



THE NEURODIVERSITY HUB PROJECT CHARTER

May 2018

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF NEURODIVERSITY HUB CHARTER

This project charter serves to benefit participating universities, employers, and other organisations to ensure:

- A clear and collective understanding of the operations of the NDH Advisory Group as a mechanism for the successful delivery of the agreed objectives and outcomes of the NDH
- Sharing of experience and learnings, including in relation to the:
 - identification, registration and on-boarding of students to the NDH
 - range of programs offered and their delivery
 - success of programs involving employer partners, including mentoring, internships and other work experience
 - employment outcomes
 - coordinated approach to the identification, sign-up and on-boarding of further participating organisations in the NDH
 - continuous improvement of the NDH offerings
 - development, coordination and implementation of new elements of the NDH.

The intended audience for this Charter consists of NDH partner organisations, including employers, tertiary institutions (university/TAFE), and service providers.

2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Neurodiversity Hub is to improve the employability of neurodivergent individuals and establish a pipeline of work-ready candidates for employers. Neurodiversity is defined as the range of differences in individual brain function and behavioural traits, regarded as part of normal variation in the human population. Examples of neurodiversity include ADHD, autism, and dyslexia.

3 JUSTIFICATION

3.1 BUSINESS NEED

The NDH is necessary to solve challenges relating to the recruitment, assessment, and sustainment of neurodiverse – and namely autistic – talent. Despite the success of certain Autism at Work (A@W) programmes, long-term scalability and success will require new ways of accessing this talent pool. Additionally, many A@W assessment processes, based on workplace simulation, incur material short-term costs such as: physical space, time, and salary costs. Lastly, A@W must adequately support participants to ensure retention, and lack of adequate early, mid- and late-stage support may increase risk of failure in the workplace.

4 SCOPE

4.1 OBJECTIVES

For neurodivergent students:

- Support neurodivergent students in becoming work-ready and building connections with organisations that value their talents
- Assisting students in obtaining work experience and internships
- Increasing employment opportunities

For potential employers:

- Create a pipeline of work-ready neurodivergent talent for employers seeking candidates who are typically creative, quick learners, task-focused, attention-to-detail orientated or problem solvers
- Provide training in how to work more effectively with neurodiverse people - including employees, customers and suppliers
- Provide greater sustainability and scalability for neurodivergent employment
- Reduce costs of recruitment, assessment, on-boarding and support for employers

For other partner organisations:

- Providing valuable opportunities for research in the area of neurodiversity
- Facilitating innovation among Hub partners and collaborators

4.2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR NDH PARTICIPANTS

For neurodivergent students:

- Complete employability assessments
- Undertake 'enterprise readiness training' provided via e-learning platforms
- Attend seminars and workshops on social and life skills
- Participate in peer mentoring and industry mentoring
- Be considered for internships or work experience assignments
- Engage disability services consultants for feedback from work experiences

For potential employers:

- Provide industry mentorships
- Offer life skills seminars for students in company's area of expertise
- Provide internship and/or work experience opportunities
- Participate in regular employer forums to discuss advice and experiences
- Utilize e-learning training to support becoming an autism-friendly employer
- Gain access to a pipeline of qualified and talented job candidates.

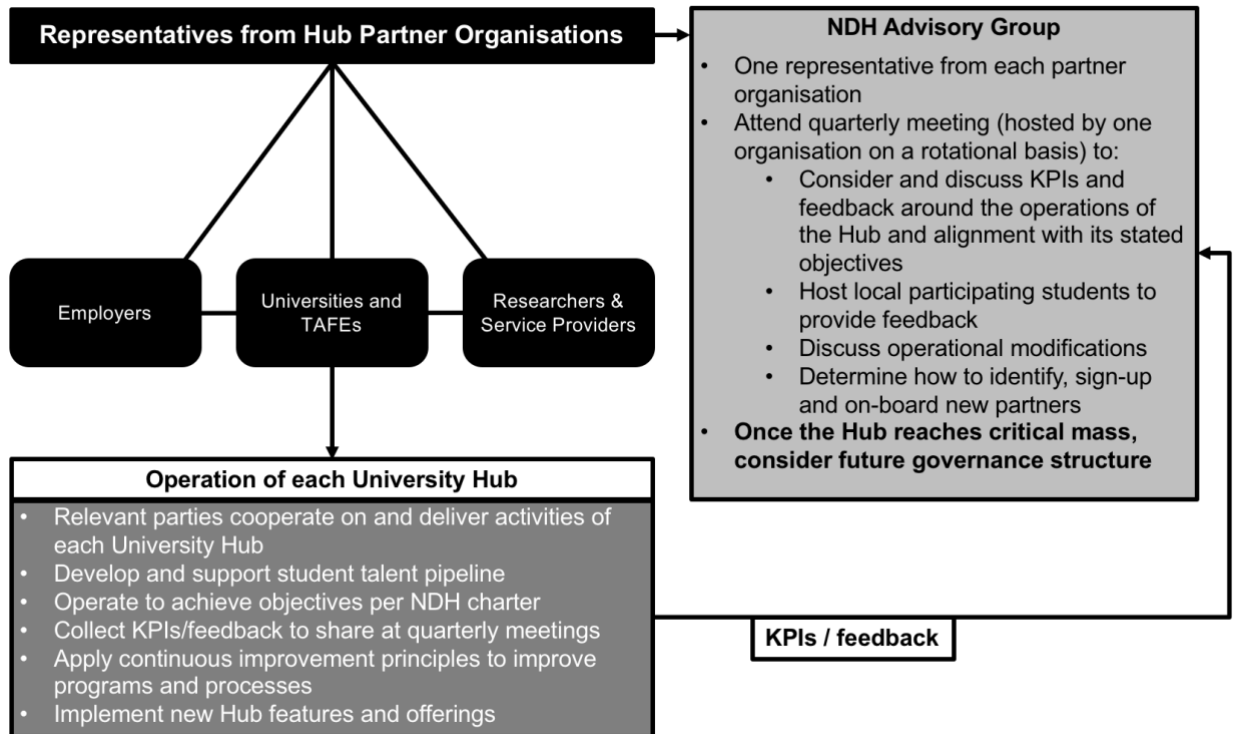
For universities/TAFEs:

- Increase inclusivity on campus via Uptimize e-learning training
- Identify new opportunities for research
- Increase employability and opportunity for neurodivergent students
- Develop reputation as an accessible university for people with disabilities

5 NDH ADVISORY GROUP

5.1 ADVISORY GROUP STRUCTURE

The following diagram outlines the operation of the NDH Advisory Group, which will serve to reinforce the satisfaction of project objectives.



The Advisory Group (AG) will consider and discuss agreed key performance indicators and feedback surrounding NDH operations and alignment with its stated objectives. This could include feedback from neurodivergent university students, universities, employer partners, research organisations and service providers. It could also include presentations from industry experts, by invitation.



5.2 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Advisory Group must adopt agreed key performance indicators (KPIs), which partner universities and employers will use to measure outcomes of the NDH.

Below are several KPIs from the Spectrum Support Program (SSP) at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)¹ located in Rochester, New York, USA:

¹ Launched in 2008, SSP supports 84 autistic students in a number of key areas: transition to university, academic and social success, executive functioning, and career preparation. SSP costs up to \$2,000 per semester (versus an avg. of \$3,500 per semester for similar programs in the USA).

- Count of total student enrolment in NDH
- Count of total enrolment in NDH by first-year students
- Frequency of weekly 1:1 coaching appointments with career services
- Enrolment growth by level of support needed (high, medium, low)
- Number of NDH-enrolled students in good academic standing
- Graduation rate of enrolled students
- Employment status of enrolled students after graduation

Other KPIs (non-SSP) to consider include:

- Employment application rate² of NDH-registered students
- Employment placement rate of NDH-registered students
- Time to find employment
- Results of post-graduation milestone follow-up survey
 - After students graduate, the university should survey NDH alumni at the following milestones: 1 year, 3 years, 5 years, and 10 years
 - The purpose of this is to learn about the career progression of alumni
 - Are they still with the organizations that they joined after graduating? Why or why not?
 - Are they advancing in the company?
 - Are they satisfied in their jobs?
 - Do they feel supported?
- Results of annual student experience survey
 - The purpose of this survey is to assess how students experience the NDH's resources and support. The format of the survey and the questions asked should be consistent across universities. The survey should be developed in consultation with autistic students. The survey might address:
 - Level of support experienced (academic, social, professional)
 - Quality of mentorship
 - Quality of employability resources and training
 - Quality of life skills resources and training
 - Quality of work experience/internship (if obtained)
 - Degree of confidence in recruiting process
 - Awareness of employment opportunities

Universities may add or remove survey areas depending on their resource capabilities. These KPIs will provide empirical data to guide the operations of the University Hubs and provide input to NDH Advisory Group meetings. This input is imperative to the success and growth of the University Hubs.

² "Employment" refers to work placements, accreditation internships, professional internships, part time work/volunteering, industry-linked projects, industry study tours, and post-graduation employment.

In addition to KPIs for universities, it is important to also have KPIs for employers. Some KPIs to consider are:

- Number of employment opportunities provided
- Number of in-kind resources provided
- Success rate of employment programs (as defined by employer)
- Number of university employment forums attended (virtual and in-person)
- Number of students hired after they graduate
- Retention rate of neurodivergent hires
- Number of neurotypical employees trained in neurodiversity

These metrics will provide empirical data to guide the participation of employers and provide input to NDH Advisory Group Meetings.

5.3 MEETING PROTOCOL

5.3.1 Topics of Discussion

- Presentation by students enrolled in university hubs
- Sharing of experience and learnings of the operation of the NDH by participant Universities
- Sharing of experience from participant employers
- Presentations from involved research organisations and service providers
- Presentations from industry experts on thought leadership or other topics (by invitation)
- Opportunities for improvement of NDH offerings
- Presentation and discussion of new elements proposed for the NDH to facilitate their proper development, coordination and implementation.

5.3.2 Logistics

Meetings will normally be conducted quarterly, but this may vary due to availability or other external factors. Meetings will be hosted by one university or employer on a rotational basis. Untapped Group will be able to provide co-ordination, organisation and secretarial services for the meeting in partnership with the hosting organisation.

5.3.3 Attendance

The Advisory Group would be open to all participating universities, employers and other organisations that are formally registered with the NDH. It would be preferred if each participating organisation could nominate a representative to attend the meetings – in order to achieve a certain level of consistency – and that these representatives would commit to attend a majority of scheduled meetings.

Dial-in / video attendance would also be available. A delegate may be nominated, with prior communication, but the delegate must have close knowledge and history of the items for discussion.

If remote participation is not possible or a delegate is unable to be nominated, the member should review any materials and provide relevant feedback ahead of the meeting.

It is also **strongly** recommended that a small number of neurodiverse students participating in the NDH in the location closest to the meeting also attend in order to provide their perspectives and experience of the NDH. This input could be provided via some type of presentation or discussion at the commencement of the meeting. As an organisation that provides services to neurodiverse students, it is crucial for the Group to adopt the “*nothing about us without us*” mantra.³

5.3.4 Minutes and Agenda

The hosting organisation hosting organisation will develop and finalise the agenda (having regard for the suggested discussion topics in Section 5.3.1), with support from Untapped Group. Partner organisations can request agenda items by notifying the hosting organisation. Any pre-reading material will be co-ordinated by the hosting organisation and Untapped Group and should be distributed one clear week before the meeting. Minutes outlining the outcome of discussions and any specific actions will be circulated to all members within two weeks of the meeting.

6 NDH GOVERNING BODY

Once the NDH achieves critical mass, the Advisory Group will have the option of creating a governing body to provide direction on the strategic development of the NDH. The Advisory Group will determine the timing of the establishment of a governing body, and related operating charter, as it sees fit.

7 EXPANSION OF HUB PARTNERS

The Advisory Group will need to determine how to best identify, sign-up and on-board new partner organisations and which pre-requisites/minimum standards will be required of joining organisations.

³ The disabled community adopted this mantra in the 1990s. It communicates the idea that no policy should be decided without full and direct participation from the group(s) affected by that policy.