Review of Intersect

Plan and Terms of Reference

(Ian Gibson and Robin Stanton | 19 March 2013)

1 Background

Intersect Australia Limited was established in 2008 to provide eResearch services to its members and to the broader research sector within NSW and Australia. Intersect was established on the basis of a Business Case and Strategic Plan (link) covering the period 2008 to 2012.

Intersect was established by its six founding members together with the NSW government with an initial commitment of four years of membership. Intersect now serves a broader base of 11 university members and a growing affiliate membership.

Intersect has a well established value proposition and business outlook through until the end of 2014.

Intersect operates is a highly dynamic environment:

- ICT platforms and expertise underpinning Intersect activities evolve rapidly,

- Intersect's members' requirements and associated expectations of Intersect evolve with technology and individual business opportunities, and

- funding models for eResearch infrastructure and associated services will continue to change in the future

To date, Intersect has prospered in this environment. However it is appropriate now to review its business model in the context of eResearch directions and on the basis of outcomes to date, to review its ability to respond to future members requirements.

2 Purpose

The primary purpose of the review is to provide members with an assessment of the value Intersect has provided to date.

As such, the outcome of the review may be used as an input to the development of the next Intersect Strategic Plan, to cover the period 2014 to 2018.

The Review will provide the Board with findings based on:

- A critique of the Intersect Business case against eResearch directions and members' future requirements

- An assessment of Intersect's capability to prosecute the Business case, and accordingly to deliver value to members.

3 Terms of Reference

The Review is tasked with making findings with respect to the relevance of the Intersect Business Case to members and the ability of the organization to deliver that Case.

The Review will also comment on, and be informed by, current progress towards currently formulated strategic goals.

The Review will be guided by the following foci.

3.1   Intersect business case

3.1.1   Alignment with members priorities

3.1.2   Alignment with government priorities (State and Commonwealth)

3.1.3   Return on Investment (in Intersect by members)

3.2   Intersect capability

3.2.1   Research enablement

3.2.2   Responsiveness

3.2.3   Service usage and uptake

3.2.4   Human resource capabilities

3.2.5   Communications and positioning

3.2.6   Partnerships

3.3   Outcomes to date: progress towards Strategic Goals

3.3.1   NSW leadership position in eResearch services

3.3.2   Agencies and industry access to eResearch services and expertise where important to NCW economy

3.3.3   eResearch mediated collaboration between industry and research institutions

[See Intersect Strategic Goals appended below for convenience]

3.4   Out of scope

This review is not intended to review or evaluate:

- The performance of any Intersect individuals
- Any broader economic or other impact Intersect may have had within NSW

4 Structure and Process

The Review will be conducted by a panel consisting of:

o   Independent Chair (Prof Robin Stanton, Pro Vice Chancellor (E-strategies) ANU)

- o Two representatives of Members – Andrew Cheetham (UWS), Mark Hoffman (UNSW)
- o An external expert, Mary Hobson (Executive Director, eRSA)

Intersect will provide secretariat services to the panel.

The panel will work from:

- o A business Review of Intersect carried out by Enterprise Connect
- o The results of a benchmarking exercise carried out by the Sax institute, in which Intersect participated
- o Material provided by Intersect
- o Material gathered from interviews with staff
- o Feedback from research groups and other recipients of Intersect services
- o Feedback from members
- o Interviews with select stakeholders

5 Plan and timing

18 February 2013: Consideration of this document by the Intersect Board of Directors

Early March 2013: Initial meeting of the review panel

March 2013: preparation of material by Intersect

March/April 2013: gathering of input and feedback from members and other stakeholders

May 2013: preparation of the review Report

20th May 2013: presentation of the review findings to the Intersect Board of Directors

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Appendix: Intersect Strategic Goals

- Stimulate the uptake of eResearch throughout the research institutions in NSW

- Provide skills development and knowledge transfer services to NSW researchers and their support organisations to greatly increase eResearch skill levels in NSW

- Develop innovative and valuable eResearch tools and services that are required to facilitate the development of eResearch in NSW, and nationally through co-funded development with national eResearch agencies (NCRIS PfC, Super Science etc)

- Provide advice and assistance to members on eResearch best practice

- Arrange for service providers (including national eResearch agencies and Intersect itself) to deliver newly developed services to NSW researchers, and where possible to industry

- Promote industry uptake of research outcomes and services developed through eResearch

- Establish and promote close collaboration between NSW researchers from different institutions as well as between NSW, national and international research centres of excellence

- Provide a national focus on the application of eResearch including in the humanities, arts and social sciences

- Act as the focal point for interaction with the national eResearch agencies, and assist members gain benefit from these agencies