



**Downs Industry Schools Co-operation Inc
(DISCO)**

Strategic Plan

2022 - 2025

Partnering Schools, Linking with Business, Supporting Youth

Prepared by the CEO and DISCO Management Committee – Approved November 2022

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Executive Summary

The Downs Industry Schools Co-operation Inc (trading as DISCO) is a specialist youth services agency assisting young people across an age range of 15 – 24 years. The organisation assists young people both inside and outside the education system.

DISCO commenced operation in 1997 with a single office site and one staff member and now operates in multiple sites across Southwest Queensland.

DISCO provides an environment that is designed to welcome and support young people as they make the transition through school or from school into further education or employment.

Currently DISCO works in four key areas to support youth. These areas are:

1. Support for students to complete the compulsory phase of education
2. Youth Engagement or Reengagement
3. Youth Employment
4. Product and service support

DISCO regularly undertakes a structured review of its processes and activities to ensure all programs are responsive to young people and are aligned with the vision, values and goals for the organisation.

This strategic plan for 2022 – 2025 was developed by the CEO and the Management Committee of the organisation.

The plan has been developed in recognition of the economic uncertainty under which government funded organisations operate and therefore an increased need to be able to provide services efficiently without compromising high quality outcomes for young people.

As such the focus of the strategic plan is to consider DISCO's range of services and analyse the organisations capacity to continue to deliver highly specific services to youth in an uncertain funding environment. The organisation is also committed to build upon its strong practice base through evaluation and review and a reinvigorated approach to the involvement of young people within the organisation. This is demonstrated, in part, through its commitment to have a young person present as an Ordinary Member providing advice and suggestions to the Management Committee. This helps ensure DISCO is well positioned to maximise youth appropriate services and quality outcomes and aids in developing stronger partnerships with key stakeholders to enhance the organisations capability to grow and respond to the needs of young people in the communities in which we operate.

DISCO is committed to offering an employment environment that allows us to attract and retain talented, passionate and dedicated staff. Critical to the successful attainment of this goal is the objective of gaining longer term funding opportunities as this helps create a more stable and secure working environment.

This document has the objective of evaluating DISCO's current strategy around business innovation and growth, program management and service delivery and assesses the future in terms of current work and where the organisation expects to be at the end of 2025.

The organisation acknowledges the work done by many internal and external individuals and extends its thanks to the many volunteers, employees and community stakeholders who have provided support to the organisation and continue to offer unwavering support.

Organisation Structure & Office Locations

DISCO Management Committee & Ordinary Members

A Management Committee of 3 representatives who undertake executive roles to support the organisation:

The Management Committee of the Downs Industry Schools Co-Operation Inc is made up of Ordinary Members who have agreed to undertake an executive role as President, Vice President or Treasurer. All Management Committee positions are elected and are unpaid.

It is expected that if a member nominates for a Management Committee role that they will also perform an office bearer's role.

The position of Secretary is undertaken by an Ordinary Member, but this role is not part of the executive.

This Management Committee meets monthly with ordinary members invited to participate in the meetings.

Ordinary Members primarily come from three categories.

Industry – the organisation is keen to get a cross section of representatives from different industry sectors.

Education – the organisation is ideally supported by representatives from the catholic, independent and Education QLD sectors

Youth – the organisation has a youth representative involved (who must be over 18) to provide input to ensure the organisation has at the forefront of its thinking the best interests of young people

Sub Committees will be formed as required by the Management Committee to direct certain projects.

Operations

The organisations day to day operations are directed by the Operations Manager and CEO who are responsible for working with Ordinary and Management Committee members to develop the organisations strategic direction and then implementing these plans or goals from an operational perspective.

Reporting to the CEO is the role of Operations Manager as well as the functions of the contracted Finance Officer.

Other individuals may also report to the CEO depending on location and project.

The CEO is responsible for the financial performance of the organisation which is linked to the approved annual budget which is also monitored by the Treasurer with expenditure and income assessed monthly at Ordinary Meetings.

The CEO is responsible for the organisation's reputation and branding.

The CEO is expected to take a strong leadership role both inside and outside the business to positively grow the profile of the organisation and seek out opportunities for the organisation in line with the business's strategic direction.

This approach is underpinned by DISCO's objectives, vision and mission which reflect our focus to support young people across the regions we serve.

DISCO:

"Partnering Schools, Linking with Business, Supporting Youth"

Office Locations

**Head Office
Suite 3, Level 1 453 Ruthven
St Toowoomba QLD 4350**



**at 129 James St
Toowoomba QLD 4350**



**at 169 Cunningham St
Dalby QLD 4405**



**at 119 Spencer St
Gatton QLD 4455**



Purpose

Our Reason for Being

The Downs Industry Schools Co-Op (DISCO) is a non-profit, community-based youth organisation which has a focus to assist young people from 15 – 25 years of age with the capacity currently to extend service offerings in Toowoomba, the Southwest and the Lockyer Vally in Queensland.

The young people DISCO assists are involved both in and out of the education system.

DISCO provides them with support and advice to assist them to make appropriate education, employment and career related decisions.

With a history of professionalism, high standards and a genuine passion for our work, DISCO team members make a difference to help a young person every time, everyday....

Our Objective

We offer support to young people who reach out to us and our organisation listens, supports and builds their confidence to help them as they grow, explore and determine a future that maximises their true potential.

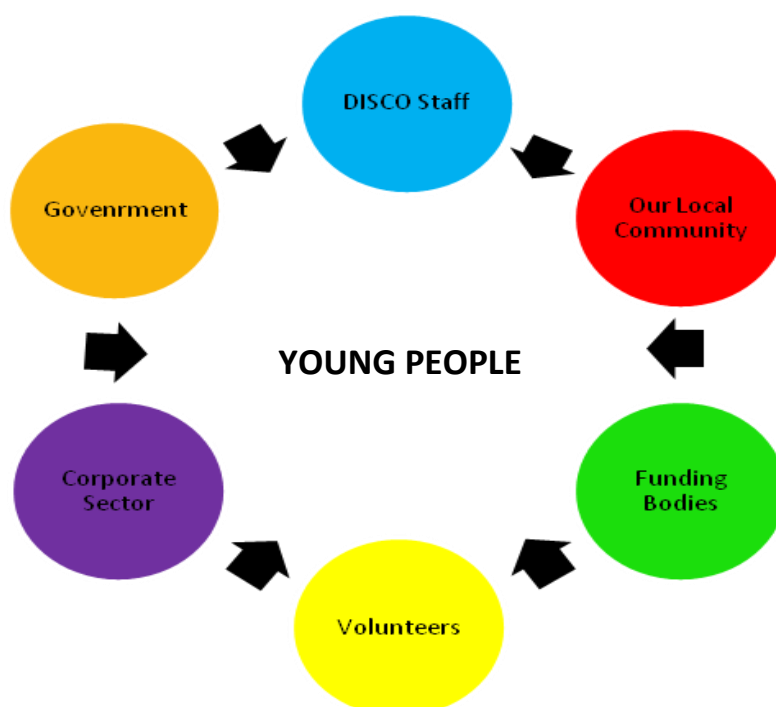
Our Vision

Irrespective of how young people are when they link with our organisation, we aim to have them grow as a person whilst they spend time with us.

Our Mission

“Partnering schools, linking with business, supporting youth”.

Our Stakeholders



Where are we now?

History

DISCO has developed steadily since its inception in 1997. The organisation has grown conservatively remaining a focus on its original core objectives under which were reviewed to reflect the primary functions of the organisation in 2015. They are as follows:

- 1) *To promote to the community the benefits of supporting youth and facilitate opportunities for the benefit of students, schools, employers and parents;*
- 2) *Act as a facilitator to support youth to liaise effectively with the business community by providing information on school-based and post school initiatives whilst seeking support to trial new projects and opportunities that benefit young people;*
- 3) *Assist youth and their families to participate in and access information on relevant services;*
- 4) *Provide services to assist youth to prepare effectively for further training, education and possible employment and*
- 5) *Actively seek out opportunities to benefit youth within the communities the organisation operates.*

The organisation has been fortunate that senior management and Management Committee members have been stable and this has assisted the business to grow steadily building a brand that is now recognisable and valued.

Staff stability has also been strong with team members in our employ for an average of nearly five years which is above the industry average and an achievement considering the changes in government policies and programs.

The steady growth of the organisations fiscal position is strong due primarily to income received through the Transition to Work Service which concluded in June 2022.

The organisations relationship within the communities it operates in is particularly strong. DISCO's key stakeholders recognise and value our work and young people identify with the organisation as genuine, responsive, honest and committed.

Our foundation is strong, and the organisation is well placed to expand and continue its growth subject to future funding opportunities.

Most noticeably the organisation has developed an excellent relationship with young people who demonstrate their satisfaction by referring their friends and providing feedback that the work we do is genuine, reliable and that we do what we say we will. Of all of the strengths the DISCO organisation has, this is probably the most important.

Current program offerings

The organisation currently delivers the following programs and services from its four offices.

- 1) Get Set for Work – Funded by the Department of Education and Training (State) – Contract until the end of 2024
- 2) Ready for Work - Funded by the Department of Education and Training (State) – Contract until the end of 2023
- 3) Other smaller programs and projects that are funded at amounts below \$100K. These include school specific programs and other one off or annual initiatives

The programs and services can and are affected by changes in government policy and as such it is difficult to plan extensively beyond the know contract periods unless new income is identified and is more stable.

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats

Our organisation - 2022

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly talented and many long serving team members • Excellent brand • Strong established relationship with our community and government • Local knowledge of our community • Developing non-government income • Strong stable Management Committee • Positive brand recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow band of work • Succession plan challenges due to minimal staffing levels • Access to trained and qualified future staff • Long term sustainability • Cost of labour • Expected wage growth • No current property assets • Insufficient government lobbying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New project opportunities based on existing relationships (Govt and Other) • Income via product growth and sales • The opening of new offices • Links to innovative local and overseas agencies • One stop shop for youth • White paper initiatives for Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing skill shortages in sector • Increasing cost of labour • Management of risk • Changes in government policy • 'Slippage' in funding through government funding applications

Where would we like to be?

Currently the organisation is well placed to develop further into the future subject to continued funding.

Our reliance on government funding remains high (in excess of 95%) so it is important to lower this and increase our own fee-for-service and non-government income as much as possible.

Ultimately one of the more specific objectives is to seek to further create independence from government funding and give our future more certainty through opportunities that we can control rather than be at the mercy of policy changes which can impact significantly on our clients, our staff and our future.

Goals

Our Goals 2022 - 2025:

1. **Maintain high quality service delivery** to ensure key stakeholders, funding providers and our clients, remain positive about and appreciative of the work undertaken
2. Integrate improved service delivery and performance through the introduction and **commitment to quality policies and procedures** which are **underpinned by a positive workforce development strategy** and **strong risk management practices**
3. Identify, assess and, if appropriate, **commit to new office locations** to further expand our services to assist more young people
4. **Develop succession planning** (where possible) to ensure the long-term security of the organisation from a staff and senior management perspective
5. Investigate opportunities to **grow our range of programs and services** by considering tenders as well as developing additional products and resources and assessing opportunities that can be promoted to government to aid youth and improve the organisations longer term sustainability. We must seek out and engage with Government and lobby for funding opportunities and present white paper initiatives
6. Investigate and consider potential **partnership opportunities** which will have the dual benefit of offering learning and business development opportunities to young people and importantly contributing to the organisations non-government income
7. Where possible, **retain a surplus annually** which is in addition to operational requirements to enable a funding allocation for future years and **to meet all future financial obligations**

Our Key Performance Indicators

Our measures of Success (KPI's)

- The range of services offered to young people and our capability to further develop a 'one stop shop' to assist youth to grow and develop
- Maintenance and growth in funded programs and services
- Improved internal and external service relationships between DISCO and other agencies
- The number of MOU's and partnership arrangements entered into to develop opportunities and, where appropriate, expand our services
- Increased opportunities to advocate for, and with, young people
- The retention of staff and low turnover of employees including the progression of staff to higher duties
- The review and analysis of staff and client surveys to assess approval of service performance

- The retention and possible expansion of sites to deliver opportunities to young people
- The continued stability and support of Management and Ordinary Committee members supporting the growth and development of the organisation

Achieving our Goals

For DISCO to grow and prosper this Strategic Plan must tackle the goals outlined below to progress the organisation and strengthen it.

Our first goal is as follows:

1. Maintain high quality service delivery to ensure key stakeholders including funding providers and our clients remain pleased and appreciative of the work we undertake

DISCO must approach its work to ensure our primary stakeholders remain satisfied with the work we do. To achieve this goal the following key requirements must be addressed:

- Consistency of service
(We must ensure we deliver a consistency in service to all clients and this standard is maintained across our organisation)
- Stability of staffing
(By selecting and supporting staff and operating a workforce development strategy that is open and considerate, DISCO will retain a low turnover rate to aid consistent operational performance)
- Auditing of work undertaken
(Through assessment and review we can react to compliments and criticism to improve the quality and professionalism of our work)
- Strong relationships with other youth service providers
(It is critical from a support and growth perspective that we link collaboratively with other service providers for mutual gain, the identification of opportunities and the benefit of our clients)
- Positive relationship with other key groups e.g. parents, school representatives
(Our performance and the importance of two-way communication between key stakeholders is vital and critical to the relationships that need to exist between the groups we work with)
- Strong relationships with government
(We must build on the reputation our agency has with government and use it as a tool to seek out opportunities and influence policy)
- Market and communicate our message to highlight achievements and inform those we work with about our work
(It is vital that we continue to market and communicate our brand, our achievements and our message through multiple approaches on a consistent basis)
- Provision appropriate capital allocations to ensure our team members can work with the best possible equipment and resources
(Our staff must have access to suitable technology and resources, and it is necessary to ensure that each year the organisation provisions sufficient capital resources to maintain this commitment)

Our second goal is as follows:

2. Integrate improved service delivery and performance through the introduction and commitment to quality policies and procedures which are underpinned by a positive workforce development strategy and strong risk management practices

DISCO must implement and measure its performance and assess regularly the quality and depth of its policies and procedures to ensure that the work undertaken is recognised positively by the community and supported by a team of staff who are well trained, positive and passionate about the work they do. To achieve this goal the following key requirements must be addressed:

- Appropriate and up to date policies and risk management practices must be in place and these must be reviewed annually

(As an agency, DISCO has a responsibility to support and protect those we serve and those staff and volunteers who assist DISCO to achieve its goals and objectives)

- All staff must be appropriately selected and inducted into the organisation

(It is critical that we choose the right people and support their introduction to the organisation so they can provide their best performance possible in their role)

- Staff must operate under Position Descriptions and be annually reviewed on performance

(To ensure new and existing staff are clear about their responsibilities and to provide feedback and measure their achievements we need to invest in, and provide feedback too, our people)

- Staff must receive ongoing training in line with their role and their planned development

(DISCO recognises that all team members need support and ongoing training to aid support for their role and grow them for future opportunities which may arise)

- Staff and partners must be recognised and rewarded to reflect hard work and achievement

(Our capacity to reward excellence in staff, volunteers and community partners will only further highlight talent and achievement which must be celebrated. In addition, through Staff Recognition days, we should seek to thank our team members for their commitment and dedication)

Our third goal is as follows:

3. Identify, assess and, if appropriate, commit to new office locations to further expand our services to assist more young people

If appropriate, the Management Committee must assess the potential to further develop opportunities for business expansion and growth. To achieve this goal the following key requirements must be addressed:

- Identify locations for possible growth and undertake (where appropriate) a scoping study to assess value and opportunities

(In partnership with government and local communities we must assess opportunities and determine minimum requirements around the business model to support additional offices)

- Consult with government and possible partner organisations to assess funding opportunities and possible partnerships

(DISCO must continue to build on existing relationships whilst developing new ones that provide for possible partnerships and new growth opportunities)

- Undertake a community audit to assess the value of entering into a new region

(Although a region may appear to benefit from our presence it is important to make sure that the community would welcome and support the commencement of a new youth agency)

- Propose youth development programs to funding bodies and demonstrate need through evidence and feedback

(DISCO must identify and demonstrate need and propose innovative solutions to government backed up by a model that can be trialled and tested for possible long-term funding)

Our fourth goal is as follows:

4. Develop succession planning (where possible) to ensure the long-term security of the organisation from a staff and senior management perspective

- Continue to plan and encourage development of internal staff for future opportunities
(DISCO will continue to encourage internal development and plan for the use of school-based trainees who may potentially be able to fill future part- or full-time vacancies)

Our fifth goal is as follows:

5. Investigate opportunities to grow our range of programs and services by considering tenders as well as developing additional products and resources and assessing opportunities that can be promoted to government to aid youth and improve the organisations longer term sustainability. We must seek out and engage with Government and lobby for funding opportunities and present white paper initiatives

The organisations capacity to exist well into the future must be based on long term planning and be underpinned by qualities including innovation, professionalism and reliability. To achieve this goal the following key requirements must be addressed:

- The organisation must continue to assess funding opportunities through government that match our objectives as a youth agency

(Our organisation must monitor opportunities and liaise with government regarding possible youth tenders or funding opportunities)

- We must move beyond the process of applying for funding and seek to demonstrate alternative opportunities of income that may encompass work in partnership with the corporate sector

(The organisation must seek to develop new relationships with the corporate sector that may lead to linkages and funding possibilities to grow income opportunities and possibilities)

- DISCO must use its reputation to be innovative and propose white paper initiatives or pilot programs to government and develop new programs and services to help young people

(Due to DISCO's profile, it is important to capitalise on our knowledge and propose trial funding possibilities to offer real support for youth and the possibility of a new innovative program that could be supported nationally)

- Further work to develop, market and sell resources, programs and services must be undertaken to develop additional streams of income

(It is important to use past success in this area and DISCO's profile to identify and develop new resources and enhance our marketing on the products and services already available for sale)

- Establish and build on links established with other youth agencies to create innovation for the business, our clients and our staff

(Work undertaken to date in this area has revealed that there are significant opportunities to enhance our development and links established to date suggest real possibilities for growth and opportunity through the innovation and ideas of others)

Our sixth goal is as follows:

6. Investigate and consider potential partnership opportunities which will have the dual benefit of offering learning and business development opportunities to young people and importantly contributing to the organisations non-government income

To move the business toward a more secure foundation and lessen the need to consider changing the direction of the organisation to involve ourselves in activities not connected to our core business as well as the option to become involved in income generating projects that provide education, work development skills and employment for young people. To achieve this goal the following key requirements must be addressed:

- Visit, assess and review currently operating youth agencies to identify successful enterprise opportunities and consider models that may work in one of the communities DISCO operates in

(Work undertaken to date in this area has revealed current successful models that could/can be investigated, assessed and possibly replicated. Examples could include a driving school, café, water distribution business etc)

- Work with our current finance partner Bendigo Bank to assess funding availability as well looking at the organisations capacity

(Work undertaken to date in this area has revealed that our current lender will and has leant money to other Not for Profit entities. Bendigo Banks community banking model is keen to support projects with both cash grants and loans. This needs to be investigated further)

Our seventh goal is as follows:

7. Where possible, retain a surplus annually which is in addition to operational requirements to enable a funding allocation for future years and to meet all future financial obligations

Our long-term future and sustainability must mean that we put away funds for the future to allow for periods of uncertainty and the purchase of capital resources. To achieve this goal the following key requirements must be addressed:

- Because of the uncertainty of government policy and funding, it is necessary that the organisation continues to provision an appropriate surplus from annual operating funds to be allocated to cover operational requirements for the future

(As part of the budgetary planning process a provision must continue to be made to cover operational commitments including personnel costs, vehicle, resourcing and accommodation costs etc should it be necessary for the organisation to close)

- To develop a base from which the organisation can become more stable and secure whilst allowing flexibility to enable the organisation the capability to seize opportunities as they arise to improve the organisations longer-term viability.

(In consultation with the Management Committee be responsive to opportunities and build into the budget to achieve an operational surplus allowance of a minimum 10% annually, where possible)

- The Executive has already undertaken forward financial planning that has determined DISCO's ability to continue trading, even with reduced income, until the end of 2024 *(The CEO will continue to closely monitor the annual approved expenditure and income with the Treasurer to ensure financial targets are met and the organisation annually can measure its ongoing fiscal position against its target to ensure it remains on track)*

The Future

As an organisation, DISCO and the people connected to it remain passionate, responsive and flexible with the knowledge and capability of achieving for the youth in the regions in which the organisation operates.

Assisted by a Management Committee that is capable of supporting opportunities and reasonable risk, DISCO has time to analyse new prospects to secure its financial future.

Utilising this document as both a developmental and assessment tool the organisation can plan out its strategy to survive and grow over the coming years by focussing on three key strategic areas:

- Financial
- Human
- Innovation

The Management Committee appreciates and recognises all of the key stakeholders linked to the organisation and looks forward to this support continuing as the organisation continues to influence positively the lives of young Australians.

