEMENT	OUTCOMES	RESULT OF SELF-ASSESSMENT (DEVELOPING, ESTABLISHING, OR EMBEDDING)
1. **Service aims and objectives**	a) Service aims and objectives are based on identified student and organisational needs b) Service design supports the aims and objectives	
2. **Student focus**	a) Student outcomes are defined and monitored b) The service responds to diversity, actively promotes its services and engages with difficult to reach or at risk students	
3. **People and resources**	a) Resources are appropriately targeted to student need b) Staff performance is linked to the aims and objectives of the service c) Information and technology used by the service is contemporary and supports the service aims and objectives	
4. **Partnerships and community participation**	a) The service builds and maintains partnerships to support career development b) The service is informed by input from the broader community	