

City and State: A Partnership for Building Community Capacity In ICT and Promoting Lifelong Learning

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Abstract

The Community Access to ICTs in Schools (CAICTS) project focuses on school and community engagement and, building community capacity through the provision of skills training in information and communications technologies (ICT). The initiative has aimed to respond to Queensland Government and Brisbane City Council priorities, in particular, skilling the community, breaking down the digital divide and fostering lifelong learning.

The project demonstrates the effectiveness of establishing a new intergovernmental and community partnership using existing infrastructure to achieve common goals. The partnership between the two levels of government, participating schools and volunteers has delivered training to 4755 participants at sixty sites across Brisbane City, from 2002 to 2004.

This paper provides an overview of 'what works' and an analysis of the key success factors contributing to this project. In particular, policy development, partner support and involvement, shared goals and responsibilities, program flexibility, course materials, funding arrangements, facilitator training and evaluation processes will be considered. The use of national census data for monitoring and targeting potential areas for future service delivery will also be demonstrated.

Project successes, challenges and future directions will be examined using the extensive feedback provided by participants, schools and course facilitators. This will be supported by the individual reflections of a participant, facilitator and school. Insights gathered from working in partnership will be addressed in the context of a conceptual framework that can be used for innovative service delivery.

1. Background

The Community Access to ICTs in Schools project is a joint initiative between the Brisbane City Council (BCC) and Education Queensland (EQ) aimed at strengthening the social and economic capabilities of the general community by increasing their level of participation in the use of technology. The project capitalises on the use of existing infrastructure in the form of state school facilities and established school — community links across the city.

This project provides grant funding to state schools that have reached EQ's ICT foundation benchmarks (Education Queensland 2004) to provide basic and applied computer and ICT training to members of local communities.

At the broadest level the initiative contributes directly to the Queensland Government's (2005) 'Smart State' priorities by increasing skills in the use of ICT within the community. It also contributes to the Brisbane City Council (2001) 2010 Strategy aims of a smart and prosperous city. This supports the building of community capacity through strengthening services to and building more supportive communities.

At the project level the objectives for the partners, as expressed in the Memorandum of Understanding (Brisbane City Council and Education Queensland 2004), are complementary. These objectives have been identified as:

- fostering community engagement between school and parents and the wider community through curriculum activities
- developing social cohesion and confidence of school communities
- supporting schools in acting as secure, safe and comfortable environments
- creating schools as non-threatening community hubs
- creating opportunities for disadvantaged communities to gain skills and
- creating further training opportunities for communities.

The project partners anticipate that these objectives will translate into specific outcomes such as an increase the number of citizens using the Internet, improving skills within the community, fostering lifelong learning and enhancing school–community partnerships.

Implementing the processes and procedures aimed at achieving these objectives is undertaken in the context of the Queensland Government's six guiding principles for community engagement (Queensland Government Community Engagement Division 2001):

- Inclusiveness — connecting with those who are hardest to reach
- Reaching out — changing the ways government and community work together for the better
- Mutual respect — listening, understanding and acting on experiences that are different from our own
- Integrity — engagement as a means of promoting integrity in the democratic processes of government
- Affirming diversity — changing the processes of government to incorporate diverse values and interests
- Adding value — building community capacity for future engagement.

Between 2002 and 2004, 96 grants were distributed to 60 different school sites across the city. In this time, 4628 members of the community were trained. In 2005 it is anticipated that an additional 1360 people will be trained at 26 sites (Table 1).

Table 1. Project participation

Year	Number of schools	Number of participants
2002	37	1572
2003	33	1683
2004	26	1373
2005*	26	1360

*Anticipated numbers

Implementation

In 2001 a pilot project, School–Community Internet Project, involving four schools was conducted in the Coopers Plains District, an area in Brisbane’s southwestern suburbs. Following the success of the pilot in demonstrating the appropriateness of the project methodology and the community demand for ICT training, the BCC and EQ negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding to support a jointly-funded program that is now in its fourth year of operation.

Development of four online learning modules was sponsored by the BCC. These modules — Using your keyboard and mouse, Introduction to Windows, Introduction to Internet, and Internet for Advanced Users — were available to schools on ‘ourbrisbane.com’ (Brisbane City Council 2005), Brisbane’s online portal and through The Learning Place, Education Queensland’s EQ’s web-based online learning gateway (Education Queensland 2005). Schools were subsequently provided with training outlines for a range of practical topics such as Internet Shopping, Researching Your Family History, Researching Your Local Area and the History Of Your House, Searching for Council/Government Products and Services Online, How to Pay Council/Government Bills Online, Real Estate: Buying and Selling a House on the Net, Internet Banking and Financial Planning, and Helping Children with Homework (using the Internet).

Participating schools are required to operate within the policy framework provided by the *Department of Education Manual SC12: Community Access to Information Communication Technologies in Schools* (Department of Education and the Arts 2005). This outlines the policies and operational guidelines within which schools are required to operate in providing community access to school facilities, the engagement of training staff, safety and security requirements along with IT network considerations.

A team comprising one project officer from each agency manages the strategic aspects of the project while all communication with schools is coordinated through the EQ project officer.

Individual schools are responsible for managing the operational aspects associated with the promotion and implementation of the training.

Projects are implemented to coincide with the January–December school year. Milestones can be categorised around three project phases; planning, promotion and delivery (Table 2).

Table 2. Project milestones

School term	Month	Milestone
Term 4	December	Advanced notice of project provided to schools
Term 1 Planning	January	Call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) from schools
	February	Review EOI and select successful schools Notify successful schools
	March	Orientation session for facilitators and trainers Schools promote project to their communities
Term 2 Promotion and delivery	April	School promotion as required Provision of community training by schools Visits to schools by project team as required
	May	School promotion as required Provision of community training by schools Visits to schools by project team as required
	June	Provision of community training by schools Interim report due Winter vacation
Term3 Promotion and delivery	July	School promotion as required Provision of community training by schools Visits to schools by project team as required
	August	School promotion as required Provision of community training by schools Visits to schools by project team as required
	September	School, Participant and Facilitator feedback Spring vacation
Term 4 Planning	October	Collation of feedback
	November	Analysis of feedback
	December	Develop report Advanced notice of project provided to schools Summer vacation

Publicising the program

In January and February state schools in Brisbane are invited to submit a proposal to participate in the project. Internal channels are used to alert schools to the call for Expressions of Interest.

Notices with links to application forms and supporting guidelines are placed on the EQ Intranet bulletin board, articles are placed on the ICTs for Learning page of *EdViews* (EQ's fortnightly newspaper), through *Education Matters* (a weekly newsletter to principals) and via the ICTs for Learning website at <<http://education.qld.gov.au/itt/learning/explore/community.html>>.

In addition, the 2005 project saw specific invitations sent to 23 principals inviting them to consider their school's participation in the project. Identification of these schools was accomplished by plotting the distribution of all project sites on a map indicating Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas 2001 (Australian Bureau of Census and Statistics 2001) in order to identify those areas of the city that had been under represented in previous rounds of the project. Five schools responded to the invitation, three of which were new to the project.

School applications

Schools submit a response to a series of questions on a standard form. Apart from responses that provide basic information about the school, schools need to submit details about their proposed program, the suitability of their facilities, the grant being requested and who will provide the training.

Proposals are assessed against seven selection criteria to determining which schools will be the successful grant recipients. In their applications schools are encouraged to be flexible in putting together proposals that address local circumstances, particularly in terms of:

- providing programs to meet the needs of their communities and special interest groups
- partnering with local businesses and community agencies (such as charitable organisations and not-for-profit groups) to deliver the training
- promoting the program to the community
- targeting specific community groups
- developing community capacity
- aligning the program to the School ICTs Learning Agreement (a school plan for the allocation of resources to achieve ICTs benchmarks).

Funding

Both Brisbane City Council and Education Queensland contribute \$50,000 each per annum to fund the program. Ninety percent of the project budget is directed to program delivery at the school level, with minimal costs for central administration and marketing. Schools receive approximately 50 per cent of their grant funding at the commencement of the program, based on the anticipated number of community members they plan to train. The final payment is transferred to schools once they have provided feedback on completion of the project. Levels of grant funding for schools (Table 3) have remained relatively consistent since the project's inception. Minor changes, such as the introduction of a new entry level in 2004 (minimum 20 participants) have been made to encourage schools to participate in the project.

Table 3. Levels of grant funding for schools*

Number of community members trained	Establishment allocation (\$)	Final allocation (\$)	Total grant (\$)
Minimum 20	1000	500	1500
Minimum 35	1000	1200	2200
Minimum 50	1500	1500	3000
Minimum 65	2000	2000	4000
Minimum 80	2500	2500	5000

* Funding is based on providing the equivalent minimum number of participant hours, calculated as follows: Number of community members trained x 10 hours.

School operations

Participating schools are required to support the project with a facilitator who takes responsibility for delivering the program and maintaining a register of participants. School representatives are required to attend a half-day information session to introduce them to the program, online resources, models for delivery of training, reporting requirements and to share experiences with schools that participated in previous projects.

In its first year of implementation the training program was confined to the online materials provided by the project partners. In response to feedback from schools, subsequent projects allowed for greater flexibility in the design of program content although it should be noted that schools have always been encouraged to provide a program that responded to the needs of its local community. Schools are now able to use a range of materials including those that they have developed onsite.

Because of the diversity in the way schools implement the program there are notable variations in the way grant funds are allocated between different aspects of their operations. Range-based estimates (Table 4) give an indication of how funds are divided between different operational functions with the most notable expenditure being in the areas of trainers' wages and facilities.

Table 4. Range based estimate of school expenditures

Function	Range (%)
Administration	2–3
Promotion	5–10
Trainer’s wages	35–55
Materials	5–10
Facilities (equipment, power, Internet connections, network administration, depreciation)	40–55
Refreshments	1–2

Trainers

Trainers delivering programs need to be qualified and possess appropriate ICT skills. They might be a qualified teacher or industry trainer with skills in ICT or a facilitator with a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training.

Target groups

Whilst all Brisbane adult residents are eligible to enrol, the project was established to reach out to people in the community with few or no ICT skills or those with basic ICT skills wishing to explore practical ICT applications. Specific target groups include migrants, seniors, different language and cultural groups, unemployed people and parents, depending on the school location and the needs of the community.

Marketing and promotion

Schools are expected to use knowledge of their local community needs and how to promote and market the program to best engage the community. Feedback provided by participants (Figure 1) indicates school newsletters, newspapers and word-of-mouth remain the most common media by which participants became aware of the program.

Additional research conducted in 2005 revealed that of the ‘other promotional channels’ used, the billboard fronting an arterial road and parents and citizens meetings are particularly effective techniques for promoting the program.

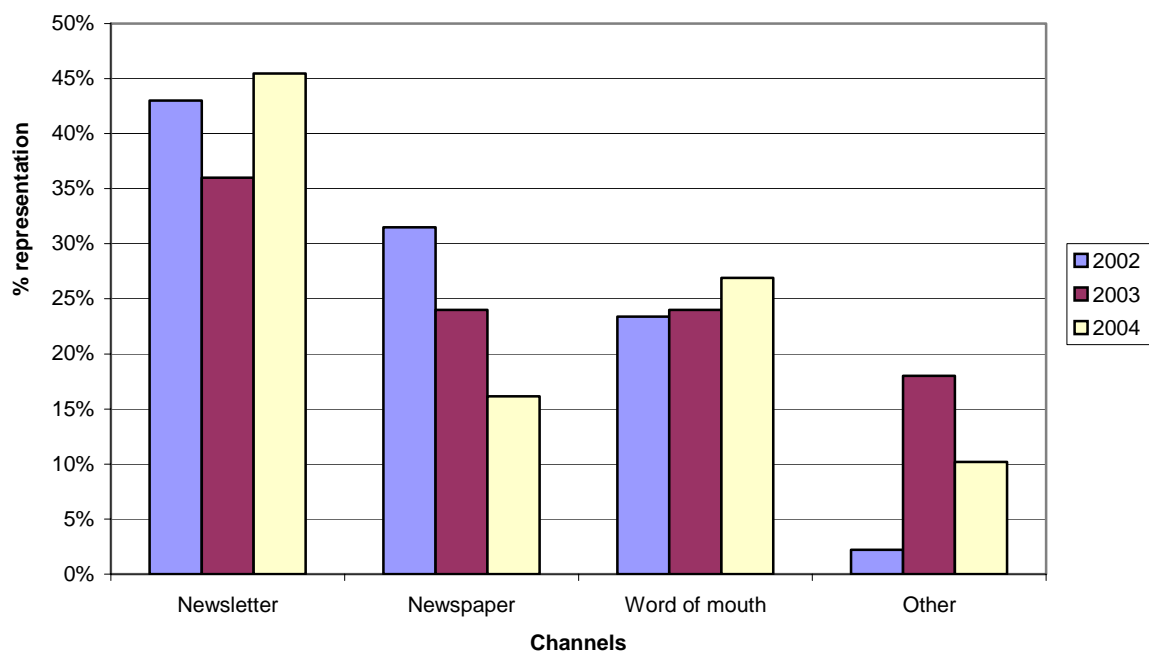


Figure 1. How participants heard about the program

2. Achievements to date

In each year of the program, including the pilot, participants, participating schools and course facilitators were surveyed. In addition, in 2004, an analysis of the socio-economic profile of the locations of participating and non-participating schools was conducted to identify those schools in disadvantaged areas that had not participated in the program. In 2005, additional research of both participating and non-participating schools was undertaken to gather data relating to community engagement strategies and community capacity building and the reasons schools did not participate or left the program.

Data gathered by through these tools is summarised and discussed in this paper as follows:

- Surveys each year (2002–2004) of all participants, facilitators and participating schools
- Identification of Brisbane socio-economic areas of disadvantage where schools have not participated in the program
- Survey in 2005 of all project schools regarding community engagement and community capacity building outcomes
- Survey in 2005 of all non-participating schools and of schools that had ceased participation.

Participant survey responses 2002–2004

Participants are requested to provide information about themselves and various aspects of the training program by responding to a 23-question survey. In 2004 the response rate was

40 per cent compared with 26 per cent of participants completing the survey in 2002 and an 18 per cent response rate in 2003 (Brisbane City Council and Education Queensland 2005).

Participant survey questions related to reasons for participation, impact on their confidence with using computers and the Internet, their improved ability to assist children, their opinion of schools as a community resource, the quality of the facilities used, whether they would participate on a regular basis and whether or not they would be prepared to pay a small fee to participate.

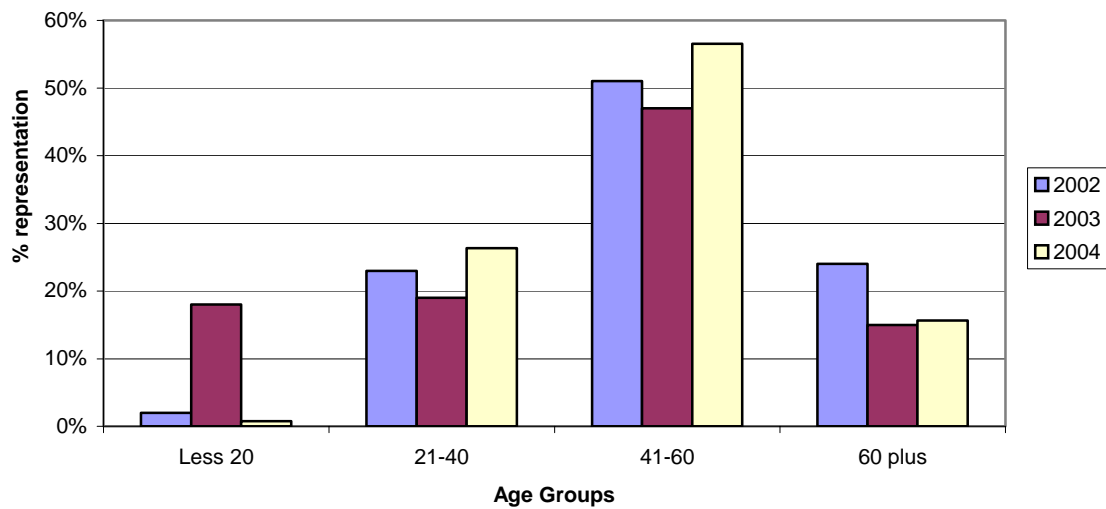


Figure 2. Age of participants

More than half of the participants have been in the 41 to 60 years age group. Whilst the proportion of the 60 plus group appears to have stabilised around 15 per cent, the under 20 years group fluctuated dramatically between 2002 and 2004. The 2004 project recorded the highest percentage of 21 to 40-year-old participants for three projects (Figure 2).

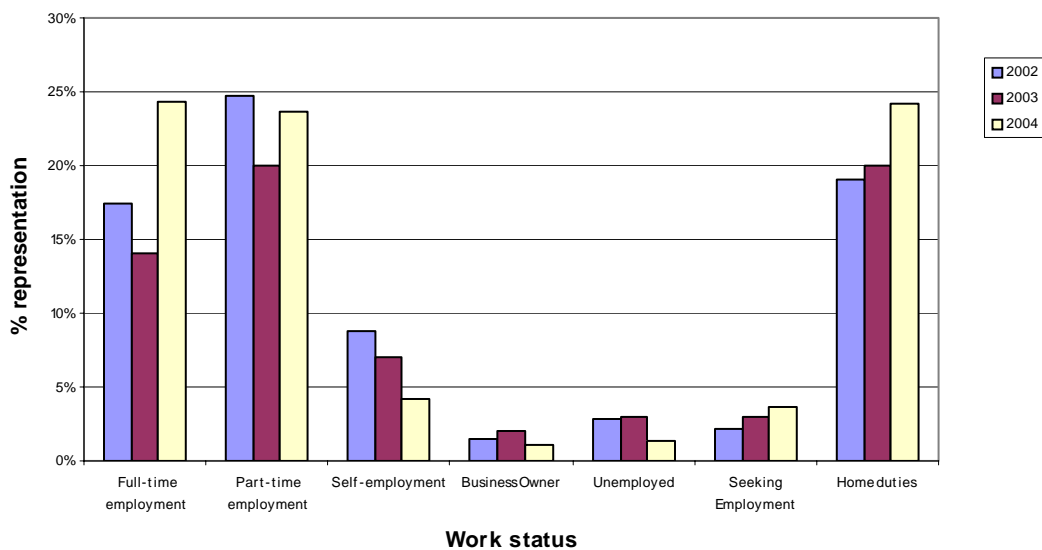


Figure 3. Participant's work status

The most common categories of Work status throughout the duration of the project have been Employed (part-time and full-time) and Home Duties with each category accounting for up to 20 per cent of participants (Figure 3).

The Retired category accounted for more than ten percent of participants in each year while approximately five per cent of participants were self-employed. In total, participants who regarded themselves as either Unemployed, Seeking Employment or a Business Owner made up approximately five per cent of the participants in any year.

The reasons for participation in the program are provided in Figure 4. Personal use is the most common reason for participation, with close to 50 per cent of participants indicating this as the reason for participating in the program. Prior to 2004 participants were asked to indicate one or more reasons for participating in the program. In 2004 this question was simplified with participants asked to indicate only their main reason for participation.

This accounts for the significant decline in the total percentage of responses indicating Personal Use as a reason for participation. Attendance for Business Reasons was on a par with the 2003 project, while both Employment and Helping students showed a slight decline as the primary motivating reason.

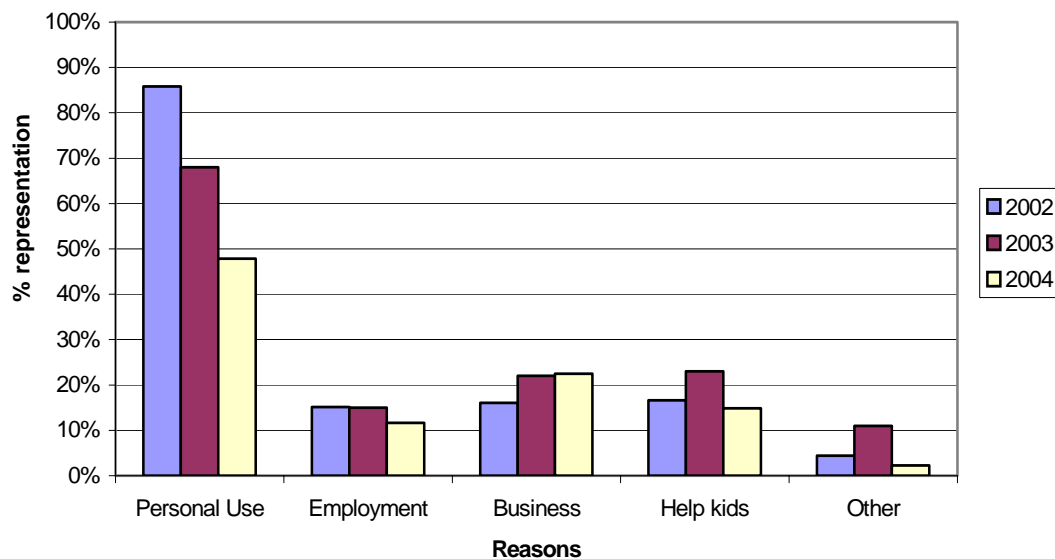


Figure 4. Reasons for participation

Participants were asked to indicate if attending the program increased their confidence in using computers and the Internet (Figure 5). The number of participants strongly agreeing with the statement has remained consistent for each year of the project. While there was a

ten per cent decline in the number agreeing with the statement in 2004, approximately ten per cent of participants provided no response to the question.

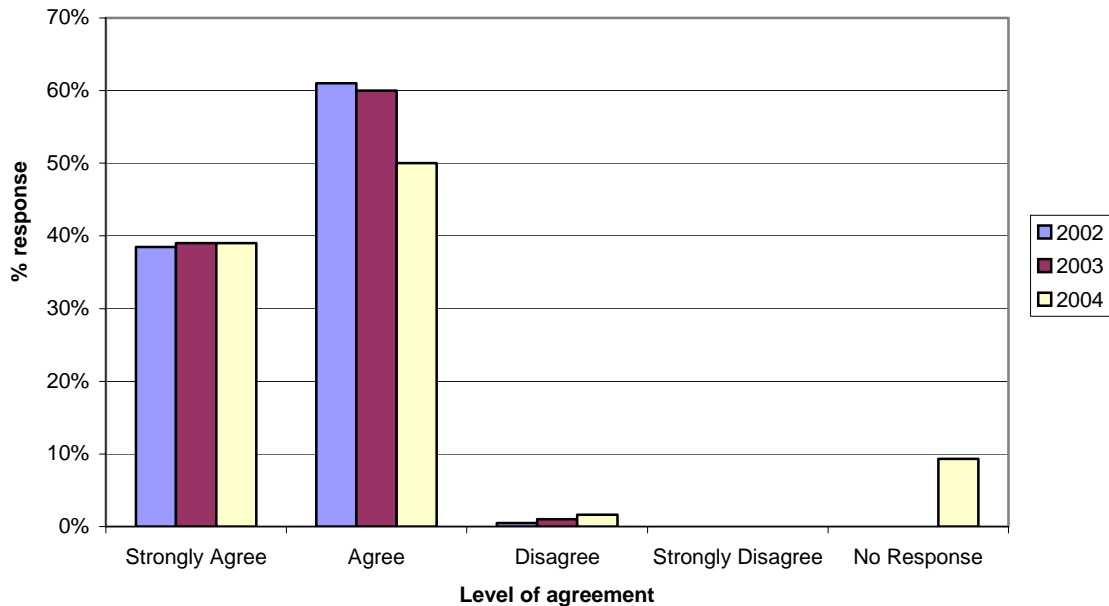


Figure 5. Program increased participant confidence

Similarly, participants were asked to indicate if the program improved their ability to help their children (Figure 6). A significant percentage of participants in each of the project years strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. There is a declining percentage of participants disagreeing with the statement while strong disagreement is negligible. The percentage of respondents for which this question was not applicable declined from approximately 35 per cent in the first two years to 18 per cent in 2004.

Participants were asked to indicate if they had a better opinion of schools as a community resource as a result of completing the program (Figure 7). More than 90 per cent of participants in each year of the program either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. There is a declining trend in those disagreeing with the statement while strong disagreement is negligible.

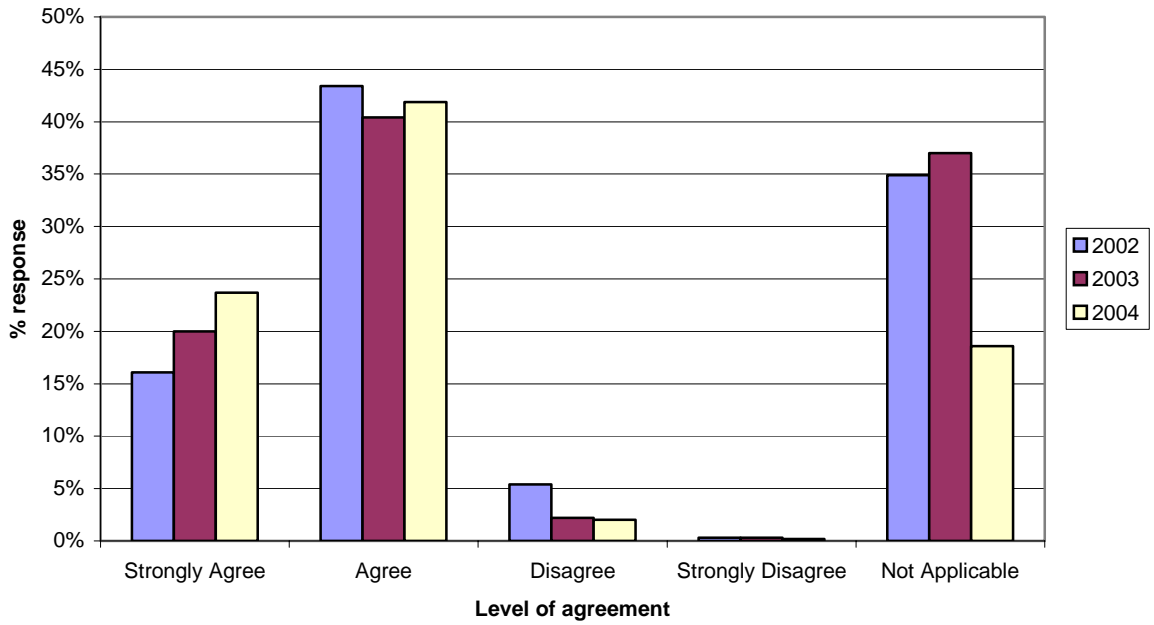


Figure 6. Improved ability to assist children

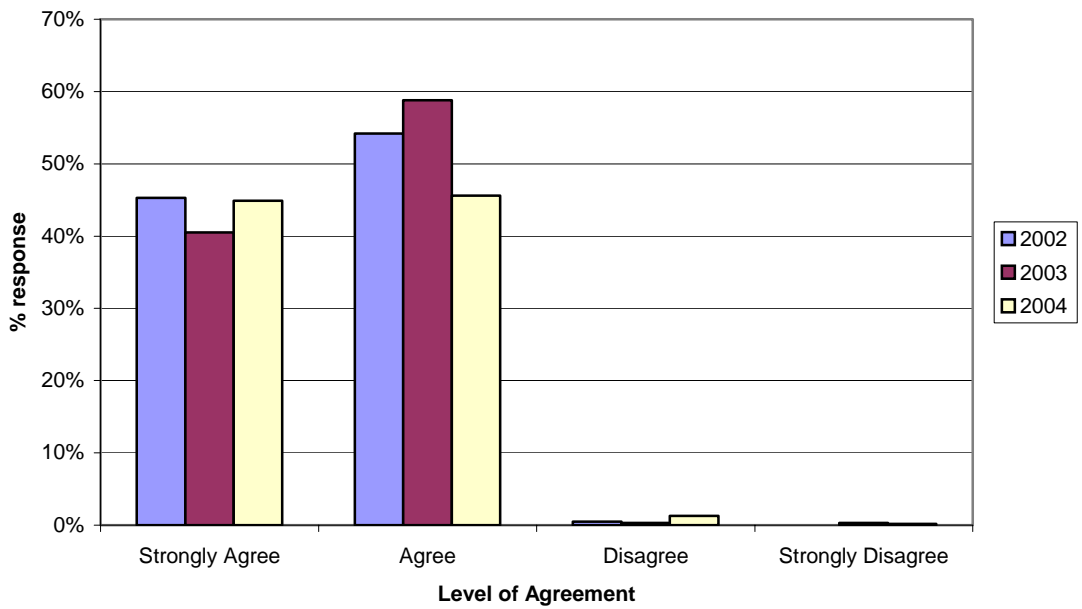


Figure 7. Improved opinion of schools

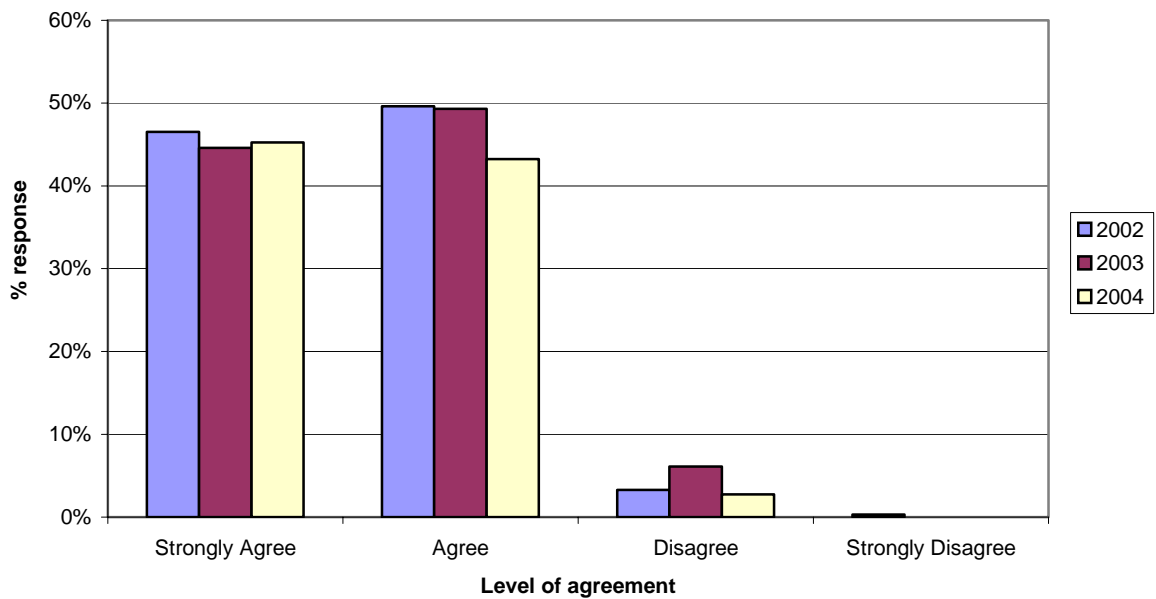


Figure 8. Participate regularly if available

An insight into the sustainability of the project is evidenced by responses to the statement that the program would continue to be supported in the future if it was made available on a regular basis (Figure 8). This reveals the level of strong agreement is consistent across the years the project has operated while the level of agreement shows some decline in 2004. The level of disagreement and strong disagreement remains negligible.

An additional indicator of the project's sustainability is reflected in participant responses to a statement related to their willingness to pay a small fee for the program (Figure 9). More than 85 per cent of participants consistently indicate they would be prepared to pay, even though most schools provided free training. The level of disagreement and strong disagreement has declined to less than three per cent in 2004.

More than 90 per cent of respondents consistently agreed or strongly agreed that the training facilities provided by schools were comfortable and good for learning (Figure 10). There has been a decline in the number of people disagreeing with the statement while strong disagreement is negligible. This data assists schools to monitor the suitability of their training facilities over time.

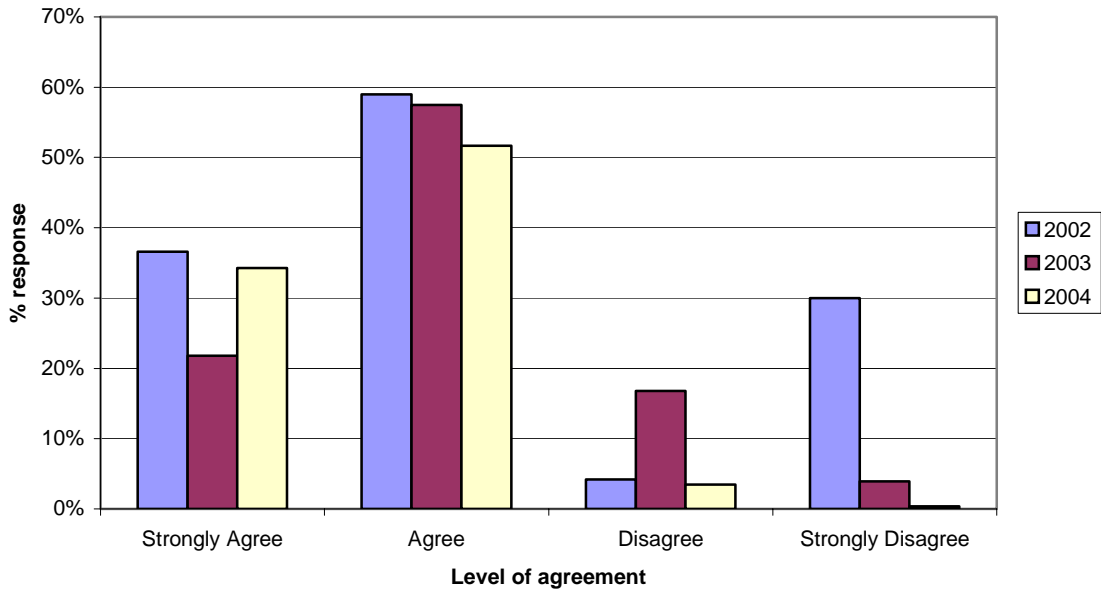


Figure 9. Prepared to pay a small fee

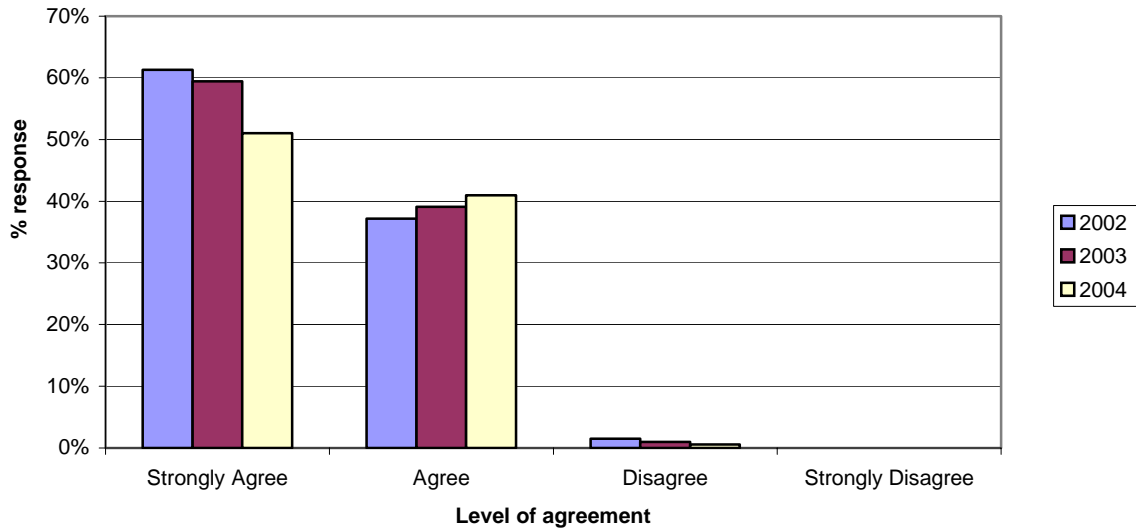


Figure 10. Facilities were good for learning

Feedback from participants in each year of the program has consistently been positive with typical responses being:

- “As far as I am concerned this is one of the more useful courses I have done. I have tried (other providers) courses in the past, so, in comparison, this was the best”
- “It gave me an introduction to the programs and confidence to try more”
- “Gave me some confidence to start using the computer”

- “Inspirational”.

Facilitator survey responses 2002–2004

Facilitators are asked to respond to ten questions relating to the program, its delivery and the level of support provided.

Survey responses reveal that more than 85 per cent of facilitators indicate the information and advice provided at the orientation session and throughout the project is helpful while all facilitators indicate that they either strongly agreed or agreed that they were able to design a program according to the needs of participants. Facilitators have consistently indicated that course participants respond well to the training program. The level of agreement or strong agreement has risen from 86 per cent in 2002 to 100 per cent in 2004.

Equally, the levels of satisfaction with the training facilities mirrored the responses provided by participants. These responses have been consistent across all years of the project with only a small number of isolated instances where computers or networks haven't functioned according to expectations.

Typical responses from individual facilitators include:

- “The Participants enjoyed the program and all gained knowledge and experience in relation to their specific needs”
- “I feel this approach worked very well and I was very happy with the outcomes as were the participants”.

School survey responses 2002–2004

Schools are asked to submit a final report outlining their final participant numbers, program offered, community engagement strategies, support provided to assist schools, suggestions for improvement, strategies for maintaining relationships developed throughout the program, interest in participation in future programs and other comments. Schools consistently indicate their interest in participating in future programs with typical comments being:

- “These programs meet a very real need...They also assist in developing real connections between the school and the community”
- “Yes, as a school community we are committed to the notion of lifelong learning. We hope we can grow as a learning community ...”
- “Yes, because it creates positive relationships with the greater community”.

Each year of the program schools have identified a small number of areas in which program improvements can be made. These can be categorised as being either internal (addressed at the school level) or external (addressed by the central agencies).

Examples of internal school issues have included suggestions to organise participants into smaller groups, a change in promotions to focus on the general community rather than specific groups and the use of a self-assessment check to assess participant skills at the commencement of a course.

Operational issues raised in the 2004 feedback which need to be considered by the project partners include the calling for expressions of interest at an earlier date, the production of materials about the MS Office suite and updating of existing online materials for Windows XP and the provision of more advanced units including digital cameras and computer security.

A number of schools confirmed some of the positive aspects of the program. These included the program was “great” and identifying that “program flexibility is a plus”.

Schools indicated a desire to maintain relationships with the community on several levels. Most have been enthusiastic about using this or similar ICT training programs as a vehicle for sustaining community relationships while others indicate that they would maintain relationships through informal means.

Survey responses indicate that a number of the project schools have implemented or are in the process of developing formal strategies for sustaining community relationships including:

- “Inviting parents to participate in the schools ICT parent helper program”
- “Inviting local businesses to become part of the Business Partner Program”
- “Developing relationships with a Community Social Group”.

Identification of Brisbane socio-economic areas of disadvantage where schools have not participated in the program

Using the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001), statistical local areas in Brisbane were mapped against schools that have participated in the program. This enabled the identification of schools in more disadvantaged areas that had not participated to date. This led to the use of several additional promotional strategies that were successful in the first-time participation of three targeted schools in the 2005 program. The strategies used included:

- using an information session to encourage not-for-profit and community organisations working with disadvantaged communities to establish a partnership directly with a local school
- inviting schools in areas of high disadvantage to consider participation in the program
- providing posters and flyers for schools to distribute, to local libraries to advertise and to community groups to alert members
- alerting the general public to the program through BCC email newsletters and websites.

Survey in 2005 of all project schools regarding community engagement and community capacity building outcomes

The 2005 survey, while largely confirming the findings of the annual program evaluations, offers insights into strategic issues that could be addressed to enhance the project outcomes. Data was gathered on specific community engagement strategies and their effectiveness across the planning, promotion and delivery/evaluation phases of the program. It also sought to establish if the program had assisted in building community capacity.

Community engagement strategies

Schools were surveyed to identify the range of strategies and their level of effectiveness for engaging with their communities during the three phases of the project.

While there was a limited response rate of 20 per cent the results indicated that schools engaged with their communities in all phases of the project with significantly greater engagement in planning and promotion phases. The use of the school newsletter and P&C meetings were the most common engagement methodologies in each phase. Other frequently used activities included Sharing Information with Other Schools and the School Billboard. Responses revealed that the level of effectiveness for each tool was variable, depending on the phase in which it was used. Sharing Information with Other Schools was rated the most effective during planning phase. School newsletters rated highly across all phases but it was identified as the most effective tool during the promotion and delivery/evaluation phases. Other effective strategies included the use of fact sheets, special committees, local newspaper and school display. Although used more commonly in the promotion phase, the school website was rated as only marginally effective or worse as a community engagement activity.

Results indicate that schools prefer to focus on using tools and strategies that target their direct school communities as opposed to using those tools, such as letterbox flyers, community reference groups, community displays or involvement with community fairs, that could more effectively target the broader community. The potential for using school websites to promote the program to the wider community could be significantly developed.

Community capacity building outcomes

Schools were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with five statements relating to the impact of the CAICTS project on community capacity building outcomes (Figure 11). They were also asked to identify and rate the potential for the project to provide opportunities for improvements in these areas.

The results showed that respondents felt that the most important impact of the project was the improved quality of the school's networks and associations with individuals in their

communities. The next highest rated outcomes were the expansion in the number of community networks.

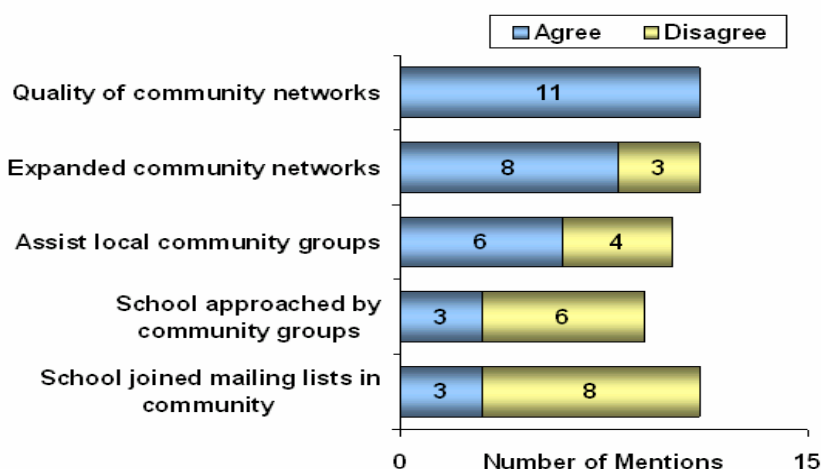


Figure 11. Impact of CAICTS project

Schools were almost equally divided in their opinion as to whether they had been able to assist local community groups as a result of participating in the program while 60 per cent saw potential for improvement in this area. Most schools indicated that community groups had not approached them to provide information on the project or other activities. Few respondents indicated that they had been added to the mailing lists of community groups as a result of the project.

The potential for the project to improve the quality of existing community and individual networks and to expand these were rated as being significant.

Survey in 2005 of all non-participating schools and schools that had ceased participation

There are 180 schools in Brisbane that are eligible to participate in the program. Surveys were sent to 120 schools that had elected not to submit a grant proposal to identify the factors influencing their decision not to participate. A similar survey was distributed to 38 schools that had participated in the program at least once and then ceased their involvement. The main reasons identified for withdrawal and non-participation are summarised in Table 5.

Difficulty appointing a course facilitator was a highly significant factor for both groups of schools while for non-participating schools the lack of resources, limitations of workstations and lack of funding were all ranked as highly significant factors by a majority of respondents. Although employing an experienced facilitator emerged as the key reason for non-participation, the factors that were more commonly rated as highly significant in the decision

making process by more schools were insufficient resources, workstation limitations and insufficient funding.

Table 5. Five key issues for withdrawal and non-participation

Schools withdrawing from the program	Non participating schools
Difficulty appointing a course facilitator	Difficulty appointing a course facilitator
Insufficient funding to conduct the program	Insufficient resources in the school to run the program
Community demand was insufficient	Computer workstations were inappropriate
Insufficient resources in the school to run the program	Insufficient funding to conduct the program
Course material didn't match community needs	Administration requirements appeared onerous

3. Evaluating success of the project partnership

While the statistics and feedback gathered from schools, facilitators and participants paint a picture of a valuable and successful project, it is worth considering the project using wider evaluation frameworks. The partnership has therefore been evaluated from two perspectives: Matching aspects of the project with the principles of excellence contained in The Australian Business Excellence Framework (SAI Global 2004) and through identifying the degree of success in achieving the objectives contained in the Memorandum of Understanding.

Using the *Australian Business Excellence Framework*

Features of the CAICTS project implementation that align with each of the twelve principles of excellence in the framework are identified in Table 6. Based on the matching of these aspects it is evident that all the principles are addressed to varying degrees by the project.

Table 6. Project characteristics

Principles of excellence	Aspect of CAICTS project
Clear direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit outcomes for both partners are derived from each agency's strategic plan and operational processes.
Agreed plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose and objectives of collaboration are explicit in the Memorandum of Understanding.
Customer focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems are designed to minimise school level administration and provide support at critical milestones.
Improve processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes are refined in response to survey feedback • Simplicity of business models and decision-making processes.

Involvement people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCC has a strong culture of community consultation and customer service • EQ fosters community consultation through P&C Associations and school councils • Schools are engaging with their communities • Partners work collaboratively.
Continual learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project officers are exposed to different knowledge and experiences. BCC project officer contributes experience of building community and social capital. • EQ project officer contributes knowledge of schools and adult learning • Schools share experiences through formal and informal communication channels.
Systems thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both partners are large government organisations with similar process in place to providing service to the community • EQ has responsibility for coordinating the operational support for the project.
Use data effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant, school and facilitator feedback forms basis of operational modifications • Free exchange of information and data.
Understand variation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program is designed to enable flexibility in meeting the needs of different communities and schools.
Community impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and participant feedback indicates the program should have substantial impact in their communities.
Stakeholder value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant feedback suggests the project is sustainable • Numbers trained and goodwill generated provides value for money when benchmarked against similar projects • Mutual investment for mutual benefit and building a long-term relationship.
Role model leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project initiation overseen by the Divisional Manager, Community and Economic Development Division (BCC) and Assistant Director-General (EQ) • Senior officer involvement and support at key stages of the project.

Success of partnership in achieving MOU objectives

Aligning relevant data with the objectives contained within the MOU (Table 7) indicates that the project is successful in substantially meeting its specified objectives.

Table 7. Summary of evidence on the achievement of project objectives

Objective	Evidence
Foster community engagement between school and parents and the wider community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2002–2005: 5988 participants at 67 sites in all Educational districts in Brisbane • 2005 research: A range of engagement strategies is used to engage the direct school community at all stages of the project. Some schools taking steps to engage wider community. • Only three of nine respondents indicated community groups were approaching schools.
Develop social cohesion and confidence of school communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2002–2005: 90%+ agreement that participants had a better opinion of schools. For those who disagree the trend is declining and is less than 3%. • 72% participants agreed program improved their ability to assist children • 2005 research: All respondents agreed the quality of community networks had improved with a majority of these indicating expanded networks • Six of ten respondents indicated they had been able to assist community groups.
Support schools in acting as secure, safe and comfortable environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2002–2005 Provision of 122 grants to schools • 90%+ agreement that school facilities were good for learning • 92% agreed they would participate regularly if available, 91% would be prepared to pay a fee to participate.
Create schools as non-threatening community hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three schools operate as community training hubs. Majority of 2005 survey respondents agreed networks had expanded.
Create opportunities for disadvantaged communities to gain skills and create further training opportunities for communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 122 grants across 67 sites providing access to communities, particularly people over 41 with limited exposure to ICTs • 90%+ agreement that program increased participant confidence in using ICTs • 39% participants Retired or Home Duties • 6% of participants have been Unemployed and/ or Seeking Employment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58% participation for personal use and 19% for business reasons • The opportunity to participate in the program is promoted to not-for-profit organisations and community centres • Targeting areas of socio-economic disadvantage using invitations to schools • Pathways to other learning programs are in development.
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4. Future directions

A number of potential opportunities for enhancing the CAICTS project have been identified at both the operational and strategic levels.

At the operational level, engaging facilitators, consideration of existing funding levels and workstation improvements have been identified as reasons for not participating. These issues, along with the need to update some existing online materials and the addition of new content areas that focus on the application of ICT, will be considered by the partners as the project proceeds.

At the systemic level the partners may need to identify strategies for encouraging schools to expand the methods used to target individuals and groups beyond their established school communities and to support the development of schools as community hubs. Associated with this is the fostering of an understanding of the benefits this could produce. There are emerging opportunities for the program to act as a vehicle to provide easy-entry pathways into additional training programs that are either accredited or unaccredited through a range of providers. To this end, preliminary discussions have been held with the University of Queensland's Centre for Continuing and TESOL Education and Skilling Solutions, a unit within Queensland's Online Learning Institute.

From EQ's perspective, the increasing need for parents to gain online access to school-based information related to an individual student's educational experience is likely to impact on the type and content of ICT program offerings being made available through community focussed training programs.

From BCC's perspective, the program has clearly been successful in attracting participants and has been rated very highly by individuals, facilitators and schools that have participated. It is also clear that the program could achieve more in supporting the growth of strong communities in Brisbane through stronger partnerships between schools and their wider communities. Through improved community engagement strategies, course content could be

developed that continues to meet the learning needs of Brisbane communities and clearer pathways could be fostered to support lifelong learning.

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