

5 *'A Journey to the Reality of Accountability' Western Cape College: The First Three Years¹ by Derek Hunter*

Western Cape College was created in 2001 and formally launched by the Minister of Education Anna Bligh in 2002.

The College was formed from the original schools of Weipa State School, Mapoon State School, Aurukun State School and Napranum State School. The objective of the formation of the College was to fundamentally address the horrific education outcomes for Indigenous students attending these four campuses. Education outcomes for this cohort of Indigenous students reflected the national picture of endemic failure including a continuing decline in overall outcomes. Training and employment outcomes were equally poor despite the availability of substantial employment opportunity at Comalco Ltd., Weipa. The signing of the WCCCA agreement in 2001 is central to the focus of much of the work of the College and creates a significant partnership opportunity between the College and Comalco Ltd., in the provision of education, training and employment.

The focus of the College has been on achieving organisational effectiveness and individual teacher accountability as the fundamental driver of improved education, training and employment outcomes. This focus has been a higher priority than pedagogy and curriculum innovation, which traditionally are seen to be the answer to the failure in outcomes for Indigenous students. To achieve this end, systems leadership theory has been introduced, providing an integrated suite of models, to drive organisational effectiveness and individual teacher accountability. In effect the College has worked to achieve an environment where teachers can genuinely work to their potential.

Three years into the College's journey 'towards accountability' educational success is now clearly measurable. The central components of healthy education: enrolment, attendance and measurable improved education outcomes are all present in the College's progress over the first three years of operation. In accord with Queensland Education's 'Learning To Earning' charter the College has improved provision of vocational education and training, including the provision of in school apprenticeships and traineeships. The College is now the official provider of TAFE on the West Cape. Re-engagement of youth who have left school but are not yet work-ready has been approached in a highly entrepreneurial manner. The College has provided in principle support, including a student enrolment base and teacher/trainer resources, for the development of the Weipa Training Hub (WMPF) and The Aurukun Youth Strategy. These new organisations are developing effectively and will in the near future need

¹ The document *'A Journey To The Reality Of Accountability By Western Cape College'*, written in 2002, gives a detailed rationale for the creation of the College and the challenges it faced in the early stages of its development. This document is available from the director's office, Western Cape College.

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to formalise their relationship to the College to ensure a coordinated delivery of services to the communities concerned.

The data presented in this document has been drawn from the Queensland Education state-testing centre or has been externally verified to ensure that it does not perpetuate the creative use of statistics that is common in this field of education. Western Cape College has fundamentally turned endemic failure into growing success. The rationale for this important change, dealing with organisational effectiveness and teacher accountability as the required foundation for educational success as opposed to curriculum innovation and pedagogy, now sits as one of the most important steps forward in Indigenous education in Australia.

Overview

An overview of fundamental changes implemented to achieve Western Cape College's objectives:

- Four state schools are formed into the four campuses of one College with a geographic spread of 300km.
- The restructure of management to facilitate the new College undertaken with the assistance of Queensland Education and the Queensland Teachers' Union.
- The financial and physical rationalisation of the new organisation.
- The introduction of systems leadership theory as the organising principle for the College, bringing a fully integrated suite of models to drive organisational effectiveness and teacher accountability.
- The development of a strategy to deliver the Queensland Education charter of 'Learning to Earning'.
- The acceptance of the College's obligations under the WCCCA agreement.
- The development work for the introduction of a Montessori pre-school.
- The introduction of staged schooling; Junior P-3, Middle 4-9, Senior 10-12.
- The introduction of the 'New Basics' curriculum as a trial school for Queensland.
- The introduction of the ETRF reform agenda to provide school based apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Foundation support for the development of the Weipa Training Hub (WMPF).
- Foundation support for the development of the Aurukun Youth Strategy targeting self-excluded youth who are not yet work-ready.
- The re-development of a 30-bed hostel in Weipa.
- The development of a boarding school strategy to assist remote students with genuine access to secondary education including transition support.
- The development of a data collection and reporting framework that has integrity.

Educational progress by campus

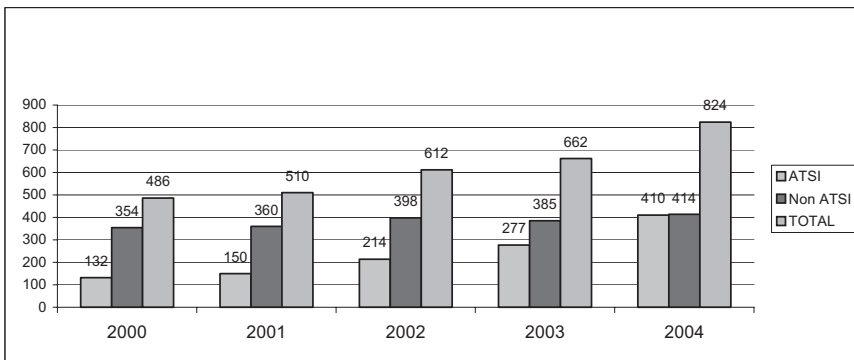
WEIPA

The Weipa campus of Western Cape College has produced an impressive set of education outcomes over the first three years of the College's journey.

The original Weipa State School was a majority non-Indigenous school including a small cohort of Indigenous students. Its academic results were marginally below the state norm despite the relationship between affluence and educational outcomes. Weipa sits in the top tier of affluent towns in Queensland.

Over the past three years the enrolment has grown substantially to the point where the school is now 50 per cent Indigenous (see Figures CS5.1 and CS5.2). This increase in enrolment reflects the movement of Indigenous students from the Napranum campus as well as a significant number of Indigenous students previously not attending any school. Grade 1 classes are now 50 per cent Indigenous enrolment. Education outcomes have improved as have a number of measures that reflect the quality of education provision.

Enrolment



ATSI - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Figure CS5.1 Weipa Campus Enrolment Summary 2000–2004

Attendance

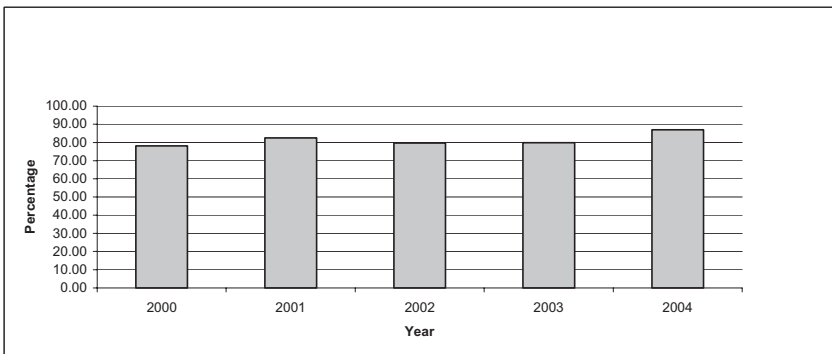


Figure CS5.2 Weipa Total Campus Average Attendance Comparative 2000–2004

Reading/Writing/Number

In reading this data it should be understood that this campus has moved to a 50 per cent Indigenous enrolment. Given the background of the new enrolment it would be reasonable to predict that the mean performance of the campus, in the areas of reading, writing and number, would fall substantially. In reality there has been virtually no change in the mean performance of students. In effect this is an outstanding result (see Figure CS5.3).

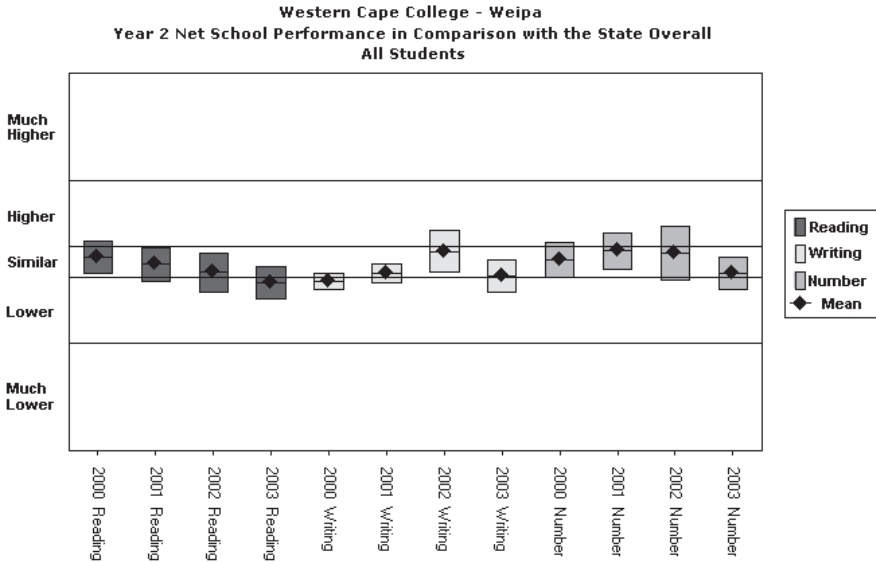


Figure CS5.3 Weipa Year 2 Net School Performance

Year English 12 Results

In presenting this chart the emphasis is on academic improvement in the ‘high’ to ‘very high’ range. This substantial improvement in senior results has been experienced across the range of subject offerings. The ‘low’ to ‘very low’ students in this subject have been catered for by a more appropriate course in 2002 onwards (see Figure CS5.4).

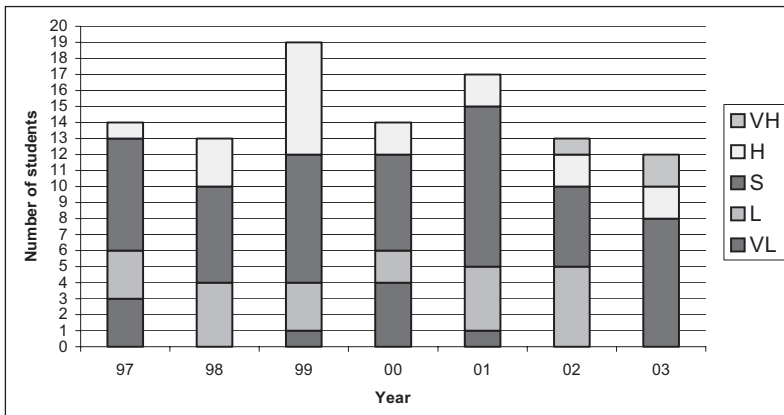


Figure CS5.4 Senior English Result Comparison 1997–2003

MAPOON

The Mapoon campus of Western Cape College has made very good progress over the three-year period of the journey. As Mapoon State School the operation of the school was in a state of serious disarray in 2001. Student behaviour was out of control with the obvious impact on already appalling education outcomes.

Today the Mapoon campus is a model of developing excellence and is an outstanding example of what should be the norm on all remote Indigenous community schools in Australia. All education measures have improved dramatically on this campus (See Figures CS5.5 to CS5.7).

Enrolment

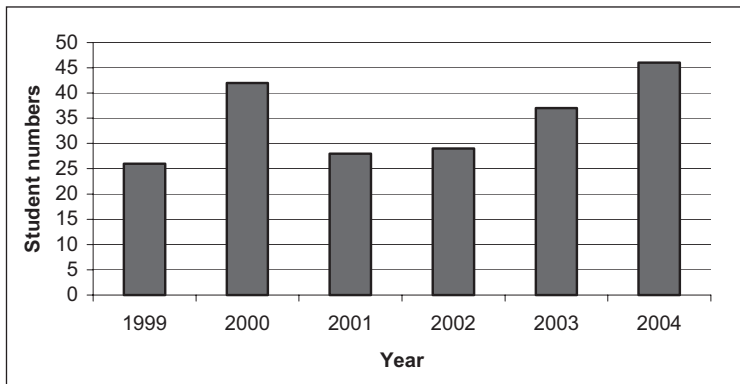


Figure CS5.5 Mapoon Campus Enrolment Summary 1999–2004

Attendance

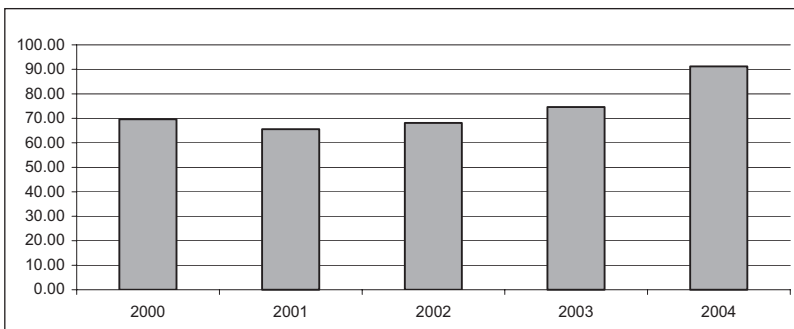


Figure CS5.6 Mapoon Total Campus Average Attendance Comparative 2000–2004

Reading/Writing/Number

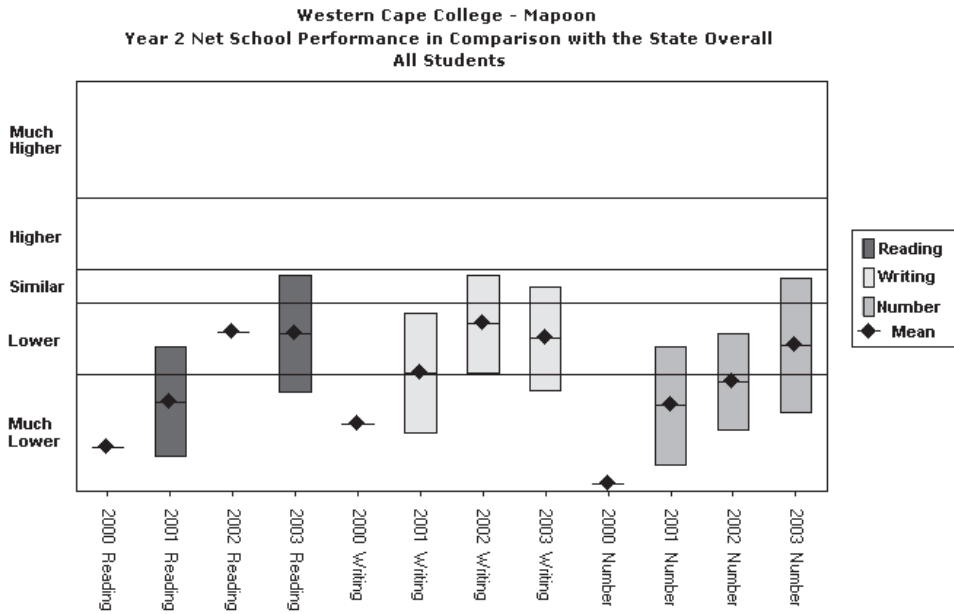


Figure CS5.7 Mapoon Year 2 Net School Performance 2000–2003

AURUKUN

The Aurukun campus of Western Cape College has made slower progress over the three-year journey than is being seen on other College campuses. Nonetheless, improvement is measurable and will rapidly increase over the next two years. The history of Aurukun is a troubled one and it is taking further thought in the design of systems and the training of staff to bring it up to the level of success that is being experienced on other campuses.

The pre-school is a major highlight of educational excellence that has emerged in the past three years. Its operation is of a standard that would be applauded in any suburb of any major city in Australia (see Figures CS5.8 to CS5.10).

Enrolment

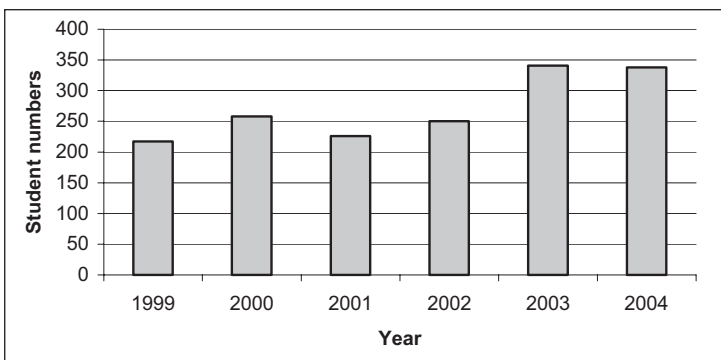


Figure CS5.8 Arukun Campus Enrolment Summary 1999–2004

Attendance

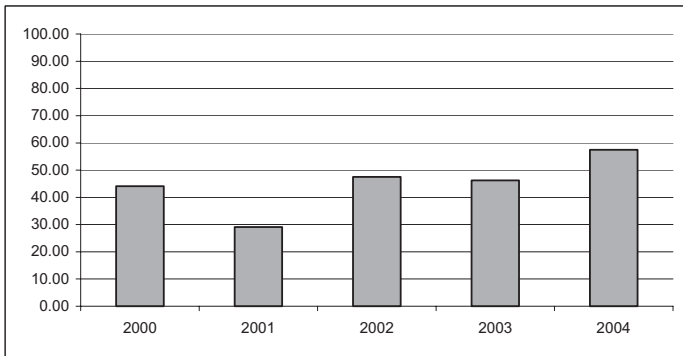


Figure CS5.9 Arukun Total Campus Average Attendance Comparative 2000-2004

Reading/Writing/Number

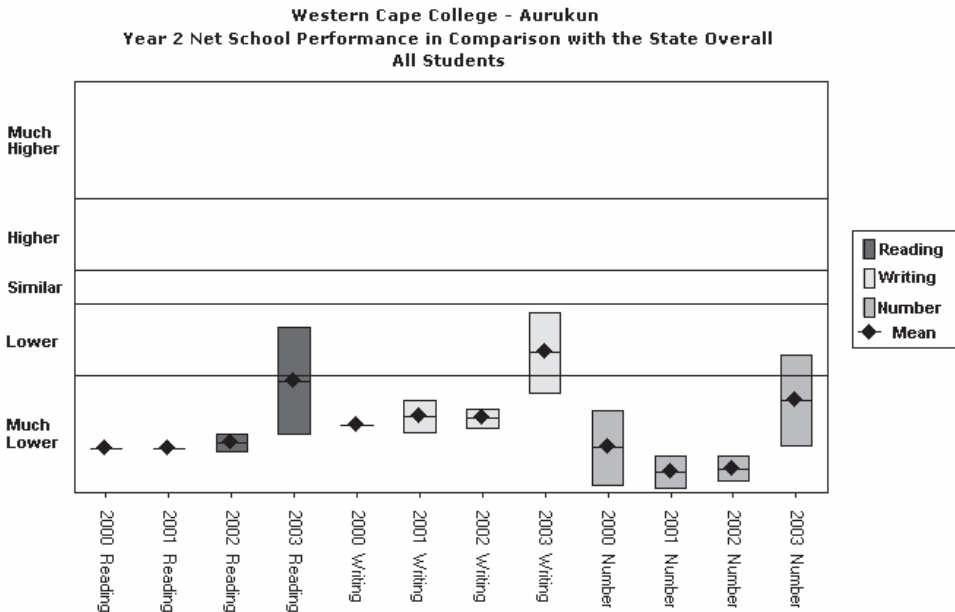


Figure CS5.10 Arukun Year 2 Net School Performance 2000-2003

NAPRANUM

The Napranum Campus of Western Cape College presents an interesting study in education improvement. Because of the proximity of the campus to Weipa a number of parents have chosen to send their children to the Weipa campus. This trend appears to be linked to improving education outcomes as parents move their children in relation to their improved outcomes at Napranum to Weipa. The fluctuating improvement on the Reading/Writing/Number chart would appear to substantiate this trend.

The declining enrolment is accelerating while attendance at the campus is improving (see Figures CS5.11 to CS5.13).

Enrolment

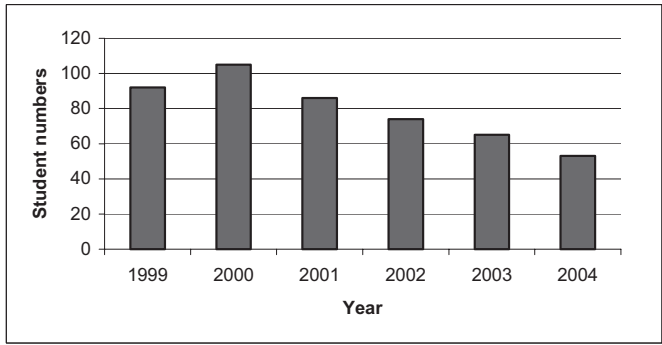


Figure CS5.11 Napranum Campus Enrolment Summary 1999–2004

Attendance

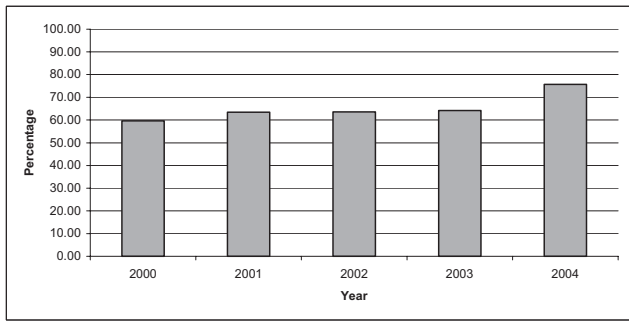


Figure CS5.12 Napranum Total Campus Average Attendance Comparative 2000–2004

Reading/Writing/Number

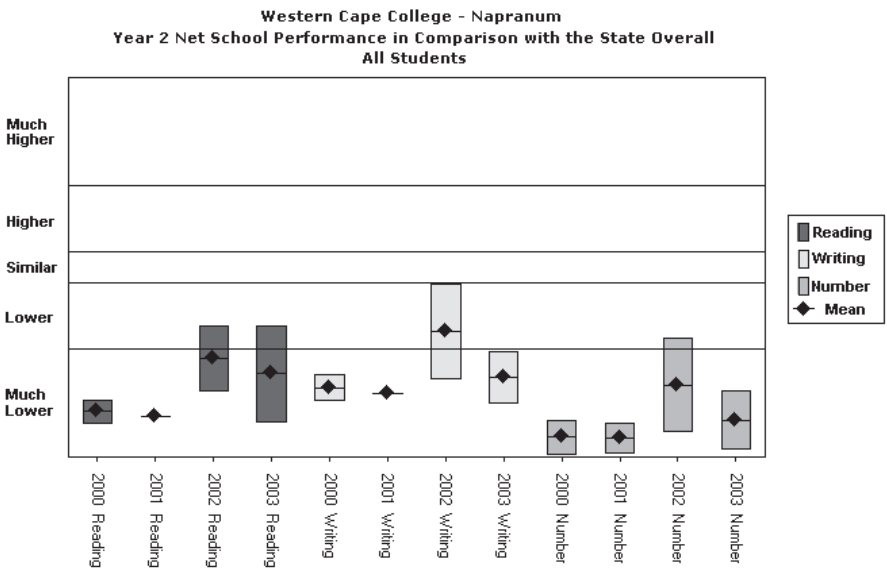


Figure CS5.13 Napranum Year 2 Net School Performance 2000–2003

Future sustainability

The major danger for the sustainability of the success of Western Cape College is that it is directly linked to the work of the current director. The College has no process by which a future director would be required, by Queensland Education, to maintain the current approach that is achieving such obvious success. The danger therefore is that the work will be identified as the work of one particular leader as opposed to a process that is transferable to a new director and indeed to other schools and their leaders.

To deal with this potential risk to the ongoing success of Western Cape College the following recommendations, if agreed, will assist sustainability:

- That the Queensland Education minister, formally endorse the approach to organisational effectiveness and teacher accountability (systems leadership theory), underpinning the current success of Western Cape College.
- That the federal minister of education be approached to nominate the work of the College, in the area of organisational effectiveness and teacher accountability, as a project of national significance.
- That the Queensland Education minister take steps to widen the approach taken to organisational effectiveness and teacher accountability by Western Cape College, to a group of other schools (Cape York) to demonstrate the transferability of the modelling and create a platform for its nomination as an approach capable of wide-scale application in reversing the failure in remote Indigenous education in Australia.
- That given the nature of the employment situation on Cape York (one major employer with the capacity to provide work to appropriately educated and trained Indigenous students) it would be of value to broker a formal partnership with Comalco to strengthen the overall project.

Further improvement in education outcomes

Significant further improvement in education, training and employment outcomes is achievable, if consideration is given to strengthening the current authorities of the director to bring them in line with his accountability to Queensland Education. The following recommendations would significantly improve the business effectiveness and operational outcomes of the College:

- That the director be given authority to veto selection of staff for work at Western Cape College based on the required capability for the work to be undertaken.
- That the director be given the authority to instigate transfer of staff not meeting the requirements of work at Western Cape College.
- That the College trial receiving its total Commonwealth funding allocation, currently tied to various programme outcomes, as a single line budget set against rigorous academic, retention and employment targets.
- That a team leader be funded for a three-year period, to appropriately facilitate the work of the various agencies and their associated funding for 'conception to schooling', to the benefit of the communities served by Western Cape College.

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- That a team leader be funded for a three-year period to further implement systems of data collection and management, in an authentic manner, to allow further refinement of expenditure and resource allocation.