Submission to the
Disability Employment Centre of Excellence

Background to APO

For 21 years, the Analysis & Policy Observatory (APO) has been curating material published by organisations such as universities, government and not-for-profits to make it accessible in an open access repository, across internet search engines and in libraries. This material includes policy and research reports, strategies, fact sheets, datasets, surveys, practice guides and case studies. Where available, we collect the easy read versions, summaries and any other resources accompanying the main report or resource.

APO provides curated collections to organisations that wish to engage an audience in an evidence base of policy, practice and research. The Regulation Policy and Practice Collection and regulation jobs board supports ANZSOG's National Regulators Community of Practice. APO provides the Disability Research Collection to support the National Disability Research Partnership's aim to engage the disability community in research, and the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission's Knowledge Hub to support their staff and clients.

Anyone can sign up to APO to add resources (published by an organisation) to the repository and curated collections. These contributions are moderated by APO editors to ensure accurate metadata and compliance with APO's collection policy. Many researchers add their reports to APO to reach a wide audience comprising of policymakers and practitioners and to access engagement metrics such as page views and downloads.

APO is closing operations at Swinburne University of Technology and is currently exploring funding options to re-establish operations at a new organisation sometime in the new year. An outcome is likely to be announced by January 2024.

Question 3.2 Are there any models for a Centre to consider that are not included in this paper?

APO could support support a multi-purpose centre that took on the functions of a clearinghouse, research centre, and evidence-informed training hub.
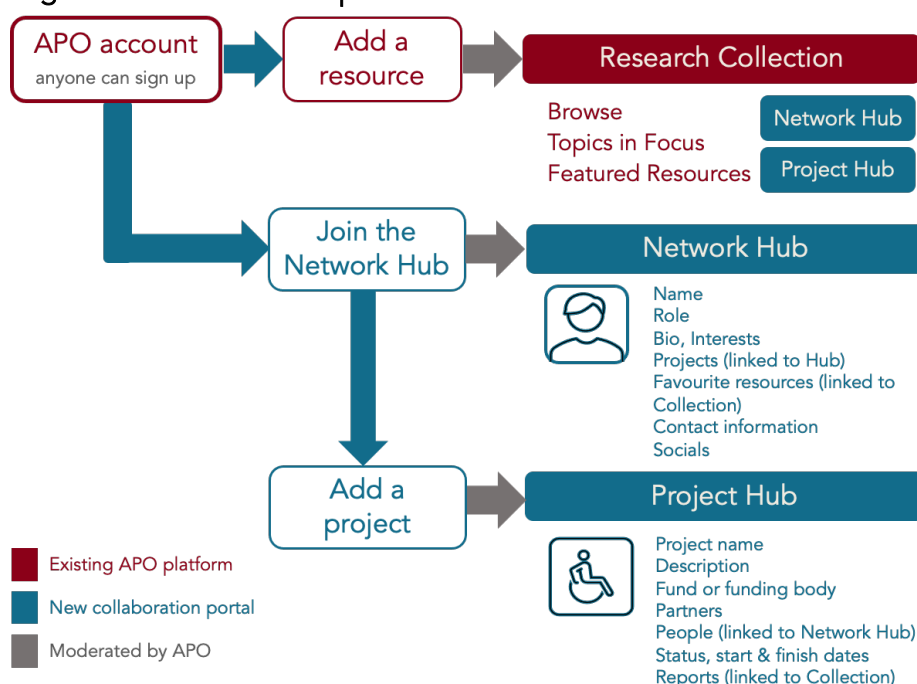
Often when repositories are established, the emphasis is on the quality of the research being made available, whereas the information management is just as important in ensuring that the research is discoverable, findable and accessible. APO has established information management infrastructure including the Public Policy Taxonomy – an up-to-date list of subject terms that reflect contemporary Australian public policy and practice. APO currently has 71 items under the term disability employment.

APO has resources from all the research centres cited in the options paper: the Melbourne Disability Institute at the University of Melbourne, the Centre for Social Impact, the Centre of Research Excellence in Disability and Health, the National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

APO focuses on open access material – primarily grey literature – which has been produced by academics and researchers who wish to engage a public audience.

In 2024, APO is planning to expand our platform to include network and project hubs (see Figure 1), which together with curated collection would create collaboration portals to support evidence-informed practice. The network hubs will enable researchers, practitioners, service providers, carers and people with disability to connect to discuss research and best practice in disability employment. The project hub will enable people in the network hub to provide visibility of their research at the beginning of project lifecycle to maximise participation, engagement and practical outcomes.

Figure 1. Collaboration portals on APO

APO advertises jobs, events and courses to the 15,000 subscribers to our free newsletter service comprising people working in government (around 50%), not-for-profits (20-25%) and universities (15%). This engaged audience could be used to promote the work of the Centre. APO collects a diverse range of resources published by organisations including audio and video which would enable the development of a hub of training resources.

Question 4.2 Are there any other implementation issues that should be considered?

It is critical that the Centre is established to be enduring and builds on, rather than replicates, existing initiatives. APO has established infrastructure that mobilises information, makes it accessible to a diverse public audience, and preserves and archives it for future reference. APO mints Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) which guarantees a permanent digital location for the record. Standalone repositories often disappear when the funding stops as there has been no effort to archive it.

The Centre may wish to consider how it will evaluate and measure its impact. APO collects reliable engagement metrics on the views of the resource landing page and the subsequent downloads. APO can also generate metrics on the use of other aspects of our website.

Question 4.3 What elements of the proposed role of the Centre or its functions should be prioritised?

Using APO's existing platform could enable the Centre to establish a collaboration portal cost-effectively and relatively quickly. The portal could:

- bring together the evidence, practice guides, training materials in one or more curated collections,
- connect service providers, employers, researchers, and people with a disability in a network hub, and
- provide visibility to research projects on disability employment – not just those funded or supported by the Centre – maximising research impact and reducing duplication of effort.