NCVER

Brokering successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes: Common themes in good-practice models

Kristine Giddy
Jessica Lopez
Anne Redman

Cultural and Indigenous
Research Centre Australia

NCVER

Brokering successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes
Common themes in good-practice models

Kristine Giddy
Jessica Lopez
Anne Redman
Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia

CIRCA

Publisher's note

Additional information relating to this research is available in *Brokering successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes: Common themes in good practice models—Support document*. It can be accessed from NCVER's website <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2127.html>.

To find other material of interest, search VOCED (the UNESCO/NCVER international database <http://www.voced.edu.au>) using the following keywords: Community development; employment service; Indigenous people; unemployment; welfare.

About the research

Brokering successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes: Common themes in good-practice models

Kristine Giddy, Jessica Lopez and Anne Redman, Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia

One of the priorities of the Australian Government's social inclusion agenda is to increase employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The government recently announced significant reforms to employment services to ensure that more Indigenous Australians have the skills needed to get and keep a job.

It is therefore timely to examine the characteristics of employment service organisations that lead to sustainable employment for Indigenous Australians. Based on a selection of good-practice examples, this research has identified seven essential factors required for employment service organisations to achieve the best outcomes for their clients:

- having strong vision and understanding the importance of monitoring targets

- responding to the employment market

- maintaining strong relationships with community and business

- offering 'job related' and culturally appropriate training

- collaborating with Indigenous leaders and the community

- providing holistic support

- ensuring strong staff commitment.

A further four factors are identified as desirable:

- tailoring available funding to suit individual needs

- providing employment opportunities through internal enterprise

- learning from other organisations

- having alternative sources of funding.

This research provides a set of clear examples and principles for other employment service organisations, both Indigenous-owned and others, to build their own capacity to achieve positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job-seekers. These are summarised in a separate guide, which can be downloaded from the NCVER website <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2125.html>.

Tom Karmel
Managing Director, NCVER

Informing policy and practice in Australia's training system …

Contents

Tables

Executive summary

Context and aims of research

Against a background of review and changes to employment services nationally and the need to close the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) commissioned the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia to undertake research on factors leading to successful employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The research was overseen by the National VET Indigenous Advisory Taskforce.

The research was designed to provide information for organisations across Australia working to achieve good employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Improving employment outcomes can also lead to better social and economic wellbeing for this group of Australians, at the same time as changing attitudes in the broader community.

The nine organisations (mainly employment services organisations) included in the research varied considerably in their services, structures and locations (urban, regional and remote parts of Australia). Some were registered training organisations or working with registered training organisations, while others were Job Network providers. Some ran their own businesses/enterprises, and others had a mixture of services, including health, tenancy and recruitment. Some were large (with more than 140 employees nationally), while others were small (with four full-time staff). Several organisations were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and managed, and others were not, although all have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are underrepresented in the workforce, have lower household incomes than other Australians, have higher unemployment rates and are more likely to live on welfare payments (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2006). Indigenous job-seekers face multiple barriers such as poor health, low levels of education and a lack of opportunities in areas of limited economies.

Several studies and evaluations of successful employment programs and organisations have identified factors common to successful practice and include:

✧ targeted and integrated training

✧ knowledge of client group and its context

✧ provision of mentoring and support

✧ partnerships and connections

✧ community involvement

✧ skilled and dedicated staff

✧ specialist strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

✧ innovation

✧ promotion of success.

These factors, identified by the literature, became the key areas of focus when consulting with organisations involved in the research.

Research findings

The research identified the characteristics common to most of these organisations and which were helping them to achieve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job-seekers. These common characteristics offered important additions to the factors identified by the literature and provided case studies to exemplify how these factors operate in practice.

The characteristics or factors were categorised as essential and desirable, with those that were common across all of the organisations involved in the research considered as essential for achieving success. Desirable factors were those that were not found to be operating in all organisations but, for those organisations where they were, were considered to be contributing to success. These factors include:

Essential

✧ having strong vision and understanding the importance of monitoring targets

✧ responding to the employment market

✧ maintaining strong relationships with community and business

✧ offering 'job related' and culturally appropriate training

✧ collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and the community

✧ providing holistic support

✧ ensuring strong staff commitment.

Desirable

✧ tailoring available funding to suit individual needs

✧ providing employment opportunities through internal enterprise

✧ learning from other organisations

✧ having alternative sources of funding.

The research found that these factors were interrelated. For example, organisations that are aware and take advantage of the diversity of funding opportunities are in a better position to 'sell' their clients to employers, and, combined with knowledge of the jobs market, they are better able to target their efforts with certain employers where there are known skills and labour shortages. Understanding how to work funding arrangements also allows organisations to provide what the client needs by transferring them to different programs, for example, to provide the level of mentoring that they need.

In addition, while taking a holistic approach to working with clients and looking at the whole person are important, many organisations also stressed that having jobs waiting for people is critical, that they do need that light at the end of the tunnel. While much of this is influenced by the local economy and the commitment of employers, this research indicates that, using the factors identified above, employment service organisations can play a critical role in delivering employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

A guide providing practical examples for organisations has been adapted from the findings of this research. This guide has the potential to assist both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment services organisations to achieve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait job-seekers. It also has the potential to shape the design of employment programs. The guide can be found on the NCVER website<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2125.html>.

Introduction

In early 2008, the Australian Government launched a review of employment services as part of its social inclusion agenda and announced changes, to commence in July 2009, to national employment services. The aim of the changes is to minimise the number of long-term welfare-dependent Australians and to provide services which are relevant to the needs of both job-seekers and employers looking for work-ready job-seekers.

Against this background, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) expressed interest in exploring factors leading to successful employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. With guidance from the National VET Indigenous Advisory Taskforce (NVIAT), NCVER commissioned the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) to undertake research in this area. Consultations were conducted with a range of organisations identified by NCVER and the National Taskforce as having demonstrated success in delivering sustainable employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job-seekers.

This report details the research findings of consultations with the following organisations:

✧ Aboriginal Employment Strategy, Glebe, New South Wales

✧ Central West Community College, Bathurst, New South Wales

✧ ITEC Employment, Cairns, Queensland

✧ Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation, Broken Hill, New South Wales

✧ Myuma Pty Ltd, Camooweal, Queensland

✧ Narromine Community Skills Project Inc., Narromine, New South Wales

✧ Quality Industry Training and Employment, Mareeba, Queensland

✧ Waltja, Alice Springs, Northern Territory

✧ Wunan Foundation Inc., Kununurra, Western Australia.

Research objectives

The overarching aim of the research was to create a 'blueprint', or guide, for success for employment services organisations working to achieve good employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. To achieve this aim, the research sought to explore the following areas with individual organisations:

✧ similarities across the sample organisations that lead to organisational success and how these influence success (structure, nature of relationships with other service providers, composition of steering group, community consultation and inclusion processes)

✧ key training, employment, retention, post-placement strategies and mentoring arrangements

✧ factors leading to successful training and employment outcomes; the number of key factors required to ensure success

✧ underpinning themes that can be applied to future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander training, leading to employment outcomes.

Context and methodology

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment

The disadvantaged socioeconomic status and lower levels of employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compared with the wider population is a key social indicator of the economic health and social wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 2007). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are underrepresented in the workforce, have lower household incomes than other Australians, have higher unemployment rates and are much more likely to live on welfare payments The lowest employment-to-population ratio (46%) was experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote areas (ABS 2006).

Barriers to employment

A major challenge to organisations aiming to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes is recognising and addressing the interrelated factors which can act as barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment. The literature suggests that obstacles to employment differ amongst regions and communities and in many cases are influenced by the type of economy that prevails. These obstacles include:

✧ level of job opportunities in areas of limited economies

✧ low levels of education and relevant training

✧ lack of experience

✧ poor health

✧ problems with alcohol, drugs and gambling

✧ aspirations to work and role models

✧ workplace culture and level of support for employees

✧ geographical isolation, transport and reluctance to leave the community for employment

✧ limited understanding by corporate sector of how socioeconomic disadvantage impacts on the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees

✧ the challenges involved in balancing family and community obligations with the demands of work

✧ access to organised childcare (Commonwealth of Australia 2008; Tiplady & Barclay 2007)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment organisations may also face their own barriers to delivery of sustainable employment outcomes. These include: short-term funding; fragmentation of initiatives and lack of linkages; and contracts that do not necessarily recognise qualitative objectives, such as the need to develop better partnerships with key organisations (McDonald et al. 2005).

Successful employment outcomes and sustainable good practice

For the purpose of this research, the broad definition of successful employment outcomes outlined in McDonald et al. (2005) is adopted. A successful employment initiative for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment can be described as initiatives that lead to employment either directly or indirectly by overcoming barriers and creating pathways towards employment or further training. They may also produce social, personal or community outcomes that lead to employment some time in the future, if not immediately. For example, outcomes such as greater social harmony are not strictly employment outcomes, but increase the likelihood of employment in the future (Lewis 2001).

The need for sustaining good practice is highlighted in the literature. Much of the funding for Indigenous employment programs is short-term, but sustaining good practice should be about ensuring that benefits are long lived and that successive initiatives build on what has already been achieved (McDonald et al. 2005). Longer-term government support for initiatives may be more useful in turning around ingrained community mindsets (Lewis 2001).

Methodology

The methodology for this project consisted of three major components:

✧ A literature review was conducted to clarify definitions of success, identify factors that promote sustainable employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and to provide an overview of what is currently known with regard to best practice in successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes. This phase of the project informed the key lines of questioning used in the consultation phase of the research. The full literature review can be found in the support document available from the NCVER website <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2127.html>.

✧ Site visits were conducted to consult with staff from four of the selected organisations, as well as with employers and job-seekers.

✧ Telephone interviews were undertaken with staff from the remainder of the organisations and employers.

Consultations

A combination of site visits and telephone interviews were conducted with nine organisations to identify factors that lead to sustainable employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (table 1). These organisations are described in more detail in the appendix.

Table 1   Organisations consulted and the approaches used

Method	Organisations	Approach
Face-to-face consultations	Aboriginal Employment Strategy (Sydney, NSW)	Interviews/group discussion with staff and management
	Wunan (Kununurra, WA)	Interviews with clients (3–6 per organisation)
	Myuma Pty Ltd (Camooweal, Qld)	
	Narromine Skills (Narromine, NSW)	Interviews with key stakeholders of the organisation, such as CDEP* organisations (2 per organisation)
		Interviews with employers (2 per organisation)
Telephone consultations	Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation (Broken Hill, NSW)	2 interviews per organisation
	Waltja (Alice Springs, NT)	Interviews with staff, management and employers
	Central West Community College (Bathurst, NSW)	
	Quality Industry Training and Employment (QiTE) (Mareeba, Qld)	
	ITEC Employment (Cairns, Qld)	

Note: * CDEP = Community Development Employment Projects

Research findings

Defining success

When speaking to organisations about success, the researchers posed several questions aimed to elicit an understanding of definitions and measurements of success in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment context. All of the organisations defined success differently and these differences reflect the varying aims, structure and expertise of each of the organisations. However, the notion of sustained employment was strong across all of the organisations.

The most common way organisations measured and defined success accorded with policy regulations; these determine the placement of an individual in continuous employment for 26 weeks as the final outcome for the organisations working in the job market. However, for most organisations consulted, this was viewed as the 'practical' definition of success that determined the funding base, while a broader holistic definition of sustainable employment was perceived to reflect 'real' success.

For example, some organisations defined success as assisting clients so that they are 'never on Centrelink payments again', or so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients are 'off payments and onto wages'.

> If [they] make six months and we don't see them again, [we] see that as a good outcome.

For these organisations success was about employment opportunities that continue after the subsidies stop.

However, some organisations acknowledged that, while placing people in sustainable employment is the ideal outcome, this is not always possible, and that shorter-term work placements are a measure of success, as these can be important stepping stones towards further work.

> [The organisation] has started people on a path and given them a start … most of the job is done, it is up to the client to take it from there.

This was more likely to be mentioned by organisations in regions where there were few job opportunities, seasonal work placements, and little staff turnover, and in these cases training and work experience were viewed as providing a positive experience for clients, even when it does not lead directly to employment.

While discussions on the definition of success incorporated sustainable employment outcomes, it should be noted that a few organisations also felt that success can be defined in terms of the incremental steps that an individual takes on the path to gaining employment, such as greater independence and increased confidence and self-esteem. However, it was noted that these individual successes were much more difficult to measure than more tangible measures such as the number of job placements in a calendar year.

Success was also seen to vary, according to the client, and may include increasing self-esteem, creating a work ethic or creating role models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. For example, one organisation noted: 'An Aboriginal person servicing another Aboriginal person is powerful, it is building a role model base, and a competition base—it says "if I can do this, so can you".' Other organisations suggested that, for some clients, success may be attendance

at training 80 per cent of the time, and for others it may be placing someone in a job that offers wider benefits for the client beyond the provision of employment. As one of the clients explained:

> I'm 55 years old and people have told me I'm good for nothing all the way through. My case manager told me I can do things and now I've proved I can.

Some organisations highlighted the tension between meeting what they saw as rigid outcome measures in order to secure funding arrangements, and delivering services that meet the individual needs of their clients.

> We fight the pressure from federal government programs all the time. It is very restrictive thinking of outcomes in those terms. You have to treat the person as a whole. It is about helping the person feel comfortable.

Another example of a specific definition of success was provided by Maari Ma Health, which defines success in terms of the number of Aboriginal people employed in health-related fields in the region, as the organisation believes that this is one of the most important factors in working towards the improved health of Aboriginal people. Maari Ma also feels that a measure of success for their organisation is the number of Aboriginal people in management positions.

An additional definition of success for a few organisations was improving community attitudes by placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a wide range of non-typical employment areas. They emphasised the positive impact this has on changing community attitudes and generating positive stereotypes.
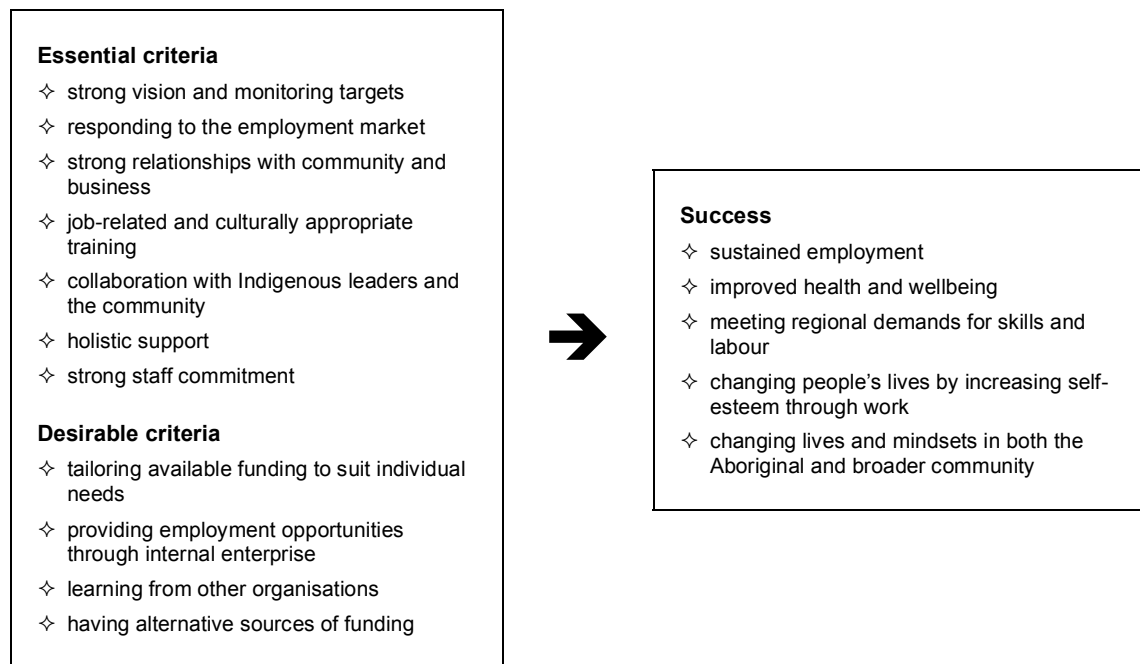
While the definition of success for most organisations focused on the client needs, a few organisations defined success in terms of meeting industry demands for labour and skills. For example, the Aboriginal Employment Strategy sees itself as a vehicle enabling corporate Australia to engage with Aboriginal people and consequently the organisation focuses on business needs first.

Factors for success

The aim of the research was to understand what leads to successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes, as identified by organisations working towards that goal. Based on the consultations, a series of success factors was identified, confirming those already described in the literature, as well as identifying some additional elements. For example, targeted and integrated training was highlighted by the literature as a factor leading to success and was confirmed and enriched by the research, which revealed that culturally appropriate training was another important element to training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job-seekers.

The research provides examples or case studies of how organisations were able to implement the factors in practice. The factors identified through consultations have been categorised as essential and desirable (figure 1). Those that were common across all of the organisations involved in the research have been categorised as essential, and are those factors considered necessary for achieving success with regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes. Desirable factors are those that were not found to be operating in all organisations but, for those organisations where they were, were believed to be contributing to success.

Figure 1   Guide to success for organisations working towards Indigenous employment

Essential criteria

◇ strong vision and monitoring targets

◇ responding to the employment market

◇ strong relationships with community and business

◇ job-related and culturally appropriate training

◇ collaboration with Indigenous leaders and the community

◇ holistic support

◇ strong staff commitment

Desirable criteria

◇ tailoring available funding to suit individual needs

◇ providing employment opportunities through internal enterprise

◇ learning from other organisations

◇ having alternative sources of funding

➔

Success

◇ sustained employment

◇ improved health and wellbeing

◇ meeting regional demands for skills and labour

◇ changing people's lives by increasing self-esteem through work

◇ changing lives and mindsets in both the Aboriginal and broader community

Factors for success—essential

The following factors were identified by the organisations consulted as factors contributing to their success. Although many different factors were offered, the following list was compiled on the basis that each of the factors identified was common to all of the organisations, and are therefore considered to be key elements behind the organisations' ability to deliver employment outcomes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. Many of the factors listed here are interrelated and the research suggests that, in combination, positive outcomes are achieved.

Strong vision and monitoring targets

All of the organisations included in the research had a strong overarching vision and aims that they were working towards. The main objective of some organisations was to promote the welfare of the communities in which they are based and they saw the provision of employment and training as one part of this equation. Most organisations had a vision which extended beyond employment outcomes, to the health and wellbeing of the individuals and communities they service. For example, the Wunan Foundation in Kununurra aims to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people living in the Kimberley region and believes that employment is linked to this:

> Our purpose is to make sure Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley enjoy the capabilities and opportunities necessary to make positive choices in life and to lead independent and fulfilling lives—essentially, to have dreams and a fair chance at achieving them.

Similarly, Maari Ma Health in Broken Hill aims to improve the health of Aboriginal people in the region through the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers.

Most of the organisations we spoke to recognised the need to regularly revisit and review their activities to ensure that their goals are being achieved. Developing key performance indicators and milestones to monitor targets is one way that organisations keep on track with their vision.

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES) is an employment service with seven offices in New South Wales and offices in Alice Springs, Perth and Townsville. The organisation's primary aim is to place unemployed Aboriginal people into employment and the organisation is a vehicle for corporate Australia to engage with Aboriginal people, providing the link between business and the Aboriginal community. With this in mind their vision is based on a job vacancy model, with jobs and employers a key focus. In particular, the organisation focuses on businesses with a presence across Australia, as well as across the regions, since their philosophy is for people to be able to remain and be employed in regional centres.

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy also has broad aims that extend beyond employment outcomes. A key goal is to build pride and passion in Aboriginal communities. The strategy also strives to change the mindset within Aboriginal communities to career pathways, and 'building a life of higher achievement'. As well, cultural exchange is an important outcome and the organisation sees itself 'as an office of social change'.

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy is very focused on monitoring its success, its main measure being the registration-to-placement ratio (the number registered to the number placed in employment). The organisation also conducts an internal staff survey, as well as a longitudinal study of clients to measure its performance.

Responding to the employment market

All of the organisations we spoke to recognised that knowledge of the jobs market is crucial to ensuring success. Organisations pointed to the need to continually adapt their activities to take advantage of labour needs and skills shortages in order to meet the needs of business. Keeping a constant eye out for new opportunities through the media and maintaining extensive networks were felt to help with staying ahead in the employment market. Training organisations responded to opportunities by tailoring and developing new training in areas where there was an industry need for workers (for example, in road construction).

Several organisations pointed to the need to meet employers' expectations and, as a result, these organisations focused on helping their clients understand the employers' requirements. Myuma CEO said: 'We go to employers and ask what they need and then mould someone to that by building their skills and tailoring their training to that need.' For organisations located in remote areas, meeting employers' needs can involve 'bridging the space between two worlds' in order to prepare people for the expectations of work in the 'real world'. At Myuma, providing an Aboriginal-run training camp with intensive support helps to prepare people for employment.

Quality Industry Training and Employment (QITE) provides employment and training services to employers and job-seekers on the Atherton Tablelands (Queensland). The organisation responded to the expansion of the aged care sector and the corresponding skills shortage by providing training for their clients. The response from their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job-seekers was overwhelming, filling their first enrolment for Certificate III in Aged Care. QITE's literacy and numeracy assessment at the beginning of the course determined that they would need to address this barrier throughout the course. As a result, the organisation allowed one year for completion, including 100 hours of work placement. The intensity of study required a strong commitment from clients in order to complete. Initially they experienced a drop-off from 23 to 17 over the first three months. To date, 13 have completed work placements, three are working in the aged care industry, with another three to commence work in the industry on completion of their certificate. Students have completed the course two months ahead of schedule.

Quality Industry Training and Employment has also recognised a gap in the building industry and has started its own furniture workshop, giving clients hands-on experience. Two trainees have completed their Certificate II in Furniture Making and they have recently taken on five Aboriginal trainees who will also complete the certificate course. The Chief Executive Officer of the organisation's Mareeba branch feels that when it comes to training, they 'know where the jobs are and where people are having trouble filling them and we can respond to that'.

ITEC, a Job Network provider with 17 offices across the Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia is aware that in one community where they operate there will be a new retail centre constructed. In anticipation of this, clients have undertaken a building and construction course. Part of ITEC's approach is to scan the media for tenders and local contracts in order to identify potential employment opportunities. Knowledge of upcoming projects in which local contractors are involved is also a source of information when identifying potential opportunities.

Strong relationships with community and business

All of the organisations spoke about the importance of strong relationships with the community and business. It was clear that many of the organisations had regular contact with employers, some even daily. Many of the organisations in remote and regional areas had relationships which were informal and personal. These relationships enabled many organisations to be candid with employers about their expectations with regard to clients. It was noted that, once a relationship is well established, employers were more likely to 'give people a go', as there was a level of trust in the organisation's judgement. Some organisations noted that, when this level of trust has been established, clients with greater support needs could be placed with employers who are more likely to meet their needs.

In some cases where the attitudes of some employers were less than enthusiastic towards taking on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, particularly in smaller towns, organisations understood that they could not afford to 'burn any bridges' and emphasised the need to build rapport. It was noted that through positive experiences some employers' attitudes shifted and became more supportive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment through the partnership with the organisation.

Strong relationships with the community and clients were also seen as important. For non-Indigenous organisations consultations with clients and community members about needs was one formal method used to engage people. In one example at Quality Industry Training and Employment, these consultations were administered through a survey with clients that canvassed their opinions on what they feel is stopping them from gaining employment. This was followed by a one-day workshop with clients and community members, as well as a second day of workshops which brought together community health, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and government officials to share the information gathered and to work collaboratively on meeting the community's needs. Other organisations built relationships with the community through informal networks.

The Wunan Foundation has very strong links with businesses and organisations in the Kimberley region. The organsisation works closely with employers and training providers such as Kimberly Group Training and technical and further education (TAFE) providers. These relationships are marked by constant dialogue and an open-door policy which means that decisions can be reached quickly and efficiently. For example, when the researchers visited Wunan, a meeting was taking place between Wunan staff and TAFE to develop places in the mechanic workshop class for clients about to undertake training with Wunan. This discussion was held face to face and was finalised by the end of the meeting. Wunan also maintains steady communication with employers in the region to ensure that they are constantly aware of employment opportunities.

'Job related' and culturally appropriate training

All of the organisations included in the research either offered training themselves, or were linked to other training organisations. Many organisations noted that, while building people's skills is important, ideally, training must be linked to employment. When comparing themselves with other

employment providers, some of the organisations felt frustrated about the way some agencies place people in training purely for financial rewards (that is, funding from government). This was often discussed as 'training for training's sake'. Most of the training organisations targeted their training to take advantage of skills and labour shortages in the local and regional economy, thereby giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients more opportunities to gain employment on completion. In some cases, such as in the mining industry where companies are legally obliged to provide jobs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations were able to negotiate jobs for individuals before their clients undertook training. In these instances clients undertake training relevant to their area of employment before they begin work.

Some organisations also noted that there is a preference for 'hands on' training as opposed to more traditional, 'classroom' based approaches. While training needs were thought to vary widely, some organisations felt that their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients preferred the applied approach and that many had poor past experiences of being in the classroom. It was acknowledged that this is a more expensive way to deliver training, but it was felt that the outcomes experienced warranted this approach. Some organisations subsidised the training with money from other business ventures, and others were able to integrate their training with community enterprises established to give clients real business/work experience.

Organisations that offered training placed emphasis on employing the right trainers. Trainers that were either Aboriginal or related well to Aboriginal clients were highly valued. Being 'approachable', having 'no airs or graces' and being able to facilitate learning as opposed to 'teacher types' were qualities that were well regarded.

Support-intensive training was also felt to be important in meeting the needs of clients. Some organisations relied on committed training personnel who were prepared to offer their time over and above the funded program in order to give their trainees the support and personal attention needed. One remote organisation provided a camp environment, removing people from the stresses and influences of life by offering accommodation and meals as part of the training package.

Training that emphasised job readiness was also deemed important. For many organisations this included working on life skills such as budgeting and managing finances and preparing people for the expectations of the workplace, which in some cases was seen to be a huge cultural shift. Myuma staff commented that: 'Independent living is the thing they need the most to maintain a job.' For other organisations job readiness involved several stages in order to first establish trust with the job-seeker and build self-esteem. For these clients feeder programs such as art and craft can be a stage one on their journey towards being ready for employment.

The Myuma Group remotely located in North West Queensland negotiates potential job placements in the mining and construction industries before clients undertake their 13-week training program. Wherever possible, the company seeks to guarantee trainees that they can and will get a job on successful completion of the program, either with an outside employer or with Myuma's own civil construction business. The training provides trainee wages, accommodation, all meals and cultural activities. Through their civil construction business and contacts with other businesses, the company is able to provide hands-on training for which there is a job available. The company is also able to create a realistic working environment at the same time as 'cocooning' people and creating a supportive and forgiving program. Chief Executive Officer Colin Saltmere says: 'When people come in they think this is just another government training program they have to do, that it doesn't lead to jobs. They come out changed people, confident and proud, like a snake that's changed its skin.'

Myuma's training program is run by a mixture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous trainers. One trainee said of the training, 'When I got a job I knew what to do because I had done it here. For an Indigenous person to learn from an Indigenous staff member, it has the ability for the information to sink in. They understand what you mean and they have more time for you. After knock-off time you can have a yarn to answer any questions.'

The camp brings together a mix of people from both traditional ways and urban settings. Cultural and traditional elements are part of the camp experience in order to reaffirm and reinvigorate the traditional ways. While learning the expectations of work, participants are also learning traditional values such as respect and responsibility. A Myuma staff member said: 'We're not asking people to forsake their culture.'

Myuma was recognised at the Australian Training Awards, winning an award in innovation in training for the Split Rock partnership in 2007.

Maari Ma health service, located in Broken Hill in western New South Wales, is an example of an organisation that helps to provide workers with on-the-job training. For example, Maari Ma connects recently employed Aboriginal health workers with the Broken Hill Department of Rural Health (part of Sydney University) to undertake training. Training is only offered once an individual has commenced their employment and is tailored to fit their working schedule. Participants train with other Aboriginal students and are provided with mentoring.

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy is a registered group training organisation and has provided school-based traineeships since 2004. In 2008 there were 400 students Australia-wide undertaking this training. This targets students from the end of Year 10 and the beginning of Year 11 to complete a traineeship while studying their Higher School Certificate, with the possibility of sustainable employment upon completion of high school. Staff of the organisation indicated that the program provides a 99 per cent guarantee of employment on completion of the traineeship.

Another approach the organisation takes is to gain industry sponsors or to align the training with industry before training courses are conducted.

Collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and the community

The research included a mix of organisations that were owned and managed by Aboriginal people and those that were not. All of the organisations sought direction and advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and community members through the presence of Indigenous people in decision-making positions in management, boards and advisory groups, as well as staff. All organisations were committed to learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expertise and incorporating this knowledge into their aims, processes and training.

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation is a community-based organisation working with Aboriginal families in remote Central Australia. Waltja's agenda is driven by a management committee of traditional Aboriginal women, whose aim is to improve outcomes for families. Waltja management is a partnership between the management committee members, the executive and the manager, with the support of all other Waltja personnel. Every 12 months Waltja holds its annual general meeting, at which the management committee of no fewer than 22 people is elected. Members also elect office bearers (chairperson, vice chairperson, public officer, treasurer and vice treasurer) and these office bearers make up the executive committee. A majority of management committee members must be appointed from remote communities. The management committee is responsible for setting the overall goals and objectives of Waltja and making decisions about policies and priorities, while the executive committee is responsible for setting direction and making decisions about projects and programs and therefore works more closely with the full range of Waltja's services and activities with agencies and remote communities. This was felt to be a unique and beneficial organisational structure, as the governing body represents the client group.

When Quality Industry Training and Employment took on the Community Development Employment Projects program they went through 'a lot of soul searching' as they are not Aboriginal-owned or managed. While the organisation has many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and 15 per cent of their staff is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, they originally felt it was not their place to run services specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, when a local Aboriginal service folded, they could not afford to let the community lose its Community Development Employment Projects program. They gathered support from the community and clients by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory committee, made up of an Indigenous school liaison officer, an OHS officer at one of the local mines, and the manager of the local Aboriginal health centre, amongst others. Despite some initial suspicion by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community towards this new arrangement, the outcomes they have achieved for their clients have engendered increasingly strong support.

Holistic support

All of the organisations we spoke to recognised that employment is interrelated to many other aspects of life. Many organisations viewed their goal as changing people's lives through empowerment rather than simply finding employment. Organisations worked with their clients to overcome the barriers to employment such as housing, poor health, drug and alcohol issues, welfare-dependent attitudes and a lack of confidence. Most provided intensive and practical support for their clients where needed. Some organisations which offered a range of integrated services such as health, tenancy and other community services could provide this support in-house and others worked closely with external providers. Organisations such as Myuma with a live-in dry training camp arrangement were able to address issues such as housing and drug and alcohol by the nature of their set-up and remote location, which deters clients from any distractions.

Within the gamut of employment services, most organisations offered a wide range of services, including support with resumes, applications, information and advice on training options, as well as updating clients about job opportunities.

Most organisations had a thorough and individualised client assessment process to ensure that they do not 'set people up to fail'. This included sharing stories, history, and background, as well as identifying and addressing (where possible) potential barriers such as transport, work attire, caring options, accommodation, and alcohol and drug-related issues.

Many of the organisations used mentoring or case management to provide personalised attention to clients and employers. Organisations pointed to the need for these arrangements to be highly supportive and provide a service which is friendly and respectful, and which builds client confidence. Effective mentoring arrangements were in place both during training and before placement, and importantly extended to post-placement for up to weeks or months, depending on the need. Mentors were sourced from a number of places, including from within the organisation's

staff, respected members of the community, other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workplace or from the employers' own mentoring arrangements.

The role of the mentor post-placement is to provide a type of mediation between the employee and employer when issues arise and to clear up any misunderstandings. Many organisations stressed the need for these arrangements to be 'hands on' and extend outside the office to the place of employment and to the home. Mentoring arrangements that are tailored to individual needs differed, depending on the needs of the clients, with more intensive support required for more disadvantaged clients, such as those with a history of incarceration, low literacy and numeracy levels, no employment history and those with drug and alcohol problems. Organisations that provide mentoring for employers are highly regarded by employers, who may need support to take on job-seekers and who may be learning along with the employees placed with them. The provision of mentoring or support for employers may lead to employers being better placed to take on more disadvantaged job-seekers in the future.

Located in Kununurra in northern Western Australia, Wunan is a training and employment provider that provides holistic support to clients to help them to reach their employment and personal goals. For example, Wunan provides temporary and longer-term accommodation to clients and employees to assist them in transitioning to independent living. This is particularly useful for clients who have moved to Kununurra from other communities. Wunan also provides financial literacy training and money management courses as part of their training programs. Wunan staff provide post-placement support for both clients and employers to address problems experienced by either party.

The Myuma group uses a system of mentors to support people pre- and post-placement. They draw mentors either from leaders in the community, Myuma's staff or the company the client is placed with. Myuma's staff have regular, even daily contact with employers they work with in order to support the placements and increase the employer's understanding of any issues. Staff go the extra mile to support their clients, hoping that those people will become the next wave of mentors to others.

Myuma's holistic understanding of Aboriginal people and remote life has led them to set up a dry training camp that provides all accommodation and meals, drug and alcohol testing and support, along with life skills such as budgeting, traditional cultural activities, and responsibilities of employment. Myuma believes in the need to break the welfare mentality and encourage a work ethic, with incentives such as paid training, and motivates workers to 'lift their game' and join workers who have gone on to work in other companies. Motivation is aided by the increased prestige and higher pay in employment outside the camp. A Myuma staff member said: 'You can see the change in people after just 28 days.'

One client said of the camp: 'Here there's no chance to mess up, you are a long way from home and away from trouble. You can't get up to mischief. If you get caught drinking all night you are breathalysed and then down for the day without pay, same as at other mines.'

ITEC has recently placed young men from the Torres Strait Islands, Cape York and Western Australia into employment in an abattoir in Victoria. At the time of this research there were five young men moving to Victoria from the Torres Strait Islands. These men had approached ITEC about positions they had heard about from others in Victoria. For these young men mentoring is critical. The mentor travels with them to Victoria, assists in purchasing clothes, organises housing, and attends the induction. The mentor also provides assistance with transport to work and preparing meals. As well, employers are able to contact the mentor for support and assistance.

An employer who works with ITEC also talked about the needs of employees, and noted that for success it is critical that there is someone who is able to offer support and 'find out what's going on' if there are any problems with the employees. This, along with someone to maintain motivation, was highlighted as important from the perspective of the employers. Mentors were viewed as critical as they provide 'someone on the outside between the employer and employee'. Employment organisations that provide employers with mentor services are in high demand.

Narromine Community Skills Project Inc. is a Job Network Provider based in Narromine, New South Wales. A client of Narromine Skills who is currently a trainee at a local real estate agent described the support they received from the employment services agency very positively. The client listed a range of support provided, including regular updates on job opportunities, assistance with clothing, computer access, assistance in completing a resume and completing the job application, approaching employers, seeking information on training courses, and organising job interviews.

'They couldn't have helped me more, helping me with everything. They told me about the job, they put my resume through, and organised the interview … If you needed clothes, they wouldn't just give you clothes, they would tell you what you needed … You can come in and use them [computers] whenever you want, can use them for jobs, and also for email, for anything … They are friendly, you're not just another person, it felt as though you are somebody.'

Strong staff commitment

When speaking to managers and staff of the organisations included in this research, it was clear that they were highly dedicated and committed to bringing about change for their clients. They demonstrated a keen sense of responsibility towards their clients and viewed their roles as different from the 'average' job. They genuinely cared and would 'go the extra mile' to help by doing things such as getting up early to take clients to interviews and work, and providing extra support for people undertaking literacy and numeracy exams. As such, they are able to develop good rapport and personalised relationships with their clients and the employers they work with. One employer working with Myuma felt that the reason their staff had enjoyed success was 'their hands-on approach and getting their hands dirty. They live and breathe the job and are available to the clients 24/7. They go beyond what they have to do. They identify what needs to be done and they do it.'

Ways in which the organisations encouraged committed staff and staff longevity included: sending staff to leadership programs, attending conferences, having regular staff meetings, conducting staff surveys and staff personal development days; establishing special interest groups looking at best practice; and running a buddy system where new staff members team up with more experienced staff. In most cases it was also clear that staff were entrusted with a high level of responsibility to deliver services to their clients.

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy talked about the importance of internal training and development for staff as the key to the organisation's survival and growth, as staff retention is critical for success. There were also several reward programs in place, such as annual bonuses to reward and recognise staff, monthly rewards for staff (employment coordinator of the month receives a $100 prize) and offices (office of the month receives a $200 lunch), six-monthly performance management appraisals, and salary reviews every 12 months.

Central West Community College has a designated Aboriginal services team that works with clients across the range of services provided, including training, recruitment, tenancy and other community support services. The team's staff feel they 'live their jobs' and see them as more than nine to five. They know it is vital to be approachable, empathetic and to develop trust with clients, taking the time to get to know them as people.

Clients at Narromine Skills discussed the commitment of staff and acknowledged the extra lengths they go to provide assistance and support. One client said:

They do a lot for me, so [I am] very grateful. I wouldn't ask them to do more. They bend over backwards to help. [The staff member] helped me a lot with the resume because I had no idea. I brought in information on being a volunteer at the zoo, and she bent over backwards to help me. She found out about a course in Sydney on reptiles, and approved all the travel to Sydney. For another course she printed information for me on flexible delivery, on distance education. She emailed people at the zoo and followed up with phone calls and they were very helpful. I feel very nervous with people so I was happy for her to do it. The room is decorated really nice—fish tanks, photos of her kids and cats. Reminds you they are human, it's personal.

Factors for success—desirable

The factors identified here were illustrated by some but not all of the organisations included in the research. While not common to all, it was clear that for the organisations that demonstrated these factors, they played a key part in the organisations' success.

Tailoring available funding to suit individual needs

All of the organisations received some type of government funding and most spoke of the need to combine and tailor funding arrangements to best suit the needs of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. In this way, they do not let funding arrangements dictate the vision and approach of the organisation, but rather see it as assisting the organisation to deliver what their clients and business partners need. Some organisations combine a range of funding to suit individual needs. For example, while a client may begin under the Structured Training and Employment Projects Employment and Related Services (STEPERS) program, which entitles them to 26 weeks of mentoring, if they are assessed as needing continued mentoring, they can be transferred to the New Careers for Aboriginal People program, where there is no limit to the length of support provided. Many of the organisations also sought additional funding by keeping their eye out for funding opportunities. Other organisations combined the Community Development Employment Projects program with other employer wage subsidies.

Narromine Community Skills Project Inc. works closely with the local Community Development Employment Projects program to develop incentive packages for employers. Despite the sensitivities due to competition for funding and placements in the area, this relationship is seen as important as it enables the organisations to draw on all available funding. Examples include having job-seekers with a CDEP host employer for two days per week, at no cost to the employer, and then offering incentives to these employers to take on the client for the remaining three days per week (for these three days the employer pays 80 per cent of the wage based on STEPERS funding). Narromine Skills refers to this approach as a 'fine balancing act' where they 'look at all services available for the clients … and then arrange these to ensure the best appeal to the clients and employers, and sell this to employers.'

Providing employment opportunities through internal enterprise

A few of the organisations we spoke to had their own businesses and enterprises and were able to offer clients work, traineeships and experience through these operations. This gave their clients the experience of real workplace expectations and requirements in a supportive environment, in many cases transitioning clients to a work environment. Participants also mentioned that this approach gave the organisation's staff a 'hands on' understanding of their clients' skills and needs. In the case of Quality Industry Training and Employment, many of the enterprises they have developed have arisen from client ideas. These have been generated in consultation workshops addressing topics that clients feel could help them or their community with their skills and aspirations. The

community's school bus run and catering service were developed in this way. Other employment organisations such as Myuma were generated from an already established business. Myuma was established on the back of a successful civil construction business that saw the need to train local people and people from neighbouring communities. Myuma is able to hire many of its trainees for their own business ventures. While the prestige and higher pay associated with working for an external employer is promoted amongst trainees, Myuma's civil construction business can act as a temporary fallback for clients who encounter barriers and who do not gain employment with other employers.

Some organisations felt that operating an enterprise also gave staff a greater understanding of other employers, especially with regard to their expectations of employees. One employer felt that this gave the organisation a 'businesslike' attitude when working with employers.

Quality Industry Training and Employment runs several community enterprises, including a furniture-making business selling kitchens and bathrooms direct to the public, a harvest labour service, a lawn-mowing business and a catering company, with plans to start a café. Trainees benefit from learning in a work environment and can work through any potential issues 'in house'. The company was able to overcome issues with fruit and vegetable growers who did not want to take on their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients by establishing a harvest labour hire enterprise. This effectively minimised the risk and took away any paperwork from employers with previous poor experiences of high turnover, as they were now able to pay the organisation directly, rather than dealing with a series of group certificates. The stress relating to individuals not turning up to work was alleviated, with the enterprise shouldering the burden of finding replacements.

Learning from other organisations

Many of the organisations we spoke to dedicated resources to explore approaches used by other employment service organisations. This gave them the opportunity to learn from innovation and to share ideas and at the same time promote their own activities. This was done either informally through networks or through conferences and research. One organisation said: 'We like to keep an ear to the ground with the other Job Network providers because we like to have a good reputation and we like to offer our clients something they can't get elsewhere. We like to lead the way in the types of services we provide.'

Several of the organisations were only just beginning to 'spread the word' about what they had been doing and the success they had been experiencing. This was true for both newer organisations and those with a long history. For example, Quality Industry Training and Employment recently turned 21, and after conducting market research realised that they needed to increase the level of promotion. Fact sheets were developed and sent to key stakeholders and the media, and this led to the TV program *Landline* approaching them to do a story.

Maari Ma dedicates resources to learning from other organisations working in the field of Aboriginal health. This has been achieved by enabling board members to visit other regions across Australia to meet with other health services and consult with management and staff. These consultations have meant that Maari Ma board members have been able to share ideas with, and trial or adopt successful practices being utilised by, these organisations.

Having alternative sources of funding

Some of the organisations included in the research had non-government income sources. These sources included having their own business or enterprise, being registered as a charity, and/or generating income through fees, assets and investments. These organisations felt the extra income

revenue provided the flexibility to operate in 'the way they saw fit', including taking risks and trying different initiatives. As one participant said, the income offered flexibility so that there was an 'independence from figures and quotas'. For some, this meant being able to provide extra support for clients in their training experience, job-seeking or extra mentor support when being placed in a job where the funding was not sufficient to cover this greater need. For others this meant the ability to try new processes such as piloting new employment programs in remote communities. These extra sources of income were seen to act as a shield for organisations when taking risks.

While Central West Community College receives government funding, it also generates income with its customised business training and fee-paying courses such as leisure and recreation courses. The organisation's corporate structure allows it to staff a dedicated Aboriginal services team to cut across its many services, including training, recruitment and tenancy advice, so that clients are not referred from one organisation to the next. This flexibility allows the team to provide intense mentoring and transfer clients from one type of funding to the other in order to meet their individual needs.

One employer (aged care) working with Narromine Skills gave an example where they had employed someone for six months, but after this time they had insufficient funds to continue the employment. The organisation they were working with was able to cover the wages for a longer time period (through the use of their own funds), and after several months the employer was able to offer a permanent position.

How factors interrelate

While each success factor is presented here separately, the importance of the relationship between these factors must be emphasised. For example, while taking a holistic approach to working with clients and 'looking at the whole person' are important, many organisations also stressed that there need to be jobs waiting for people, that they 'do need that light at the end of the tunnel'. While much of this is influenced by the local economy and the commitment of employers, this research indicates that employment service organisations can play a critical role in delivering employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Organisations that know and take advantage of the varied funding opportunities are in a better position to 'sell' their clients to employers, and, combined with knowledge of the jobs market, they are better able to target their efforts with certain employers where there are known skills and labour shortages. Understanding how to work funding arrangements also allows organisations to provide for client needs by transferring them to different programs, for example, to provide the level of mentoring they need.

Environmental enablers

The research identified two major external or 'environmental' factors that can have a significant impact on the success of organisations in achieving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment. These have been categorised as external, as they are outside the control of organisations and result from local economic forces.

The availability of employment opportunities in the region in which an organisation operates, along with the level of commitment from the region's employer base to employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, was a significant determining factor in successful outcomes in Indigenous employment. Organisations were able to offer a greater choice of employment to their clients in regions and industries where businesses were motivated to take on Aboriginal employees through government programs and incentives. For example, organisations operating in areas near mining

activity were more easily able to place their clients and trainees and had the added bonus of being able to take advantage of mining companies' legal requirement to take on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

In a similar vein, the research suggests that organisations had greater success in locations where employers were supportive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment—whether through government incentives or personal commitment. In these cases there were often better relationships and communication between employers, the organisations and clients.

Conclusion

While environmental factors such as local employment opportunities and employers' commitment to employing Aboriginal people impact on organisations' ability to place job-seekers, this research has identified a set of critical factors which assist organisations whose role is to deliver employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job-seekers. These factors have been converted into a guide, which also contains relevant examples. This guide has the potential to assist both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment services organisations to achieve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job-seekers. It also has the potential to shape the design of employment programs. This guide is available from the NCVER website <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2125.html>.

References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2006, *Census data*, ABS, Canberra.

Commonwealth of Australia, 2008, *Increasing Indigenous economic opportunity: A discussion paper on the future of the CDEP and Indigenous Employment Programs*, Canberra, viewed 24 January 2009, <http://www.indigenous.gov.au/Increasing_Indigenous_Economic_Opportunity.pdf>.

Lewis, G 2001, *Moree Aboriginal Employment Strategy: A report to Reconciliation Australia*, viewed 24 January 2009, <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/downloads/158/moree_report3.pdf>.

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 2007, *Indigenous Australians at work: Successful initiatives in Indigenous Employment*, House of Representatives Publishing Unit, Canberra, viewed 24 January 2009, <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/ indigenousemployment/report/fullreport.pdf>.

McDonald, R, Dickie, M, Figgis, J, Fyffe, J & Golding, B 2005, *Not exactly rocket science: Replicating good practice in meeting diverse clients needs*, ANTA, Brisbane, viewed 24 January 2009, <http://www.voced.edu.au/docs/ dest/TD_ANTA_81_15.pdf>.

Tiplady, T & Barclay, MA 2007, *Indigenous employment in the Australian minerals industry*, Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining, St Lucia, Queensland, viewed 24 January 2009, <http://www.csrm.uq.edu.au/ docs/CSRM%20Report_FINAL%20TO%20PRINT_singles.pdf>.

Wunan Foundation Inc 2008, website viewed January 2009, <http://www.wunan.org.au/images/ Wunan_Socio-economic_Pathways.pdf>.

Appendix: Overview of organisations consulted

This section provides an overview of the organisations consulted during the research. Table 2 summarises the key characteristics. A more detailed description of each organisation follows.

Table 2   Characteristics of the organisations

Organisation	Indigenous owned/managed	Not-for-profit	Number of employees	Number of sites	Majority of staff Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	Job Network provider	Registered training organisation
Aboriginal Employment Strategy	Yes	Yes	73	7	Yes	No	Yes
Central West Community College	No	Yes	144	25	No	Yes	Yes
ITEC	No	No	140	17	No	Yes	No[1]
Maari Ma Aboriginal Health Corporation	Yes	Yes	78	1	Yes	No	No
Myuma Pty Ltd	Yes	Yes	40	1	Yes	No	No[2]
Narromine Community Skills Project Inc	No	Yes	8	1	No	Yes	No
Quality Industry Training and Employment (QITE)	No	Yes	60	5	No	Yes	No[3]
Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation	Yes	Yes	20	1	Yes	No	Yes
Wunan Foundation Inc	Yes	Yes	45	1	Yes	No	No

Notes: (1) ITEC works with a sister company that is an RTO.
       (2) Myuma partners with RTOs to deliver accredited training.
       (3) QITE delivers accredited training under the auspice of Jobs Australia.

Description of organisations included in the research

Aboriginal Employment Strategy

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy is an employment service begun in 1997 in Moree. There are now seven offices in New South Wales and offices in Alice Springs, Perth and Townsville. The organisation's primary aim is to place unemployed Aboriginal people into employment, and during the 2007–08 financial year the Aboriginal Employment Strategy placed 1474 unemployed Aboriginal people into employment. The key programs of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy are employment services, group training, registered training, talent management, and the youth, entrepreneurial and ambassador programs. The Aboriginal Employment Strategy has 73 staff across Australia, and all staff are Aboriginal.

Central West Community College

Central West Community College is an independent not-for-profit organisation based in Bathurst and offers services in 25 locations across regional and rural New South Wales. They aim to build the community through the provision of training, employment and community support services.

Their training services include community education courses, language and literacy training, Aboriginal training and employment programs, prevocational training for job-seekers, customised business training and vocational and recreational short courses. Other services they offer include recruitment, disability employment, apprenticeships and community support services, including tenancy and personal support. While Central West Community College receives government funding, it also generates income with its customised business training and fee-paying courses such as leisure and recreation courses. The college takes direction from a board and has a designated Aboriginal Services Team that works with Aboriginal clients across the range of services provided. The college was named runner-up in the Large Provider of the Year category at the New South Wales Training Awards.

ITEC

ITEC is an employment service provider that originally started in Mackay 15 years ago and now operates in 17 sites across Australia in Queensland (Mackay, Cairns, Atherton, Cape York and the Torres Strait Islands), the Northern Territory (Alice Springs and remote central Australia, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, Katherine and Tennant Creek), Western Australia (Kununurra, Broome, and Port Hedland) and South Australia. ITEC employs 140 people in the Job Network area and one-third of its staff are Indigenous. ITEC is a for-profit organisation and operates all Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations employment programs, including the Structured Training and Employment Projects Employment and Related Services and Indigenous Youth Employment Consultant programs.

Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation

Maari Ma is a health service and Aboriginal corporation that has been operating for the last 13 years in Broken Hill in western New South Wales. As a health service, one of Maari Ma's chief aims is to improve Aboriginal health standards for people in their region, to ensure Aboriginal people live longer and to close the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. In terms of employment, a key focus area is training local Aboriginal people to become health practitioners, as Maari Ma believes that employment is an important social determinant that is strongly linked to improving health standards. Maari Ma also feels that it is important that Aboriginal people are represented in management positions within the organisation and is working towards this aim. To achieve the desired employment targets, the organisation has established a strong relationship with the Broken Hill Department of Rural Health, which has a specialised training course for Aboriginal health workers. Maari Ma has a board that consists of seven Aboriginal people who meet six times a year and are democratically elected every three years. There are 78 staff members and over two-thirds are Aboriginal.

Myuma Pty Ltd

Myuma Pty Ltd is an entity of the Myuma Group, a corporation set up to represent the Indjilandji/Dhidhanu people, traditional owners from the upper Georgina River basin in north-west Queensland and central-east Northern Territory. The Myuma group was established in 2004 to further the wellbeing, cultural maintenance and quality of life of the Aboriginal people of their region. Myuma Pty Ltd is a non-profit proprietary company that runs a labour and plant hire operation, delivers accredited training programs and offers employment opportunities to local Aboriginal people in civil construction work, mining and related support services, including horticulture, hospitality and catering and limestone quarry work. Myuma employs around 40 staff and receives direction from its board of elders. Myuma won an award for Innovation in Training for the Split Rock Partnership at the Australian Training Awards in 2007.

Narromine Community Skills Project Inc

Narromine Community Skills is a Job Network provider based in Narromine in New South Wales. This is a community-based not-for-profit organisation, with fewer than ten staff (most are non-

Indigenous). Narromine Skills has a long history in the Narromine area—it has been operating for more than 20 years—and has over 200 Aboriginal clients.

Quality Industry Training and Employment

Quality Industry Training and Employment is a community-based non-profit registered charity organisation providing employment and training services to employers and job-seekers on the Atherton Tablelands (Queensland). The organisation recently turned 21 years old. Quality Industry Training and Employment runs both accredited and non-accredited vocational training courses, employment and job-placement services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment programs, a labour hire service, including harvest labour hire, professional recruitment services, community development programs and several community enterprises, including catering, lawn-mowing, community transport, and a timber workshop. Around 15 per cent of the organisation's staff are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and the committee receives direction from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory committee. They have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific strategy, which is overseen by an Indigenous Programs division. Quality Industry Training and Employment has also won several industry awards.

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation

Based in Alice Springs, Waltja is a community-based organisation working with Aboriginal families in remote Central Australia. Waltja's agenda is driven by a management committee of traditional Aboriginal women, whose aim is to improve outcomes for families. The Management of Waltja is a partnership between the management committee members, the executive and the manager, with the support of all other Waltja personnel. Every 12 months Waltja holds its annual general meeting, at which the management committee of not fewer than 22 people is elected from its membership. All management committee members are nominated by and live in their remote community. Waltja is a registered training provider and offers workshops and one-to-one training in a range of community development and community service areas, such as nutrition, health, child care, youth, aged care and disability services, life skills, fund-raising, program management, financial management and governance of community organisations. The training supports Aboriginal community development and self-determination and the employment of Aboriginal people in community-based services. Waltja has approximately 20 staff, most of whom are Aboriginal.

Wunan Foundation Inc.

Wunan Foundation Inc., located in Kununurra, Western Australia, was established in 1997 as a community-driven initiative by the elected representative body for Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley, ATSIC Wunan Regional Council. This initiative recognised that Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley need to develop a strong, independently sustainable economic base. The purpose of the foundation is to build capacity to sustain innovative and progressive programs for improving socioeconomic outcomes for Aboriginal people in the East Kimberley. Wunan is governed by a board consisting of six local Aboriginal people across the Kimberley region, an advisor and three other members with expertise relevant to Wunan affairs. Wunan has four main areas of activity, including Wunan Business Assist, Wunan Accommodation, Wunan Construction and Maintenance and East Kimberly Job Pathways. The Job Pathways program focuses on training solutions to increase 'employability skills' and provides post-placement support, including counselling, financial planning, self-esteem building, skills development and accommodation, to achieve sustained employment outcomes. There are 45 staff members across the organisation and roughly half are Aboriginal. Wunan was established to assist Aboriginal people to find employment and accommodation and as such their client base is solely Aboriginal people from the Kimberley region.

NCVER