



Young Carers Program Manual

Inner Eastern Local Learning and
Employment Network

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Table of Contents

Part 1: Overview	2
1.1 Executive summary	2
1.2 Anticipated Outcomes of the Program	2
1.3 Potential Impacts of the Program	3
1.4 Background	3
1.5 Using this Resource	4
1.6 Project Outline	4
1.7 Governance	4
Part 2: Program Development	5
2.1 Identifying Young Carer Participants	5
2.2 Planning the Program.....	5
Part 3: Delivering the Program.....	7
3.1 Program Structure and Sessions	7
3.2 Program Evaluation.....	8
3.3 Evaluation Method.....	8
3.4 Evaluation Tools	8
Appendices.....	9
A. Program Logic	9
B. Sample Memorandum of Understanding - School and Community Partner	10,11
C. Sample Student Enrolment Form	12,13
D. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Assessment	14
E. Sample Risk Management Framework	15,16
F. Sample Young Carers Evaluation Form	17,18

Part 1: Overview

1.1 Executive summary

During 2015 staff at the Inner Eastern Local Learning Employment Network identified a range of issues relating to young care givers. We became increasingly aware - through research reports and discussions with stakeholders - that there were a number of young people providing caring support services to family members (eg a parent), and whose caring duties were impacting on school engagement. We also found that this cohort rarely identified or disclosed as "carers", ie having caring responsibilities, yet at the same time, there were associated impacts on school attendance and engagement.

In early 2016 the IELLEN established a Young Carers Network which was launched with a specific project, the production and public screening of a short film on Young Carers. The 9 minute film features interviews with a number of young carers who tell their story and the issues they face. (This clip has since been uploaded onto YouTube, where's it been viewed more than 600 times).

During 2016, Young Carer contacts continued to receive fortnightly email updates from IELLEN staff on opportunities, activities and news (relating to young carers) and evaluation of work we conducted encouraged us to consider developing further initiatives.

In 2017 School Focused Youth Services (SFYS), a program of the Department of Education and Training, approved a small grant application from the IELLEN. This enabled the IELLEN to develop a Young Carers support program, and funding for a manual to assist local schools to deliver support to identified groups of students who live with carer responsibilities.

This manual is aimed at relevant school staff to guide them in engaging young carers in a program specifically aimed at supporting their needs within a school context. Outcomes may include increasing their engagement in education, developing skills about managing time, and providing activities for which they are the focus.

1.2 Anticipated Outcomes of the Program

- Young people identified as being carers and showing signs of disengaging from school will be connected to and/or provided with support to remain in school.
- Support services will demonstrate success in addressing disengagement and improved positive school engagement.
- Increased social connectedness.
- A support manual to schools and community services to enhance sustainable options
- Respite/break from caring opportunities.

1.3 Potential Impacts of the Program

- Improved educational outcomes/students keep up to date with classwork
- School has greater potential to support young carers
- Pilot delivers successful and sustainable education engagement project
- Ongoing group activity
- Through psycho-social education develop young carer's resilience and provide greater insight into working with their personal situations

1.4 Background

Young Carers may be defined as "children or young people up to 25 years of age, who help care for a family member who has an illness, a disability, a mental health issue or who has an alcohol or other drug problem."

(<http://www.youngcarers.net.au/about-young-carers/>).

Many factors propel and sustain a young person to become a young carer. This includes parents' or caregivers' advanced age, mental health illness, physical health illness, alcohol or other drug use, physical incapacity, cognitive incapacity. These may be comorbid conditions e.g. Alcohol and other drug use and mental health illness.

There are estimated to be more than 390,000 young carers in Australia who are often described as having 'high levels of resilience' and other positive qualities, but who may face numerous barriers to staying in school (and when older, finding and maintaining work, and leading a well-balanced life).

Young carers may be at risk of not putting time into maintaining their own mental, physical and social well-being which provides challenges to maintaining school attendance and engagement. These challenges impact on the young carers' ability to build and sustain a sense of belonging in the school community and connection with their peers, alongside the challenge of consistently timely attendance in a physical and emotional state to participate and learn.

Evidence from the community and empirical researchers suggests that students' literacy and numeracy challenges, and caring duties impact students' engagement at school and may be a driving factor in their disengagement from education. Participation in class activities may be hindered by this factor.

Community consultation and research has shown:

- Young carers are less likely to complete year 12 or equivalent than non-carers (66% completion rate as opposed to 73%) (ABS data 2008). (This is restricted to those identify as carers).
- 40% of young carers participate in further study as opposed to 60% of non-carers, that is, young carers are less likely to continue further education pathways (Carers Australia, 2011 Young Carers in Education)
- 60% of young carers aged 15 to 25 are unemployed or not in the paid workforce (compared to 38% of non-carer young people) (ABS data 2008)

1.5 Using this Resource

This resource has been produced for schools and community organisations to assist in providing information to them about young carers and how to engage them.

It is designed as an aid to facilitate discussion between schools, young carers, other carers and key workers.

Young Carers groups are ultimately about improving the education, training and employment opportunities for the young people involved and supporting young people to remain engaged in education.

This resource provides information on developing partnerships with community agencies, services and providing positive outcomes for young carers.

1.6 Program Outline

A regular planned support group for Young Carers providing regular psycho-education activities with a facilitator(s) who engage and deliver sessions.

A neutral venue be sourced that has easy access.

Development of program outline and marketing materials -to be followed up with a promotional campaign.

Well-being staff are invited to refer students to programs – other community services can also be targeted to provide referrals.

Young Carers are invited to join the group. Participants co-design the program content to ensure that their aspirations and needs are met through the activities. This may include meeting times, activities, speakers, opportunities to assist with homework, life-skills and emotional developments.

Throughout the development it is advised that action research be utilised as an evaluation tool. This should include responses from young carers, schools, community services and other relevant parties.

1.7 Governance

Project governance is the management framework within which project decisions are made. Project governance is a critical element of any project. It is the role of project governance to provide a decision making framework that is logical, robust and repeatable to govern an organisation's project.

The Young Carers Project included in its governance:

- MOU between community agency and school
- Risk management plan
- School/ Community organisational management policies and procedures

Part 2: Program Development

2.1 Identifying Young Carer Participants

It is worth remembering that young carers can be expected to grow up quickly and it may also be said that they may learn to live with an unusual level of responsibility for their age. Young carers, particularly those with primary caring roles, are required to be mature beyond their years. Those providing care for a parent may find that normal parent/child roles have been reversed. In addition, our research shows that young carers generally don't know what services and supports are available to help them, ie with regards their caring role. Even if they are aware of services, they may not have the time required to fully access them. Many we have surveyed report that they do not receive respite or other carer support.

Being a young carer can provide both positive experiences and additional challenges for the child or young person. Some of the benefits of being a young carer can include a greater sense of belonging to the family, feeling valued, developing better living and communication skills and having greater sensitivity and empathy towards others. Young carers who receive adequate support in their caring role are more likely to report positive benefits. Young carers who do not may find that every aspect of their life is affected.

Some of the challenges young carers report include:

- absences from school resulting in disruption to school work and social networks
- difficulty completing homework or putting enough effort into school work
- difficulty doing normal things with peers, such as spontaneously going out with friends
- difficulty 'fitting in' with peers who have different experiences and expectations
- difficulty with bullying at school because of their caring role and/or the particular illness or disability of the person they care for
- additional personal stress because of expectations placed on them by family members, or on themselves.

2.2 Planning a Program

Planning of a Young Carer's program requires one major caveat: young people must identify that they are interested in a program to support them.

In initial stages it is important that those who may present as a young carer are provided with a supported space when inviting them in for a consultation about the potential of running a program.

1. Co-design

Ask potential participants about their availability and what they would like in a program. When young people have ownership over a program they are more likely to maintain participation and engagement. Work with a local community agency who have skilled staff and an understanding of young carers and their needs.

2. Pre-Planning

An outline of expectations from both school staff and the community agency needs to be thought out and explored during this time. It is good practice to set a schedule of regular meetings between school and community staff to discuss issues or concerns. Implementing procedures regarding disclosures, critical incidents and other major areas of concerns also need to be covered – this will follow the policies and procedures that the school have endorsed.

3. Assess Participant Needs and Interests

At the initial stages of program planning it is important to consider the specific needs and interests of young carers. There are a number of ways to do this including conducting and distributing questionnaires, hosting informal group discussions or focus groups, having a suggestion box, or doing "get acquainted" interviews with individuals. By identifying the specific needs or interests of community members before designing a program, the likelihood of a successful and well-attended is increased.

4. Purpose

As the information gathered during assessment is considered, and the program planning process begins, it's also important the needs of young carers are identified as well as the possible outcomes to achieve. What do young carers understand of the purpose of attending a group - what will it do for them?

5. Initiate Program

With a purpose decided, it is best to have an informal group of Young Carers brainstorming specific ideas for their program. This is a great time to go wild and dream big! In a brainstorm all ideas are written down and comments on and evaluations of ideas are kept to a minimum. This is the time to be creative and build off of the ideas of others. Once everything is noted on paper, the list of ideas can be sorted and evaluated. The group can then aim to reach consensus on activities and the way the program is delivered.

6. Implement Program

During this phase some or all of the following needs to happen:

- Setting a budget - where the funds will come from for a program and if necessary, seeking out co-sponsorship from local funding bodies
- Contacting Wellbeing staff / relevant teachers / local community supports
- Identifying possible dates, times, and places

- Checking for timetable conflicts
- Choosing a specific time, date, and place; reserving a space and equipment.

7. Marketing

Marketing of a program is one of the most important, and at times, most challenging tasks. Marketing across all year levels and ensuring the support of wellbeing staff to assist in targeting the hidden Young Carer are two important considerations.

8. Pre Day 1

Before a group commences it is worth reminding everyone that they are invited to attend, ensuring that a space is booked and that materials / resources are available.

Part 3: Delivering the Program

Program delivery will be determined by timetable restraints, young carers' availability, and activities to be undertaken by the group. For example, a fortnightly program can provide regular contact without being too invasive or time consuming.

Location will depend upon the group. Experience has taught us it is better delivered within the school but a school-based group may also prefer an external setting.

The group should have a start and finish date – this can obviously be extended.

3.1 Program Structure and Sessions

Session 1

To achieve effective outcomes, it is best to work with young carers by using a co-design approach – i.e. working with them to design the activities and program that work for them.

All participants should complete an enrolment form – this can assist in providing facilitators information regarding individual circumstances and commitments.

The first session should be very informal with introduction of participants (they may not know each other / are in different year levels), light discussion about the reason for the group, and some of the activities in which attendees might like to participate. It is important that attendees understand that the program is for them and that space is being provided that they can have that is just theirs.

Session 2-10

These sessions need to be determined by the participants – a mix of group discussion, activities and sharing of meals may be successful in a pilot program.

Examples of activities: It may be helpful to have examples of activities ready to help guide the group choices. these will also be dependent on budget:

- Cooking
- Shopping
- Sporting events
- Movies
- BBQ
- Skate park
- Rock Climbing
- Grooming and self-care afternoon

3.2 Program Evaluation

Regular evaluation of the program guides changes and ensures that outcomes objectives are being met. Writing an evaluation report helps to share key findings and recommendations with internal and external stakeholders. A report can be used to suggest changes, to communicate value to funders, or to share good practice with other organisations.

3.3 Evaluation Method

Our Young Carers program used Action Research as our evaluation tool. Action research is known by other names, including participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning, and contextual action research, but all are variations on a theme. Action research is "learning by doing" - a group of people identify a problem, do something to resolve it, see how successful their efforts were, and if not satisfied, to try again.

Action research tends to be:

- Cyclic – similar steps tend to occur in a similar sequence
- Participative – the students / schools/ community services are involved as partners in the research process
- Qualitative – it deals with language rather than numbers and
- Reflective – critical reflection upon the process and outcomes are important parts of each program

3.4 Evaluation Tools

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire about 3-16 year olds. It exists in several versions to meet the needs of researchers, clinicians and educationalists. Each version includes between one and three of the following components. All versions of the SDQ ask about 25 attributes, some positive and others negative. These 25 items are divided between 5 scales: Emotional; Problems; Hyperactivity / Inattention; Peer Relationships; and Pro-social behaviours. We also used our own internal evaluation tool to measure engagement and where we could make improvements in co-design.

Appendices

A. Program Logic

Engage Young Carers						
<p>Problem statement</p> <p>There are more than 390000 young carers in Australia who are often described as having 'high levels of resilience' and other positive qualities, they face numerous barriers to staying in school, finding and maintaining work and leading a well-balanced life.</p>	<p>Inputs</p> <p>A facilitator / safe meeting space / external agencies</p>	<p>Outputs: Activities</p> <p>10 session program with a mix of group discussion/ external activities. Engagement in education and skills development</p>	<p>Outputs: Participation</p> <p>Young Carers who are in school and often do not identify as carers</p>	<p>Short-term outcomes</p> <p>0-10 weeks</p> <p>Regular attendance</p> <p>Participation in co-design</p>	<p>Medium-term outcomes</p> <p>Understanding of self-care, being part of a community, supporting peers</p>	<p>Long-term outcomes</p> <p>Remain engaged in education</p> <p>Development of skills around resilience</p>
<p>Assumptions: Young carers often don't put time into maintaining their own mental, physical and social well-being and provides challenges to maintaining their school attendance and engagement. These challenges impacts on young carers' ability to build and sustain a sense of belonging in the school community and connection with their peers alongside challenges of consistently timely attendance in a physical and emotional state to participate and learn</p>				<p>External Factors:</p> <p>Timetable / numbers of carers / Engagement can all affect the success of a program</p>		

B. Sample MOU between School and Community Partner

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN COMMUNITY AGENCY AND SCHOOL

1. **Parties.** This Memorandum of Understanding (hereinafter referred to as "MOU") is made and entered into by and between the { COMMUNITY agency name}, whose address is _____, and the [SCHOOL name], whose address is _____

2. **Purpose.** The purpose of this MOU is to establish the terms and conditions under which the YOUNG CARERS will meet and function.

3. **Term of MOU.** This MOU is effective upon the day and date last signed and executed by the duly authorized representatives of the parties to this MOU and the governing bodies of the parties' respective counties or municipalities and shall remain in full force and effect for not longer than [time frame]. This MOU may be terminated, without cause, by either party upon [time frame] written notice, which notice shall be delivered by hand or by certified mail to the address listed above.

4. **Responsibilities of COMMUNITY AGENCY**

- Deliver a regular Young Cares program to participants designated by the School
- To ensure that any activity undertaken has a risk management matrix assessment
- To ensure that if an incident that occurs the Community Agency will follow policies and procedures as undertaken by the School
- To liaise with the appropriate School staff
- To ensure that all facilitators have appropriate credentials i.e Working with Children Check

5. **Responsibilities of School.**

Assess students who may be performing Caring duties

Provide (if required) a safe space to deliver the program

Liaise with Facilitators / community Organisation to ensure timing and program delivery is appropriate

Provide relevant policies and procedures upon request

Liaise with parents – if required

6. **General Provisions**

A. Amendments. Either party may request changes to this MOU. Any changes, modifications, revisions or amendments to this MOU which are mutually agreed upon by and between the parties to this MOU shall be incorporated by written instrument, and effective when executed and signed by all parties to this MOU.

B. Applicable Law. The construction, interpretation and enforcement of this MOU shall be governed by the laws of the State of Victoria. The courts of the State of Victoria shall have jurisdiction over any action arising out of this MOU.

C. Sample Student Enrolment Form

1. Assessment

Assessment:	
School Rep Details	Date of assessment:
Name	Position
Students Name	
Year Level	Address:
Mobile:	State:
Email:	Post Code:
Youth allowance (other) recipient:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Part time/casual work:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Living arrangements:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Stable for the moment <input type="checkbox"/> Unstable	
Assessment of living arrangements:	
Information about supporting parents if applicable:	
Is permission granted on the Registration Form to contact supporting parents/guardians:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Parent/Guardian details:	
Other adult contact:	
What involvement the participant currently has with other agencies/services:	

Participant characteristics

- Disability
- Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander
- Single parent family
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background
- Humanitarian Refugee

Participant barriers:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Single parent family <input type="checkbox"/> Carer <input type="checkbox"/> Death of significant person <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying <input type="checkbox"/> Alienation from peers <input type="checkbox"/> Self esteem issues <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health <input type="checkbox"/> Other medical issues <input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Guardianship of minister | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Substance abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Justice orders <input type="checkbox"/> Homelessness <input type="checkbox"/> Low literacy & numeracy <input type="checkbox"/> Low academic achievement <input type="checkbox"/> Poor connections <input type="checkbox"/> Suspension <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
|--|--|

Participant strengths:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> regular school attendance <input type="checkbox"/> positive relationships with teachers, coaches and peers <input type="checkbox"/> participation and achievement in school activities <input type="checkbox"/> access to personal, interactional and academic support <input type="checkbox"/> associating with pro-social peers <input type="checkbox"/> regard for self and others <input type="checkbox"/> substance avoidance <input type="checkbox"/> self confidence <input type="checkbox"/> positive sense of identity and belonging | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> stable and affordable housing <input type="checkbox"/> access to services <input type="checkbox"/> participation in community activities, such as sport and recreation <input type="checkbox"/> involvement with supporting adults <input type="checkbox"/> income security <input type="checkbox"/> pro-social attitudes <input type="checkbox"/> competent social skills |
|--|---|

Education History

School young person is attending/ last attended:

Participation pattern at school/training:

- Regular attendance (less than 5 days absence per 10 weeks)
- Irregular attendance (10-15 days absent per 10 weeks)
- Poor attendee or truant (absent from school/training more than 15 days per ten weeks).

Emergency Phone Number: _____

D. SDQ Assessment

Scoring the Self-Report Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

The 25 items in the SDQ comprise 5 scales of 5 items each. It is usually easiest to score all 5 scales first before working out the total difficulties score. Somewhat True is always scored as 1, but the scoring of Not True and Certainly True varies with the item, as shown below scale by scale. For each of the 5 scales the score can range from 0 to 10 if all 5 items were completed. Scale score can be prorated if at least 3 items were completed.

Emotional Symptoms Scale	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	0	1	2
I worry a lot	0	1	2
I am often unhappy, downhearted or tearful	0	1	2
I am nervous in new situations	0	1	2
I have many fears, I am easily scared	0	1	2

Conduct Problems Scale	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I get very angry and often lose my temper	0	1	2
I usually do as I am told	2	1	0
I fight a lot	0	1	2
I am often accused of lying or cheating	0	1	2
I take things that are not mine	0	1	2

Hyperactivity Scale	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I am restless. I cannot stay still for long	0	1	2
I am constantly fidgeting or squirming	0	1	2
I am easily distracted	0	1	2
I think before I do things	2	1	0
I finish the work I am doing	2	1	0

Peer Problems Scale	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I am usually on my own	0	1	2
I have one good friend or more	2	1	0
Other people my age generally like me	2	1	0
Other children or young people pick on me	0	1	2
I get on better with adults than with people my age	0	1	2

Prosocial Scale	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
I try to be nice to other people	0	1	2
I usually share with others	0	1	2
I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	0	1	2
I am kind to younger children	0	1	2
I often volunteer to help others	0	1	2

The Total Difficulties Score:

is generated by summing the scores from all the scales except the prosocial scale. The resultant score can range from 0 to 40 (and is counted as missing if one of the component scores is missing).

E. Sample Risk Management Framework



Risk Assessment Template

This template is to be used with reference to the OHS Risk Management Procedure and OHS Risk Management Guide.
 For support in conducting a Risk Assessment contact the OHS Advisory Service on 1300 074 715

F.
G.

1. Background Information				
School/Workplace:		Date:		
Title of Assessment:		Name of person conducting assessment:		
2. Risk Assessment				
	Identify and list Hazards	List Current Risk Controls	Risk Rating	List Additional Controls (if any)
1				
2				
3				

Using the Matrix

1. Evaluate the **consequences** of a risk occurring according to the ratings in the top row
2. Evaluate the **likelihood** of an incident occurring according to the ratings in the left hand column
3. Calculate the **level of risk** by finding the intersection between the likelihood and the consequences

1. Consequence

Descriptor	Level	Definition
Insignificant	1	No injury
Minor	2	Injury/ ill health requiring first aid
Moderate	3	Injury/ill health requiring medical attention
Major	4	Injury/ill health requiring hospital admission
Severe	5	Fatality

2. Likelihood

Descriptor	Level	Definition
Rare	1	May occur somewhere, sometime ("Once in a life time / once in a hundred years")
Unlikely	2	May occur somewhere within DET over an extended period of time
Possible	3	May occur several times across DET or a region over a period of time
Likely	4	May be anticipated multiple times over a period of time May occur once every few repetitions of the activity or event
Almost Certain	5	Prone to occur regularly It is anticipated for each repetition of the activity of event

3. Risk level

Likelihood	Consequence				
	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Almost Certain	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
Likely	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
Possible	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Extreme
Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
Rare	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium

Key

Descriptor	Definition
Extreme:	Notify Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee immediately. Corrective actions should be taken immediately. Cease associated activity.
High:	Notify Workplace Manager and/or Management OHS Nominee immediately. Corrective actions should be taken within 48 hours of notification.
Medium:	Notify Nominated employee, HSR / OHS Committee. Nominated employee, OHS Representative / OHS Committee is to follow up that corrective action is taken within 7 days.
Low	Notify Nominated employee, HSR / OHS Committee. Nominated employee, HSR / OHS Committee is to follow up that corrective action is taken within a reasonable time.

F. Sample Young Carers Evaluation Form



Young Carers Evaluation Questionnaire

Name:	
Location:	
Date:	

Instructions:

Please circle your response to each statement below and rate the program from 1 to 5, where:

- 1 = You strongly disagree
- 2 = You disagree
- 3 = You neither agree nor disagree
- 4 = You agree
- 5 = You strongly agree

N/A: Choose N/A if the item is not appropriate or not applicable to this program

Content							
No	Aspect	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	N/A
1.	I was well informed about the program.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2.	The program lived up to my expectations.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3.	The program gave me support and 'me' time	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4.	The pace of the program was appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Program Facilitator/s							
No	Aspect	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	N/A
1.	The facilitator/s were well prepared.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2.	The facilitator/s were helpful.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3.	The Facilitator/s answered all my questions.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Program Results							
No	Aspect	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	N/A
1.	I would attend this group again.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2.	I found the group provided me with support	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3.	These programs are a good way for me to learn about having time to spend on myself.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

How would you improve this program? <i>(Tick any that apply)</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide better information before the program.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clarify further the programs objectives.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Improve programs organisation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slow down the pace of the program.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Speed up the pace of the program.
<input type="checkbox"/>	A lot more time for the program.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shorten the time for the program.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have speakers attend the program

Your feedback is sincerely appreciated. Thank you.