



SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

**FORTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS**
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 4–7 November 2014)

***AGENDA ITEM 6: CORPORATE AGENDA FOR CHANGE: DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS,
RSEULTS AND RESPONSIVENESS***

AGENDA ITEM 6.3: REPORT OF THE JOINT WORKING GROUP ON SPBEA REVIEW

(Paper presented by the Secretariat)

Summary

1. The CRGA Joint Working Group on the SPBEA Review was commissioned by the CRGA 43 in November 2013, to ‘further assess the optimum approach and resources required to take the recommendations forward’. The Joint Working Group (JWG) was established in February 2014, and chaired by the Kiribati High Commissioner in Fiji, HE Reteta Rimon, with other members from Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Solomon Islands, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). Secretariat services were provided by the Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Quality (SPBEQ, formerly the Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment [SPBEA]).
2. The JWG met five times. Its report contains the main findings of its work and highlights the organisational and staffing structure changes made to align with the review recommendations. In view of the financial and human resources constraints, it was agreed that a phased implementation approach be adopted, and following a rationalisation exercise, a schedule and resourcing options were drawn up to meet the cost implications. The total number of positions has therefore been reduced from the 72 recommended in the SPBEA review report to 38, which requires an additional 10 staff to be recruited within the 2014–2016 period. The full implementation of the phased programme will be dependent on the availability of funds as detailed in the resourcing options section of the report.
3. The SPBEQ Strategic Plan 2014–2016 has been developed to reflect the expanded mandate of the board with the strategic goal of **improved quality of education**, and is aligned with ETHD (Education, Training and Human Development Division) and wider SPC goals and objectives. The plan is also tabled as part of this report for approval by CRGA.

Recommendations

4. CRGA is invited to:
 - i. note the Report of the Joint Working Group on the SPBEA Review;
 - ii. review the options presented in the review report and paragraph 20 and provide guidance on which option the Secretariat is to pursue and which countries will be able to access SPBEQ programme services;
 - iii. request that the Secretariat further analyse and refine the phased implementation plan developed by the Joint Working Group, within its current resource capacity; and
 - iv. approve the SPBEQ Strategic Plan 2014–2016.
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REPORT OF THE JOINT WORKING GROUP ON SPBEA REVIEW

Purpose

5. This paper presents the Report of the Joint Working Group on the implementation plan and resource options for moving forward with the recommendations of the SPBEA Review. A full copy of the report is attached as Annex 1.
6. The report is complemented by the SPBEQ Strategic Plan 2014–2016 (attached), which has incorporated changes aligned to the review recommendations, as well as the internal Skills Audit Report used to align existing staff members to the revised organisational structure and identify skills gaps to be filled to service the expanded mandate of the board.

Background

7. The Joint Working Group (JWG) of SPC member countries and the secretariat was commissioned by CRGA 43 in November, 2013 to ‘further assess the optimum approach and resources required to take the recommendations [of the SPBEA Review] forward and present its findings and recommendations to CRGA 44 for its consideration’.
8. The JWG comprised Suva-based representatives of Pacific Islands embassies (Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea [PNG], Marshall Islands and Solomon Islands); representatives from Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Fiji’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; and SPC. The group was chaired by the Kiribati High Commissioner in Fiji, HE Reteta Rimon-Nikuata. The Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Quality (SPBEQ, formerly the Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment [SPBEA]) provided secretariat services to the five meetings of the JWG. A full list of the members of the JWG is in Appendix 3 to the JWG Report.
9. The 2013 SPBEA review recommendations addressed several key areas, including (i) identity and mandate, (ii) core functions, (iii) review of the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards, (iv) staffing and structure, (v) resourcing and financing, and (vi) implementation.
10. Based on its approved terms of reference, the JWG focused its work in several areas, including the following:
 - i. An analysis of the SPBEA review recommendations to assess the optimum approach and resources required to take the recommendations forward.
 - ii. Consideration of the findings of the skills audit of SPBEA, and mapping of current staff and staff structure, to identify new skills required as well as identify staff gaps to be filled to successfully implement the review recommendations in line with the phased implementation plan. This includes identifying a practical organisational structure for the board and a staffing structure for SPBEQ to enable it to effectively engage and take leadership in promoting the anticipated global education priorities in the post-2015 era.
 - iii. Consideration of a possible strategy for resource mobilisation.

Findings of the JWG

11. The JWG adopted SPBEQ as the official name of the board to replace SPBEA, as already approved at the 2013 CRGA meeting. It was recognised that the organisational structure of the SPBEQ is an internal SPC matter; however, the proposed staff structure and resource implications will be presented for discussion and feedback.

12. Seven sections were identified under the new mandate for SPBEQ: (i) Accreditation; (ii) Assessment; (iii) Corporate Services; (iv) Educational Policy and Leadership; (v) ICT; (vi) Research and Development, and (vii) Teaching, Learning and Curriculum.
13. A skills audit of the existing SPBEQ staff was completed in January 2014, and the findings were used as a basis for aligning existing staff with the new sections as well as identifying the skills gaps that will need to be filled. Professional development needs to address skills gaps in the new staff structure were also identified. The Skills Audit Report and staffing structure are attached as Appendix 1 in the JWG Report.
14. Strategies suggested for eliminating skills gaps and realigning the secretariat with the expanded mandate included (i) the reorganisation of key functions to the key areas described in the expanded mandate; (ii) reformulation of all job descriptions to ensure they are aligned with current and future requirements of the post; (iii) recruitment of additional staff with appropriate and proven competence in the key skill areas in current and future vacancies; and (iv) a professional development plan for the secretariat.
15. A revised organisational and staffing structure for SPBEQ has been drawn up to reflect the structure required to deliver programmes and services for its new identity, mandate and core functions. The staffing structure proposes a staffing complement of 38 compared to the 72 suggested in the review recommendations. The reduction in the number of positions ensures a practical and cost-effective utilisation of resources that takes into account current funding levels and mechanisms and explores opportunities for other sources of funding as well as the priorities of the secretariat. The staff complement of 38 members will increase the current staff size by 10. Funding for three of these positions has already been factored into the 2014 and 2015 budgets. Two of the positions are currently vacant and the third position will be newly created in 2015. The recruitment of the other 8 positions will require additional sources of funding and will proceed only when funding becomes available.
16. The development of the SPBEQ Strategic Plan 2014–2016 (attached to the JWG Report as Appendix 2) has been a major exercise undertaken by the secretariat under close guidance and scrutiny by the working group. Input to and feedback on the strategic plan was widely solicited from the JWG and SPC's Education, Training and Human Development (ETHD) Divisions; its Strategic Engagement, Policy and Planning Facility (SEPPF) and its Senior Leadership Team. The plan was also presented to and approved by the PBEQ Board in July 2014 and is included in this report for CRGA approval.
17. This Strategic Plan 2014–2016 reflects the expanded mandate with the strategic goal of improved quality of education in Pacific Island countries and territories to be achieved using several strategies and a theory of change approach. The expected changes (results) within the proposed programme framework include three specific initiatives (in the areas of literacy and numeracy, benchmarking, and accreditation) that respond to a number of trends:
 - an increasing range of activities that relate to intervention, leading to an improvement in classroom achievement in general, and in literacy and numeracy in particular;
 - identification and evidence-based quantification of factors that impinge on the quality of education and student achievement;
 - consolidation of a quality assured mechanism for regional recognition of qualifications that facilitate opportunities for labour mobility;
 - an expansion of the use of information technology within examination systems, standards monitoring, and research; and
 - promotion of a culture of sharing information and best practices in policy implementation between countries in order to strengthen accountability in education.
18. In considering the additional financial outlay required to fully implement SPBEQ's expanded mandate, it was agreed that a more practical approach would be to phase in its implementation over the 2014 to 2016 strategic plan period and beyond.

19. In terms of the funding options suggested in the review report to enable the provision of SPBEQ services to all SPC membership, Option 1 was recommended as the most viable option (i.e. *continue with the current funding modality; and in lieu of member contributions, SPC countries which are not financial members of SPBEQ can access SPBEQ technical services at cost-recovery rates*). This does however imply that not all SPC members can access technical services provided by the SPBEQ programme.
20. Other options reviewed and discussed for resource mobilisation include: (i) additional project funding; (ii) additional membership fees; (iii) shifting project funding to programme funding; (iii) sourcing of in-country activities from bilateral funding; and (iv) undertaking consultancies at full cost recovery. Some of these options have already been explored by SPBEQ.
21. The Secretariat invites CRGA to review the options presented in the review report and paragraph 20 and provide guidance on which option it is to pursue and which countries will be able to access SPBEQ programme services.

Conclusion

22. To highlight the emphasis on education quality and to support the expanded core functions of SPBEQ, additional human, financial and physical resources will be required to support the delivery of services to member countries. The expanded mandate is also reflected in the governance structure and the SPBEQ Strategic Plan 2014–2016. The phased implementation plan and resource mobilisation options prepared by the JWG aim to move the recommendations of the review towards a successful and sustainable implementation.

Recommendations

23. CRGA is invited to:
 - i. note the Report of the Joint Working Group on the SPBEA Review;
 - ii. review the options presented in the review report and paragraph 20 and provide guidance on which option the Secretariat is to pursue and which countries will be able to access SPBEQ programme services;
 - iii. request that the Secretariat further analyse and refine the phased implementation plan developed by the Joint Working Group, within its current resource capacity; and
 - iv. approve the SPBEQ Strategic Plan 2014–2016.
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