

Development Education looks towards accreditation

By Robin Moore

Credit Union Foundation Australia (CUFA) has been investigating whether its Development Education (DE) workshop is suitable for national accreditation. Registered training organisation, FutureStaff, was invited to attend the most recent DE workshop in Albury, from 15-20 March 2003, with a view to making recommendations about steps required to get the workshop and workplace project fully accredited.

Leigh Saville, Victorian and South Australian Training Coordinator with FutureStaff, observed the entire workshop and evaluated how it compared to accredited units of competency within the national framework. He was checking for aspects of the workshop that corresponded to units in the community services, business services and training packages endorsed by financial services.

"Our role on this occasion is to go out and measure competency-based training and to assist in developing the required tools to collect evidence," Mr Saville said. "The development education workshop addresses a range of competencies and coupled with the post-workshop project will contribute the majority of units required to gain a qualification. The next step to accreditation is to strengthen the processes that measure the work of each participant."

Mr Saville said he doesn't see any obstacles to accreditation if the role of mentor becomes more structured. They will need to have the skills required to implement assessment procedures and to authenticate participants' work. He would also like to see a slightly stronger focus on activity record keeping.

Suggestions of how the competence of participants can be measured and how their performance should be

recorded will be included in the FutureStaff report to be presented to CUFA.

Grahame Mehrstens, CUFA Manager for International Development, has watched the development education workshops evolve and grow for more than a decade. He is positive about undertaking a restructure of the workshops to include reports, case studies and activities that can be more easily assessed and checked by a registered training authority.

"Accreditation should help credit union management decide to allocate resources to enable staff to do the workshops," said Mr Mehrstens.

"Management may be more inclined to participate if it is certificated as workplace relevant. Our aim is to see accreditation achieved in 2004."

In the Financial Services Reform Act (FSR), the minimum requirement for a responsible officer is a diploma. The DE workshops could become a certificate four course that acts as a stepping-stone between high school and diploma. Once certified, it would be recognised nationally.

WORKSHOP RESULTS IN ACTION

Annabel Cockerton, RediCredit Review Officer at the NSW Teachers Credit Union, graduated from DE in 1999. As a result of the skills and inspiration she acquired at the workshop she plays a leading role, along with other DE graduates, in charity work at her credit union. "We hold an annual charity day during credit union week. Every year we try and do something bigger and better," she said.

In October 2002 the group raised more than \$1000 for CUFA by conducting a raffle and encouraging staff to pay \$2 to come to work in casual clothes. At the March 2003 workshop, Mrs Cockerton followed the lead of many workshop graduates and returned to Albury to assist as a mentor.



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Another DE graduate, CUSCAL's Senior Portfolio Manager Wholesale Cards, Karen Keogh undertook to set some credit union values in action at a retirement village in her community. To facilitate this she fostered a relationship between her children's school and the nearby retirement village. The children now regularly visit the elderly for afternoon tea and some very nice friendships have developed as a result.

Harry Vanderveek, Director, WAW Credit Union, has also recently graduated from the DE workshop. His DE project was to work with a credit union colleague from Bougainville, in Papua New Guinea, to get resources for schools in the region. After lots of phone calls and letters, he eventually convinced several book companies to make substantial donations of books. Children in Bougainville schools are now using these texts.

There were 27 participants at the March workshop including two Filipinos, three Fijians, one indigenous Australian, as well as representatives from the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and Thailand. All graduates will go back to their credit unions and community with a plan to initiate a socially responsible project based on credit union values. ■