



BUILDING A HIGH PERFORMING SYSTEM

A business improvement plan for the
Department for Education and Child Development



Government of South Australia

Department for Education and
Child Development

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Introduction



The Department for Education and Child Development *Strategic plan 2014-2017* sets out a clear and ambitious vision for DECD:

'A high performing system that improves the educational attainment and wellbeing of South Australia's children and young people.'

We can be rightly proud of the quality of education and care we provide in South Australia. Yet many aspects of our corporate systems, processes and service delivery will require improvement if we are to provide the best possible service to South Australian children and young people.

Building a high performing system identifies the ways in which our organisation will need to change over the short-to-medium term to fulfil the vision set out in the strategic plan. It sets out 13 change priorities that have been identified as critical to lifting the standard of service we provide within the organisation and to the community.

The change priorities recognise that the delivery of high quality services to children and young people is the first priority of DECD. All services, and especially those within the corporate sphere, should be designed to ensure that they support the day-to-day teaching, protection and care, leadership, provided by our staff, and the learning and development of children and young people.

The priorities also seek to shape the department as a high performing, professional and accountable public sector organisation. They address a number of recommendations of the Allen Review regarding communication, workforce development and leadership, and will support the ongoing implementation of recommendations identified by the Independent Education Inquiry.

The change priorities aim to achieve five core outcomes, namely:

1. Increasing local decision-making
2. Improving support for sites and partnerships
3. Building a high quality workforce
4. Managing our assets effectively
5. Improving performance and accountability.

Some aspects of the change priorities are included within the *Building a better system* element of the strategic plan to ensure they are subject to the same regular monitoring as other strategic plan initiatives. Other change priorities will be achieved over the shorter term. The priorities will complement the work already underway to redesign service delivery within Families SA. Please refer to the companion document *Families SA Service plan* for additional detail.

The change priorities reflect many of the issues raised during 18 months of consultation with over 9000 staff and community members. Developing workable solutions to many of these issues will require the planned and systematic involvement of our professional workforce in reviewing the way we work and developing streamlined systems, practices and processes to link sites, partnerships and Central Office.

I look forward to working with you on these priority areas, and hope that you will support this exciting, foundational work to build a system that delivers for South Australian families, children and young people.

Tony Harrison
Chief Executive

Executive summary

This document proposes 13 change priorities as essential to the development of a modern, sustainable and customer-centric organisation. The priorities address the following core outcomes for business improvement:

1. Increasing local decision-making

By providing schools and preschools with a definitive model of local leadership we can enable leaders and school communities to direct resources most effectively to improve student outcomes. Site leaders and partnerships will benefit from a clear understanding of their delegated authority and their relationship with decision-making processes across the system. In addition, increasing system capacity to support children with high and complex needs is a critical area for change.

2. Improving support for sites and partnerships

Central Office will be designed to ensure that decision-making at the local level is fully supported. The review and refinement of business processes to reduce administrative burden and inefficiencies can also ensure this is achieved. There is an immediate opportunity to improve the quality and relevance of communications to care and protection, schools and preschools and begin work towards building a culture of service excellence across the department.

3. Building a high quality workforce

The South Australian public education system needs a coherent, systematic approach to attracting, retaining and continuously building people's skills and capacity at all career stages. It is also equally important to recruit and retain highly skilled staff in child protection and care services. All staff across the agency should be engaged in performance development that is directly aligned to their professional needs, and where necessary, leaders must be supported to implement effective and timely performance management measures.

4. Managing our assets effectively

The development of an asset master plan will support better investment decisions and lead to safer, healthier and sustainable sites that meet current and future education and care needs. An ICT master plan will also be developed to support contemporary education and care practices and improve site administration, data access and reporting.

5. Improving performance and accountability

To deliver a high performing education and care system, the department will set clear expectations for performance across all levels. To support this, DECD must have sufficient capacity to measure, analyse and share data. All child protection and education leaders will require change management skills to effectively lead the department's response to system performance issues.

Increasing local decision-making

Change Priority 1: Governance and delegated authority

There is international evidence to indicate that appropriate levels of delegated authority for schools and preschools can improve student outcomes. Delivery of a clearly defined South Australian model of local service delivery will provide much needed clarity of roles and responsibilities for sites and partnerships.

This priority requires swift action to define and agree an appropriate school and preschool governance and delegation model. This involves developing suitable alignment of:

- funding
- support services (frontline and corporate)
- performance measures
- accountability framework
- capability at school, partnership and departmental level
- roles, responsibilities and capabilities.

This change priority will require a review of major delegated authority models from across the country, and extensive involvement of principals, preschool directors and other key stakeholders. It will ensure there is an accessible governance framework providing clear guidance about decision-making authority and accountability across the full catalogue of activities that take place within schools, partnerships and the department.

Change Priority 2: Support services and wellbeing

The issues experienced by children and young people are increasing in complexity and frequency. To better address this, the department is designing an integrated service delivery model that prioritises high-impact interventions to children with the greatest needs. This change priority will involve child protection, child health, education and care services. Core components of the model will be:

- a common approach to assessment and intervention
- services that are flexible and responsive to specific needs
- pathways to access information and support, and referral to specialist services, including those provided by other government agencies and non-government services
- consistency in operating models including referral, records management and case management
- access to multi-disciplinary and specialist knowledge, experience and skills to best support a complex range of needs and issues.

This change priority will directly impact on education achievement, safety, health and wellbeing outcomes for children with high needs. All children and families that access the department's services will experience more efficient and effective service delivery and be better assisted to transition between universal, targeted and tertiary service levels.

Within public schools and preschools, all support will be provided from a single support plan for each child. A resource directory will also be developed to enable education and child development local partnerships to easily locate necessary resources and services.

Improving support for sites and partnerships

Change Priority 3: Corporate-level services

The department will need to develop an appropriate structure and model of corporate service delivery to ensure the implementation of Change Priority 1 and 2. This means defining the roles and responsibilities in Central Office and their relationship to all partnerships, sites and services with regard to:

- governance, including corporate governance, resource allocation and control, relationship management and performance reporting
- policy governance, including strategic analysis and planning, policy development and review
- practice governance, including quality and safety, research and innovation and training and development
- delivery of corporate or business services.

A thorough review of all corporate-level structures and services will identify alternate models of delivery, inefficiencies and duplication in roles, functions and services.

Change Priority 4: Policy and processes

This priority is designed to work in conjunction with Change Priority 3. Projects under this priority will highlight the processes and practices that will need to change to support a new model of local decision-making and accountability. It will also identify those processes that are resulting in inefficiencies, delays, administrative burden, ineffective planning, and excessive controls that do not support improved outcomes and strengthened governance.

Significant work is already underway to develop a more accessible suite of operational policies that provide greater confidence to all staff. Opportunities to integrate and improve corporate services to support Families SA staff and offices will also be explored. In addition, this priority will deliver:

- a single 'help desk' through which staff can access the full range of corporate level services and advice, based on 'ask just once' principles
- streamlined business processes connecting schools and preschools with corporate services.

Critical to building greater levels of respect, trust and confidence between schools and preschools and the Central Office, this priority will also focus on instilling a culture of service excellence across the corporate level of the system.

Improving support for sites and partnerships

Change Priority 5: Communication

The department will deliver a long-term strategic approach to improving communications and public relations activities for all program areas. There will also be immediate improvements to the clarity and consistency of information schools and preschools receive from Central Office. This will involve establishing a smaller number of reliable internal communication channels to make it easier for all staff to access the information they need and eliminate unnecessary communication 'clutter'. In the short term, our workforce and clients will be able to access:

- a new intranet that facilitates improved internal communications
- a new public web presence providing important service-related information and promoting key State Government initiatives and strategies to the community
- consistent, timely and accessible information about policies, procedures and standards.

Initiatives will also be implemented to improve communications with parents and the community.

Building a high quality workforce

Change Priority 6: Teaching quality

Extensive international, national and local research clearly demonstrates that early childhood and school teaching quality and preschool and school leadership capability are the greatest determinants in improving child and student engagement, achievement and wellbeing. This priority area will see the development of a cohesive teaching quality strategy spanning birth to 18 that generates high quality teacher recruitment, induction, ongoing professional learning, performance development and better teacher retention in our preschools and schools. The teaching quality strategy will deliver:

- better qualified teachers through engagement in masters programs
- embedding of the *Australian professional standards for teachers* including 'highly accomplished' and 'lead teachers' within the teacher classification structure
- concrete, flexible learning modules and resources for teachers at various career stages linked to the APST and the *Teaching for effective learning* framework
- implementation of the *Teaching for effective learning* Compass online tool, which enables teachers to obtain and use feedback from colleagues and students to develop their practice.

A key component of the strategy will be extensive engagement with staff and stakeholders in the course of its development.

Change Priority 7: Leading people

Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping strategy, culture and behaviour across the organisation. The department will identify and put in place new strategies to attract high quality candidates to leadership roles and further build current leaders. This will include:

- reviewing the strategies that support the recruitment and retention of highly skilled staff in child protection and care services. This will include developing and implementing a leadership succession plan for Families SA
- a clear and planned approach to generate a pool of quality applicants as the retirement rate of current leaders increases
- improved methodologies for the recruitment, selection and deployment of leaders to areas of greatest need
- a specially developed, mandated and accredited program for new and aspiring leaders in schools and preschools aligned with the *Australian standard for principals*
- support for 120 current and aspiring preschool directors and school principals to achieve advanced leadership qualifications from 2015 to 2020.

A planned approach to leadership development will ensure aspiring and current leaders achieve the standards required to confidently and effectively perform their roles. Where these programs relate to our education workforce, they will be developed with the Advisory Board of the SA Institute of Educational Leadership and designed to complement other statewide initiatives with strong educational leadership components such as the department's Australian Curriculum and *Teaching for effective learning* implementation strategy and the *Birth-18 numeracy and literacy* strategy.

Building a high quality workforce

Change Priority 8: Performance and development

There are many tools available to assist leaders across the department with the performance and development of staff. The aim of this change priority is to provide a consistent experience of performance and development for staff as they move across sites, roles and classifications. To achieve this, the department will develop a performance management system that clearly establishes expectations for all employees and drives improvement by:

- establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to the strategic directions for all executive directors that includes a KPI relating to feedback to all direct reports
- ensuring all teachers have a current and annually reviewed performance and development plan directly aligned with school and systemic priorities
- ensuring all Families SA and Central Office staff have a current and annually reviewed performance and development plan directly aligned to the strategic directions and business plan for their area
- aligning teacher certification pathways with the *Australian professional standards for teachers*

- creating a system to monitor and report on implementation of performance and development processes across the organisation
- early identification of performance concerns to support the management of unsatisfactory performance
- increased focus on employee psychological health across the department.

Individual performance management provides direct benefits to each person, and provides the department with a valuable tool in guiding and recognising the efforts of our people in improving learning outcomes and life opportunities for our children and young people.

Managing our assets effectively

Change Priority 9: Asset master plan

There are approximately 1200 sites across the State with ongoing requirements for maintenance, upgrade and development. In order to support high quality teaching and learning outcomes the department must ensure that assets held are fully utilised, are safe, healthy and sustainable, and accommodate future demographic, teaching and care needs.

The department will develop and build an asset master plan for schools, preschools and other sites for optimal use and delivery of education and care into the future. This will involve consideration of the future requirements for teaching and learning and state-wide demographic factors.

The asset master plan will incorporate:

- demographic analysis of the future education and care needs of South Australia
- clear investment priorities
- roles and responsibilities developed for the management of assets and maintenance of sites.

A coordinated master plan for managing and developing the department's assets will allow better targeting of capital investment funds, and the reduction of unnecessary maintenance costs. It will increase parent confidence in the system and provide tangible benefits to children such as reductions in unnecessary commutes, and safe, enriching learning environments.

Change Priority 10: ICT master plan

The department has an ageing ICT infrastructure that requires modernisation at the site and corporate level. To address this, the department will develop an ICT master plan that informs investment in new technologies at schools and preschools for teaching and learning, and also for the wider corporate system.

The ICT master plan will incorporate:

- a new intranet
- mandated and accessible systems across the department
- system panel contracts
- a support charter for sites
- a parent portal.

An ICT master plan ensures department resources are best allocated so that schools and preschools are provided with ICT infrastructure that better supports teaching and learning. Across the system, it will support better communications, improved data access, reduced processing costs and contemporary service delivery models.

Improving performance and accountability

Change Priority 11: Education system performance

To continuously improve the quality of service delivered to children and families, the department must invest in its capacity to monitor performance at all levels of the system. An education system performance framework will enable more informed decision making and performance monitoring by leaders across the system. The framework will include:

- policies, procedures and reporting systems
- agreed and established performance measures for child, site, partnership and system
- the collection of the data needed for analysis against the measures
- training for staff to use and access the system.

Clear policies, procedures and standards will support an effective self-review and external review process, and allow targeted support and intervention at both the site and central level. In addition, effective performance analysis and reporting will allow teachers, principals and other leaders to identify and share successful professional practice across the system.

Change Priority 12: Data and information

Effective performance monitoring will require a strategic approach to the management and use of data to drive improved outcomes. The department will develop a data strategy based on establishing the role of the Business Intelligence team in the Office for Strategy and Performance. This team will provide useful data reporting and analysis internally and externally, including:

- quality assured performance information in an accessible format to inform decision making, classroom practice and school and preschool improvement planning
- more transparent public reporting on the implementation and outcomes of State Government priorities and strategies.

This change priority will support informed evidenced-based decision making and planning at all levels of the system, and will ensure the workforce is informed by timely and robust local, national and international data and information to enhance child protection, educational and child development outcomes. It will also underpin alignment of strategic, corporate, partnership and site planning and activities to deliver cohesive effort and efficient allocation of resources.

Change Priority 13: Change management capability

The department will design and implement a consistent change management strategy and methodology, build capacity to lead change within the workforce and develop a continuous improvement culture. This will form part of the professional development of all leaders, and support effective and timely implementation of change across the system.

This change priority will create several benefits, including:

- staff will have the opportunity to influence, guide and participate in improvement
- improved capacity across the department to deliver change and improvement
- a change management professional development program.

The launch of change teams to ensure that *Building a high performing system* priorities are validated, developed and reviewed by the staff who need to work with them, is explored further on in this document.

Implementing the priorities

Together the DECD *Strategic plan 2014-2017* and this document represent a significant reform challenge for the department. To manage this we will adopt an integrated approach to planning, governing and monitoring the reform efforts, with transparent reporting on progress against all of the key deliverables.

The correct sequencing of the change priorities will also be a key determinant of success. Significant progress has already been made against Change Priority 5: Communication – with the renewal of the department's intranet site and web presence underway. In addition, the following change priority areas are considered foundational, with work already underway or commencing immediately:

Governance and delegation

Building an appropriate model under this priority will drive reforms in Central Office in terms of funding models, operational and corporate services. An independent review of school and preschool governance is currently underway and the Office for Education will shortly commence a review of delegated authority models across Australia.

Support services and wellbeing

As with governance and delegation, clarity on the best model for delivery of support services will allow the development of appropriate corporate supports. A concept model for the delivery of support services has been developed and is currently undergoing consultation.

Teaching quality

Work on this change priority will commence with an engagement strategy that enables key stakeholders – including teachers, children and young people, site leaders, principal, professional and parent associations, unions and universities – to consider current research and evidence and contribute to identifying the critical factors and actions they believe a teaching quality strategy needs to address, as a matter of priority, to raise teaching quality in schools and preschools.

Change teams

A key element of successful change management will be an approach to developing policies and business processes that is based on the direct involvement of staff from schools, preschools and other direct service delivery areas.

The department will establish small, time-limited change teams to guide and contribute to the work across all change priority areas. The change teams will comprise staff from preschool, schools and partnerships, typically supported by one or two specialist corporate staff.

The change team will follow a supported process of investigating, analysing and providing recommendations for change in regards to the department's structures, policies, processes and practices. In time this approach will create a cohort of staff at all levels of the department that have the skills and capabilities to drive and deliver continuous improvement and change.

In implementing these priorities we will work closely with the change management experts at the Office for Public Sector Renewal (OPSR). OPSR has implemented the highly successful *change@ South Australia* program and will ensure that the change management approaches adopted reflect best practice in the public sector.

Participation in the change teams will be based on a mix of direct recruitment and expressions of interest. Expressions of interest will be published in the DECD *Update* to ensure all staff are informed of opportunities as they arise.

Governance and reporting

Each change priority has been assigned to a senior executive with responsibility for the development and implementation of the priority across the department and in sites. The overall implementation of the change priorities will be overseen by an expert steering committee chaired by the Chief Executive. The steering committee will include:

- the deputy chief executives
- one or two members external to the department with skills and expertise in the areas of business improvement and change delivery.

External membership creates the opportunity to benefit from the insight of individuals with skills, knowledge and expertise not present within the department. The small, expert steering committee will facilitate prompt, objective decision making and increase the level of accountability of the senior executives responsible for individual projects. The steering committee will be responsible for:

- ensuring priorities reflect the input received from various stakeholders, and are reflective of needs identified at a site level
- ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to complete each priority deliverable within agreed timeframes
- ensuring the workforce and other stakeholders are kept informed about progress against the change priorities.

The final membership of the steering committee, terms of reference and regular progress reports will be made available at www.decd.sa.gov.au/strategicplan.



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