



To whom it may concern,

NextEd Group welcomes the opportunity to provide the following feedback in relation to the implementation of the Suburban University Study Hubs Program. Please find our responses to the relevant questions below.

What is the aim of the Suburban University Study Hubs Program?

Consultation Questions

1. How can a place-based approach be fostered, as part of the Suburban University Study Hubs program, that ensures the voice of local communities is integrated in their design and operation?

We don't think that this can be achieved given the construct of the applicable threshold standards. It is likely to require significant changes to course content, delivery modes, level of student support and cohort sizes. The later impacting upon financial viability of courses.

Adapt the courses, providers, and resources available at the hubs based on community feedback and evolving needs.

2. How can the Suburban University Study Hubs widen participation and support and extend further study opportunities, adding to existing or planned investments?

By expanding beyond the traditional 'University' footprint and including institutes of higher education and university colleges. Both of which are more suitably set up to cater for niche areas of study, divergent delivery modes and unique student needs.

Collaborate with local community organisations, employers, and industry partners to create internship opportunities and job placement programs.

3. How can equity be embedded into the design of Suburban University Study Hubs?

Equity for whom? Is this model only for under-represented groups or also for disadvantaged groups (i.e. cohorts with unique needs)?

Ensure that the physical spaces, digital resources, and materials used in the hubs are inclusive for all individuals.

4. Where multiple communities may co-exist within the same area (for example, ethnic, cultural, industry-based, etc.), how can Suburban University Study Hubs ensure they meet the needs of these different communities?

By having multiple providers operating from the hub. Engage representatives from each community in the planning and decision-making processes and form advisory councils or committees to ensure their voices are heard.

5. How can we ensure that Suburban University Study Hubs operate to support students engaging with any provider, while also ensuring strong connections with local providers, campuses and leaders?

There may not be any local providers to connect with. Break down the barriers between public and private providers, between G8 universities and other universities, between large and small providers. Physically operate as a hub rather than multiple campuses within a warehouse. Common student facilities, common, reception, common library and labs and social venues. Common wellbeing and health services. Organise shared campus events and activities that bring together students from different providers. Establish data-sharing agreements between providers, to track student progress and outcomes, ensuring that hub support services are effective.

What barriers will the Suburban University Study Hubs address and what services will they provide?

Consultation Questions

6. What dedicated support services should Suburban University Study Hubs provide? Are there gaps in support for under-represented cohorts (for example, First Nations students, students with disability) Suburban University Study Hubs could address?

Whilst it would be lovely to operate on the basis that there is something for everyone, it is more likely that there will be a need for some targeted/ focused approach. Establish mentorship and counselling programs to provide guidance and support to students.

7. How can Suburban University Study Hubs provide a culturally safe environment for all students, that is relevant to them and their local context?

This implies that society generally and universities in particular are currently failing to do this. Maybe there needs to be a manifesto for all participating providers to comply with. Organise cultural events, celebrations, and workshops that reflect the diversity of the communities served by the hubs. Recruit and retain a diverse staff that can relate to the backgrounds and experiences of students.

9. Are there existing support mechanisms that could be leveraged and offered through the Suburban University Study Hubs? How could the Hubs provide a useful additional impact and avoid duplication of services?

The fact that they are hubs implies a smaller focused service and that they are for under-represented populations, the impact will be greater than existing more traditional models. Maybe the use of a charter that brings providers and community together to determine the key attributes would be helpful. It would need to be reviewed against defined deliverables. Staying true to purpose will be difficult over time.

10. How can Suburban University Study Hubs best communicate the supports they provide to local students and support aspiration in their local community?

They cannot do this until they have met with the communities, sought their counsel and mutually established the purposes and services. Then through collaboration, the Hubs and their represented communities can articulate this to stakeholders. Organise information sessions where community members can tour the study hub, meet staff, and learn about the resources available. Information sessions at local secondary schools and community centres.

11. What role could Suburban University Study Hubs play in supporting enabling/tertiary preparation courses for students from under-represented backgrounds?

I believe that these should be embedded in existing TAFEs and senior secondary colleges. Provide dedicated academic support services, including tutoring and one-on-one assistance, to help students succeed in the enabling courses.

Where will the Suburban University Study Hubs be located?

Consultation Questions

12. What factors should be considered when selecting locations for Suburban University Study Hubs?

Opportunity versus cost. Likelihood of success, Community support what services and related infrastructure already exists in the location and whether these are successful or not. Local community, demographic considerations, infrastructure, resources, and cost factors.

13. What other types of social infrastructure should be located in close proximity to Suburban University Study Hubs to maximise their success? (e.g., childcare services)

Counselling services, medical services, aged care support, disability support, learning support, access to part time work, transport, affordable accommodation, access to crisis centres.

14. How can Suburban University Study Hubs complement, rather than replace, the innovative solutions being implemented by education providers to support students in outer metropolitan and peri-urban areas?

By including these providers in the Hubs. Conduct a joint needs assessment with education providers to identify gaps in services and support that the study hubs can address without duplication.

Who can apply?

Consultation Questions

15. What skills, services and attributes should an organisation be able to demonstrate as evidence of their ability to establish and operate a Suburban University Study Hub?

Provision of academic support services, disability services, history of community outreach as well as entrenched diversity and inclusion practices.

16. What governance mechanisms should be in place to ensure each Suburban University Study Hub is operating effectively and meeting the needs of the local community?

Essentially a charter or mandate that is developed collaboratively between community stakeholders and hub providers. This would be in the form of an action and intent document that has clearly identifiable measurables, that is assessed by a panel of key stakeholders on an annual basis. Appoint a finance committee to oversee budget allocation, resource management, and financial accountability to ensure transparency in financial matters.

17. Should a single organisation be eligible to operate multiple hubs? If so, how could local community drive and engagement be built into the Suburban University Study Hub operating model?

Absolutely not. A hub should not be made up of a single operator.

18. How could the Suburban University Study Hubs encourage collaboration between hubs and education providers (including universities and VET)?

So long as universities and VET includes all sizes and levels of private and public providers then having shared goals is a start. Significant collaboration was achieved between public and private providers during the pandemic to overcome issues, and particularly with respect to the NSW govt's international student pilot program.

What will the Suburban University Study Hubs Program fund?

Consultation Questions

19. How can Suburban University Study Hubs encourage and support partnerships that

benefit students? What incentives would be most effective to promote partnership development?

Through the partnerships being owned and driven by community rather than the institutions.

Highlight the opportunity for partners to access a diverse talent pool of students from study hubs, potentially for internships, research, or recruitment.

20. What learnings are there from existing initiatives, and/or are there new ideas that could support the design and development of the Suburban University Study Hubs, noting that they are intended to be different from institution specific study centres/hubs.

We need to look outside of Australia to countries such as Canada where successful programs to redress inequality have operated for many years. Currently we have little in Australia that shines the light on how best to do this.