

Grants to Learning Centres – Suggested Change in the Basis of Calculation.

Explanation by the Federation Management Committee:

At the SeniorNet Federation AGM this year (2009) a Member Society Motion was included in the agenda as follows:

- **Member Society Motions:**

SeniorNet Whitianga: ***“That the Federation include teaching hours in the learner hours funding payments to member SeniorNet Societies.”***

Note:

It appears that the words “teaching hours” here mean the hours of attendance of tutors teaching classes, so that claims for grants from the Federation would be based on student learner hours plus contact hours for the tutors working with the classes.

Unfortunately, as there was no committee meeting between the receipt of the motion and the AGM, the committee was unable to table an explanation to the meeting.

As a result, the meeting found it difficult to come to a decision. An amendment was proposed relating to the role of the Tertiary Education Commission in the proposal. But as the views of the member Societies were not available in regard to all the matters discussed at the meeting, it was resolved that the matter be left for the agenda of the next Federation meeting.

In view of that, the management committee decided that it should make this explanation, to assist in the discussion.

First, the cost involved:

A simple way of calculating a possible cost is to suggest that it would add approx on average, 25% to the Learner Hours claimed. This figure is calculated on the basis that there would be a minimum of one tutor in a class of three learners, or two for a class of six. This is probably a low figure, so that the real figure could be quite a bit higher.

The 2009 budget accepted at the meeting shows that grants to Learning Centres are expected to be \$345,000. 25% of that is \$83,333.

Secondly, how would this money be funded ?

Certainly it cannot be funded on a long term basis out of existing Federation funds. The options would be:

- to seek a higher grant from the TEC and/or other organisations,
- and/or to reduce the grant rate paid to Learning Centres.

In view of the amount involved, the first option is most unlikely to be successful in the short term.

2010 – Member Motion No. 3

The second option merely changes the way the same budget would be distributed. In doing so, there would probably be some advantage for those Learning Centres that have a high tutor to student ratio and a reduction for those with low ratios.

The role of the Tertiary Education Commission:

SeniorNet is unusual in that we do not pay tutors. But part of the grants from the TEC to other institutions is used to pay tutors. So a tutor component is recognised.

The only restriction the TEC places on the use of the grants the Federation receives (provided of course the use is within the objects of the Federation), is that TEC does not permit the funding of tutor training (there is a clause in our contract to that effect).

So it would appear that the TEC would not object if we did move to accept and implement the motion.

The Learner Hour Concept:

The way we use Learner Hours to calculate grants is a method that the interim management committee decided to use when the Federation was first set up. But in fact, the Federation has the freedom to choose whatever method of calculation it wishes, to determine grants to Learning Centres. Learner Hours were chosen because at the time, the TEC was moving to require the use of Learner Hours for all Adult Community Education (ACE) providers. But in the end they did not make that change as the new government policy of the use of Management Plans was instituted.

So the Federation has the ability to change its method of calculation.

We are sure that SeniorNet members could think of many ways the calculations could be made !!

However, if we were to change, any change would need to show a benefit to the majority of the Learning Centres.

It also needs to be recognised that a change would likely take a period of a year or two to implement.