Replicating good practice in meeting diverse client needs
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Summary of Main Themes

Introduction

There is no doubt that vocational education and training (VET) has a key role to play in improving the lives of Indigenous people and people with a disability, and that learning and skills are vital in building social capital, particularly amongst marginalised groups.

There are many examples of good practice initiatives that rise ‘above and beyond’ to meet client needs and that open the way to meaningful employment for clients. These are training programs that are built around a solid understanding of the needs of Indigenous people and people with a disability, that bring together community and relevant government agencies, that adapt and evolve as necessary and that involve people who are deeply committed to achieving outcomes for these client groups.

Despite the success of these isolated examples of good practice however, they are often not sustained, nor is good practice being consistently replicated across the sector. Funding is usually only available on a short-term basis. When one initiative is over, practitioners spend significant amounts of time hunting for bits of funding to continue the initiative or begin a new one. This project-driven approach, as well as the fragmentation of initiatives and lack of linkages means that, on the whole, when it comes to better training and employment outcomes, more could be done to build the capacity of local communities and reduce economic and social disadvantage.

The initiatives studied

The aim of this project was to examine a handful of good practice initiatives and:

- analyse the reasons for success
- distil key lessons; and
- develop principles and models that can be used to support the broader replication of the identified good practices.

To select the initiatives to analyse, we looked for ‘successful initiatives’ as described below:

A ‘successful initiative’ leads to...

- employment outcomes
  - directly
  - indirectly

  either or by

  - surmounting barriers to access and to successful learning
  - creating pathways towards employment or further training
  - social, personal or community outcomes that may lead to employment outcomes
That is, we focused on those that led to employment outcomes for the clients. We recognised that while some initiatives directly result in employment for clients, others increase the likelihood that clients will find employment some time in the future, even if not immediately.

**A ‘good practice’ model**

Although many good practice initiatives attribute their success to a committed and competent individual, we wanted to avoid the conclusion that good practice comes down to having “the right person in the right place at the right time”.

And it wasn’t too hard. When we looked closely at the individuals involved in good practice initiatives, and at the context in which the initiative occurred and the systems supporting it, there were common ingredients of success. We were able to identify characteristics of good practice that should not be owned by just a few shining stars, but which are able to be adopted by other practitioners and systems.

If we were to capture the characteristics in single words, they would be:

- **Tenacious**
- **Knowledgeable**
- **Supportive**
- **Adaptive**
- **Connected**

Note that these elements are not quite preconditions—i.e. that all must exist before an initiative will succeed. In fact, we came across initiatives that did not demonstrate all characteristics but that were still highly successful.

Neither are the characteristics a ‘list’. The starting point may be any one of them and they need not be in a particular order. The relative importance of characteristics is highly dependent on the context.

Essentially the words capture the characteristics consistently present in the examples of good practice, in a way that also conveys the passion, energy and grim determination that we found. Together, the characteristics constitute a model for thinking about good practice with the potential to guide future policy and practice.
Replicating and sustaining good practice

The model of characteristics set out above seems to describe well what is in place while ‘good practice’ is being practised. The obvious next question is: how can these characteristics, which underpin good practice, be sustained and/or replicated?

The case studies suggest an answer. In them, it is clear that the characteristics of good practice did not appear suddenly with the particular initiative we investigated. Rather, the characteristics had been gradually developed through a series of related projects and initiatives. This process of stepwise acquisition of capability reminded us of the investment mindset that is common in business, but much less common in education. In a business investment, one would not put money into an initiative without an understanding – or at least a sound inkling – of which part of the expenditure is special and only for this phase and what more might be needed to keep on the path of continuous improvement.

Our tentative conclusion is that investment in projects intended to improve employment outcomes for Indigenous learners and learners with a disability purchases three ‘goods’:

- participant learning—the explicit information/knowledge acquired about good practice through the experience of the project
- participant good will—the "110 per cent" effort that people who are engaged in an initiative routinely expend because of the challenge and their passionate commitment to achieving their goals; and
- consumables—the resources that are used in order to carry out the initiative/program.

Which of these purchases can be sustained or shared (replicated) without further input will depend on the particular initiative, but it is highly unlikely that significant new practice will require a single-shot investment.

In addition to the sustainability of initiatives, is the important issue of how good practice is replicated. We looked to some thinking around change management which emphasises the need to focus simultaneously on structures and systems and culture, or behaviours and attitudes. There are various systemic issues such as the short-term nature of funding and the heavy focus on accountability, that can impede good practice and which require examination. There are also ways in which individual practitioners can be inspired and supported to demonstrate the characteristics of good practice in their own context.

Developing the good practice model into useful tools

We see that the good practice model could, with some extra work, be developed into useful tools for proposers, funders, institutions and the system in the following ways:
### Integrating the characteristics of good practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uses</th>
<th>Proposers</th>
<th>Funders</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>The system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposals, Assessment and Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Design of an application template for projects</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of project proposals</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Enabling a proposer to show that they have all the elements, or how the program will develop each element</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing criteria for proposal assessment: testing proponents’ thinking about the purpose of a proposal, possibly more efficiently than can be done at present</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing assumptions in project proposals, by asking “why”: “why do we need tenacity?” then ask again about the answer, then again— to provide a gap analysis</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Checking the alignment of the initiative with the site on which it is to be enacted</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking whether a particular initiative is transferable— Would the innovation have the right elements in the new environment? What would need to be done to maximise the chances of replicability?</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Checking for smooth connections at the system-provider interface</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>A basis for dialogue between applicants and funding agencies</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>A basis for developing partnerships</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>A probing tool to help providers and clients understand each other</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Diagnose gaps in expertise</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Use as a change management tool</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Test and sensitise the system to deliver good practice to various equity groups</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation and Review</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discover whether there is a gap between ‘ideal’ and ‘achieved’</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiding self-reflection and self-analysis</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompts to the system to develop those elements which seem to be absent, or to look at how they might be generated</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysing the system-wide program of funding (perhaps to move towards a whole of government approach?)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Not Exactly Rocket Science"
Conclusion

In the course of this project, our many informants described to us how a particular initiative had succeeded, or what needed to happen in order for an initiative to be replicated successfully. They recognised, as we did, that the changes needed did not require particular brilliance to work out, and that many of the reasons for success and the suggestions for improvement were little more than commonsense. Several of them then, in a somewhat ruminative tone, said: "It’s not exactly rocket science."

Articulating the characteristics of good practice in a way that captures the energy demonstrated in the initiatives, although not rocket science, has the potential to change the way people think about equity initiatives and is an essential foundation for influencing the systems and processes that support equity initiatives.
1. Introduction

There is no doubt that vocational education and training (VET) has a key role to play in improving the lives of Indigenous people and people with a disability, and that learning and skills are vital in building social capital, particularly amongst marginalised groups.

There are many examples of good practice initiatives that rise ‘above and beyond’ to meet client needs and that open the way to meaningful employment for clients. These are training programs that are built around a solid understanding of the needs of Indigenous people and people with a disability, that bring together community and relevant government agencies, that adapt and evolve as necessary and that involve people who are deeply committed to achieving outcomes for these client groups.

Despite the success of these isolated examples of good practice however, they are often not sustained, nor is good practice being consistently replicated across the sector. Funding is usually only available on a short-term basis. When one initiative is over, practitioners spend significant amounts of time hunting for bits of funding to continue the initiative or begin a new one. This project-driven approach, as well as the fragmentation of initiatives and lack of linkages means that, on the whole, when it comes to better training and employment outcomes, building the capacity of local communities and reducing economic and social disadvantage—more could be done.

The mid-term reviews of Partners in a Learning Culture Blueprint¹ and the Bridging Pathways Blueprint², confirmed that while there has been progress at a policy level to increase opportunities and improve outcomes for Indigenous people and people with a disability—for example, the recognition of the need for holistic, whole of government approaches—the picture ‘on the ground’ is slow to change. Employment outcomes are still significantly low for both these client groups.

So there is an urgent need and opportunity for the good practice that exists to be somehow harnessed and for the principles underlying their success to be applied to not only other initiatives but also to the systems, processes and policies that support all equity initiatives.

There is also a need to develop ways of sustaining the benefits of good practice so that the end of funding does not spell the end of the benefits and support for the clients, nor the end of the learning and goodwill that was achieved.

About this project

In response to the mid-term reviews of the Blueprints, States, Territories and the Australian Government identified a range of projects and initiatives they believed to be good practice, in terms of the outcomes they are delivering for people with a

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¹ Australia’s blueprint for implementing the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for vocational education and training
² A blueprint for the national plan of action for increasing opportunities for people with a disability in vocational education and training
disability and Indigenous Australians. The aim of this project was to examine a handful of those initiatives and:

- analyse the reasons for success
- distil key lessons; and
- develop principles and models that can be used to support the broader replication of the identified good practices.

To select the initiatives to analyse, we focused on those that led to employment outcomes for the clients. We recognised that while some initiatives directly result in employment for clients, others increase the likelihood that clients will find employment some time in the future, even if not immediately—for example, one initiative involved working with employers in a region to address reluctance on their part to employ people with a disability, while others provided preliminary training that opened opportunities for people to complete further training which might lead to employment.

Essentially, we looked for ‘successful initiatives’ as described below:

![Diagram of successful initiative outcomes]

A ‘successful initiative’ leads to...

- employment outcomes
  - either directly or indirectly
  - by surmounting barriers to access and to successful learning
  - creating pathways towards employment or further training
  - social, personal or community outcomes that may lead to employment outcomes

We also drew on the knowledge and advice of equity officers to select initiatives. In the end, we examined eleven initiatives, with a balance between initiatives for Indigenous clients and clients with a disability, ensuring there was at least one from each State and Territory.

From our examination of the initiatives we analysed the common elements that contributed to their success and developed a model for thinking about what constitutes good practice. This was tested with key stakeholders and practitioners in a Synthesis Workshop.

The full project methodology is provided at Appendix A, and the good practice exemplars are reported in Appendix B.

"Not Exactly Rocket Science"
"Not Exactly Rocket Science"

In the course of this project, our many informants described to us how a particular initiative had succeeded, or what needed to happen in order for an initiative to be replicated successfully. They recognised, as we did, that the changes needed did not require particular brilliance to work out, and that many of the reasons for success and the suggestions for improvement were little more than commonsense. Several of them then, in a somewhat ruminative tone, said: “It’s not exactly rocket science.”

Thus the title of our report.
2. A GOOD PRACTICE MODEL

All the initiatives examined represented some kind of intervention designed to overcome the disadvantage experienced by Indigenous learners and learners with a disability. The VET system most easily accommodates the average person who faces few barriers in accessing training and finding a job and does not always accommodate those requiring extra support or a customised approach. These initiatives are examples of people and programs that provided a way for Indigenous learners and learners with a disability to acquire skills and enhance their quality of life.

The characteristics of good practice initiatives

In examining successful initiatives in this field, people commonly identified a particular person as being critical to the initiative’s success—a champion who inspired and drove the initiative, and kept on driving and inspiring, even after initial funding ceased. And many had witnessed effort flagging when the champion moved on.

Despite this, we were anxious not to conclude that good practice comes down to having "the right person in the right place at the right time". To quote one respondent:

“That’s a hopeless answer. It’s like saying Cathy Freeman is special so we are absolved from training anyone else...It is not personality. It is discipline and being methodical and taking the time and being thoughtful. It is making your own mark.”

And we did find that, when we looked closely at the individuals involved in good practice initiatives, and at the context in which the initiative occurred and the systems supporting it, there were common ingredients of success. We were able to identify characteristics of good practice that should not be owned by just a few shining stars, but which are able to be adopted by other practitioners and systems.

If we were to capture the characteristics in single words, they would be:

- Tenacious
- Knowledgeable
- Supportive
- Adaptive
- Connected

"Not Exactly Rocket Science"
Note that these elements are not quite preconditions—i.e. that all must exist before an initiative will succeed. Neither are they principles. We think of them together as a model for thinking about good practice. They are characteristics that we found consistently in the cases we studied, although in some cases not all characteristics were present when an initiative started, and despite this the initiative was highly successful.

**Knowledgeable**

- a deep and solid understanding of needs
- considerable self-understanding
- data
- multiple perspectives
- learning from mistakes

Good practice initiatives are based on a solid understanding of the character and aspirations of the client group and its context. They draw on a base of sound and credible research and the best available knowledge about what works and what doesn’t. Very often, the initiators of good practice initiatives have considerable experience of working with Indigenous clients and clients with a disability and a deep understanding of how to get the best possible outcomes for them. They understand labour market realities and the context within which the initiative exists—the organisations it needs to connect with and the systems it needs to work within.

*The West Coast Building Initiative* is a great example of an initiative born out of a real understanding of the clients and the context. The initiator is a TAFE lecturer in Ceduna, a small town in which one third of the population is Aboriginal. He knew that existing entry level training in woodwork was not providing meaningful outcomes for the clients, and certainly not employment outcomes. He also knew there was a lot of work available in Aboriginal housing in the Ceduna area. But traditional building courses which might have equipped Indigenous clients with the skills for that work, were only offered in Adelaide. Most of the students were unable to leave their homes and families to complete a course approximately 800kms away.

Based on this knowledge, he instigated the *Building Initiative*, through which a small group of Indigenous students are completing a building qualification that will enable them to find work in the local housing industry.
Good practice initiatives start with extensive consultation with clients: learners, businesses, communities—taking lots of time upfront because the initiators know that this is an essential step.

Then they adapt. They customise training programs and approaches, built around the learner and their circumstances. And they keep adapting when necessary—constantly evolving in their quest to find the very best way of achieving their goal. They are responsive to the client and to any research or experience in the field that shows what works. Initiators of good practice are not constrained by the usual way of doing things. Most often, they are operating well outside the normal bounds. They are prepared to be innovative and find new ways—if that’s what it takes to help their clients.

Courses offered by OTEN Institute for Aboriginal Women in Corrective Courses provide an excellent example of training that is developed around the client and that evolves to suit their requirements. The Program ethos is ‘to do no harm’ and to not expose students to any negativity within their educational experience. Coordinators go to extraordinary lengths to tailor the program and its delivery for the clients. Students are not required to attend TAFE, they work at their own pace and a teacher or mentor is available to provide support as required. The results have been outstanding. The last intake totalled 150 students with a 100 percent completion rate.

The model was replicated at a correctional centre which also took a flexible approach. In response to discussions with the women and with the aim of encouraging the students to complete their courses, the number of assignments was reduced, and some course requirements were adapted to take account of the fact that the women did not have access to the internet and were unable to make phone calls.

The Julalikari Council Women’s Arts and Crafts Centre at Tennant Creek was established in 1994 in response to an existing interest in painting amongst some women in the community—an interest that had, in part, been stimulated by one of the local churches. The centre operates simultaneously as a business workplace and like an art school. Different artist are invited to come, work with and teach the women new skills. It has no ‘grand training plan’ but the training brought in is a gradual evolution in response to the women’s changing interests, and with a view to keeping fresh ideas and possible lines of development coming in.

There are plans to upgrade and extend the centre and the women play a key role in shaping its activities. Although its focus is art more than training, the centre does encourage women to undertake studies and some have achieved qualifications in Business Studies, computing and literacy.
It often takes more than one person or organisation to meet diverse client needs. In fact, some initiatives are successful purely because of the extent of connection and engagement with relevant community organisations and other agencies representing the interests of the client. Connections are also often made outside the group of a person’s or an organisation’s ‘usual’ network, getting help from unexpected and remote sources, and giving help in return.

A characteristic of many good practice initiatives is that they establish connections and get people working together for the benefit of the client—like the disability employment agency that works with group training companies to help people with a disability into traineeships and apprenticeships. Initiators are often great networkers who make connections with other organisations and individuals. Good practice initiatives, particularly for Indigenous students, recognise the importance of connecting with the community and realise that success is not only about benefits to an individual, but benefits to the community.

The approach taken by *Edge Employment Solutions* in Western Australia demonstrates how a partnership between two organisations can increase the participation of people with disabilities in apprenticeships and traineeships. *Edge*, a disability employment agency (‘DEA’), recognised that it could work with group training organisations (‘GTO’) to help people with disabilities into trades and occupations that are accessed through apprenticeships or traineeships—areas where they were underrepresented.

*Edge* has been involved in a number of programs designed to foster partnerships between GTOs and DEAs around Australia and to discover what makes them successful. Interestingly, a survey it conducted in 2001 found that only 23 out of the 180 GTOs operating in Australia were indenturing apprentices and trainees with disabilities and the 20 most successful had well established partnerships with one or more disability employment agencies in their area.

After approximately five years of experience and after various projects to establish partnerships around Australia, *Edge* understands what makes partnerships work, and what undermines them and is currently supporting newly formed GTO-DEA partnerships around the country. Resulting from its initiative, group training organisations are starting to routinely include people with disabilities amongst their indentured students—a situation that did not exist five years ago.
The Wurreker Koorie Project in Victoria understands that community involvement is crucial to the successful education of the Koorie people. The initiative arose out of a recognition that training providers were offering programs that were often inconsistent with the training needs and aspirations of Koorie people.

Essentially, Wurreker is a way of doing things. It is a mechanism for collaborative planning and delivery of education and training—an equal partnership between Koorie communities and the State Governments. It helps ensure that training is culturally appropriate and provides the Koorie people with pathways to employment, community development, individual learner development and self-determination.

Supportive

- building capacity
- flexibility and support for learners
- helping employers adjust to requirements
- nurturing teachers
- “whatever it takes”

Good practice initiatives are supportive of the learners, employers and their own people. Learners are given the support they require in order to complete their training, find or retain employment. It might be in the form of a flexible approach to assessment or a person who’s available to help with problems that arise in the workplace. Employers are offered support in adapting to the unique requirements of the clients. Also, the initiator of the initiative usually enjoys the support of senior managers, and a supportive culture within the organisation.

These supportive aspects also build capability in all involved: employers who have needed to make adjustments have a greater capacity to deal with change in the future, families have a better understanding of future possibilities, teachers increase their understanding of clients’ needs, and the system is more capable as it is more able to respond in the future.

Effective support during and after training is a key element to the success of the Wickham Point Indigenous Access Training Program. This program skilled participants for employment in the construction of the LNG plant at Wickham Point, near Darwin. Twenty-nine candidates received accelerated training, primarily at Certificate II level in a range of construction competencies. The Northern Land Council provided outstanding mentoring support to students.

They did a fantastic job, which was absolutely vital for training and retention of workers. They would do things, like if someone had a doctor’s appointment, the mentor would take the person to the doctor’s appointment and bring them back immediately after. To be frank, if that service weren’t there, the person would have taken the whole day off to get to the appointment. They also worked with the person’s family: for example on the Railway project, with the male away from home for long periods of time working, the spouse or...
partner would be faced with the bills. They might never have had to
tackle that before. So NLC was available for the wife back at the
home front.

Jon Baker, general manager, Territory Construction Association

Sean Lange from the Northern Land Council, described the support in this
way:

_The main thing is getting around the difficulties of maintaining
employment. It’s when they’re employed that they have to know we
are here. The issue can be transport. Or misunderstandings:
communication in the workplace is a real issue. One person didn’t
understand when she was supposed to turn up, and once a
disharmony happens, the Indigenous person is wary about going
back to work. This year [2004] we’ve had more problems with
people staying in employment._

The _NSW Apprenticeship Program for People with a Disability_ attributes its
success, in a large part to the mentoring and conflict resolution it provides
between apprentices and employers. It employs local coordinators who help
to ensure the apprenticeship experience is the best possible for all involved.
The program recognises that apprentices with disabilities can be high
maintenance for employers and they really need ongoing support. The local
coordinators regularly touch base with employers and apprentices to make
sure everyone is happy. The program coordinator tells a classic story:

_“There was situation where a young man was placed in a painting
apprenticeship. For the first few months he was doing really well,
but when the painting job moved from painting inside to painting
outside of the building two storeys up, his behaviour changed. The
employer contacted the local coordinator who discovered the young
man was really nervous on the ladder. A new ladder was purchased
— one that had wide flat treads instead of thin round ones — and he
was back to performing perfectly.”_

_Dennis McDermott, Project Officer. Training and Development Unit._

**Tenacious**

- deep commitment and high ambitions
- persistent
- risk-taking
- “dream big—then get the nuts and bolts right”

“Tenacious” has different connotations for different people. To us the word
represents a common ingredient that we found in all the good practice initiatives: a
person with a strong attachment, deeply committed to finding ways to help
Indigenous clients and clients with a disability achieve what they want out of life.

Their tenacity normally arises from a strong set of values and a core purpose,
which in turn leads to a long-term commitment. It’s found not only in these areas,
but equally in any areas in which changes in views and culture are necessary to bring about change—e.g. health and the environment. And they often dream big—starting with high ambitions for what might be achieved.

Tenacious practitioners are often also found trying to get better value for their clients out of the mainstream, or to better connect equity initiatives with the mainstream: putting the onus on the mainstream to deliver.

Because of their dedication, they can be stubbornly persistent, they often extend themselves beyond their duty, they take risks and work around the rules where necessary.

All the case studies highlight the importance of tenacious people, expressed in a variety of ways:

“A vital aspect of that support [for students with a disability undertaking training at the Canberra Institute of Technology] has been the qualities of the staff who provide it. It’s hard to articulate these qualities without seeming to trivialise them, but key ones have been their experience, their passion, and perhaps most importantly their confidence that the students are capable of achieving a Certificate.”

“The enthusiasm, persistence, vision, comprehensive planning and strategic thinking ad research for the pilot projects originated from a skilled and committed project initiator/coordinator.” (Building Bridges Program, Wodonga Institute of TAFE, Victoria)

“The success of the Program (for Aboriginal Women in Corrective Courses) is based on a number of things including the dedicated staff. The head of the division at OTEN...is very access minded and really cares about prisoners’ rights, Aboriginal rights and women’s rights.”

Capturing the spirit

We agonised for some time over the words that would capture not only the essential characteristics of good practice, but the passion, energy, and grim determination that we found in so many of the examples.

It would have been easier to drag out well-used words around “partnerships”, “communication”, “pathways”, and so on, and construct a model around them. But for us, those kinds of words don’t capture the energy needed to change the ways in which people think about equity initiatives—and a new way of thinking is what is needed if the necessary changes are to occur.

Thus the use of the adjectives that we have chosen.
How the model works

In representing the characteristics, we wanted to make clear that:

- they are not a list
- no one characteristic is a necessary starting-point
- the characteristics do not need to be in any particular order; and
- ‘good practice’ may not have all five characteristics.

_The characteristics are not a list_

We have deliberately drawn them within a frame, to emphasise that they should not be thought of as a list. It might, however, be useful, to think of ways in which they are connected.

_No one characteristic is a necessary starting-point_

Although we have listed “knowledgeable” at the top, and it could often be a good starting-point, there will be some initiatives for example, in which knowledge is less important than the extent to which the initiative is connected within a community. So we are suggesting that in using the model, people start where it makes most sense to start.
The characteristics do not need to be considered in any particular order.

In fact, we could start with any one of them, and proceed to consider the others in any order and (although not shown fully in the diagram) in either direction:

'Good practice’ might not have all five characteristics

In our studies, we did tend to find all five elements present to some extent—but not always. This again reinforces our earlier point that the five elements should not be thought of as a list of five required characteristics.
3. Replicating and sustaining good practice

In a sense, this project involved two elements. One was the development of a model for thinking about good practice (as described above). The other involved research and thinking about how good practice can be sustained and replicated. This chapter is about sustainability and replicability.

At an early stage, we differentiated between replicability of good practice and sustainability. The ultimate purpose of this study is to better understand how good practice in the vocational education and training of Indigenous learners and learners with a disability can be widely and successfully replicated. However, we realised at the start that much of this good practice originates in specially funded short-term projects which operate outside the bounds of normal business and which often have short-term results, which alerted us to the issue of sustaining good practice as quite separate from replicating it.

Sustaining good practice is about ensuring that the outcomes of initiatives are embedded and that the initiatives that follow build on what’s been achieved. It is about ensuring that the benefits are long-lived and that the learning is captured and applied to avoid the nagging but common question: "are we forever reinventing wheels?" Replicating good practice, on the other hand, involves thinking about ways of inspiring others to replicate good practice in another context with a new client group and having systems, structures and processes in place to enable and support them in doing that.

So we considered two questions:

- What is required for good practice initiatives to be sustained?
- What needs to happen to inspire and support more good practice?

Sustaining the good practice that already exists

In considering how good practice initiatives can be sustained, it is helpful to ask which element of the initiative ought to be sustained. The funding of initiatives intended to improve employment outcomes for Indigenous learners and learners with a disability “purchases” three types of items:

- participant learning
- participant good will
- consumables

These are explained in the following table:
Categories of use to which funds put Specific examples from our studies

| 1) Funds buy learning: the explicit information/knowledge which is acquired about good practice through the experience of the project. | • The proponents and sponsors of the program have the opportunity to reflect on the experience – they learned, for example, how important selection of candidates can be, how important it is to involve local Indigenous communities in setting educational goals, what skills and training mentors really need. 
• The funding pays for professional development of teachers (and others).
• Insight is gained into the cost of the program and where efficiencies might be made.
• The reports and other materials (CD-ROMs, best practice guides, modified training materials) produced as an outcome of the initiative encapsulate learning. |

| 2) Funds buy good will: this is the often mentioned “110 per cent” effort that people who are engaged in an initiative routinely expend because of the challenge and their passionate commitment to achieving their goals. | • The many unpaid hours of work in “getting all the details right” …“turning up in class even though it is not their turn to teach the group”.
• The long and often difficult hours spent negotiating partnerships amongst agencies. |

| 3) Funds pay for ‘consumables’: these are the resources that are used in order to carry out the initiative/program. | • Set-up costs.
• Salaries to develop, coordinate and manage the program – sometimes by employing additional staff or changing job descriptions or changing staffing formulas.
• Payment to RTOs or others to provide the required training.
• Mentors and others working directly to support learners (and into employment).
• Subsidies to employers. |

Sustaining the learning

The knowledge acquired through an initiative can potentially be sustained at the individual level, at the organisational level and at a systemic level. Clearly individuals who have learned through an initiative take that learning with them into new work and new environments. They might also pass it on to colleagues formally or informally. And there are avenues for encouraging this—conferences, communities of practice, professional development programs etc.

For the learning to be sustained at the site of the original initiative, it is often assumed that the personnel also need to be ‘sustained’ – that is, the individuals involved need to remain in place. Often they do not, and unless specific steps are taken to ensure the knowledge gained is passed on to whoever comes next, it is likely to disappear. This transfer is an element of succession planning and requires a further (usually modest) investment in time spent both in planning for succession and in ensuring the knowledge is shared.

Three approaches to sustaining learning in a dynamic environment were illustrated in the projects studied:
- the transfer of ‘the Program’ in *NSW for Aboriginal Women in Corrective Courses* from Mulawa to Emu Plains, where explicit steps are being taken to shift (and adapt) the Program to the new environment;

- the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training taking steps to devise a model which captures all the steps required by many agencies to achieve strong employment outcomes in ‘reverse engineered’ VET programs for Indigenous learners;

- the employers who have been involved over the years in the *NSW Apprenticeship Program for people with a disability* have not only maintained their improved understanding of the value of employing people with a disability but grown it.

Sometimes the learning is ‘picked up’ by the organisation, and what began as a one-off initiative becomes part of the mainstream—a new program offered or a new way of doing things. An example is the *Building Bridges* program which began as a special initiative and has now become one of the standard programs offered by the Access and Management Department of the Wodonga Institute of TAFE.

What seems to be less common is the embedding of learning at a systemic level. Ideally the knowledge and wisdom gained through one initiative would spread beyond the individuals and organisations involved to inform and change the way systems operate so that good practice eventually becomes standard practice.

### Sustaining the good will

The energy which involvement in special projects almost always generates (and which is often key to successful outcomes) tends, understandably, to dissipate once the project is concluded. The ‘system’ – whatever constitutes ‘the system’ in the particular case – needs to recognise that it is not only exploitative but self-defeating to expect the initial exciting 110% effort to be sustained simply by the strength of character of the participants. The ‘system’ has to adapt in some way(s) so that it furnishes the extra ‘ten percent’ so that participants’ work can be returned to its normal contractual level.

Essentially, the system needs to take on the commitment or core purpose that individuals demonstrate. Collins and Porras’ famous study, *Built to Last* [1994], examined the roots of sustained corporate greatness, which have come to be seen as the roots of sustained greatness for any institution. They observed that core purpose is the quintessential element in sustaining an entity:

> An effective purpose reflects the importance people attach to the company’s work – it taps their idealistic motivations – rather than just describing the organisation’s output or target customers. It captures the soul of the organisation....

> Purpose (which should last at least 100 years) should not be confused with specific goals or business strategies (which should change many times in 100 years). Whereas you might achieve a goal or complete a strategy, you cannot fulfil a purpose; it is like a guiding star on the horizon – forever pursued but never reached. Yet while purpose itself does not change, it does inspire change. The very fact that purpose can
never be fully realised means that an organisation can never stop stimulating change and progress in order to live more fully to its purpose. (p 224)

The system needs to also have a core purpose in order to inspire people to deploy the attributes associated with innovative good practice – being knowledgeable, adaptive, tenacious, supportive and connected. These things are largely determined by the culture or tone of the institution or system in which people operate.

In some instances this can be done with minimal organisational change. In other cases the changes may be considerable. An example of the former is the way the staff at Wodonga Institute of TAFE continue to develop their changed pedagogy by being given opportunities to keep sharing with one another. An example of the latter is the Wurreker Koorie Project in Victoria which created a system-wide infrastructure.

It is worth noting that what we are calling here the energy associated with involvement in a funded project is essentially the affective component that accompanied the cognitive learning. In tandem, the two will drive a cycle of continuous improvement so long as the system keeps their willingness to innovate and improve ‘topped up’. This drive to continuous improvement, based on an initial innovative project, is what the business literature labels ‘sustained innovation’. It is the organisation or system fostering a bent for innovativeness by recognising the intrinsic value of innovativeness, and sponsoring it for its own sake.

Sustaining consumables

The extra resources brought in and ‘piloted’ in a project are spent on salaries, subsidies and/or the purchase of training. With two exceptions, the ‘good practice’ projects studied here were understood to be projects funded for a defined period with an end point (and a final accounting). Some of what was learned during the initiative may make it possible to use ‘consumable’ resources more efficiently on subsequent occasions. However, since the point of the project was precisely to learn how to use those additional resources – and use them well – it makes no sense to imagine that the good practice can be repeated without the very resources it was testing.

If the pilot program found that new resources did indeed improve outcomes, then sustaining the good practice requires mechanisms for reconstituting the resources. The least satisfactory, but not uncommon, mechanism is for the good practice proponents to search for new funding sources to enable the practice to be sustained for another year or two.

Alternatively, ‘the system’ might mainstream or embed the resource in its budget for the proponent agency so that it is no longer an exceptional item requiring special pleading. That in itself would save resources as applying for special funding is a laborious process loaded with inefficiencies. Mainstreaming is the course being taken in Western Australia where the eight pilot partnerships between Group Training Companies (GTCs) and Disability Employment Agencies (DEAs) have been designed specifically to produce a formula for funding GTCs by the Department of
Education and Training which allows and expects them to routinely purchase the services of DEAs.

One of the problems noted by many consulted in this study is that because agencies have limited responsibilities, they take a limited view of the social fabric. There is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that money not spent by Education, for example, in helping the disadvantaged into training and work simply creates an impost that has to paid another time from another budget, for example, by Health or Justice. By the time that cost has been shifted it is almost always significantly (often hugely) greater than the original cost.

What it takes to sustain the benefits of good practice

In sum, looking at the sustainability of good practice from an economic perspective clarifies the ‘burden’ to be carried forward by the individuals involved and that which needs to be shouldered by the system in which the good practice is expected to be sustained. Specifically:

- the individuals need to understand what has been learned (including cost efficiencies that might be obtained) and attend to ways these understandings might be passed to those who follow them and to others (most will maintain enthusiasm and extra energy well past the point at which special funding ceases)

- the system needs to establish robust processes for capturing the learning from good practice initiatives. It also needs to develop a ‘core purpose’ so that good practice can be sustained without heroic effort, and it needs to provide the additional resources which the good practice ‘experiment’ demonstrated are effective in improving outcomes for the two equity groups.

One of the clear lessons from the current study is that the investment made in a special project/program/pilot is – if the experiment turns out well – only the first in a whole series of investments that will need to be made if the good practice is to be sustained or replicated.

More on the idea of investment

Although the parallel between the domains of education and commerce is far from exact, it is useful to compare the commercial approach to developing an innovative idea with the approach taken in the education sector. In the world of commerce, it is expected and accepted that to take a new concept and develop it to the point where it becomes a profitable product or service, will require a substantial investment of up to 100 times the cost of original research. It happens something like this:

Successful research: ‘finding something out’ leads researchers to some new knowledge/insight.

Development phase where idea tested and genuine work to scale it up undertaken.

- Investment cost expected to be 10 times cost of initial research

Commercialisation phase (i.e. taking the ‘answer’ to the market)

- Investment cost: expected to be 100 times the cost of original research

Return on investment: income stream from sale of product/service/ process
In education however, funding is available for the initial initiative that generates new knowledge and insight into meeting diverse client needs, but then there is no investment strategy for embedding the good new processes/approaches/practices and strategies. To run the project again usually involves a new application for funding that, again, has a time limit.

The idea that examples of good practice in vocational education and training or principles of good practice can leapfrog over the two investment steps (development and commercialisation) that are essential elsewhere deserves careful unpacking.

**Replicating good practice**

In thinking about how to replicate good practice, it is useful to draw on some of the principles that apply to change efforts more generally. For example, Michael Beer and Nitin Nohria in their article *Cracking the Code of Change* (2000) draw a distinction between “hard” and “soft” approaches to encouraging change, and found that most successful and long-lasting change strategies use a combination of the approaches.

The following table demonstrates what this means in practice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of change</th>
<th>&quot;Hard&quot; approach</th>
<th>&quot;Soft&quot; approach</th>
<th>A combined approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Manage change from the top down.</td>
<td>Encourage participation from the bottom up.</td>
<td>Set direction from the top and engage the people below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Emphasise structure and systems.</td>
<td>Build up culture: focus on behaviour and attitudes.</td>
<td>Focus simultaneously on the hard (structures and systems) and the soft (culture).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward System</td>
<td>Motivate through financial incentives.</td>
<td>Motivate through commitment.</td>
<td>Use incentives to reinforce change but not to drive it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Applied to the issue of replicating good practice, this thinking emphasises the importance of a two-pronged approach that establishes systems, structures and processes that foster good practice and builds the capacity and willingness of individuals to demonstrate the characteristics of good practice in their own context.

Establishing systems, structures and processes that foster good practice

Through the course of this work, we were made aware of various systemic issues that seem to be impeding good practice. Research and discussions highlighted the importance of the system having a core purpose and commitment (to best practice in meeting diverse client needs), of having ways of capturing the learning from good practice initiatives, and the importance of the system itself being knowledgeable, adaptive, connected, supportive and tenacious. Practitioners also often spoke of funding arrangements and auditing processes as ‘enemies of good practice’.

Particularly it seems that the short-term nature of funding and the strong focus on accountability can work against practitioners acquiring the underpinning elements of good practice. Practitioners spend large amounts of time applying for relatively small amounts of money that allow them to conduct one short-term project. It seems that a longer term approach with a systemic focus on developing the elements of good practice would benefit practitioners and lead to better outcomes for clients.

On the ground, auditing processes seem to consume much of practitioners’ time and do more to instil fear and reluctance than a willingness to explore and emulate good practice which is, ironically, what a quality framework is supposed to promote.

All this highlights the need for some thinking about how systems, structures and processes can be established or changed to foster rather than hinder good practice. Taking a ‘systems thinking’ approach would help to analyse ways in which the system can be modified to support good practice. (Examples of a ‘systems thinking’ approach are given in Appendix E). What aspects of the system and the way in which it is implemented are hindering good practice? What values underpin the way systems are constructed? What cultures have been built up which lead to an essentially project based approach to equity? And, looking more positively, what steps might be effective in modifying the elements of such cultures and processes that militate against effective outcomes for equity groups?

Building the capacity and willingness of individuals

The need to build the capacity of VET sector staff to support learners to achieve successful outcomes has long been recognised as an issue, and was highlighted in the Blueprint reviews. The good practice model highlights the kinds of characteristics and practices that more practitioners need to demonstrate for there to be more replication of good practice across the sector.

Alongside the need to build capacity is the need to inspire people to change and improve their practice. From our examination of initiatives and discussions with
stakeholders and practitioners at the synthesis workshop³, there are a number of sources of inspiration. One is the availability of funding. It buys so many of the elements required—people with appropriate skills, and time. It buys time to consult, manage properly, reflect and adapt.

People are also inspired by their colleagues. Practitioners always appreciate the opportunity to get together and share what they’re doing and evaluate what works and what doesn’t. Various professional development initiatives allow for this and they seem to encourage people to higher standards in their practice.

And sometimes it’s the client group that inspires revised practice. Some groups collectively and persuasively communicate their needs in such a way that they are usually met. They tell the providers of education and training just what they need. Which emphasises the importance of having avenues by which practitioners can obtain feedback from clients.

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³ The project findings were presented at a workshop comprising key stakeholders, some practitioners and relevant ANTA staff and the project team facilitated discussion about the ways in which the findings might be put to practical use to encourage more good practice across the VET sector.
4. Knowledge sharing

We have devoted a section in this report to ‘knowledge sharing’ because the need to collect, manage and make available the knowledge and learning about good practice cuts across all the elements of sustaining and replicating it. If knowledge about good practice is not captured and used, practitioners will keep reinventing wheels, rather than building on the wisdom of others, and funds will not be used as effectively as possible, meaning that ultimately the clients will lose out.

The challenge is to capture the right kind of knowledge in the right kind of way. Grappling with the following questions may provide a useful starting point:

- What kind of knowledge is the knowledge of interest?
- What is the ‘market’ for the knowledge? and
- How can this knowledge be codified?

What kind of knowledge is the knowledge of interest?

Knowledge is a very special kind of commodity. Information is not knowledge – a point that is made time and again. The difference between the two is not easy to pin down but Davenport and Prusak\(^4\) have a nice way of describing it. Knowledge, in their (and others) view is derived from information but is broader, deeper and richer than information:

[For] information to become knowledge humans must do virtually all the work – a transformation that happens through comparison (how does information about this situation compare to other situations we have known), through thinking about consequences (what implications does the information have for decisions and actions?) and through conversation (what do other people think about this information).

Various ‘dimensions’ of knowledge have been identified and deciding exactly where the particular knowledge of interest sits can be of value in thinking about how it might be shared:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tacit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not observable in use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not teachable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not articulated</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What is the ‘market’ for this knowledge?

The idea of a knowledge market with knowledge buyers, sellers and brokers maintains the central role of individuals in the generation and exchange of knowledge. It also makes it very clear that the intended (hoped for) customer(s) of the knowledge have to want to buy it – have to be motivated to actively engage with it, to transform it from information (someone else’s knowledge) to their knowledge.

An essential element in getting knowledge to spread and be taken up is that people need to be working in a context of curiosity, openness and belief that the problems they face can, indeed, be solved. This principle is captured by two of Snowden’s ‘rules’ of knowledge management⁵

- Knowledge can only be volunteered, never conscripted
- Human knowledge requires contextual stimulation (“I only know what I know when I need to know it”)

Developing a real marketplace – contexts where the knowledge of interest can be discussed, where trust can be developed amongst buyers, sellers and brokers, and ideas tested – is a tactic widely recommended. The focus of most knowledge management, however, has been within single business enterprises. The knowledge market in the Equity Good Practice Project is much broader and more amorphous than that. And it operates in a context where the time and energy of both buyers and sellers is severely constrained by existing commitments.

How can this knowledge be codified (i.e made useful and attractive to its market)?

Putting knowledge into forms that are useful and will stimulate potential buyers to make it their knowledge is always a challenge. The form needs to be powerful enough to convince experienced people that they should change – or at the very least, consider changing – what they have been doing often for a very long time. Hard questions need to be asked when codifying knowledge: to what extent has the original knowledge been pared down? How much of the subtlety, the nuances have been lost? Will the recipient trust this? How much of what we are trying to communicate is actually absorbed?

The critical point is that knowledge not only must be accessible to the people who ought to use it (i.e not squirreled away on a website somewhere) but the ‘codification’ must generate a sense that something special is being shared, that joint ownership or custody of the knowledge is being initiated.

Applying these questions to knowledge about good practice in meeting diverse client needs, highlights the need for:

- a repository of knowledge and information about good practice, in a form that is attractive to practitioners
- incentives to encourage practitioners to draw on that knowledge and information and apply it to their own practice

⁵ taken from D Snowden (2003) Complex Knowledge (presentation) IBM UK
a mechanism by which practitioners can interrogate that knowledge when they need it.
5. **THE WAY FORWARD**

We suggest two ways in which this work could be taken forward:

- Disseminating the findings of this project
- Developing the good practice model into useful tools.

**Disseminating the findings of this project**

As this report was being prepared, discussions were in train concerning how equity issues would be handled within the new national structure for vocational education and training to be implemented in mid-2005. It would therefore be presumptuous for us to make too many suggestions as to how dissemination might best occur.

**Authorising**

However, that said, one starting-point is to recall that this project had its roots not in a DEST or ANTA initiative, but in the responses that State Training Authority Boards made to the mid-term review of the Blueprints. One part of the dissemination strategy would therefore be to go back to them, and to disseminate via:

- State and Territory Training Authority Chairs
- National Equity Network—because of its unique composition, being connected both to State-level managers and to practitioners
- Officers at State and Territory level responsible for evaluating projects and/or making funding decisions.

This could be supplemented by:

- TAFE Directors Australia—partly because the case-studies focused on providers, and partly because of the importance of the sponsorship of management at this level if innovations are to succeed.

DEST could also use it as part of their knowledge management policies/processes.

**Keeping the ideas alive**

It would be a pity if this work, and the potential for a new model, languished on a shelf. We would suggest the following strategies might be considered:

- Using the process above to gather equity staff from the States and Territories together—perhaps more staff than comprise the current National Equity Network—to share knowledge about what people are doing in different jurisdictions, something we felt was lacking.
- Place the model where its elements can be a quick reminder: on a laminated A5 card so it really can be a ‘handy tool’—on hand; on a mouse mat; or on a screen saver
- Develop the model’s elements as a one-minute ‘prompt’
Ensure that there are different tools designed for different audiences – both authorising audiences and practitioner/user audiences.

**Developing the good practice model into useful tools**

In Section 2 we described the five characteristics of good practice in equity initiatives. These were tested with key stakeholders and practitioners at a Synthesis Workshop. The model resonated with participants, who were enthusiastic about using it in practical ways in their everyday work.

Stakeholders can see that the model could, with some extra work, be developed into tools that can be used for:

- planning
- analysis and evaluation
- assessing the suitability of proposed projects
- ‘checking’ the system—i.e. sensitivities, priorities, activities.

**How tools could benefit users**

We see many ways in which tools can benefit Indigenous Australians and people with a disability, by helping all those involved in equity initiatives (project developers, funders, practitioners, and the system generally) to ask the right questions and examine the characteristics of good practice.

The table on the following page outlines potential uses and users of tools.

**A caution about the model**

If the good practice model is used as a basis for other tools, we suggest that some further work should first be done to refine the model. The nature of this project has placed inevitable restrictions on how far the good practice characteristics can be taken at this stage:

- they are based on only 11 case studies
- the case studies were chosen from a list from State and Territory Training Authorities
- they were restricted to 'success stories', rather than chosen for the lessons that they might yield
- the case studies focused largely on a provider perspective.
## Integrating the characteristics of good practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uses</th>
<th>Proposers</th>
<th>Funders</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>The system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proposals, Assessment and Planning</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design of an application template for projects</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of project proposals</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling a proposer to show that they have all the elements, or how the program will develop each element</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing criteria for proposal assessment: testing proponents’ thinking about the purpose of a proposal, possibly more efficiently than can be done at present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing assumptions in project proposals, by asking &quot;why&quot;: &quot;why do we need tenacity?&quot; then ask again about the answer, then again—to provide a gap analysis</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking the alignment of the initiative with the site on which it is to be enacted</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking whether a particular initiative is transferable—Would the innovation have the right elements in the new environment? What would need to be done to maximise the chances of replicability?</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking for smooth connections at the system-provider interface</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cooperation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A basis for dialogue between applicants and funding agencies</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A basis for developing partnerships</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A probing tool to help providers and clients understand each other</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnose gaps in expertise</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use as a change management tool</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test and sensitise the system to deliver good practice to various equity groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation and Review</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discover whether there is a gap between ‘ideal’ and ‘achieved’</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiding self-reflection and self-analysis</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompts to the system to develop those elements which seem to be absent, or to look at how they might be generated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysing the system-wide program of funding (perhaps to move towards a whole of government approach?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Refining the model

In order to refine the model, we suggest the following steps:

1. Test it more broadly:

   a) test the model and the key words with different equity groups, to see what other key words emerge that might have particular synergy for particular groups
   b) check the relative importance of the characteristics—are some more important than others, and is this different for different equity groups?
   c) check whether, largely, the same key words work across equity groups, or whether there is a major difference—get people to use stories, photos, vignettes, to put in their own examples of what the 5 elements mean
   d) develop questions to be asked within each of the five elements, to elucidate the nature of each innovation
   e) explore whether the model could usefully be enriched: for example, is there one, over-arching element which binds all the others, and captures the essence of equity initiatives—something that is to do with the reduction of inequity, or in colloquial terms, giving everyone a fair go; or is there the capacity to make the model three-dimensional?
   f) explore whether it would be useful to make the model computer-based so people could run various scenarios on it (to create more or less of any of the elements).

2. Develop tools:

   a) Explore with groups of potential users, ways in which the model could be developed into useful tools (starting with the uses in the table above, and expanding on it)
   b) Develop clever ways of using tools—not just as a checklist to be ‘scored’
   c) Develop ways of linking the model into accountability mechanisms.
   d) Apply the model not only to individual initiatives, but to systems and mechanisms, to change the way in which advances in VET for equity groups might occur: from an emphasis on projects overseen by individuals on an often local level, to an emphasis on larger-scale interventions which support the adoption of good practice more broadly.

3. Trial the tools

   a) Test them with both successful past initiatives, and with unsuccessful ones.
   b) Trial them with client groups.
Further forward

When we started this project we wondered whether whatever model emerged from it would be specific to Indigenous Australians, or to people with a disability, or to equity groups generally—or might our model in fact be largely a generic one, which could be applied to initiatives in general. We were also very aware of the experience from disadvantaged groups that has taught us that when adjustments are made to make training more accessible to people with special needs or situations, the training often ends up providing a better experience for all.

As we've only carried out 11 case studies, all of which were in one of two equity groups, we're obviously not in a position to say—although it's possible, that it is a generic framework. It would be worth testing this question in the work which we are suggesting should follow.

6. CONCLUSION

When we tested our model for good practice on practitioners and stakeholders in a synthesis workshop, the one word that provoked considerable debate was 'tenacious'. People objected to the notion that meeting the needs of Indigenous learners and learners with a disability requires burnout levels of energy, persistence and tenacity.

Quite to the contrary, extracting key lessons from the good practice initiatives has shown that good practice in meeting diverse client needs is 'not exactly rocket science.' There are key ingredients of success that are, if not already possessed by individual practitioners and initiatives, easily obtainable. Articulating these in a way that captures the energy demonstrated in the initiatives, has the potential to change the way people think about equity initiatives and to influence systems and processes so they promote rather than hinder good practice in meeting diverse client needs.
APPENDICES

Appendix A:
Project Methodology

Appendix B:
Good Practice Exemplars—Brief Reports

Appendix C:
Advice on a Stakeholder Analysis and Engagement Strategy

Appendix D:
Sustainability: Early Work

Appendix E:
Systemic Change: Early Work
APPENDIX A:  
PROJECT METHODOLOGY

This project involved the following stages:

**Preparation of strategic briefing papers**

The project team developed briefing papers on issues considered to be relevant to replicating good practice in meeting diverse client needs. Topics covered were:

- Conceptions of change
- What the research has shown about inequity in VET
- Barriers identified by the mid-term reviews
- Best practice
- Knowledge management
- Stakeholder engagement
- Communication strategies

**Workshop with ANTA staff and project team**

The project team met with ANTA staff to discuss matters such as:

- What we mean when we talk about terms like ‘good practice’ and ‘knowledge management’.
- How to select good practice exemplars to examine in-depth.
- A stakeholder analysis and engagement strategy.
- Communication plan and strategies.

**Testing of definition with State and Territory Equity Managers**

The team developed a definition of 'successful initiatives' to use in selecting good practice exemplars for closer examination. This was tested with State and Territory Equity Officers at a network meeting and the definition refined as a result.

**Initial analysis of exemplars**

Using the definition of a 'successful initiative' and based on recommendations from individual Equity Officers, approximately 2 – 3 examples of good practice initiatives were selected from each jurisdiction for an initial analysis by survey. Based on surveys with people involved in the initiatives (see the survey questions below), 11 initiatives were chosen to be the subject of in-depth site visits.
In-depth site visits

Members of the project team visited the sites of good practice initiatives around the nation. Using the site visit guide (below), they gathered insight into what constitutes good practice, what contributes to an initiative’s success, the kinds of hurdles faced etc. This was captured in a report.

Team Workshop

Taking all the information gathered during site visits, the project team met to analyse the information and extract elements of good practice common to all the initiatives.

Synthesis Workshop

The team presented and tested their findings at a workshop comprising key stakeholders, some practitioners and relevant ANTA staff and discussed ways in which the findings might be put to practical use to encourage more good practice across the VET sector.
Survey Questions

These survey questions have been drafted for the first round of interviews with project contacts.

What makes this initiative 'successful'?

Does that fit within our definition of a successful initiative? i.e:

A 'successful initiative' leads to...

- employment outcomes
- creating pathways to employment
- social outcomes that will lead to employment outcomes
- directly
- by surmounting barriers to access
- or indirectly

What inspired the initiative?

What gave the instigators the courage and incentive to do something new?

What impact has this initiative had?

Has it led to systemic change or to changes in business practices? Were there any unintended outcomes? Has it impacted on attitudes?

Where did the funding come from?

How well has the initiative accommodated constraints (for example, in time and resources)?

Is the initiative sustainable without further funding?

What kind of investment would it require? Does the initiative NEED to be sustained?

Is there a key person central to the success of the initiative?

What characteristics does that person have and what does that person do that makes this initiative successful?
Did the initiative use alliances (internal or external)?

Has it led to collaborative commitment at the local or regional level?

How transferable or replicable is the initiative?

What elements of the initiative’s success are generic and could have application in other contexts, with other groups?

Has the initiative inspired others?

Is it prized among its peers? Are stakeholders enthusiastic about it?

What kind of knowledge was acquired?
(i.e. tacit, observable, articulable, teachable)
Site Visit Guide

The site visits focused on the following:

The outcomes of the initiative

For example:
  - What were/are the outcomes for the clients?
  - Has this initiative led to systemic change or to changes in business practices?
  - Were there any unintended outcomes?
  - Has the initiative inspired others? Have others tried to replicate it?
  - Has this initiative impacted on attitudes?

Factors contributing to the initiative’s success

For example:
  - Was/is there a key person central to the success of this initiative? What characteristics do they have and what do they do to make the initiative successful?
  - What was it about how this initiative was managed, that contributed to its success?
  - Did the initiative use internal or external alliances?
  - Did research inform the planning or conduct of this initiative?
  - Where did you go for help/information/inspiration?

What might follow this initiative

For example:
  - Is this initiative sustainable, in the sense that it has:
    - changed teaching practice
    - changed service delivery
    - produced an educational or training resource; and/or
    - changed the attitudes of employers
  - Is this initiative transferable or replicable?
  - What did people learn from this initiative? Did they acquire knowledge that is observable, articulable and/or teachable?
  - Is the initiative sustainable without further funding? What kind of investment would it require? Does the initiative need to be sustained?
Hurdles faced by the initiative and how they were overcome

For example:

- How did the initiative accommodate constraints in time and resources?
In order to harness some insight into what constitutes ‘good practice’ in meeting diverse client needs and how it might be replicated, the project team closely examined and analysed eleven good practice initiatives.

This report documents insights gathered during those eleven site visits. The initiatives documented are:

- Canberra Institute of Technology: Certificate I in Horticulture
- NSW Apprenticeship Program for People with a Disability
- Aboriginal Women in Corrective Courses, OTEN, TAFE NSW
- Julalikari Council Women’s Arts and Crafts Centre, Tennant Creek, NT
- Wickham Point LNG Indigenous Access Training Program, NT
- Breaking the Unemployment Cycle Initiative, Qld DET
- West Coast Building Initiative, Spencer Institute of TAFE, SA
- Disability Access Equity Officer Employment Project, Launceston, Tasmania
- Wurreker Koorie Project, Victoria
- Building Bridges Program, Wodonga Institute of TAFE, Victoria
- Disability New Apprenticeships Partnership Project, WA
CANBERRA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY:  
CERTIFICATE I COURSE IN HORTICULTURE

About the initiative

This initiative involves the development of two Certificate I courses and their delivery to students with a mild intellectual or learning disability:

- Certificate I in Horticulture; combined with
- Certificate I in Learning Options—a literacy and numeracy program which also has elements of basic computing and working in the community—or a Statement of Attainment if not all aspects of the Certificate I can be completed.

A key element of the initiative was the allocation of considerable resources to support these students during the courses.

At the same time, this initiative is about much more than these courses: it’s about what can be achieved when a large TAFE Institute makes a strategic decision to devote a significant level of resources to a particular equity initiative.

The outcomes of the initiative

This initiative is judged by CIT to have been very successful:

- It instils confidence in the students, and a belief in themselves that they can succeed in education.
- It benefits the students’ families. When a student completes a course like this, it provides for the whole family the satisfaction that their child is contributing to the community—they are participating in further study (like most people of similar age) and are building skills that could lead to possible employment and that help build a positive self image.
- There have been some direct employment outcomes, with some graduates from the courses being employed by a government-owned nursery, a gardening firm and a bowling green. There have also been some indirect outcomes, such as employers’ changed perceptions when they see students with a disability working productively in the workplace.
- Some students have benefited by qualifying for and enrolling in mainstream courses such as the Certificate III in Horticulture (with adjustment support—for example, a note-taker in the case of a student with cerebral palsy).
- Another outcome has been to help students with a disability meet the challenge of moving from one environment to another: in this case, moving from secondary schooling to tertiary study, and then from tertiary study to work. (The significance of these transitional points is often not well understood—for example, the lack of ‘handover briefings’ for school students embarking on tertiary study, and the fact that many
employers, for example, have never met people with particular disabilities.)

Students have also benefited by participation in community events. The Horticulture class entered the scarecrow competition for Floriade ACT. The whole group contributed to building (using plants) the scarecrows over a number of weeks. They won 2nd prize out of possibly hundreds of contestants. This also provided the community with a positive example of what students with mild intellectual disabilities can achieve within a tertiary institution.

None of these outcomes could have been achieved without the support offered to enable them to complete the Certificate I.

The community sees the benefit as well: there is already a waiting-list for the courses for next year.

Factors contributing to the initiative’s success

There is no doubt in the minds of those responsible for this initiative that the main factor contributing to its success has been the level of resources devoted to it, which has translated to high levels of support to the students during the two years of the course.

A vital aspect of that support and of the success of the initiative generally, is the qualities of the staff involved. It’s hard to articulate these qualities without seeming to trivialise them, but key ones have been their experience (in TAFE and in industry), their passion, and perhaps most importantly their confidence that the students are capable of achieving a Certificate.

The dedication and commitment of the staff is another reason for success. Staff work beyond what is expected of them, often spending many unpaid hours developing materials, preparing classes and field work and applying for funding.

The time factor is an important element contributing to the success of this initiative. Normally subjects that equate to Certificate I take approximately one semester for a regular class of students, but for these students the Certificate I is delivered over two years. This ensures that the learning styles and requirements of these students are met. Some of the requirements include:

- repetition of new skills
- hands on practical experience thereby tying theory into everyday practice
- extra time to devote to the literacy and language component of the course
- moving through as a whole group, allowing students to develop new friendships and an identity as a CIT and horticulture student (flexible learning that requires students to work at their own pace, with their own reading materials on an individual basis does often not prove successful with these students)
providing an environment that is conducive to their learning needs and time

ensuring enough time is allowed to complete the award.

Factors beyond the immediate teaching environment which have contributed to the success of this initiative are:

- a supportive senior management at CIT
- the suitability of the course for the local demographic: in this case, a compact metropolitan area with one large public provider able to research and meet client needs
- for some students, participation in the Willing and Able Mentoring Program, an Australia-wide program for nominated students across all industry areas, in which mentors from industry offer direct support and guidance to students with a disability.

Hurdles faced by the initiative and how they were overcome

Not surprisingly, given the earlier comments, the prime hurdle is the lack of funds.

It’s not just the absolute amount of money available for such initiatives, but difficulties which arise from the varied responsibilities of different government agencies with slightly different agendas, and even different key definitions. Applications for funding are not only time consuming, they also require people with loads of experience in applying for funding and the knowledge about where funding is available to assist in the whole process. If a course is so successful they should be able to retain funding. And/or people seem to spend a lot of their time sourcing where funding is available; this always seems to be such a waste of energy, time and resources.

Secondly, there is the hurdle of employer attitudes and actions:

- many employers are resistant to employing people with a disability;
- even for those employers who do employ people with a disability, their attitudes to these employees are sometimes inappropriate or underdeveloped—impatience, abuse, and failing to ensure positive attitudes among employees.

And thirdly, there are the challenges of successfully running such programs:

- finding the right teachers
- dealing with the risk that teachers and course coordinators burn out, having to continually prove themselves and the success of the course, by having to apply for funding year after year. Many of the teachers that would be employed for delivering such courses, are usually part time teachers, they already spend many hours that they are not renumerated for, adapting course materials, preparing classes and field work and implementing the reasonable adjustments that may be required for their students.
being prepared to say ‘no’ to applicants—for example, to potentially disruptive students—which would be helped by supported employment agencies and schools having a better awareness about the program so that they could elicit more suitable candidates, which would alleviate the need for excluding students from the interview process.

What might follow this initiative

Other faculties have seen the success and the positive outcomes in establishing Certificate I courses for discrete groups of students with disabilities, using a similar model. Most faculties are very willing to run these courses.

There is, however, one major hurdle to similar initiatives: money. Currently one-tenth of the Institute’s total equity budget is spent on providing support to students in this one course. CIT’s Faculties would like to run others like it, but they do not have the funds for teacher time to not only deliver the course but the time and expense that is required for modifying an existing higher award level into a Certificate I level (where one does not already exist). Clearly an investment such as was made for the Certificate I in Horticulture is not possible without compromising the basic level of equity support needed across the Institute.

Other initiatives have been tried, by ‘clubbing together’ various avenues of funding, but it has to be done year after year.

There is, however, a business case for increased investment: the equity team see a number of students with a disability struggling in various Certificate II courses, and needing significant support, which would not be needed had the students been able to obtain the support within a dedicated Certificate I course earlier.
NSW Apprenticeship Program for People with a Disability

About the initiative

The NSW Apprenticeship Program for People with a disability (the 'Program') commenced in 1981 to mark the International Year of Disabled Persons. The aim of the Program is to provide apprenticeship opportunities in state government departments and statutory authorities for people with assessed disabilities.

The NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) with assistance from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) funds the Program.

The objectives of the Program are:

- To give people with disabilities the opportunity for career development through an apprenticeship
- To provide a work environment which encourages people with disabilities to function at their full potential and help them achieve job satisfaction
- To encourage NSW government departments and authorities to recruit people with disabilities.

The Program is run internally at DET with the assistance of eight local coordinators located throughout NSW. The local coordinators are not exclusively employed to work on this Program. This role is an add-on to their jobs as Industry Training Coordinators where they are employed to monitor a number of apprenticeships in their region. The Program is also supported by disability organisations that provide on-going support for the Program.

The Program has a database of employers that are invited to participate in the Program. New employers are sought by advertising in the NSW Public Service magazine. Decisions about what apprenticeships should be offered are made based on what employers are offering. Generally, only about one third of apprenticeships on offer are taken up due to budget restrictions.

Local coordinators ensure potential employers are able to provide a suitable range of experiences for the students and they visit the workplaces to assess the suitability of the training that will be offered.

Apprenticeships are offered in a wide range of different trades, from health services to gardening to carpentry, cooking and painting. The philosophy of the Program is to offer genuine ordinary everyday apprenticeships. This ensures the apprenticeships have credibility with employers and in the industry generally.

Apprentices are found through contact with disability employment organisations and through public advertisements in the Sydney Morning Herald and other relevant local papers. For each position advertised, on average there are six to 30 applicants, ranging in age from 16 to 64 years old.
The Program adopts standard public sector recruitment procedures when making a match between applicant and employer. All applicants are considered for the apprenticeship they apply for, provided they have a documented disability and have the capacity to do the job. The selection panel comprises a representative from the employer’s organisation, a local coordinator or their representative and a person with an understanding of disabilities.

Outcomes of the initiative

This Program is highly successful on a number of fronts. Retention rates are high. In the last 18 months, only two of the 96 participants have dropped out—for very legitimate reasons, effectively making the drop out rate zero. At the end of the four-year apprenticeship, the apprentice is qualified in their nominated trade, well trained with a good support network and references.

Many apprentices go on to find employment. The Program doesn’t require employers to offer apprentices work at the end of the training, however apprentices often get a job, usually with the organisation they work for. Although finding employment is an excellent outcome, the Program recognises that people with a disability participating in apprenticeships is about more than getting a job—it’s also about gaining confidence, self esteem and direction.

“This Program is not all about getting jobs, it is about giving the apprentices the confidence and self esteem to try new things. I knew one young man who is now driving buses as a result of his electrical apprenticeship – he loves it and there is no way he would be doing something like that if it wasn’t for the Program.”

As far as employers are concerned, many return year after year to participate again in the Program. They learn how to work with people with a disability and overcome initial fears they have about the implications of having a person with a disability in their workplace. It also gives employers access to skilled employees who are in demand in some industries, at no cost.

Factors contributing to the initiative’s success

The success of the Program comes down to a number of things including:

A committed project officer

The Project Officer has been working on the Program for the last four years and is dedicated and supportive.

Local coordinators

Local coordinators play a crucial role in mentoring apprentices and resolving any conflicts that arise between them, their employers or other employees. They keep a friendly eye on the apprentices and are available to support employers through any difficulties.
“The local coordinators are crucial to the success of the Program. We need these people for their local knowledge, local connections and the fact that they are on the ground. They are vital people, make no mistake about that.”

“There was situation where a young man was placed in a painting apprenticeship. For the first few months he was doing really well, but when the painting job moved from painting inside to painting outside of the building two storeys up, his behaviour changed. The employer contacted the local coordinator who discovered the young man was really nervous on the ladder. A new ladder was purchased – one that had wide flat treads instead of thin round ones – and he was back to performing perfectly.”

Alliances

The disability employment organisations’ support of the Program is vital to the success of the Program. They help not only in recruitment of the apprentices but also in assisting the local coordinators monitor the apprentices in the workplace. There is a fine line here though between support and intrusion, and one that needs to be monitored.

Not insisting that the employer employ the apprentice

An attempt was made to set up a traineeship program based on this apprenticeship model. It wasn’t nearly as successful as this initiative. One of the reasons was that for the traineeship program, a condition of employers participating was that they commit to employing trainees on completion of the program, which many felt they couldn’t do.

It’s considered important to the success of this program, that employers are not asked to employ apprentices on completion of the program. Employers are usually unable to make that commitment and will not be as willing to participate in the program if they have to make that commitment.

System wide long-term commitment to the program

The program has been running for over twelve years.

What might follow this initiative

This Program is not sustainable without funding. It requires about one million dollars to keep the apprenticeship figures as high as they are. However, the Program has changed attitudes of employers and employees and that alone makes the Program common practise in some business arenas and thereby sustainable in its own right.

Despite the program being costly to run, it also clearly has a range of benefits, including employment outcomes, which save money in other ways.
The Program is replicable, with just a few key ingredients.

"In order to replicate the Program all you would need is a person who has some sort of understanding of disabilities. Next a database of host employers would need to be identified as well as contacts made with disability organisations to get the applicants on board. Also local coordinators are needed but they are just standard people already out in the field doing other work and nominated by their boss to take on a bit more."

Both Queensland and Western Australia have expressed interest in the program, but to date, this program is unique to NSW.

**Hurdles faced by the initiative and how they were overcome**

The main hurdle identified is the commitment from employers and their education. It is important that the employer understands what an apprenticeship is and how to deal with a disabled person. The Program addresses this with resources for employers and training where necessary.

Another hurdle is getting employers on board. Over time, employers know the Program and willingly sign up or tell other organisations about the Program so they sign up by word of mouth. Increasing recruitment numbers however also boils down to networking.

Limited time and resources is also an ongoing hurdle for the Program. Restricting the number of apprentices that can participate in the Program has best accommodated this.

Another difficulty at times can be managing the partnerships with disability employment organisations. If roles are not clear and organisations are giving too much support to the apprentices, this can cause problems with employers and other employees. There needs to be specific guidance as to what role disability employment organisations play within the Program.
ABORIGINAL WOMEN IN CORRECTIVE COURSES
OTEN, TAFE NSW

About the initiative

The Aboriginal Women in Corrective Courses (the ‘Program’) is a distance learning educational course that has been running for two years at a high security correctional centre in Mulawa. The Program is headed up by the Open Training and Education Network (OTEN) and is funded by ANTA. The correctional centre at Mulawa is closing down and the Program is currently in the process of being transferred to a lower security correctional centre in Emu Plains.

The Program is based on an evolving model that was developed by OTEN for Juvenile Justice Centres five years ago focusing on young people disengaged from education. It is a twelve month course that can be completed within a semester if done full-time or longer than one year if desired. Students are encouraged to work at their own pace. The philosophy of the Program is ‘to do no harm,’ meaning to not expose the students to any negativity within their educational experience, recognising that a negative experience could mean that some won’t try again.

The model is very flexible. Students can complete the coursework at the centre via the distance learning model offered by OTEN. They do not have to attend TAFE.

“We realised that with disengaged young people, you can not just put them into TAFE because they cause problems. The TAFE teachers hate them and the kids hate it, and the same problems there were there in school are still there, it doesn’t work.”

The model was adapted for use at the Mulawa Correctional Centre. Slight but important changes were made to the Juvenile Justice Centre model. OTEN employed a mentor to work with the women, and changes were made based on her discussions with the women themselves. They included:

- A reduction in the number of assignments – there were too many assignments in the modules for the women to complete.
- Changes to the way research is conducted– unrealistic expectations about how the women could conduct research were in the model, such as using the internet and telephone. This was altered to accommodate to their restricted environment.
- Changes to reporting requirements–since the Aboriginal women in corrective services don’t have access to the internet, completed course work is provided to OTEN via the tutor/mentor, rather than via email.

The Program will be replicated at Emu Plains, again with modifications. A smaller number of enrolments will be accepted. The coordinator is keen to raise completion rates so will lower the number of participants to allow those who do take part to have more support and to ensure that those who participate are highly suitable and motivated. Participants from Mulawa correctional centre also
suggested lowering enrolment numbers to make sure the program is still considered ‘selective’ or ‘special’.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) will be signed by all partners in the Program at Emu Plains to ensure that everyone knows their role and their expectations are met. There will also be more engagement with education officers who will help in selecting women for the Program.

Another modification will be the inclusion of an ‘exit module’ early on in the Program. Many of the women are released without notice and there is no way for OTEN to follow them up with their education. The purpose of the module will be to let the women know at the start what their options are when they leave the centre and to make sure they know how they can continue their studies.

**Outcomes of the initiative**

The model has been extremely successful, with the last intake in Juvenile Justice Centres totalling 150 students and a 100 percent completion rate.

The results at Mulawa Correctional Centre have also been impressive. Seven out of 45 women enrolled have completed the course. Although this may not sound like a lot, completion rates before the model was introduced were zero.

> "We have been told that the women are beside themselves about completing the course. It is difficult to get access to them to ask them directly, but we hear they are very excited through the tutor and also the education officers."

Because of the difficulty OTEN has in getting information about the women once they have left the centre, it’s not possible to say what the outcomes are in the longer term, beyond the women completing the course.

The Program has been replicated at a few men’s correctional centres throughout NSW, such as Long Bay where the results have also been successful.

**Factors contributing to the initiative’s success**

The success of the Program is based upon a number of things including:

* **Dedicated and experienced staff**

The head of the division at OTEN responsible for this Program is very access minded and cares about prisoners rights, Aboriginal rights and women’s rights. This leadership is seen as a contributing factor to the Program’s success providing the environment for the Program to flourish. Staff involved are experienced teachers and many have worked with Aboriginal people in education roles, and have a good understanding of culturally appropriate practices.

* **Mentoring and guidance**

The mentor that is hired by OTEN is seen as crucial to the success of the program. She is Indigenous and goes the extra mile in supporting the women to complete
the Program. She also has brokered good relationships with the corrective centre and the education officers, who provide her with access to the women.

"The mentor really links all the women together, giving the Program a community feel, which is what indigenous women respond to well. She is there to motivate them, she is really interested in the women and that is why the Program works so well."

**Client engagement in the evolving design and delivery of the program**

The women provide input via the mentor. They are actively involved in providing feedback about the course and have been instrumental in the changes that have been made along the way.

**A client centred program**

The Program understands where the clients are coming from and what will motivate and help them to finish the course. For example, the course materials for juveniles are actually designed for adults, realising that the students will respond better to that.

"Pretty much when you do education it is the education culture that you are buying into – no matter who you are – whether you are a tribal person or a Muslim person in prison – it is not the content but the culture of education that you have to learn."

**Flexibility**

Since the program is distance learning the women are provided with the materials and can work at their own pace.

**Hurdles faced by the initiative and how they were overcome**

Setting up the Program took more time than budgeted for. Staff had to work hard to make the Program happen and often put in many unpaid hours.

Operating the Program within a corrective centre also proved a challenge, especially within a high security facility. They have strict rules that must be abided by – such as "shut downs" when the centre is closed to visitors due to some disturbance the night before. Sometimes group learning wasn’t possible. The Program had to adapt to the environment and be flexible.

**What might follow this initiative**

The Program is sustainable – "distance education is cheap as you don’t have the expense of face to face teaching" - however the coordination of the Program is not sustainable without funding. In any case, it is considered a valuable program because of the self worth it provides the women with. They can use their credit to further their education and even if they don’t, they have a broader outlook and a better understanding of what they can achieve.
The Program is most definitely replicable and this has been proved already with the model starting in the Juvenile Justice Centres, moving to this Program and continuing to move to other corrective centres.
JULALIKARI COUNCIL WOMEN’S ARTS AND CRAFTS CENTRE, TENNANT CREEK, NT

About the initiative

A screen printing program conducted in 2003 at the Julalikari Arts and Crafts Centre was nominated as an example of equity ‘good practice’ in the Northern Territory. The initiative was supported by $31,920 from the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, Flexible Response Funding.

The program was special for a number of reasons:

1. it was designed for a specific purpose: to develop products designed by Aboriginal people of the Barkly region to support the July 2003 opening of the $5.4 m Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre in Tennant Creek;
2. participation in the project extended beyond Julalikari’s normal workforce. Men do not work at the Centre but for this project men who were known to be interested in screen printing were invited to study basic screen printing techniques at the Centre in the afternoons. The women, who work at the Centre in the mornings, studied advanced screen printing;
3. The training facilitated the development of a greater variety of products with a unique local flavour and provided the potential for increased income generation.

The images reproduced here illustrate work produced during and since the training.

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6 The Julalikari Women’s Arts and Craft Centre is a CDEP project. The Centre is the women’s workplace (and the training conducted there has all the advantages associated with workplace learning).
The Art Centre was established in 1994 by the Julalikari Council in response to an existing interest in painting amongst some women in the community – an interest that extended beyond what has come to be termed ‘traditional’ painting. The Centre is housed at the ‘Pink Palace’, a former hostel built by the Banka Banka station for stockmen and their families coming into town. Two of the women who work at the Centre remember staying at the hostel, often for months at a time: one’s ‘work station’ is where her bunk bed once was. While the term Pink Palace had a derogatory tone in times past, it is applied cheerfully to the Centre.

The people consulted during this study – women working at the Centre, Centre coordinators past and present (3 of the 5 still live in Tennant Creek), people who have delivered training there and a few others involved in various ways – all consider that the success of that particular project was because it was executed on fertile ground. Its ‘good practice’ was, in their view, no different from ‘normal practice’ and its higher profile relative to the on-going work of the Centre seemed to be of little interest, almost of disinterest, to those consulted.

This report focuses on that ‘fertile ground’ and, in particular, on the three characteristics most often cited as important about the Julalikari Women’s Arts and Craft Centre:

- it is on-going: it has a past, a present and a future;
- it is a community in its own right and part of the larger community;
- it is a business.

**Outcomes of the initiative**

**Recognised training outcomes**

Training is not the focus of the centre, and is more a by-product of the women’s work than its purpose. However, of the training the women do, enough is aligned with the Visual Arts, Craft and Design Training Package that a few have gained a Certificate II. Several women have been encouraged to undertake studies that extend their capacity to manage the administrative and sales aspect of the Centre. These include formal Business Studies, computing, and literacy studies. One woman from the Centre sits on the Board of Desart\(^7\) in Alice Springs with its

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\(^7\) Desart Inc. provides support services to Central Australian Aboriginal Art Centres. It fosters and supports their aims to develop communities, maintain culture and
associated training in governance. Some of the formal training is funded, on application, by the NT Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET can also fund non-accredited training); Julalikari Council provides the base funding and some funds for training and related activities.

Employment and income

The Julalikari Women’s Arts and Crafts Centre is a CDEP program (Community Development Employment Project) auspiced by the Julalikari Council. The women are on CDEP wages for 16 hours a week: 8:00 to 12:00 Monday to Thursday. The women consider themselves workmates, which explains why in this report they are referred to as workers working at the Centre rather than as artists or craftswomen and why the training is an adjunct to the work, not the purpose of the Centre.

The women produce a range of products. Their paintings and screen prints were originally sold at the Centre but now most local sales go through Nyinkka Nyunyu Cultural Centre just down the road. Paintings are increasingly being sold through the Internet and by galleries across Australia. The women receive 60% of the painting’s price (before Gallery mark-up); the remaining 40 percent stays with the Centre for materials. The Centre also receives commissions to produce goods: recently they designed the motif and screen-printed 500 calico bags for the Barkly Regional Development Board, auspiced by the NT Department of Community Development Sport and Cultural Affairs.

Through sales of their work, the women can significantly increase their income, which is an additional attraction for working at the Centre. By generating this additional income, the Centre is effectively expanding the employment (or self-employment) outcomes for the women – although it is not couched in those terms. Some of the more prolific artists stay longer than the 16 CDEP-paid hours.

Factors contributing to the initiative’s success

The women at the Centre play a key role in shaping its activities

The women at the Centre play a key role in shaping its activities, especially with the guidance of Jessica Jones and Nikkie Morrison, Indigenous women who have become the Centre’s Senior Supervisors.

Alan Murn, the current Coordinator, explained that there is no “grand training plan”, rather the training brought in (from a number of sources: Batchelor Institute, Northern Territory University, Centralian College – the latter two now amalgamated as Charles Darwin University) is a gradual evolution in response to the women’s changing interests, and with a view to keeping fresh ideas and possible lines of development coming in. A number of the women talked about the attraction of the Centre being “a place where you try new things”. In fact, Alison Alder, the Centre’s initial coordinator, attributes its on-going success to this combination of stability and openness:
When I first came here and consulted, they said they wanted to do new things – learn pottery, tiles, many things. So the model we set up was for it to operate like an art school. Different artists are invited to come in and work. We bought books about art, architecture, too – a whole range of things for the women to look at. And they have the opportunity to decide what they want. There are other centres that focus on a saleable thing and people are almost forced to work on the same thing in the same style. They’re not really allowed to experiment and develop their own creativity. That’s the opposite of this Centre.

The Centre is stable, responsive and open

The word ‘on-going’ came up often in the conversations. Several of the women have been involved with the Centre since its inception, although others have come and gone over the years. The crafts teacher from Batchelor Institute, who was spending a fortnight at the Centre at the time of this study, teaching ceramics and sculpture (and who will return in 2005) remarked “I can see with this group an ‘on-going’ attitude: they are taking in the things I’m saying and you can almost see them storing it away mentally to use later as they practise more.”

It may be useful to point out that the art produced by the women at the Centre is generally not based on specific Dream stories or sites but reflects their current lives. Bush tucker is a long-standing subject of interest. The arrival of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway in Tennant Creek was the focus of a Centre painting project not long ago. Lindy Brodie’s series of paintings inspired by the train currently hangs in the Nyinkka Nyunyu gallery; Flora Holt continues to paint gloriously colourful images of train carriages. Work on Centre-wide projects (like the train series and the widely acclaimed set of 16 screenprinted 'punttu', or skin name portraits, one set of which is on permanent display at Nyinkka Nyunyu and another of which is in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia) has proved a very effective strategy for stimulating creativity, as is the group’s annual pilgrimage to the Desart exhibition in Alice Springs which brings together art from the 36 Indigenous art centres of central Australia.

None of its ‘responsiveness and openness’ should be taken to imply that the Centre is without direction, far from it. Murn has a number of plans already in train for ways the Centre can move forward, not least being the $110,000 they have applied for to up-grade and extend the work areas and facilities of the Pink Palace. This expansion would allow for a men’s area, especially for wood carving. Murn has organised two artists-in-residence for 2005: one a paper-maker, the other an expert in sun-etching. He would like to invite a third artist who creates art from found objects to come from Sydney for six weeks. Funding has been sourced to significantly up-grade the web-site and associated capabilities.

The Centre is a community and of the community

The responsiveness of the Centre to the larger Indigenous community is demonstrated in a number of ways, including the extended networks of everyone who works at the Centre. It is particularly noticeable in the way the Centre is alert
to the interests and talents of people who are not part of it – like the men who want to do carving.

Currently, 18 women work at the Centre; at times the number has been as high as 27; rarely has it been less than 16. Sitting around the two tables on the veranda, working on their clay reliefs, some of the women talked about how much at home they feel here:

you come in and you’re around friends …

you’re making something; being creative; others are interested in what you’re doing; it feels good …

people respect each other here …

The point about respect – mutual respect within the Centre – is quite important. One of the women said, “I welcome Flora even though I was raised here and she’s from the Gulf, and Wendy’s from another tribe, too”. Nikkie Morrison, one of the Senior Supervisors, mentioned that although several tribes are represented amongst the women working at the Centre, she would like to see greater diversity still.

The women’s feeling of ownership is also evident. And it is real: they make the decisions that shape the Centre’s activities and direction. Alan Murn, the current Coordinator, was invited to fill that role by the women. They knew him because he had taught screen-printing at the Centre in the past.

The Centre has a ‘tone’ that fits with the culture of the community

The ‘good practice’ that was made evident through the Julalikari Arts and Craft Centre’s screen-printing program reflects everyday ‘common garden’ practice at the Centre. The factors that contributed to the program’s success were that it:

- identified products that would receive wide recognition;
- brought in a talented print-maker (another talented print-maker, actually – there have been several at the Centre over the years) who had extensive experience teaching in Indigenous communities and who could recognise the merit of what was being produced;
- had good facilities which were familiar to many of the print-makers.

However, it is the tone of the place that really constitutes the good practice. It is in the way the women work, their responsiveness to new directions, their willingness to learn new skills, to extend old ones and to concentrate on the demands made of them. The image of the Centre as an art school, mentioned by one of the interviewees, is helpful. It is striving to create that interesting combination of a place imbued simultaneously with an air of casualness and of seriousness. The Centre is seamlessly part of Indigenous ways of being in Tennant Creek. Much of the advice given to non-Indigenous educators working with Indigenous learners talks, rightly, about the importance of respect, negotiation, meaningful (to the learner) outcomes, relationships and Indigenisation. What was interesting in this study is that the people consulted rarely bothered to mention those things – they are embedded in the life of the Centre and taken as read. Absences, for example, are accepted without judgment whether they are for Sorry business or personal
difficulties. It is that embeddedness – and the pleasure the women take in the work - which leads to learning, to sales and to employment outcomes.

*The Centre is a business*

The drive to deliver ‘product’ is real but it is not allowed to distort the dynamic and culture of the Centre, as Alison Alder pointed out. Nonetheless, when Alan Murn was asked what he would take from his experience at the Julalikari Centre if he were to try to replicate it somewhere else, the first thing he said was: “I’d quickly find an outlet for sales. Sales are important to artists and craftspeople.” A short time later, one of the women casually observed, “it feels good when I see someone wearing ‘my’ tee-shirt.”
Wickham Point LNG Indigenous Access Training Program, NT

About the initiative

One initiative identified as an example of equity good practice in the Northern Territory was the 13-week Indigenous Access Training Program conducted in 2003 to skill participants for employment in the construction of the Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) plant at Wickham Point (not far from Darwin). Twenty-nine candidates were enrolled in the program (in two intakes of approximately 15 students each) received accelerated training, primarily at the Certificate II level in a range of construction competencies. Twenty completed the training and 18 took up apprenticeships. A year later (October 2004) ten were still indentured and most of these are due to receive a Certificate III in the near future.

The features of this program which commend it as good practice will not be apparent from that simple description. The critical elements lie in the organisational processes that underpinned the initiative although the quality of the training itself and of the mentoring of Indigenous participants also played a role, of course. The ‘good practice’ at work in this example include:

- ‘reverse engineering’ from specific employment opportunity to training program;
- the calibre and timeliness of negotiations amongst the relevant parties;
- well defined selection procedures;
- support for participants during training and in employment.

These are discussed in turn. But first, a few points of background.

The partnership between the Northern Land Council (NLC) and the Territory Construction Association (TCA) forms the heart of this ‘good practice’ story. The NLC and TCA had established an alliance in 2002 to generate employment opportunities for Indigenous people in the construction of the Alice Springs to Darwin Railway. Through that partnership 66 Indigenous participants, most in the age range 18 to 30, were trained and over 80 per cent gained employment. The success of that venture and the fact that the two organisations worked well together led to a continuation of their Memorandum of Understanding and they have been actively pursuing opportunities for Indigenous employment on other major construction projects in the Territory.

In 2003, the NLC-TCA Partnership approached the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) with the proposal that became the Wickham Point Indigenous Access Training Program. That’s where this particular story of good practice begins. The reader should be alerted to the fact that the program was repeated in 2004 with rather different outcomes; the 2004 experience is also discussed.
Factors contributing to the initiative’s success

Reverse engineering from employment to training design

In the NLC-TCA Memorandum of Understanding, TCA takes responsibility for designing the training. Jon Baker, general manager of TCA, describes the ‘reverse engineering’ process they use and which they have come to believe is a key to designing effective training in the Darwin/NT context:

The first thing we do is go to potential employers and ask: ‘what jobs have you got coming up?’ Then we ask: ‘what are the skill requirements of those jobs?’ Then we ask about the timing of the work. So suppose they say they need concreters in 6 months’ time. We’d ask exactly what a worker needs to be productive in that specific job and when the work will come on stream. If work starts on Monday, the course must be timed to finish on the Friday.

So we design the course around the timing of the job as well as around the skill set. That is why you need the commitment of employers. The step from training to work has to be very tight.

One of the issues we do face is the problem that construction work has a finite life and when it finishes, so does employment. What we would like to do with our partnership with NLC or perhaps with Job Network is that the minute someone comes off one job, there is another lined up. People need to get back to work quickly.

This is not rocket science, you know!

The training that the 29 participants in the 2003 Wickham Point Indigenous Access Training Program received was an amalgam of competencies: primarily from the General Construction Training Package and primarily at Certificate II level with additional skills such as first aid and C-class licenses “packaged in”. There was some discussion about designing the program so that participants would be in a position to receive a full Certificate II qualification but that didn’t eventuate. The program remained tightly focused on the specifications of the jobs on offer.

It is interesting to note that none of the individuals consulted in this study made more than passing reference to the training that was delivered in either the 2003 or 2004 initiatives. There was an occasional offhand comment about the RTO concerned being experienced both technically and in working with Indigenous learners and that it had extensive facilities. In other words, because the training was good – because it was so unproblematic and lived up to everyone’s expectation - it slipped off the radar screen. There may be some messages in that.

Timely and quality negotiations

Even for a ‘simple’ highly focused 13-week training program like the 2003 Wickham Point Access one, the extent of negotiation involved is wide and demanding. Two aspects of the negotiations are mentioned here: those that involve potential employers; those that involve government departments. A model

"Not Exactly Rocket Science"
which is being developed in the Northern Territory to smooth the negotiating path is described.

Because having real jobs available at the end of the training is considered, especially by NLC and TCA, to be an essential factor in obtaining satisfactory employment outcomes, negotiation with the intended (potential) employer is critical. In the Alice Springs to Darwin Railway case, the Northern Land Council, through the Land Use Agreement and as the peak Indigenous organisation for the northern part of the Territory, was instrumental in developing the Local Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plan. There is no suggestion that the employer was in any way unwilling to offer employment to Indigenous applicants, but it was pointed out a number of times in the course of this study that they did have a contractual obligation to employ Indigenous people – an obligation that could be enforced.

The employment that was anticipated from the 2003 Indigenous Access Training Program was in constructing the LNG plant at Wickham Point. By all accounts, the construction company was very supportive of the principle of hiring Indigenous workers; however, they steadfastly refused to commit to employing ‘graduates’ of the Access Training Program. As it turned out, only one person from the 2003 intake was employed. Instead, the local Group Training Company Building Skills which is associated with the RTO that provided the Access Training agreed to offer the required number of apprenticeships. The apprentices work primarily in Darwin’s housing and general commercial sector.

In 2003 the NLC-TCA partnership approached the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) to explore avenues through which the Department might fund training which the NLC-TCA identified in their drive to create a local pool of skilled Indigenous workers for major Territory construction projects. One of the projects which they discussed was the construction of the Wickham Point LNG plant.

Negotiations between the NLC-TCA partnership and senior DEET management resulted in a grant of $227,000 (from the Department’s Flexible Response Program Fund) to establish the 2003 Wickham Point LNG Indigenous Access Training Program. Of this: $33,900 went to the NLC-TCA partnership to coordinate and manage the recruitment, training and employment support of participants; $77,266 to Industries Services Training Pty Ltd to deliver the training; and the remainder of the funds used to source such additional support as clothing and transport for the participants.

It was recognised, even in the 2003 negotiations, that the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) ought to have been involved in the project because part of its brief is to support initiatives which foster employment for Indigenous people. So when NLC-TCA approached DEET in 2004 to replicate and extend the successful 2003 initiative, DEWR was also approached.

Somehow the round of negotiations in 2004 was protracted. It is well known that even with the best will in the world, these negotiations with government and government-supported agencies are complex. The complicating factors mentioned by people consulted in this study which were especially evident in both the 2003 and 2004 examples include:
accountability mechanisms which are prescriptive and inflexible and are different for the different agencies involved and even for different programs in a single agency;

the resources which each government agency is ‘allowed’ to contribute are narrowly and tightly defined. One example nominated: "we had an idea for a networking initiative a few years ago but because it wasn’t an employment program and it wasn’t a training program, we couldn’t fit it in anywhere."

even though big construction projects are known well in advance, companies are reluctant to commit to future employment even though skill shortages are also known well in advance as is the time it takes to train people for skilled trades.

The delays in 2004 meant that training that year did not synchronise with the availability of employment and the outcomes for the 60 Indigenous participants in the four 13-week training programs (two in general construction, one in hospitality and one in welding) were disappointing. Less than half those completing training secured employment and many of those who obtained work in mid-2004 had left it by late October. The people consulted in this study attributed the poor 2004 outcomes at least in part to the lack of rigour in the selection process but – as was widely acknowledged – selection had to be done in a rush because the protracted negotiations had thrown the timing out.

**Well defined selection procedures**

Selecting participants for the Indigenous Access Training Programs was the responsibility of the NLC and a comprehensive 5-step selection process is used. It begins by 'sourcing' potential participants (NLC maintains an extensive data base). Potential recruits then attend a group session to give them "as much information as possible". Then they are individually interviewed. Then brought back together. Then interviewed individually again.

"It is important that they – and to an extent us – understand their commitment to training and to employment."

The candidates are also subjected to drug and alcohol screening.

An unintended experiment about the value of this selection process took place. The rigorous procedure followed in 2003 was not followed in 2004 (see above) and the employment outcomes in the two years were significantly different. The difference has been interpreted by the people involved as convincing evidence that a central element in the ‘good practice’ of the 2003 Wickham Point Indigenous Access Training Program – and one which needs to be considered in replication – was the careful, iterative selection process it employed.

**Effective support during and after training**

It will come as no surprise to hear that a practice contributing to the success of the 2003 Indigenous Access Training program was the individual support participants received both during training and in employment. TCA provided the ‘technical skill
learning’ mentoring. However, in discussing the 2003 initiative Jon Baker, general manager of TCA, focused his praise on the mentoring provided by the Northern Land Council:

> They did a fantastic job, which was absolutely vital for training and retention of workers. They would do things, like if someone had a doctor’s appointment, the mentor would take the person to the doctor’s appointment and bring them back immediately after... They also worked with the person’s family: for example on the Railway project, with the male away from home for long periods of time working, the spouse or partner would be faced with the bills. They might never have had to tackle that before. So NLC was available for the wife back at home front.

Sean Lange from the Northern Land Council had his own way of describing the ongoing support they provided which “made a difference”:

> The main thing is getting around the difficulties of maintaining employment. It’s when they’re employed that they have to know we are here. The issue can be transport. Or misunderstandings: communication in the workplace a real issue. One person didn’t understand when she was supposed to turn up, and once a disharmony happens, the Indigenous person is wary about going back to work. This year [2004] we’ve had more problems with people staying in employment.

A number of people pointed out that mentoring is a role that requires a range of skills, the most important of which may be the mentor knowing when to push the ‘mentee’ and when not to apply pressure while other things take priority and sort themselves out. This is not an easy judgement to make. Baker, from TCA, said that, in his experience, the best mentors for Indigenous Access Training Programs have had industry experience:

> “they know the demands that are actually made on people in the workplace and therefore they will insist on instilling an acceptance of those demands during the training period.”

Under Native Title legislation, the Northern Land Council is not funded to do any of the selection or support work which they have been able to do in these special projects. The delivery of these services has to be supported by external funding. The NLC has argued that this kind of work is “core business as it is part of the development and management of Aboriginal land”. Many of the people consulted in this study volunteered (i.e. not in answer to any question on the researcher’s part) that NLC having long-term stable funding for this role would be a great boon.

**Hurdles faced by the initiative and how they were overcome**

Even before the disappointing results of the 2004 Indigenous Access Training Program, a Director in DEET recognised that it would help everyone if there were a model – a sort of flow chart – that described all the elements (inside and outside government) that need to fit together to implement programs that lead to good
employment outcomes for Indigenous participants. The Director has been working on such a Model for Indigenous Employment on Joint Venture programs in conjunction with the NLC:

The purpose of modelling the process from beginning to end is to build our capacity as an organisation so we don’t reinvent the wheel every time a new construction project or other Indigenous employment-generating opportunity comes along. We started at the whiteboard and now have a model that encompasses all the components. The problem is that it looks incredibly complicated. So we’re in the process of paring it back and we’ll test it with projects that come along. I expect it will take 12 months to refine it, but then it should be long lasting. I hope to look back five years from now and reflect on how all the hard work in the early days has become second nature.

The model is being constructed from lived experience so that all the players will be able to see all the tasks required to get these sorts of programs implemented: who provides what support; what information needs to be shared with whom; who pays whom for what; what the lead-up times are; and so forth. As the model is currently conceptualised, there are six basic steps:

- initiate the process (including discussions with local Indigenous communities)
- define business needs (for example, detailed discussions with employers)
- audit the supply (of existing skills, of the population, of the gaps)
- deliver requisite training
- define employment issues (are there cross cultural issues which need to be addressed? is case management or pastoral care or mentoring required?)
- implementation

At this stage in its development, the model is a complicated, “over-loaded” diagram. As such it is such a good reminder of how many factors might need to be brought into alignment – on time – for Indigenous training/employment initiatives to produce the desired outcomes. In this (admittedly early stage) of the model each of the six principal steps contains seven or eight sub-steps with iterations and sub iterations amongst them.

The model is not just for construction projects. It may be as useful, if not more useful, with sustainable long term joint venture employment projects on pastoral properties, in mining and industry areas where the life of the project is greater than the construction period. A key to an effective model is that stakeholders endorse it, and stakeholder consultation is being built into the design. Despite the significant planning and conceptual effort that is being invested in the model, “the real test,” will be in the implementation, which is still many months away.
What might follow this initiative

In addition to the specific elements of good practice detailed in the preceding pages, there are three larger ideas about the replicability of initiatives which might be drawn from the experiences of the Wickham Point Indigenous Access Training Programs in 2003 and 2004:

The importance of the underlying mechanisms

One needs to look well below the operational ‘surface’ of a training/employment initiative to the mechanisms (and, indeed, the machinations) which brought it to fruition – that is, the operational work of training and support do not reveal in and of themselves the forces that shaped the practice and which would influence its replication. The image of an iceberg is a bit of a cliché but seems exceedingly appropriate here: replication might depend much more on finding out what went well (or not) in building the 90 percent of the berg that is out of sight than on what happens on the exposed 10 percent.

Employment outcomes need to meet the needs of the employees as well as the employers

The employment outcomes in 2003 were pleasing but they were not the ones for which the program had been designed. The Wickham Point construction company, Bechtel, failed to offer significant employment. It was the local Group Training Company Building Skills that provided the employment outcomes. This, from all reports, did not trouble the people who had participated in the training program which led some people consulted to quietly question what employment – or, more specifically, what employers – Indigenous participants in training programs actually want to work for. The point was summed up nicely:

> A good employment outcome is where someone stays in employment for the long term. This can only be achieved if both the employer and employee are comfortable with one another. Rights and responsibilities cut both ways.

Acknowledging that it is both unwise and impossible to generalise, it appears to be the case that opportunities for Indigenous employment in NT don’t always suit Indigenous people’s culture and lifestyle. In part this is because the jobs may require people to leave home for long period, which underscores the NLC’s point that all good (and replicable) practice must start from the interests and wishes of the Indigenous person. It also serves as a warning against defining ‘good employment outcomes’ as those that meet the needs of employers rather than meeting the needs of the concerned Indigenous individuals.

Even replicating one’s own success can be difficult

The difference in employment outcomes between 2003 and 2004 is a perfect illustration of how agonisingly difficult it can be to replicate even one’s own successful good practice, let alone someone else’s.
BREAKING THE UNEMPLOYMENT CYCLE INITIATIVE
QUEENSLAND DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

About the initiative

This initiative is different to the others reported: it involves a major systemic investment by an entire government department, and seeks to address all aspects of disadvantage—from people with a disability, to people with poor literacy and numeracy, to those who have difficulty finding employment because of their age, to those from a non-English-speaking background, to Indigenous people, to those in remote locations. Breaking the Unemployment Cycle (with a sub-banner “100,000 jobs for Queensland by mid-2007”) funds a variety of programs targeting the needs of job-seekers in one or more of these categories.

The initiative is ambitious: $100M per annum across all categories of disadvantage, which in turn enables some impressive numbers in some of the funded programs—for example, 2400 new traineeships per annum in the Public Service Training Program. It was introduced in 1998 to provide a variety of programs to all disadvantaged job seekers, and is thus an example of an integrated initiative: it covers all forms of disadvantage, rather than particular forms.

It fits within a context of Queensland employment growth having led the rest of Australia for much of the last decade, but with an unemployment rate which is significantly above the national average.

The programs funded are as follows (the following description taken from the Initiative Review, 2002):

The community employment programs and related programs aimed at long-term unemployed and disadvantaged job seekers:

- The Community Jobs Plan (CJP) which funds community and public sector organisations to employ long-term unemployed and disadvantaged job seekers on projects that benefit their communities
- The Community Employment Assistance Program (CEAP) which funds community and public sector organisations to provide long-term unemployed and disadvantaged job seekers with intensive assistance to help them get ongoing jobs through job search and job placement assistance, assistance to improve literacy and numeracy skills, vocational training and work experience
- The Experience Pays and Back to Work programs designed to target mature age job seekers over 45 years of age who experience particular difficulties in securing employment
- The Get Set for Work program designed to target assistance at young people aged 15-24 years in communities experiencing very high youth unemployment.
The **traineeship and apprenticeship programs** provide additional opportunities, particularly for young job seekers, and are the largest elements of the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle. They are:

- **The Public Sector Employment program** - providing apprenticeships and traineeships in state government, local government and community-based organisations to young people and disadvantaged groups so that they can gain employment and training leading to recognised qualifications.

- **The Youth for the Environment and Local Communities program** that provides additional traineeships for young people in environmental protection, horticulture and waste management.

The programs aimed at alleviating **skill shortages** are:

- **The Private Sector Employment program** that provides additional employer incentives to those that are normally available to private sector employers and group training organisations to take on additional apprentices and trainees in industries experiencing skill shortages or very rapid growth.

- **The Housing Industry Trade Training Plus program** aimed at alleviating skill shortages in building and construction trades.

**Outcomes of the initiative**

Many of the programs have had significant outcomes for people with a disability and Indigenous people. For a start, the numbers are impressive—over 6,000 Indigenous people per year are assisted in programs that are designed to improve their employment outcomes, and the success rate for achieving ongoing employment varies from a bit less than 50% up to 80%, depending on the program. In the case of people with a disability, 3,000 people per year are helped, and the rate of ongoing employment achieved is around 50%—and as a 2002 review of the program noted, reflecting on the fact that the success rate is lower than for other disadvantaged groups, “they face significant other or additional barriers that the program is less able to address by itself.”

Examples of programs that have been particularly successful are:

- The use of the capacity within the Queensland Public Service to create a year’s employment experience for a number of people has helped to break the cycle of “no experience, no job; no job, no experience”. Disadvantaged people are employed not with the expectation that this will lead to an ongoing job within the relevant Department, or even within the Queensland Public Service, but with the expectation that they will leave after a year better able to achieve improved employment outcomes by dint of their employment experience.

- Providing funds to community groups (e.g. at Goodna, near Ipswich) to support a partnership with the Murrie Baptist Church to develop a course called “Get Yourself a Drivers Licence”.

"Not Exactly Rocket Science"
Providing funds at sites relevant to particular communities, for particular purposes—for example, a disused mine site in which a community converted the old buildings, revegetated the site for sporting purposes, and so on—focusing on both providing training and employment experiences for local disadvantaged people. This might also involve the Department persuading a community group to employ a person or a small group with a disability for a fixed period—again, with the intention of both demonstrating people’s skills to the broader community and providing people with a firm work history.

Factors contributing to the initiative’s success

The scale of the *Breaking the Unemployment Cycle* initiative, and the variety of programs within it, is such that much has been learnt about the factors that contribute to its success. Key factors are:

- The importance of giving people a ‘job history’—in fact, many of the programs are based on this.
- The integration of government responsibilities for ‘employment’ and for ‘training’ within the same State Government Department, which enables better construction of programs which incorporate both these aspects.
- Being prepared, at government level, to provide funds for people to do things in different ways, or to try ideas that are currently outside the formal VET framework—with a focus on doing things that meet local needs; for example:
  - training outside traditional settings
  - non-accredited, unassessed training
  - ensuring that there is a work context—no matter how minor.

  This is particularly important in Indigenous communities.

- The preparedness of government to set targets, but then to implement them flexibly. For example, in the early 1990s Queensland had a “10% Policy”: 10% of the hours worked on government construction contracts over $¼M had to be worked by apprentices, trainees and others undertaking training. In addition, in designated geographical areas, there had to be 20% Indigenous involvement and still 10% in training.

- Using people’s inherent motivation to achieve something in order to interest them in training—for example, the training focusing on Drivers Licence turned out to be much more about literacy and numeracy than driving skills, as most of the students could, in fact, drive and many had been driving for years—they just didn’t have the literacy levels needed to pass the test. But had the course been advertised as a literacy and numeracy course, there is little likelihood that the learners would have materialised. As Bernie Carlon, General Manager, Employment Initiatives, said: “We try to smuggle the training in to people.” This was an important initiative as in many Indigenous communities, many of the jobs involve driving.
Hurdles faced by the initiative and how they were overcome

Although there are advantages in having ‘employment’ and ‘training’ within the same Department, the Department does not provide the bulk of the direct employment opportunities: these are provided, directly or indirectly, by various agencies, which might not all have the same commitment to people with a disadvantage. This can sometimes provide a challenge to the effective achievement of Government policy. A related problem is the difficulty of reporting, particularly in remote communities.

But perhaps the greatest hurdle is yet to be faced squarely: the misalignment between some of the assumptions made within the National Training Framework (as to the primacy of national industry-defined competency standards, accredited and assessed training, and the importance of nationally portable qualifications) and the needs of training designed to provide better employment outcomes and wherever possible (and at whatever pedagogic cost) to give people an ‘employment history’ of some sort. This is a challenge yet to be explicitly faced at a national level.
About the initiative

Ceduna is a small town with a district population of around 3,500 people on the remote western coast of South Australia. Around one third of the district population is Aboriginal – comprising around ten per cent of the State's Indigenous population. Aboriginal school completion rates are low: in 2004 the Ceduna Area School had one Aboriginal student in the final year of school. And yet the opportunities for employment in the housing industry in Ceduna township and surrounding Aboriginal communities, including homeland communities, are significant.

The Ceduna region has one of the largest CDEP\(^8\) projects (Aboriginal ‘Work for the Dole’ schemes that predate the relatively recent, non-Indigenous federal initiative) in South Australia – operating administratively through Tjutjuna Worka Tjuta [TWT], formed in 1989 to enhance training and employment prospects to the local Aboriginal Community in Ceduna. TWT employs between 160 and 180 Aboriginal participants each for 12 hours a week, who have an opportunity to be placed in private enterprise if host employers can match the CDEP hours.

The West Coast Building Initiative operates through the Ceduna Campus of Spencer Tafe, one of the seventeen small campuses that service the remote 85 per cent of the area of South Australia. It is a good example of small, successful ‘bottom up’ initiative, carefully planned, implemented and funded collaboratively through but beyond Spencer Tafe\(^9\), involving TWT, Commonwealth Department of Workplace Relations and the Aboriginal Housing Authority. The architect and key player in the initiative is the Lecturer in Trades and Aboriginal Education at the Ceduna Spencer Tafe Campus.

The project originated from a perceived need (through a training needs analysis) for more Aboriginal tradespersons to service community housing projects through mainstream local builders. As a TWT informant noted:

> “There is a high demand for employment in the building industry, particularly in homelands. Once trained they have a full time job to go to.”

However, the established pathways to building qualifications lacked the ongoing commitment, flexibility or coherence required as well as the income support required to retain trainees early on in their training. It was critical that trainees had access to reasonable living wages in the early years of the apprenticeship including what was effectively a pre-apprenticeship period. This was achieved by restructuring the training in such a way that students received CDEP wages for two

\(^8\) The Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) is funded by the Australian Government and provides Indigenous unemployment, particularly in remote Aboriginal communities Australia.

\(^9\) Spencer TAFE consistently uses title case ‘Tafe’ rather than the capitalised ‘TAFE’ acronym, a practice that is repeated for this case study.
days and AbStudy for three days of preparatory education and specifically customised training units in Tafe. Extra funds were gained (from DEWR under an Indigenous Career Employment initiative) to supplement the low first year training wages to Year 2 level and to extend the normal three year program over four years. This is an example of the flexibility built in to the program.

It was decided that ‘main streaming’ the program by taking trainees out of the region, though simpler for training organisations would likely not work. There was an emphasis on gradually building on existing, trusting relationships developed between the mentor and Aboriginal trainees over a number of years in a home maintenance program. As the trainer-mentor explained:

*We avoided calling the program preparation stage a ‘pre-apprenticeship’ so as not to scare trainees off- and also to build up their confidence while we were waiting for permission to proceed.*

As the account below reveals, the project is around three-quarters of the way through its intended cycle, having commenced with planning in 2001 and due for completion in 2005.

**Outcomes of the initiative**

The TWT CDEP West Coast Building Initiative Project has a very clear set of performance objectives, several of which have already been met. Its original aim - to place Indigenous CDEP trainees or apprentices from across the region into a range of building-related occupations with private sector contractors has been very successful.

Important vocational outcomes are anticipated in 2005 for up to six members of the Aboriginal building team. There is a shared expectation that trainees will secure ongoing employment in both private and community-based building in Ceduna and district. In addition, there is evidence of development through the project of a pride in trainees’ work, a positive work ethic and an enhancement of cross-cultural understanding between host employers and trainees.

Consistent with its other aims, the project has led to a range of positive and collaborative local linkages: between a mainstream training provider, a CDEP organisation, a housing authority and private sector building contractors. The project, as originally envisaged, is now recognised positively by the local housing industry as well as local and regional Aboriginal communities.

The project has demonstrated how appropriate delivery mechanisms for Indigenous trainees can be developed through the deliberate provision of additional resources and ongoing teambuilding and mentoring support. It has deliberately embedded extensive induction and mentoring support for the building trainees. The mentoring has arguably been enhanced by a pre-existing positive relationship and knowledge of the trainees by the Tafe trainer and mentor who is also an experienced carpenter.
Factors contributing to the initiative’s success

Commitment of the parties

The particular success of this initiative lies in the ongoing and long-term commitment of the Lecturer (also referred to in this account as the key informant) and collaborating parties to the success of the initiative. The Lecturer, as trainer-mentor, was motivated by a clear and strong personal belief in the equity associated with the program, through experiences of having been disadvantaged himself in his own training. The Lecturer’s own preference for ‘hands on’ learning was through practice, and also by a combination of industry-relevant hands-on skills.

Clear and achievable key performance objectives

The initiative had very clear and achievable key performance objectives that were embedded within the training agreement through the local CDEP organisation (TWT) that were reported against quarterly to the collaborating parties.

Involvement of the trainees

There was a deliberate ‘building in’ of existing relationships with and between participants as a team, but a high level of expectation of the building team as partners in the project and its anticipated employment outcomes. As the key informant noted:

It was sold as a one-off. You stuff up and the project goes under.

There has been attention by the Lecturer to the important detail: including the cultural needs and preferred learning styles of trainees. This has extended, for example, to the trainer-mentor working with trainees to produce work shirts that showed their own Aboriginal designs as well as implementing flexible training delivery mechanisms. The project emblem - a boomerang turning into a hammer - became a potent symbol of the project aim when combined with the Building a future slogan.

Working with employers

The stereotypical, often negative attitudes of some local employers in the building industry to Aboriginal workers needed positively addressing in order to ensure that trainees had employment futures in that industry. In one case, the trainer-mentor observed that a previously unsupportive older employer with bad employment experiences (and unhelpful and inappropriate reactions to those experiences) had turned around to a point that he was championing the project through his own business, and being employed as a lecturer in the program.

Hurdles faced and how they were overcome

One of the main initial hurdles was experienced by the originator at the research phase. Quite early on he had difficulties reconciling the desire to provide quality
local training on one hand, with expectation in Tafe training circles on the other that the standard (and best) way of providing such training was through the big, city-based Tafes.

*I went to Tafe in Adelaide to look at the way they did it. I realised they saw me as being in direct competition for students and dollars. One Tafe wouldn’t assist me in any way and I had difficulty even getting the resources I needed. I ended up working around the other Tafe’s.*

There were minor problems of continuity when key institutional stakeholders to the agreement moved on to other jobs, particularly when they moved to other locations. As a TWT informant noted:

*It’s hard to implement training with no face to face meetings and only chats over the phone.*

**What might follow this initiative**

The program, though very successful for six Aboriginal trainees to Year 3, would likely be hard to completely replicate or repeat in the same site without long-term funding and Institute commitment.

There has been no expectation that the relatively generous funding arrangements for the Ceduna pilot of this building initiative would necessarily be repeated in Spencer Tafe, Ceduna Campus for other subsequent Aboriginal trainees. Indeed, it was an expectation - shared by participants in this project in this location and at this time, that the program would be a special, ‘one off’. As the teacher-mentor explained:

*It would be incredibly expensive if main streamed. The user choice dollars [in the original project] were so low that Spencer Tafe would have handed it back. Aboriginal Education understood the need for this to happen in this area and only saw it as a pilot.*

Nor are there any illusions as to how difficult this project would be to transfer or to be replicated elsewhere –even with a similarly experienced ‘anchor person’ without the proper commitment, long-term planning and attention to detail. As the trainer-mentor said,

*It’s not enough to just have the Lecturer running the thing. It needs very thorough setting up and the participants need the proper mentor support.*

What made the Ceduna initiative possible was specific funding for a 'Coordinator mentor’ (of $50,000) to extend the life of the project.
DISABILITY ACCESS EQUITY OFFICER EMPLOYMENT PROJECT, LAUNCESTON, TASMANIA

About the initiative

Launceston is a northern Tasmanian city of around 80,000 people, with a large number of educational and training organisations, and a significant number of large and small industries. Being a reasonable-sized city, it is also the base for around ten separate specialised employment services and agencies for people with a disability. These services are evidence of the fact that Tasmania not only retains a number of centralised and regional services that are not available in other Australian States or Territories, but also has a considerable pool of people in the community with a disability. Many of these people would work if they could find appropriate local employment with flexible and informed employers providing jobs matched to their specific and sometimes different skills.

The Disability Access Equity Officer Employment Project was developed as part of a strategy to facilitate a ‘Community of Practice’ focusing on the provision of accessible and high quality VET for Tasmanians with a disability. It originated as a pilot from the Equity Standards Branch of the Department of Education in Hobart, with the intention of being replicated in Hobart with ANTA funding if successful. In essence it concentrated on the demand side of employment of people with a disability through the appointment of a project officer.

The project involved developing and implementing ‘... a communications strategy to market benefits of employing people with a disability’, providing ‘... correct and considered data ... on the benefits of employing people with a disability’, collecting information on current issues and practice affecting their employment, identifying needs in order to build the capacity for employment and raising discussion on pathways and transition issues’. The project officer found it more profitable to place less emphasis on exploring why people with a disability were not employed, and more emphasis on actually getting them employed.

The pilot project was finalised in mid 2004 and was not operating in October 2004 when this case study was researched.10

The outcomes of the initiative

The anticipated outcomes in the original project brief were ‘Increased knowledge and improved employer attitudes as to the benefits of employing and training people with a disability, in the long term leading to increased numbers of people with disabilities in meaningful employment.’ The program’s anticipated outputs were a strategy (a process and a set of documents) for working with employers to

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10 The case study was possible because of the generosity of the previous project officer and members of the Project Steering Committee.
improve training and employment opportunities and outcomes for people with a disability.

*The project was regarded as successful by all stakeholders consulted, in that knowledge was gained in person at regular events staged for around 30 employers of the 70 contacted.*

However there has been no check as to whether people were actually employed as a consequence. As a Project Steering committee member noted:

*We have no evidence that this initiative generated this number of jobs. People certainly made more inquiry calls, the web site had more hits and the project had plenty of publicity. The job was to raise awareness and it certainly did that.*

Given that the project only lasted for one year as a pilot it is too early to gauge its success in the long term as specified in the anticipated project outcome above.

Though the pilot project had finished when the case was researched on site, the project officer reported that

*An inspired network of people in supporting organisations have formed an ongoing 'Community of Practice' that still meet in various roles.*

**Factors contributing to the initiative’s success**

*The skills and experience of the project officer*

One of the main reasons that the project was successful, within the limitations of a short-term pilot, was the skills, extensive experience and existing networks of the project officer. Her previous practical and professional industry background combined with her enthusiasm empathy and networks were regarded by project committee members as

*... a winning combination. She has skills that go back to Industry Training Board experience. She thrives on networking.*

The project officer used a number of professional skills to create very professional forums (usually cocktail events) that were attractive to employers, organised at times they were able to attend, and sometimes with key outside informants. Some informants had a disability and were prominent role models for people with a disability. As the project officer explained,

*Employers want you to meet them on their turf. The information had to presented well and they go a good feed.*

A member of the project steering committee also noted that

*It is important to use and involve people with expertise and people with a disability.*
Steering Committee and Reference Group

A Steering Committee as well as an Employer Reference Group was a second important success factor.

A network for passing on information

The project officer regarded the good advice and inspiration that was delivered through a network, as a key success factor.

Hurdles faced and how they were overcome

- The project was only funded as an extended pilot. It that sense, its main hurdle was that it was not seen as ongoing, and was unable to provide the necessary support to employers.

- The first six months of the project coincided with a time in the business cycle (August to December) that was often difficult for employers.

- The project suffered from not having a good or clear action plan and not having good professional resources at the outset (such as a business card for example). As a steering committee member noted, *Sometimes we had to fight strongly to convince Equity Standards that the way we were doing it would have the outcomes.*

- The biggest hurdle identified in future projects by steering committee people interviewed was, *Getting in the door of industry. This is where [the Project Officer’s] persistence came into play.*

What might follow this initiative

This project worked in Launceston because the design, the program and the person employed (particularly her existing knowledge and networks) closely matched the specific need.

If the program was to be replicated, the former project officer suggested it would need to be located in a city or town, presupposing a necessary knowledge and expertise of staff to support it. As a project steering committee member noted, *If it’s funded again, the best bits should be picked out and the sustainability and coordination of effort looked at in the first instance. There’s a myriad of money going in: let’s look at broader networks, different industry sectors different disabilities.*

The project, though relatively cheap ($15,000 in one region), would not be sustainable without further external funding, unless, as the former project officer suggested, *... someone picked it up and was committed to it.*

It might be possible to create a similar project elsewhere with a broader project officer role, that for efficiency had multiple briefs – for example inclusive of the
demand side of employment for youth, older people, Indigenous people as well as people with a disability.
About the initiative

One of the hallmarks of Aboriginal education in Victoria is the recognition of local and regional community responsibility for education. This has been achieved since the 1970s through 29 Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECGs) and eight regions. Wurreker is a strategy developed since 2000 by the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) in partnership with the Victorian State government via the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) that combines this local community control with continuous and systematic consultation with the Victorian community. VAEAI’s effectiveness originates partly from its wide brief - that embraces all education and training sectors from early childhood to higher education, and which includes the leadership advocacy role it plays for the Victorian Koorie community and its eight regions.

Wurreker has become a community-owned (but government-funded) strategy that builds on a long-standing Partnership in Education policy, launched in Victoria in 1990, based on what have become collaborative and equal partnerships between successive State governments and the Aboriginal community through VAEAI. It was formulated and implemented in 2000 after two years of intensive consultation with the Koorie community, and focuses particularly on vocational education, training and employment. Consultation and research for Wurreker confirmed that TAFE Institutes and other Registered Training Providers were offering programs that were often inconsistent with the training needs and aspirations of Koorie people.

Wurreker is based on a vision that challenges the education, training and employment system in Victoria to provide Koorie people and communities with vocational education, training and employment with an emphasis on pathways to employment, Koorie community development, individual learner development and self-determination. In order to deliver on this vision and consistent with the current Partners in a Learning Culture National Strategy, Wurreker seeks to provide a mechanism to allocate resources, support communities, develop partnerships and deliver outcomes.

What is distinctive about Wurreker is that it provides agreed mechanisms that allow for collaborative planning and delivery in an equal partnership between Koorie communities and the State governments, but retaining local and regional decisions and control. A critical component of the Wurreker Strategy are eight Wurreker Regional Brokers that act as a bridge in the eight VAEAI regions between VAEAI and the LAECGs. In essence, through community consultation, Wurreker seeks to replace a centralised, supply-driven education and training system with a

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11 VAEAI is a community based and controlled organisation. Its main aim is to develop processes for the involvement of Victorian Koorie community members in decision making regarding education and training provision for Koorie Students.
collaborative and responsive, demand-driven training and employment system, implemented through State regions to local communities.
Outcomes of the initiative

*Wurreker* was not conceived nor seen as a disposable ‘project’ that comes and goes with the whims of governments. It is now widely seen and accepted by the Victorian Aboriginal community and governments as a sustainable and ‘normal’ way of doing things. It ensures ongoing annual consultation with the Victorian Koorie community in relation to their training needs. In essence *Wurreker* is an outcome in itself - in that it seeks to continually match student learning needs with desired outcomes.

*Wurreker* put a need for Koorie student pathways and outcomes at the heart of education and training. A Koorie Student Satisfaction Survey in 2000 had identified gaps in provision and lack of cultural appropriateness of some programs. *Wurreker* has created ongoing and effective mechanisms for owning and promoting Koorie training - through stakeholders, including the Koorie community, training providers and industry. One of its positive strengths, in the words of a *Wurreker* Regional Broker is:

...seeing the learning process by non-Koories”, and that
"Wurreker allows ownership, not an imposition. It is starting to impact on industry, Job Network and other training providers. We are talking to more people as equal partners.

*Wurreker* Regional Brokers enhance and value the critical role of LAECGs (that provide critical “voluntary advice without compromise” to regions), by providing opportunities for professional development and capacity building. *Wurreker* embodies an annual planning process that creates annual Regional and State Training Plans that set future directions for Koorie training. *Wurreker* ensures that State governments hear and act on advice on funding to RTOs, Koorie-specific and Koorie-modified curriculum and training packages.

Factors contributing to the initiative’s success

The timing was right

The *Wurreker* strategy was developed and implemented at a time of positive intersection between at least three factors: a solid decade of preparation - involving development of trust between VAEAI and State governments, the creation of a National Strategy for VET, and evidence of a need for change in strategy at a regional and local level in the interests of improved student outcomes.

Careful and purposeful implementation

*Wurreker* was implemented carefully, with clear purpose, with good background research and with no hurry. The ideas behind *Wurreker* were conceived and doggedly implemented by a visionary VAEAI manager and the VAEAI Committee of Management - with clear vision and purpose. It was supported by key champions

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"Not Exactly Rocket Science“
of the concept from both within OTTE and the State government at the highest levels, acting as equal and collaborative partners with VAEEAI.

**Effective mechanisms for consultation**

Wurreker is now regarded as being successful, in the words of a Wurreker Regional Broker, in that “It brought people to the table.” Wurreker provides mechanisms for consultation and support through Wurreker Regional Brokers – that are themselves ‘arms length’ from both VAEEAI and local communities, but responsive to both. As a Wurreker Regional Broker explained,

*We had to be careful where they were placed. If they were placed in a TAFE they would be swallowed up. If in Aboriginal Coops they might tend to dissipate their effort and lose their independent mentoring and brokering role. Most times they work well when they are shopfront.*

**Equal partnerships**

All of the documentation in different media format for Wurreker is saturated with very professional Koorie imagery and symbols. These include placing Yalka (a living Yellow Box tree) as a symbol of dynamic partnerships (with students at the centre symbolised the trunk), and visually portraying the relationships between students, LAEGs, VAEEAI and local communities in concentric interlocking circles - rather than in separate and directive relationships.

**Hurdles faced and how they were overcome**

One of the critical, early hurdles faced in developing Wurreker was that many of the key stakeholders in education and training within and beyond the Koorie community were concerned with the nature of the change. In many the particular concerns was uncertainty about the need for them to change roles, practices - and sometimes jobs - in training provision for Koories.

In the implementation phase, it was hard first for Wurreker project officers, and later for Regional Brokers, who were hesitant about their roles, to be trained up to understand and confidently perform those roles in community contexts.

**What might follow this initiative**

The Wurreker initiative has become 'a way of doing things'. As a Wurreker Broker suggested,

*It's not rocket science. It is about mechanisms and processes and equal partnerships. It involves real commitments to community needs.*

While Koorie (and Australian Indigenous) participation in VET is generally high, there is a recognition that in spite of attempts through Wurreker, ACE participation in Victoria (and elsewhere in Australia) remains very low. In 2004 there were only
four Indigenous ACE RTOs in Victoria, less than one thousand Koorie ACE participants in total and a general lack of knowledge of ACE amongst Koories.

Wurreker Regional Brokers identify more scope for targeting and communicating with employers and enterprises to facilitate pathways of Koorie people to employment. In particular, there is seen to be scope for developing Aboriginal Employment Strategies in major private industries as well as in retail. This would ensure that Koorie people who are appropriately trained have not only jobs but supportive and informed employers to go to.

Several informants suggested that there was an ongoing commitment to Wurreker from without and also from within the Koorie community and government, and that its sustainability was now independent of personalities. However is important to note the important, ongoing involvement and commitment in Wurreker of long-standing and experienced key players in VAEAI, OTTE and as Regional Brokers.

Importantly Wurreker or similar initiatives in other States or Territories would not run without ongoing financial commitment from a State or Federal government.

There has been some interest from other State and Territory Aboriginal organisations of the Wurreker model.

It is arguable that the Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) model recently implemented in mainstream education and training for young people and being considered by other States borrows from some of Wurreker's design principles. In the opinion of one Regional Broker, "Wurreker came first. LLENs followed. Victoria often sets education agendas, policies and program in advance of other States. I can't believe what we've achieved here. It should be a new way of doing business in mainstream as well."

There is a perception that the weakest link in the Wurreker chain is the sustainability of the LAECGs that lie at the base of the chain of community consultation. LAECGs – being voluntary and often without a physical or paid secretarial base, depend heavily on the generosity of other community organisations as well as community volunteers.
About the initiative

The sizeable twin cities of Albury-Wodonga straddle the upper Murray River on the NSW-Victoria border. The Wodonga Institute of TAFE, whose extensive, main campus is on the city’s outer edge, serves Wodonga in Victoria and some cross-border students. Being part of a ‘twin cities’ region committed to economic growth, Wodonga Institute has a strategic focus on serving the needs of communities and industries across the broader region, including its six feeder secondary colleges in Victoria.

The Institute’s knowledge and strategic use of industry, demographic and economic data extends to its recognition of a problem utilising the skills of some young people. The Institute recognises the inequities for one in five Australian with a disability whose access, participation and outcomes in education, training and work remain relatively low. It is also aware from Year 12, Exit 2003, OnTrack data from the Wodonga Region Cluster of inequities within the region in terms of pathways to further education, training, apprenticeships and traineeships as well as work.

The Wodonga Institute’s recent, particular recent concern has been participation and outcomes of secondary school students who have significant learning disabilities and are at risk of prematurely leaving school. A second, important and related concern is with adults from previous generations that are similarly adversely affected, in terms of their attitudes to and engagement in learning and work. Some have mental health issues; others have been long-term unemployed and require supported access to VET.

Anecdotal and statistical evidence, as well as Participatory Action Research by the Disability/Equity Coordinator indicated a growing demand for a program. The Building Bridges program was developed and fine-tuned at Wodonga Institute of TAFE through three pilot programs in the Institute to become the Building Bridges program. As the program title suggests, it is specifically designed to positively re-engage participants in learning and which reflects the objectives and targets of the draft Victorian Disability Agenda – Victoria’s response to ANTA Bridging Pathways National Strategy for people with a disability in VET.

The program was based on evidence that the mainstream education and training environment was not meeting the needs of young people with a disability; that people with mental health issues often need additional support and preparation to re-engage in learning; that long term unemployed people lacked the necessary skills to access support services, and that there were no preparatory programs for.

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12 The OnTrack data were collected through phone interviews in early 2004 from 2003 the total sample of 2003 school leavers in Victoria, identifying detail about tertiary outcomes (including VET, apprenticeships and traineeships) as well as employment outcomes. This data is able to be disaggregated to numbers by school.
mature aged people with disabilities beyond basic literacy and numeracy and mainstream return to study programs. In summary the Building Bridges pilot program focussed on the needs of a diverse range of students, who for a range of inter-related reasons, were at risk of not continuing in post-school learning.

In late 2004 the success of the original three stage pilot in 2003-4 referred to in this case study was being transformed into a Victorian, State-wide Building bridges: Access for All initiative professional development program funded by Reframing the Future. It is an eight-week, part time, pre-vocational (bridging) program for people with a disability, as well as a professional development program for teachers about inclusive practice and supporting students with a disability in the VET environment. In essence Building bridges is as much a team approach as a program, directed at supporting people with a disability through a range of stakeholders, including students, community, teachers and senior management.

The resources for the post-pilot program for late 2004-2005 include the very professional, carefully coordinated set of resources comprising Building bridges Facilitators Manual (136pp.), ‘Staff Development Facilitators Guide’ (50pp and CD), ‘Participant’s Notebook’ (42pp), a ‘Teaching Teachers’ Building Bridges youth project Video as well as a booklet developed by students from the third pilot program, all published and being promoted by the Victorian TAFE Disability Network and being distributed to all Victorian TAFEs in 2004. Its aim is to encourage long term attitudinal and cultural change within delivery of vocational education and training in Victoria.

The Building Bridges program pilot was fully and generously funded by OTTE as an innovative pilot at Wodonga Institute. This included out of class preparation, professional development and meeting time for teaching staff including sessional teachers.

**Outcomes of the initiative**

**Improved outcomes for students**

There is ample evidence that the three pilots have achieved their aim of engaging marginalised people who are not accessing VET. The outcomes for students and Institute staff that teach and service them are clear and demonstrable. In a ‘Final Summary Report’ to OTTE in 2004 the outcomes documented have included:

- ‘expressed perception by students of the success and their empowerment to learn’
- successful engagement of students with VET ...
- students going on to further learning or gaining employment
- increased awareness by teachers of the needs of students with a disability and positive ways of providing support
- increased awareness by the community (schools) of the needs of students with a learning disability and ways of providing support
improved linkages between Institute staff and community service providers
improved linkages between Institute teaching staff and Institute support programs.

The numbers of students of the 22 in the three pilot programs who achieved particular outcomes in the pilot (eg further education, competencies, work) are also clearly documented. These outcomes are diverse but overwhelmingly positive.

Most of the documented student outcomes involve students proceeding to enrolment (or anticipated enrolment) in further formal study at TAFE or at school. All outcomes achieved are consistent with the Victorian Disability Agenda priority actions that the Building Bridges program aimed to address: specifically to “…facilitate better outcomes for people with a disability in VET through improving pathways including increasing access to preparatory skills training and improving links between agencies’.

All schools of participating students in the Building Bridges program saw it as beneficial to young people at risk of leaving school early. There was an expectation that future students at risk of leaving would be referred for courses in order to re-engage through a positive learning experience.

Several schools either adopted or actively investigated the use of assistive software technology (‘Dragon naturally speaking’) to support students with a learning disability. Implementation of this voice activation software in the program has been shown to be particularly effective for students whose self-esteem has been damaged by their previous inability to transfer good ideas onto paper in conventionally literate ways. As one teacher explained:

Kids have been conditioned to only recognise credibility in work on paper. Dragon validated their credibility.

It is important to note that the success factors that underpinned the program were not focussed on direct employment outcomes. It focussed on introducing people marginalised from learning with positive opportunities to re-engage. As the program coordinator noted “You would need long term research to demonstrate employment success.” The College Manager responsible for the program noted that over the longer term OnTrack and LLEN13 data would provide some feedback on the long-term success of the Building Bridges program.

Improved teaching

Teachers in the program noted that they learned from the students, a better way to teach. Reciprocally, they reported that students in the program felt a lot more comfortable in the TAFE environment as a consequence and showed high rates of re-enrolment.

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13 Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLEN) in Victoria focus on collaborative multi-sectoral, post school approaches to education and training for young people at a regional level. LLENs also compile baseline data on student outcomes.

"Not Exactly Rocket Science"
Better relationships between service providers

Professional relationships between community service providers have been seen to be enhanced, as gauged by enhanced consultancy and referral.

Factors contributing to the initiative’s success

The qualities of the project coordinator

The enthusiasm, persistence, vision, comprehensive planning and strategic thinking and research for the pilot projects originated from a skilled and committed project initiator/coordinator who remains the project coordinator.

Though this ‘key player’ factor cannot be under-estimated, the Building Bridges program is now a formidable and very effective program backed up by a comprehensive set of professional resources that have the potential to replicate the program widely and in new contexts.

Research and consultation

The research and consultation that went into this project by the project initiator/coordinator and the implementation team within and beyond the Institute including in the local and regional community was significant and important.

Alliances

The project initiator/coordinator and Institute management effectively used their considerable networking skills and experiences to ‘weld’ together a team of teachers with alliances to service providers and user groups within and beyond the Institute. These external alliances, comprising local schools, other service providers and law enforcement agencies have been important to the effectiveness of the program.

Managements support and commitment

Building Bridges has enjoyed management support and commitment at the highest levels in the Institute. The Institute manager chaired the reference group that advised and supported the program, which was critically important.

An inclusive approach

The program’s inclusive approach to students and staff was to ask, “Would you help us learn how to teach kids better?” This approach positioned students as equal partners in the learning enterprise, and led to propositions about what young students say makes good teachers. They can be summarised as:

- Talk to us as equals.
- Relate to us in break time.
- Exhibit reciprocity, be creative in the way you teach, including media skills.

"Not Exactly Rocket Science"
Another key feature of the program is seen to be ‘... the input of students into selection of units/modules and the tangible outcomes for each course.’ (Final Summary report, OTTE 2004, p.14).

The program’s success might be due, in part, to the demonstration effect - of what was designed as a grass roots, one off, bottom-up initiative, recognised and supported from the top as well as by teachers and key Institute managers. If the program was seen as an ‘outside’ program to be replicated and mandated ‘from the top’, it would likely be much less successful.

**Flexibility**

One key strength of the program, as seen by teachers, was its flexibility and ability to anticipate contingencies. *Building Bridges* was seen to allow supervisors to select staff who were flexible, who did not panic in a crisis, who got to know the student group and who were confident enough to actively seek help in the community. As one teacher observed,

*Building Bridges can’t be forced – or it won’t work. Clients have to be there because they want to go. Students have to be pretty passionate about learning and teachers have to be flexible.*

As another teacher noted,

*You can’t have one plan and redo it every single lesson. The key to success in all teaching is coping with contingencies in changing circumstances.*

**Hurdles faced and how they were overcome**

Developers of the *Building Bridges* program recognise that the delivery model requires significant initial consultation and liaison with community stakeholders and potential students. This is critical in setting the stage for future success by identifying and addressing barriers to the student participating, and developing working relationships with community stakeholders to ensure sustainability of engagement beyond the program.’

Funding models for programs such as *Building Bridges* do not take into account the preparation needed prior to the program. The cost at present must be borne by the Institute – possibly affecting support by senior management in some organisations. If the preparation is not undertaken there is very significant risk that students will not complete the course and then it becomes another negative learning experience.

The program is resource intensive. Its continuation, even in the site in which it was developed and piloted, is beyond the scope of normal program budgets. The College Manager responsible for the program explained that funding was made possible by accommodating the program under a 1:6 Work Education staffing ratio rather than a 1:20 normal teaching ratio.

The program therefore presupposes the commitment of teaching staff. Within Wodonga Institute of TAFE, the program worked in part because of the extra (often-unpaid) work staff felt committed to undertake. As one teacher noted,
"It’d be hard to implement without extra funding. We weren’t doing things on the cheap. Even when we were separately timetabled we were often both teaching the group."  

The project coordinator noted that there was a tendency for some teachers who had undertaken the program to 'go back to the whiteboard' under pressure in the classroom. Teachers noted that one particular hurdle with teaching a group with diverse learning problems was getting cohesion.

The harder issues to resolve with disengaged learners were behavioural issues, in the words of the program coordinator, "particularly involving boys in boundary pushing stuff", as well as staff and students relating to some students with psychiatric conditions.

**What might follow this initiative**

Some opportunities for further development are identified in the 'Capacity for further development and application' section of the Final Summary Report to OTTE (2004). The report identifies that 'The success shown by the three pilot programs indicate Building Bridges meets a current gap in service delivery in [VET]. Making this program available through profile funding would address this gap, and support access to [VET] for some of the most disadvantaged groups in our communities.'

With proper preparation and Institute support, strategic roll out of the Building Bridges program and resources being disseminated to other States and Territories, would appear to be relatively simple and likely be cost effective.

*Building Bridges* was seen in the pilot as 'a local response to a national issue', as the Final Summary report to OTTE noted (p.15). That the program might "... be adapted to the needs of students in other educational environments because it is an approach to training instead of predetermined selection of units/competencies" (p.15) presupposes a radical, departure from some of the strictures of traditional TAFE pedagogies. Similarly, the emphasis in the program "... on a combination of learning, personal development and life-skill achievements, each program has measured outcomes for the students, support personnel and community stakeholders." (p.15) is fresh and potentially effective if applied to other VET programs. In summary, what is notable and radically different is that the anticipated learnings are seen as multiple and the outcomes are seen to involve stakeholders other than the students.

The Albury-Wodonga area has a critical mass of clients and support services for a project of this size, having a region of over 100,000 people. The resources for the program might need to be modified for smaller communities and non-metropolitan areas. Even in the Wodonga Institute case, staff noted that they do not touch the rural community with the current Building Bridges program.

Teachers in the Building Bridges program noted the parallel need to incorporate some of the critical successes of the program into school and VET teacher training.

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14 This quote refers to team teaching that was found to be effective by some teachers in the program.
Some teachers suggested success factors associated with the initiative might be used to transform pedagogies in schools that currently tend to disengage.
About the initiative

The 'good practice' which Edge Employment Solutions exemplifies is using partnerships between a disability employment agency like itself and a Group Training Organisation to increase the participation of people with disabilities in apprenticeships and traineeships.

The last 20 years has seen real success in placing people with disabilities in open employment in a wide range of industries and occupations. People with disabilities remained, however, noticeably absent from the trades and other occupations that are accessed through apprenticeships or traineeships. Edge was not alone in thinking, by the mid 1990s, that there would be a 'natural' fit between disability employment agencies, which know how to place and support people with disabilities in a workplace, and group training organisations, which know about apprenticeships and have established relationships with employers who engage apprentices.

What is logical and what works, however, are not the same thing. The way Edge gradually learned to implement effective partnerships provides exceptional insight into bridging that divide. Through its Executive Director, Greg Lewis, Edge has been involved in a series of projects which, together, appear to be a well-orchestrated campaign to improve access to apprenticeships but which Lewis points out was “in reality, simply a long process. We never thought of the projects as one-offs but neither could we have mapped out a full ‘learning program’ from the start. It was more a matter of taking one step and mulling it over, then taking the next step and mulling it over, and so on.”

The process can be mapped in terms of the six funded projects Edge secured which were designed, in one way or another, to involve Group Training Organisations (GTOs) in helping to place people with disabilities to gain and sustain apprenticeships. The six are catalogued here. The descriptions of projects includes a discussion of the outcomes achieved and the hurdles faced.


This project was extremely successful in placing people with disabilities in apprenticeships: 70 people registered with the pilot project; 28 were placed in apprenticeships and 5 in traineeships. The apprenticeships included a wider range than was initially expected including auto mechanic, bread maker, hairdresser, boilermaker, plumber, cabinet maker, and electrical. This was an extremely important outcome as it proved, effectively for the first time, that people with disabilities could successfully undertake apprenticeships.

Although the project itself was funded for only two years, the Department made available $50,000 annually for a further three years to ensure that the New Apprentices placed through the project would be fully supported by Edge through to the end of their studies.
The project was far less successful in building partnerships between Edge as the disability employment agency (DEA) and a GTO – only one of the apprentices was indentured to a GTO, all the rest were direct indentures brokered by Edge. The reason, as stated in the final report of the project:

[Group Training Companies] accepted that they have a responsibility to assist people with disabilities (along with other equity groups) into apprenticeships. Thus, they appear to want to change. Where they are stalled is that most don’t know how to change. In such circumstances, additional funding will only have a minimal impact because it only addresses one part of the problem: the funding issue.

National Survey of GTOs (Oct 2001-Mar 2002)

Greg Lewis was commissioned by ANTA to conduct a survey with a view to identifying key success factors in placing and supporting New Apprentices with disabilities through Group Training.

One extremely important finding of this survey was that of the 180 GTOs operating in Australia, only 23 reported that they were indenturing apprentices and trainees with disabilities. The 20 most successful (in terms of placing and supporting apprentices and trainees with disabilities) had well established partnerships with one or more disability employment agencies in their area. Lewis concluded that a connection forged between a GTO and a disability specialist is the way to go and can work. It confirmed his initial belief that the two sides – GTO and DEA – complemented on another well even though it hadn’t worked in the case of his first Western Australian project.

Lewis did identify a number of success factors and the Best Practice Guide he wrote includes a draft Memorandum of Understanding – an important step in the process – as well as 20 steps for a GTO to follow and 20 steps for the partnering DEA to follow. The Guide also sketches six case studies. It makes clear the advantages of DEA-GTO partnerships but it is honest about the problems they can face – for example:

Several GTOs felt that their disability employment partners could provide more relevant information (notwithstanding privacy limitations) about the likely impact of the disability at work or study and encourage candidates to disclose their disability up front. Some GTOs felt that their disability employment partner could become more informed about group training arrangements (i.e. understanding that the GTO is the legal employer), so as to better understand the complexities of New Apprenticeships and be more realistic about who might be able to successfully manage both the work and study requirements.

As for their own contribution to improving the partnership, some GTOs felt that they needed to get to know their disability employment partner and its clients better so as to match them more closely to the most suitable New Apprenticeship with the right host employer. It was also suggested by some GTOs that they could
give more information and advice to their disability employment partners about how they operate, upcoming positions and suitable host employers.

WA pilot partnership project (Apr 2002 – Apr 2003)

This pilot was designed to investigate and cost the establishment of partnerships between GTOs and DEAs in metropolitan and rural Western Australia to improve the placement and retention of people with disabilities in apprenticeships and traineeships; it was funded by the WA Department of Education and Training.

Lewis’s experience had convinced him that more “active encouragement” is needed to foster partnerships between GTOs and DEAs. Three such partnerships were set up for this study, Edge was the DEA partner in two of them.

Despite the knowledge Edge had acquired about effective partnerships from the national survey, only one of its partnerships in this pilot worked to the satisfaction of both parties (and even then, with some challenges). Two lessons learned from the less successful partnership were:

- the values of the partners can look, on the surface, as if they the same but, as Gill Dale from Edge pointed out “unless everybody involved deeply and truly believes that people with disabilities can work in the trades and successfully complete an apprenticeship, then the values are not really the same and the partners are not going to work well together.”

- while the roles and obligations of each party have to be clearly understood, it is not so much a case of distributing tasks between them as it is working on them jointly. For example, in marketing candidates to potential host employers, the final report of the pilot concluded:

The two key elements of an effective marketing strategy that have been learned are (i) jointly marketing candidates with disabilities and (ii) adopting an individualised (case management) approach. Under these arrangements both partners commit to getting to know each candidate better, to more carefully match them to the right apprenticeship and the right host employer, to jointly approach the prospective host employer with one candidate in mind and to present an integrated and coherent package of supports.

In terms of analysing the financial burden partnerships impose, some data was collected as to the additional hours spent by the GTOs in recruiting, placing and supporting apprentices with disabilities as compared with apprentices without disabilities. Similarly, some data was collected about the number of additional hours spent by the DEAs in recruiting, placing and supporting apprentices with disabilities as compared to employees with disabilities.


This Disability Partnership Project has established 10 GTO-DEA partnerships around Australia; it’s funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training through its Targeted Initiatives Program ($500,000). Group Training Australia is managing the project. Edge is providing
training for the partnerships and on-going support which includes a Help Desk and an e-newsletter.

One of the key elements in the support Edge is providing is to help resolve any partnership issues that arise. These are typically dealt with through a teleconference of the people involved. Having a trusted, neutral third party to turn to when issues arise, as they inevitably will, is an immense help in any partnership arrangement.

While the partnerships are a significant aspect of the project, they are a means to an end. The ultimate purpose is the placement of people with disabilities in apprenticeships and ensuring their success. Lewis does not let the partnerships lose sight of this goal. Each edition of the e-newsletter starts with a graphic of how many placements had been achieved compared to the target of 80 placements with at least half in traditional 3-4 year apprenticeships.

A second cohort of 10 national partnerships established in mid-2004

Funded by DEST for two years and again managed by Group Training Australia with Edge providing training and support to the partnerships.

It is instructive to note the changes Edge has made to the way it trains and supports the partnerships in this second round:

- A new selection criterion was added to the initial four: ‘evidence of partnership compatibility’ – a response to ‘lessons learned’ in both the 2001 national study and the second WA pilot in 2002. The other selection criteria are: (i) preparedness to sign an MOU; (ii) evidence the proposal will generate new apprenticeships; (iii) evidence of capacity to effect placements; and (iv) ability to deliver quality outcomes;

- insistence on buy-in by senior management of the partnering organisations: the MOU now has to be signed by the CEOs of the two partners and a senior manager from each must attend the training sessions;

- more interaction amongst the partnerships is being encouraged: in the first round each partnership received its own training; this time all the partnerships in a geographic region will come together for training. A forum with all the partnerships in attendance will be held half-way through the project so they can really share, compare notes and help one another.

Eight pilot partnerships between GTOs and DEAs established mid-2004

Funded by the WA Department of Education and Training utilising Australian Government Australians Working Together funding; Edge is managing the project, providing training and support for the partners, and undertaking the final evaluation.

This project follows directly from the earlier projects Edge undertook in Western Australia coupled with the experience gained from the nationally funded partnerships. In addition to the approximately 100 apprentice placements it aims
to achieve, the project is expected to collect the data which will allow the Department to contract and fund GTOs across Western Australia, not only in the Perth metropolitan area, so that indenturing apprentices with disabilities becomes core business. This project is meant to be a platform to mainstream funding so that further ‘pilots’ will be unnecessary. The final research report is to include:

A funding formula for supporting people with disabilities in apprenticeships and traineeships throughout the State (ie. provide the Department with information that can be used to make adjustments to Group Training Companies funding in order that they can continue to purchase the assistance of Disability Employment Agencies to support people with disabilities in apprenticeships/traineeships).

In this project the placement incentives are $1,000 for each partner for each placement and a further $1,000 to each for each apprenticeship for continuation into second year and again for continuation into third year.

The project officer from the WA Department of Education and Training who is overseeing this project believes that by its completion there will have been “a paradigm shift in people’s thinking so that GTOs automatically include a fair proportion of people with disabilities amongst their indentured students.”

Factors contributing to the initiative’s success

Edge Employment Solutions’ experience across six projects all designed to improve the placement and retention of people with disabilities in apprenticeships and traineeships through partnerships between DEAs and GTOs illustrates several elements to successful partnerships of this kind:

- There is a great distance between knowing about good practice and being able to implement it, especially in circumstances where implementation is as much a matter of convincing and enabling other people to act as it is of taking action oneself. Human relationships operate on an emotional as well as a rational level and, consequently, are subject to forces which no amount of good practice guidelines can entirely subjugate.

- Values can be deceptively similar. Having shared values is widely (and wisely) recommended in establishing partnerships, but experience in several of the projects described here demonstrates that values can look similar on the surface but at the level of passionately held belief – the only level that counts – diverge.

- Being clear on purpose is critical – Edge has consistently given placement in apprenticeships the highest priority, so if a partnership wasn’t working well that did not become an excuse for not finding positions for people registered. It is worth noting that Edge always starts with the individual with a disability, his/her interests, and then searches for an apprenticeship that matches those interests rather than starting with an available apprenticeship and finding a person who might be suitable.
On-going support for people involved in partnership initiatives is important – support that those concerned are comfortable accessing because they will not be considered ‘failures’ for needing or requesting that support; establishing mechanisms whereby various groups involved in an initiative can share experiences appears to help people in their attempts to replicate good practice.

Learning to do things better means taking some risks. The fact that the WA Department of Education and Training, for example, has continued to fund projects aimed at improving the number of people with disabilities who have successfully undertaken apprenticeships and not treated the less than optimal outcomes of one project along the way as a signal to abandon the quest is absolutely admirable. We teach children to not be afraid of making mistakes – even that it is a good route to learning. That holds true for agencies too.
APPENDIX C:
ADVICE ON A STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

[Early on in the project, the team was asked to provide advice to ANTA on a Stakeholder Analysis and Engagement Strategy that ANTA could pursue during the project, to ensure that all stakeholders were fully informed about the project and had opportunities to contribute. Below is the advice provided.]

In many areas of public policy, the quality of engagement with stakeholders either makes or breaks the acceptance and implementation of change. For this project, identifying who will influence its outcomes and the impact it has, and deciding how to best engage them and harness their input, is crucial.

Developing an approach for engaging stakeholders requires:

- Drawing a 'map of the territory'—identifying and ranking the different categories of stakeholders.
- Seeing the world from the stakeholders’ perspective—identifying what matters to them, why they may not be interested in, or may even oppose this work, and pinpointing the ways in which this project will benefit them.
- Deciding on how best to engage stakeholders—that is, what can be done to increase their sense of ownership and commitment to this work?

Above all, properly recruiting and engaging stakeholders requires a lot of organisational commitment and resources. Deciding at the outset how much can realistically be invested will determine the boundaries of a stakeholder engagement approach.

Categories of stakeholder

(Note: this paper refers to stakeholders for this particular project; we anticipate that the wider concern, about stakeholders relevant to equity in VET, will form a major part of the outcomes of the project itself.)

One way of conceptualising the stakeholder territory is by ‘degrees of separation’. Stakeholder proximity or distance from your core activities, determines the nature of involvement, the frequency and nature of communication and the level of investment we make in developing and sustaining the relationship.16

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16 This diagram and associated descriptions are adapted from materials prepared by the Quay Connection in the conduct of the ANTA National Marketing Strategy
In this diagram:

**Core stakeholders** are people whose influence can make or break any new initiative. They are actively involved in making the sorts of decisions that will advance equity initiatives and lead to them becoming ‘mainstreamed’, and they probably already have made a significant investment of time, reputation and energy in the area.

**Agents of change** are people with significant influence within their own field or community. They lead organisations that are likely to feel the impact of any change in the way VET is delivered to equity groups.

**Interested professionals** are those with a professional interest in equity issues, which may or may not be central to their occupation or responsibility. They are not directly impacted by initiatives in the area but are probably concerned to see positive change and improved outcomes for equity groups.

Another way of thinking about stakeholders is in terms of where they sit in relation to each other, rather than in terms of their proximity to ANTA.

So, for example, there is a large group of **active professionals**, the many committed individuals who initiate and oversee equity initiatives and ensure that they succeed, and who operate within whatever structure and boundaries are set for them. They don’t make policy, they are not responsible for allocating resources between competing demands, but they are vital to success of any program.
Some of these professionals are particularly passionate and well-connected and play a part in influencing change. They are the **change agents**. Other change agents may not necessarily be active professionals, but, like the active professionals, they are impacted by the decisions and actions of core stakeholders.

*How engagement might occur*

The aim of engaging stakeholders is to give them a sense of ownership and commitment to the work that will ensure they are ‘on board’ and willing to play their part in implementing changes.

An important aspect of this is two-way communication that takes account of where stakeholders are coming from, provides opportunity for their input in appropriate and feasible ways and makes their potential role clear. There are a number of ways this can be done, depending on the time and resources available. An opportunity for engaging key stakeholders during this project will be through their involvement in the final workshop at which our hypotheses will be tested.

How ANTA communicates to stakeholders about this work, will depend on:

- what they might want from this project (and do they recognise any mutual benefit)?
- how this project might help them achieve their goals (e.g. how can what we might do, benefit their programs?)
- how much they want to know from the project, and in what form

The nature and level of engagement might be different for those stakeholders who, for whatever reason, may either be disinterested or actively opposed to the work. Again, mapping stakeholders and viewing the project from their perspective and in terms of what they stand to lose or gain, provides an essential foundation for a stakeholder management approach.
APPENDIX D: SUSTAINABILITY: EARLY WORK

The problem inherent in any framework exercise is that, in the attempt to clarify the relevant dimensions, one dangerously over-simplifies. Nonetheless, in seeking to understand the sustainability of initiatives designed to improve employment outcomes for the two 'Blueprint' equity groups, the initiatives examined can be assigned to one of four categories; the initiative:

- changes teaching practice
- changes service delivery
- produces an educational/training resource
- changes the attitudes of employers

Each of these has associated with it particular kinds of sustainability which are best explicated through examples\(^{17}\).

Table 1. Initiatives that change teaching practice

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dimensions of sustainability</th>
<th>Example</th>
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| the new practice becomes embedded in participants on-going teaching | **Building Bridges**

Building Bridges at Wodonga Institute of TAFE was a 12-month pilot in 2003 to model a change in the relationship between students with learning difficulties or disabilities and their teachers. Students and teachers were to be equal partners with teachers listening and adapting until the students were satisfied that the teaching was actually helping them to learn.

The teachers recruited to the pilot were warned they would find it challenging, even threatening. There was a coordinator, Julie Fry, to offer support; weekly meetings of the teachers which were tough and where nothing was held back; and continuous feedback from the students. But the results for the target students were outstanding and there was a ripple effect of improvements in overall class learning.

The 12 months proved to be sufficient for the action learning/action research to be internalised by the participating teachers. They continue to use the new practices and expect to do so permanently.

**Framing the Future project**

Suzy McKenna described a Framing the Future project she participated in back in 1997 in child care to develop implementation strategies for the brand new Community Services Training Package:

> What I got from face to face was the passion and as long as that passion is there, people will do something ...and it becomes deep. In that project we argued and head butted and hated, but we were supporting each other somehow at the same time.

\(^{17}\) The material in this appendix uses classification frameworks which arose from some early work in the project. In the event, the elements and model suggested in the report classify the insights differently.
If the change is deep enough, as it was, then afterwards you stop talking about it as you go about your work. It stops being on the surface and obvious. I like the analogy with music: in the beginning the black marks translate to notes played but eventually they translate to sounds in your head.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>the new practice is reflected in organisational ‘adjustments’</th>
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**Building Bridges**

The Building Bridges group and, especially, its original coordinator Julie Fry have not been shy about promoting the model both internally and externally. The result is that in 2004 the Access and Management Department of Wodonga Institute has folded the model into their suite of programs.

Consequently when the group in the community that had served as a Reference Group for the pilot program came to the Institute and said they would like a similar program to be run for people in the community with mental health problems, the Institute could respond immediately and that program is in place.

**Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation**

Waltja’s Nutrition program received UNICEF funding for 3 years to implement a nutrition program in three remote Aboriginal communities. The funds were used in part to employ and provide professional development for up to eight Aboriginal nutrition workers in each of the three communities. There was concern about what would happen when the funding ceased but continuing employment of the community workers has been negotiated with Community Councils. It is this combination of elements that is critical, in Kate Lawrence’s view:

> Waltja’s Management Committee of senior Aboriginal women have deep knowledge of the communities. The nutrition program was based on community-identified needs and the nutrition workers who received professional development were supported during the project life as they developed their skill. Continuing employment in the new role added the essential element for sustainability.

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<tr>
<th>the new practice spreads to other teachers</th>
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(For this paper on sustainability, ‘spread’ means how the original project participants generated further interest in their practice. It needs to be distinguished from more general replication (initiated by others) which introduces a whole new set of issues about the new context compared to the old one especially in terms of existing levels of trust and commitment.)

**Building Bridges**

The Building Bridges initiative at Wodonga Institute of TAFE has developed a manual for Professional Development (PD) based on their experience and some 50 sessional staff have received PD on using the model in their teaching.

Julie Fry and the other participants in the original initiative have not been shy about promoting the model both internally and externally. The result is that in 2004, three new groups of teachers in the Institute are participating in a similar process with a new coordinator but the same weekly meetings and cyclic rounds of feedback with students.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>participants in the initiative continue to collaborate</th>
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**Communities of practice**

Berwyn Clayton talked about a few ‘communities of practice’ which she has been involved with over the years at Canberra Institute of Technology. One that was modestly funded focused on assessment and encouraged participating staff to reflect on their assessment practices. It continued for six years. But in the end, sometime after funds for the bit of relief time ceased: "Not Exactly Rocket Science"
It’s day was done. Part of what happens is people saying ‘we’ve done that’ and, indeed, they had. For them being more mindful (and skilled) at assessment had become ‘normal’ And that’s the other part: good practice becomes old practice.

We had another informal community of practice on knowledge management. The group was completely committed to sharing their knowledge. They did have the will and desperately wanted to keep going. But we couldn’t sustain it because it required ‘extra’ time and space. It just didn’t look like core business. That’s the fundamental question that we and the system need to answer: is this or is this not core business?

Suzy McKenna pointed out that Etienne Wenger, the guru of communities of practice, says it is normal for energy to drain away once the passion is dissipated. This is not something to despair of. Cycles are normal.

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<tr>
<th>Dimensions of sustainability</th>
<th>Example</th>
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| the service is maintained through establishing a new ‘dedicated’ entity | **Djigay Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal Education**  
The Djigay Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal Education is part of the TAFE NSW North Coast Institute (NCI). It started in the late 1980s as a place where Aboriginal students, many of whom were finding their studies difficult, would be in an appropriate environment and their study supported. It was officially opened in 1993.  
The Djigay Centre itself is an example of a special entity which has gradually developed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal students. Ren Perkins, Djigay’s Manager, is intent now on ensuring students access high level courses leading to Certificates III and IV as well as continuing to provide entry level programs. While the Centre is ‘special’, it is an established part of NCI and its funding is not ‘special’ but a ‘mainstream’ element in the budget process.  
The Djigay Centre itself created a second entity in the mid 1990s when its...
Student Association became an Incorporated Body. This was done specifically to create an entity that could tender for business and thereby provide workplaces so Aboriginal students could effectively participate in work-based learning.

This hope has been realized. One particularly successful venture established by the Incorporated Body is the Wigay Aboriginal Cultural Park which attracts tourists daily and provides workplace learning in such diverse fields as horticulture, tourism, maintenance and hospitality.

**WAVES Lighthouse**

WAVES Lighthouse is a school to work program in the western area of Adelaide. Most students have an intellectual disability; about 5 percent have a physical disability. WAVES aim is to create a ‘seamless’ transition to work by ensuring students have access to vocational education and to excellent structured work placements. The success of the model has been highly dependent on building alliances amongst employers, schools, RTOs, local government and disability employment agencies.

Providing this service for students is always going to cost money. The initiative was first funded as a Lighthouse project in 2000 by ECEF. The funding was maintained to the end of 2003. The WAVES Steering Committee, however, remains fully committed to the model and members of the alliance have signed a Memorandum of Agreement. Nonetheless, to secure the ongoing investment required to maintain the service, the Committee believes the model needs to be applied at least across the school clusters in Adelaide if not state-wide. A concerted effort is underway to gain the support of the appropriate government agencies to establish a central coordination unit.

**Partnerships between training organisations and employment agencies**

One strategy which has been shown to help people with a disability find more opportunities for vocational training and employment pathways is where partnerships are formed between Group Training Organisations (GTOs) and Disability Employment Agencies. As the review of new apprenticeships for people with disabilities points out: the two types of organisations complement each other in recruiting, placing and supporting New Apprentices with a disability.

Two examples were commended to us as sustaining the provision of New Apprenticeships to people with a disability. Both used the mechanism of establishing a new entity.

In one case, Northern Group Training in Launceston, the disability employment agency was merged with the original group training company –although, to the partners surprise, it is taking a long time to merge the two cultures.

In the second case, On-Q Human Resources was formed when the original disability employment agency expanded to become a group training company. It did this because it was finding it difficult to find GTOs to partner with in the Northern Rivers area who were willing to indenture New Apprentices with a disability. On-Q Human Resources runs both the Disability Employment Agency and the Group Training Organisations

Edge Employment Solutions was established in 1984 as an employment agency for people with a disability. It is interesting to note that its original name was Project Employment but they soon abandoned that brand as they believed ‘project’ implied lack of longevity!

Edge has been extremely successful on measures of employment outcomes for people with a disability. One recent initiative has been to work with Group Training Organisations in partnerships to place people with disabilities into new apprenticeships and traineeships. Greg Lewis, Director of Edge Employment

the service is maintained through the viability of the ‘service provider’
Solutions, attributes the strength of the enterprise in this and other initiatives to three key factors:

(i) good research and information

(ii) good management including an exceptional Board. As Greg explained it:

> As psychs we knew nothing about business and so from the beginning we went to the top and got the best corporate people in Perth to be on the Board. We brought in expertise and now we bask in their wisdom and knowledge...

> Having a strong Board is important not only because it is able to scrutinise the organisation – something we deeply value – it also provides stability. The Board continues even when senior managers move on.

(iii) good marketing – Edge is not shy about broadcasting its successes.

> If you are doing good things, let people know

On the other hand, Edge shares the knowledge it acquires about its own and others' practice which is, of course, not bad promotion in its own right.

**ADCET**

ADCET, the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training, is an example of an organisation in the throes of establishing viability. It was established with funding from DEST to provide a resource (and a network) for teachers, learning support staff, researchers and others concerned with improving outcomes for students in higher education and in vocational education and training who have a disability.

To cover the costs to keep ADCET a going concern, a subscription charge for the service has been imposed. There is a difficult balance here because Tony Payne, its Director, would like the material to be easily available to the occasional user – for example, a lecturer who has a person with a disability in their class only once every few years. Payne says, "we are cautiously optimistic, but it would be a great deal more efficient if DEST or some other organisation just gave us the $50,000 required to deliver the service."

**Central Australian Health Development Services**

CARHDS, the Central Australian Remote Health Development Services was established in 1997 to develop the capacity of Aboriginal people and health professionals to improve community health outcomes and to increase effective Aboriginal control over PHC service delivery through its range of training programs.

The essential partnerships are between CARDHS and the remote Aboriginal communities it serves. Dorothy Lucardie, CEO of CARDHS, described several steps that have been taken to achieve this.

First, when she arrived at CARHDS in 2002 staff turnover was very high: of the 14 staff that year, 10 were new. She set about stabilising staff. How?

> By listening to the staff when they came back from remote communities - listening to what they were doing, what was worrying them, and so on. And my acting if something needed to be done.

> My focus has been on keeping them and over the last two years, turnover has been zero. That means staff themselves have been able to build good relationships in the communities and their professional development is being reinvested in the communities.

The second step in establishing the deep partnerships required for CARDHS to meet its goals is the program initiated this year by the Communities controlled Board to take the entire staff to the various communities so they can begin to appreciate the unique features of each and their differences. One community will be visited this year as a 'pilot' and three next. Lucardie is quite moved by this:
No one else has been offered this privilege of Elders saying we will invest our time in you. Partnerships have been the focus of a number of initiatives from both ANTA and DEST in recent years. Experience makes it clear that partnerships require assiduous attention and rarely escape moments of weakness if not crisis.

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Many of the people consulted reinforced the finding of Jim Collins and Jerry Porras in *Built to Last* that maintaining a non-negotiable set of core values is what creates a lasting enterprise. For example, Dorothy Lucardie speaking about the Central Australian Remote Health Development Services:

> The communities who control CARHDS have long term aspirations and so in the MOU we link to their goals. That means we are tied to a vision not to funding. The vision comes first then funding, not the reverse. Also, ‘pilot’ projects look like fence sitting – I’ve heard people in communities say ‘we’ve had so many pilots, we should have a plane by now!’.

Greg Lewis speaking about Edge Employment Solutions:

> Part of my job is to think about where we’re going, what’s going to be needed in five or ten years time to ensure that people with a disability find employment – or, better, in ten years time a focus is going to have to be what is required to ensure they can be in self-employment.

> Part of our strategy to be sustainable is – this sounds a little too obvious but it’s not often enough said – to achieve your initial target. The secret is to set a target low enough that you can deliver on it: it’s that old precept ‘under-promise; over-deliver’.

Tony Payne who manages ADCET and has undertaken considerable research about support for students with disabilities in university education has observed the lack of sustainability of an initiative when an overarching strategy is not in place:

> Across universities in both teaching and support services there are lots of people doing lots of things but because there are few progressive strategies in place across the sector as a whole, people seem always to be starting from scratch. Its like jumping from rock to rock in a fast moving funding stream. The paucity of good practice examples I could come up with in a study of teaching and support strategies in universities for people with a disability was a sobering experience.

### Table 3. Initiatives that generate education/training resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of sustainability</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the resource continues to be used and developed to improve outcomes</td>
<td><strong>Truvision</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Truvision* is an electronic-based product developed by Elearn, the Association for the Blind in WA and the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind, which contains all the material required for a blind or vision impaired person to achieve Certificate I in IT. According to Frank Bate from Elearn:

> The way to sustain a product is to keep delivering and continually improving it. That’s what David [Gribble at the Association for the Blind] has done. The Truvision they are using now doesn’t look like the original version. Truvision has been purchased widely including recent sales to the US. I would imagine that the Association for the Blind would have an Intellectual Property claim on the new version.
Waltja Aboriginal Corporation

Waltja has facilitated many projects and programs concerned with child rearing in collaboration with women, families and child care workers in Aboriginal communities. One outcome of this extended practical experience and associated research is a series of publications including two books that have proved popular in communities: Pipirri Wiimaku (For the Little Kids) and Pipirri Palya (Kids Are Good). Both are used as learning resources for workers and management committees in Aboriginal community-based children’s services. As with other resources developed by Waltja, they have been developed by and with Aboriginal people and contain local, culturally appropriate images and stories that reflect the realities of work and life in remote Aboriginal communities. Pipirri Palya has been funded for a second print run.

a caveat

It needs to be acknowledged that not every resource produced to inform or improve practice will deliver on its promise. According to the informants to this study, for example, it is not clear how extensively or effectively the two Best Practice Guides for partnerships with Group Training Organisations are being used at this time to improve outcomes for the two ‘Blueprint’ equity groups, although both are of undoubted quality.

spin-off resources are produced

The Truvision partnership produced a follow-up online product called Hamilton Air, again for blind or vision-impaired students, which provides material required for Certificate III training in Business Studies. This has actually spawned another product, Oz Air, not for visually impaired students, but as a resource for Certificate II Business Studies.

legacy: on-going friendship with potential further fruitful collaboration

The two leaders of the Truvision partnership, Frank Bate and David Gribble, effectively "ran out" of useful things to work on together because designing accessible online products for this target group is expensive and requires funding. Opportunities for the funded development of new qualifications was not forth-coming at the time the Truvision partnership finished. However, the two meet socially over coffee every couple of weeks and are now playing with the idea of tendering to design materials for teaching blind or vision impaired university students.

Table 4. Initiatives that focus on employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of sustainability</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SunRice</td>
<td>Graeme Knott arrived at SunRice in 1994 as training manager and almost immediately recognised that literacy was an issue both in terms of safety and in accessing the training that was beginning to “take off” in food processing. SunRice obtained about $100,000 overall in WELL funding and put some 200-300 people through the program. Literacy teaching is maintained but at a very modest level. One person comes in about once a fortnight to work with the few people who want support with their work – no formal training as such. The reason for the modest maintenance is that the company has closed several sites and introduced technologies which mean there are many fewer people with very poor literacy. The company does pay for this literacy support but it costs less than $10,000 a year. Nonetheless, Knott is adamant that the WELL initiative has left an important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Yes, it’s still there. It hasn’t been forgotten. The major long term benefit for the organisation is that training is now an accepted part of daily business.

It also made us much more aware of communication in general. Our literacy trainers made it clear to us at the time that our messages weren’t getting across to the workers. So now the line managers have weekly stand-up meetings to make sure they are heard and understood. Questions are asked and answered.

And what if Knott, now People and Culture Manager for SunRice Operational Group were to leave the company?

The interest would still be there and the need to do it wouldn’t change. What would change is that I have contacts in the VET system now which helps me to know my way around it. And I know the company well. This has led people to think of me as the training ‘guru’. So if there’s a problem, it is that a lot of this knowledge is in my head. We are trying to get it out of my head: the procedural stuff make it all more transparent and involve more people everyone’s training plans.

One of the individuals contacted for the study made the point that few people know how to “link into” the VET system and suggested that how ‘outsiders’ – especially in industry – “get to grips” with the VET system would make an interesting study in itself.

THE ROLE OF ‘PERSONALITY’ IN SUSTAINING INITIATIVES

When asked what made an initiative sustainable, the immediate answer from many of the people consulted was that it had a champion who inspired and drove it – and who kept on driving it and inspiring collaborators after the initial funding ceased.

When such an individual moves on, effort flags, sometimes very quickly. This is a phenomenon which many said they had witnessed.

One respondent, however, took great exception to this way of explaining why successful initiatives are often not sustained. In fact, his retort was quite passionate:

That’s a hopeless answer. It’s like saying Cathy Freeman is special so we are absolved from training anyone else … It is not personality. It is discipline and being methodical and taking the time and being thoughtful. It is making your own mark.

The point was not that all people are equally skilful at initiating change and inspiring others, but that once an initiative is proven successful, there should be ways to embed it that do not require heroic effort.

This is a point that on reflection many of the people consulted would actually agree with. One can hear echoes of the agreement in the many examples given where sustainability, in its various guises, comes from the organisational response to the new practice or partnership. The common emphasis on personality may arise from the fact that much of the excellent or exceptional practice found in vocational education and training is the outcome of individual skill, application and commitment.
A SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING COMMENT

At this stage, the framework of sustainability can be shown as:

It needs to be said that more work is required to ensure this framework is capable of supporting the 'load' it will be asked to bear – that is, of enabling us to fairly evaluate and predict the sustainability of the Blueprint initiatives which are the focus of this Equity Good Practice Project. Two tasks in particular lie ahead:

(i) to develop a more precise understanding of the interaction between an initiative and the cultural context in which it operates and is to be sustained. This is important if we are to be able to assess how initiatives might be replicated in new contexts by new people – that is, what knowledge about the initiative and its original operation actually facilitates its replication elsewhere.

(ii) to refine and apply the concept of investment as the mechanism/process which sustains initiatives.

The framework of sustainability described in this paper takes us a step further along the path of the Equity Good Practice Project – or perhaps a better image is that it supplies another piece of equipment for the journey. In either case, it reinforces what we have already learned: that this is both a challenging and promising Project.
These three examples were gathered in the course of our work, as we explored the influence of systems on equity initiatives.

Professional doctorates in higher education

As part of a study of professional doctorates in Australian universities, McWilliam and her colleagues [2002] undertook a "micro-study" investigating the factors that optimise, or militate against, the long-term sustainability of professional doctorate programs. They concluded that two significant system changes are required if these programs are to be sustained. The first is "a re-culturing among senior academics... which is difficult to achieve in administrative systems that continue to reward academics using traditional performance criteria [i.e., the research PhD]." The second system change required would be to address the lack of genuine partnerships between universities and industry and amongst universities. Without that the system remains fragmented and programs proliferate: "the sustainability of this approach has to be questioned". It is interesting that neither the quality of the particular program nor even its commercial viability was considered sufficient for long-term sustainability.

Integration of general practice

One strand of Gawaine Powell Davies' research at the Centre for General Practice Integration Studies at the University of NSW is the evaluation of initiatives which are designed, in part, to improve the interface (integration) of general practice with the other parts of the health system (e.g., hospitals, the research base, etc). An example he describes [Powell Davies 2004] is an initiative that funded a Program Coordinator's position for 2½ years in the various Divisions of General Practice in the state. The immediate purpose was for the coordinators to work with general practices to improve their ability to work with patients with chronic disease. What some coordinators actually did was to learn how the Division could support local practitioners in a more general way, with chronic disease as one of many specific needs the practices might be helped with – that is, creating a sustained adjustment in the interaction between Divisions and practices.

Powell Davies said that the Centre itself has been gradually shifting its way of thinking to a "systems" view. When the Centre was established in 1996, the problem in the health system was diagnosed to be one of fragmentation. So for a long time the approach was to "build bridges" between general practice and the rest of the system. In shifting to a systems perspective, they have stopped thinking in terms of general practice and instead examine
how all the parts of the health system come together to solve problems. With that perspective it becomes clear that the larger context in which a local program or initiative operates is critical:

_We’ve developed a three ‘level’ diagnostic picture that helps people see that an initiative not only has to be fit for purpose locally (the first level), but the systems it relies on have to make it easy for people to do what they are trying to do – for example, allowing information to be traded across boundaries (the second level). The third level is that the overall context needs to be supportive – overall funding policies and accountability policies, for example. There are many many ways of not being supportive at this level._

Powell Davies also makes the point that systems thinking reminds us that there are always trade-offs. If one brings something new into the system, then something else needs to be taken out. If that doesn’t happen, our natural tendency to ‘economize’ our attention and effort means the new entrant will be ignored or, worse, dismissed.

**Improving the status of university teaching**

The progressive changes in the tactics used to try to make teaching as respected an aspect of university work as research – primarily to improve the quality of university teaching – illustrates quite nicely a gradual shift from individual academics innovating to the entire system being restructured to support quality teaching. The various approaches to tackle the teaching ‘problem’ are described in DEST 2003. The first was CAUT (the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching) which funded 448 individual projects between 1992 and 1995. The second, CUTSD (the Committee for University Teaching Staff Development), operated between 1996 and 1999 and it encouraged organisational as well as individual projects; 272 projects were funded. In 2000 the Australian Universities Teaching Committee (AUTC) was established. It administers a small grants program but its principal brief is to identify emerging issues in teaching and learning in Australian universities. In fact, it recommended establishing a national centre which is currently under development. When the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education opens in 2006 it will complete the journey from lone individual academics coming up with initiatives to a national systemic approach to enhance the reputation and quality of university teaching.