

Emerging local employment opportunities for young people

INNOVATIVE EMPLOYMENT & LEARNING PATHWAYS

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Table of contents

Background	3
Case study 1 Positioning unemployed people in the new economy – IT scholarships for unemployed people provided by City of Salisbury	9
Case study 2 An IT career path for skilled young people in regional Australia – Adacel Software Engineering Centre	13
Case study 3 Closing the IT Divide-InfoXchange and the Green PC	16
Case study 4 Collaborating with the corporate sector – Work Ventures and Microsoft	19
Case Study 5 Using local resources to create jobs – Salty Seas	22
Case study 6 Koori Horticulture Project – Sunraysia	26
Case study 7 An integrated approach to youth services - City of Onkaparinga	31
Case study 8 Working with kids at risk – NSW Links to Learning in Wollongong	35
Case study 9 Ballarat Group Training – Building partnerships with the community	38

Background

Young people between the age of 15-24 face major challenges. Growing into adulthood should be seen as a time of great opportunity, excitement and change. It involves forming new relationships and friendships, exploring independence, learning and leaving home. Making choices about careers, jobs and learning pathways and financial independence is central to this transition to adulthood. To enable young people to fulfil their potential the transition to work should be stimulating, challenging, rewarding and enjoyable. This transition should also encourage experimentation, enabling young people to explore different pathways and change directions to meet their interests and capabilities.

Although many young people make this successful transition, many don't. Young people account for 36% of total national unemployment. Despite a booming economy over the past 7 years, many young people are caught in casual and menial jobs and/or training treadmills that don't lead to good job and learning outcomes. Previously, early school leavers looking for entry-level jobs could expect a range of options that would provide them with work experience and skills. Today, low skilled entry-level jobs are scarce. Many routine jobs have been automated or abolished through restructuring. Low skilled young people must compete with higher skilled workers to get a start. The evidence suggests that where young people live and where they go to school has a major impact on their employment and career prospects. Young people in regional Australia are confronted with declining employment opportunities due to loss of jobs in farming and service based activities in rural towns. Young people in industrial cities and regions find it difficult to follow their parents career path because of job losses in manufacturing industries.

Over the past decade, around 70% of all new jobs created have been either part-time or casual. The reduction of government expenditures as a proportion of GDP has disproportionately impacted young people. Government departments and enterprises often provided the first step in the career of young people, including apprenticeships and other training. These opportunities have been heavily rationalised. Outsourcing and contracting-out – because of the short-term nature of contracts - creates a disincentive for firms to employ and train less experienced young people. In a digital age, a number of studies have identified and measured a growing digital divide between those who have access to good IT infrastructure and skills and those who don't.

The challenge is to make young people central to the development process. The economic, social and personal costs of not giving young people positive work and

learning experiences can be very high. The objective should be to build self-esteem and confidence to enable young people to actively and enthusiastically seek jobs, career options and continuous learning. Despite the difficulties, there are many innovative ways that young people can be supported to attain their potential. This report outlines a number of innovative cases studies that have led to positive employment and learning outcomes for young people.

Youth unemployment remains too high. Many jobs are low paid and do not provide long term career paths in satisfying and rewarding work. Strong national economic growth is not sufficient to provide good employment and training opportunities for young people. Local and regional level initiatives have become much more important in providing opportunities for young people. Firstly, the impact of structural change is very uneven. Youth unemployment, and employment more generally, is highly concentrated. Some regions are vulnerable. In outer suburban areas in the large metropolitan cities, workforce growth outstrips local employment growth. Examples include Western Sydney, Western and outer eastern Melbourne, north Brisbane and South-west Perth. In industrial cities and regions such as Wollongong, Lower Hunter, Geelong and Northern Adelaide and Onkaparinga in southern Adelaide - full time jobs have declined significantly over the past 20 years. Young people aspiring to follow their parents into similar jobs find that these jobs – particularly semi-skilled manufacturing jobs – have disappeared altogether. In most rural regions, few jobs are available for young people and many young people have to leave because of lack of work and educational opportunities. With few local jobs young school leavers are disadvantaged. Many young people in these regions fall through the cracks. Few jobs are available and many of those that are available are low skilled, low paid and offer few job prospects. They also tend to be excluded from networks in broader labour markets that could give them with information, guidance and contacts needed for jobs.

Secondly, real reductions in government expenditure have forced many community based, local and regional organisations to step into the gap to provide more support for young unemployed people. The positive aspect of this is that they usually know more about local businesses and labour market conditions than bureaucracies. The negative aspect is that they are often severely under-resourced. Staff tend to be lowly paid and resources for employment programs are small and short term. The best employment programs include local leadership and management and resource support from state and national governments.

Thirdly, the growth of community partnerships involving varying combinations of business and unions, community based organisations, councils, education and

training institutions and government offers advantages in terms of sharing resources, expertise and knowledge at a local level. Many of the most successful youth employment initiatives demonstrate a capacity of people from different backgrounds and perspectives to work together at the local level.

This report examines innovative employment and labour market initiatives that have benefited young people, particularly but not only young people at risk. Most of these are locally based initiatives that address a number of challenges confronting young people. In selecting case studies, the project identified examples of best practice. A number of criteria are used to define best practice:

Improve self-esteem and motivation of young people to work and learn.

Create the building blocks to well-paid jobs and learning opportunities.

Improve education and skills formation.

Economically and financially sustainable.

Well managed in terms of coordination of different stakeholders and delivering societal outcomes – economic, social and environmental – and benefits to young people.

The selected projects don't necessarily meet all the criteria. Some are best practice in one area, but may not be best practice in others. For example, some case studies are outstanding in building esteem of young people but may not necessarily lead to sustainable job outcomes. The more case studies can meet all criteria, the better. A range of case studies has been selected. This includes examples of structured workplace learning, private sector initiatives, creative use of government funded employment and labour market programs, positioning young people in the "new" economy, nurturing young entrepreneurs and social enterprises.

Nine case studies were selected that meet most or all of the criteria.

- Case study **1** Positioning unemployed people in the new economy –
IT scholarships for unemployed people provided by City of Salisbury
- Case study **2** An IT career path for young people in regional Australia –
Adacel Software Engineering Centre
- Case study **3** Setting up IT businesses with young people - Infoxchange
- Case study **4** Collaborating with the corporate sector – Work Ventures & Microsoft
- Case study **5** Using local resources to create jobs – Salty Seas - The Beacon
Foundation
- Case study **6** Koori Gardening Project Mildura
- Case study **7** An integrated approach to youth services - City of Onkaparinga
- Case study **8** Working with kids at risk – NSW Links to Learning in Wollongong
- Case study **9** Ballarat Group Training – Building partnerships with the community

Case study **1**

Information Technology scholarships for unemployed people – was initiated by the City of Salisbury in Adelaide. Local unemployed people with an aptitude for IT and an interest in working in this area were encouraged to apply for a scholarship to undertake intensive training in IT. With accredited training, financial support from local and state governments, and the backing of local employers, nearly all participants were able to quickly find paid work after completing the course. Participants respond very positively to being awarded a scholarship.

Case study **2**

One of the major challenges for regional Australia is to create high skilled jobs for young people. Albury based global software company Adacel has struck a successful formula that offers young people high skilled and well paid jobs, and on-site education and training in regional Australia. The company employs 20 year 12

students per year from local high schools as trainees. Students undertake a six-year part-time software engineering degree, with some VET components.

Case study 3

Non-profit organisation InfoXchange has developed the Green PC project to provide affordable access to computer technology and Internet resources to low income households and to provide jobs for young unemployed people. The group takes “old” PCs from government agencies and educational institutions, trains young people to refurbish them and then sells them to low income households. The group has provided employment and training for 25 unemployed people.

Case study 4

Community based employment and training group Work Ventures have linked up with global corporate Microsoft to position young unemployed people for “new economy” jobs. Successful applicants were given access to advanced software training modules and facilities. Within 10 weeks, most were engaged in good jobs or further training. Good management and training by Work Ventures and the imprimatur of Microsoft made a big difference.

Case study 5

The Beacon Foundation was established with the explicit objective of supporting young unemployed people. The starting point for Beacon is to look at market opportunities in areas with high youth unemployment and then to implement strategies to create employment and training opportunities for young people. The oyster farming pilot project located in St Helens Tasmania has resulted in the establishment of new enterprise and 15 jobs in the region. The template developed by the Beacon Foundation is now being employed elsewhere in Australia.

Case study 6

The Koori Horticulture Project in Mildura illustrates the benefits from different groups – the aboriginal community, employment and training organisations, private sector and government departments - working in partnership to deliver long term job and training for young kooris. An explicit objective of the three-year project is to establish a commercially viable horticulture business owned and managed by kooris.

Case study 7

The City of Onkaparinga has sought to develop a holistic approach to young people living in its area. This involves making young people central to council strategies, involving and listening to young people and responding to youth priorities. The

council is also backing the creation of new enterprises run by young people in its area.

Case study 8

The Links to Learning is a NSW Government project focused on kids at risk. The Bellambi Neighbour Centre in Wollongong has produced good results with “time-out” kids through permaculture and fun activities to provide a more constructive and individualised learning program for young people.

Case study 9

Ballarat Group Training is one of many successful group training companies that has been successful in developing new employment and training opportunities for young people because of its links with the local community and its responsiveness to the needs of young people.

Case study 1

Positioning unemployed people in the new economy – IT scholarships for unemployed people provided by City of Salisbury

Description

The project involves IT scholarships provided by City of Salisbury Council to enable unemployed residents to study for a Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) qualification. The Council awards the scholarships to local residents based on competition for places by unemployed residents. Applicants must demonstrate their skill and commitment to undertake further IT training. The Council contributes \$1,500 for each scholarship, the SA Department of Education Training and Employment contributes \$1,500 and the successful applicants contribute \$500 each. The latter can be in the form of a deferred low interest loan provided by the Council. To date, 30 scholarships have been awarded to two groups of 15 students. The first group completed the MCP and the second group is underway.

Background

The city of Salisbury is located in Northern Adelaide. The area has a strong manufacturing base concentrated around the automobile, defence, metals and engineering and processed foods industries. Structural change and tariff liberalisation in the 1980s resulted in high unemployment. Northern Adelaide in fact has the highest unemployment rates in urban Australia. The focus over the past decade has been to attract “new” economy jobs particularly in Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). Salisbury is the location of the Adelaide Technology Park – a high tech park integrated with the University of South Australia and an innovative housing project at Mawson Lakes. The area has experienced rapid growth in ICT jobs but local residents are finding it extremely difficult accessing these “new” economy jobs.

In 2000, the Council commenced a Community Mentoring Program, itself an innovative local initiative to get local business people to provide mentoring support for the area’s unemployed. Initial business interviews emphasised the need for advanced microsoft skills.

Rationale

The rationale for the IT scholarship program is the gap between the rapid growth of jobs requiring ICT skills and the skills base of unemployed resident workers. Many successful candidates in fact had ICT skills that needed upgrading or they needed to develop their “job ready” skills.

The program is not only for young people but it is open to groups of all ages. In fact, contrary to views that young people should have specific programs, Council took the view that, in order to maximise outcomes in terms of social capital, the scholarship should be open to all age groups.

TAFE had programs in IT but charged on a fee for service basis. Many unemployed people can't afford the fees for ICT courses. Hence, the shared contribution from Council, state government and the individual. The \$500 contribution by the scholarship holder was considered an important principle to gauge the commitment of residents. This could be provided as a deferred low interest loan to individuals. The awarding of IT scholarships was also a great motivating force. Students are proud of receiving scholarships and many successful candidates hadn't received this honour before. Residents had to compete to demonstrate that they had the skills and attributes to undertake the course. In the first round, 60 residents applied for 15 scholarships.

The program aimed to produce a demanding learning schedule for the students, but also to incorporate a strong work experience component. The council concluded that the program needed to:

- i integrate training with work experience,
- ii involve a financial commitment from participants, and
- iii produce short term results.

Best practice principles

- Council leadership in positioning unemployed people in the new economy.
- Demanding ICT training linked to employment outcomes.

- Strengthening networks of residents/students to achieve job and learning outcomes.
- Building self-esteem and confidence through the awarding of the scholarship.
- Program design to minimise the up-front cost of training whilst locking in a financial commitment from individuals.

Who was the lead agency?

City of Salisbury is the lead agency. The program has strong support from the elected leadership and committed council officers in the Economic Development Department. Council identified the key issues, consulted broadly within business and the community, designed and managed the program, and built partnerships with providers, the SA Department of education Training and Employment, business and residents.

Who else was involved?

The business community provides support through the Council initiated Business Mentoring Program. The SA Department of Education Training and Employment provides funds through its kickstart program. The course is run in the computer room of the Madison Park Primary School. An important element is ongoing support provided by the Council and the peer support provided by the students.

The IT Scholarship program is a partnership between a number of groups.

Implementation

The Murray Institute of TAFE conducts the course. The financial contributions from individuals, council and state government cover the cost, and the Murray Institute provides a discount. The Council advertised the scholarships in the local media and applicants had to set out reasons why they wanted to undertake the course and their capabilities. The 2-month intensive course involved MCP classes on every Thursday night and all day Saturday. On alternative Monday nights, students concentrated on work experience opportunities. This involved presentation by local business mentors, preparing resumes and interview skills.

Outcomes

The first batch of students has recently completed their studies. Despite the demanding course, many received very high marks. The Microsoft Certified Professional qualification trained students in Windows-based networking, providing application and technical skills. Four have got full time jobs, four have contract works and two are working part time. Six are involved in further education and training and five are involved in volunteer work. A number of students work as volunteer IT tutors at Morella Community House and Salisbury East Neighbourhood House. One participant was involved in the Business Mentor Program, working to give opportunities for others. According to Martha Adams, the project coordinator, one of the most positive outcomes was the strong commitment of the students to each other. This “social capital” component stimulated motivation, provided an ongoing network and resulted in better results. Martha believes that one area where improvements could be made is separating the pre-employment component from the technical training. The technical training component is very demanding in its own right.

City of Salisbury is looking to expand the project and replicate it in other industries such as age care. The area has recently become eligible for funding under the Federal Government’s Sustainable regions program because of high regional unemployment. The council is looking to build on strong employer support for the project to lock in guarantees for jobs for those successful in completing the course. The development of the local business and export centre is seen as a means to integrate this innovative training initiative further into the region’s business development strategies.

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Case study 2

An IT career path for skilled young people in regional Australia – Adacel Software Engineering Centre

Description

Adacel Technologies Limited has established a Software Engineering Centre at its Wodonga plant and plans to set up a network of similar centres around Australia. The Centre provides Internet software applications for national and global customers international projects using Java, e-commerce product design and convergent data systems.

The company employs 20 year 12 students per year from local high schools as trainees. A course was developed with Melbourne University Private and TAFE to provide on-site education and training. Students undertake a six-year part-time software engineering degree, with some VET components. The Victorian Department of State and Regional Development provides subsidies for trainees because of the benefits to regional Victoria. The program enables the company to recruit high skilled trainees in rural Australia and to educate and train them in a demanding and interesting work environment. Much of the complex tasks the firm undertakes are footloose. They can be undertaken anywhere where there is access to a sufficient number of young people with advanced IT skills. Adacel is an advanced model showing the benefits of decentralisation in a digital age. It is proposed to establish a similar centre at Mackay, Queensland in 2002.

Background

The company is a leading developer of advanced software and systems for aviation, telecommunications, defence and e-Business. IT companies have problems recruiting IT specialists. Although an international problem, the IT shortage is particularly acute in Australia.

Adacel has built internationally recognised software and systems engineering expertise for telecommunications, B2B e-commerce, aviation and defence. The company is developing market proprietary software, systems and products in Australia, Europe, North America and Asia.

Rationale

Adacel is creating high technology jobs for young people in regional Australia. It makes good business sense. By providing good jobs with career prospects it is anticipated that more skilled young people will stay in regional centres. A number of factors drive this model.

Firstly, high technology companies such as Adacel have problems getting high skilled workers. Education providers find it difficult in keeping up the pace of change in the IT industry. Students are often more highly skilled than their teachers. Young people generally are more comfortable and confident with software than older generations. Hence, Adacel has addressed this through the creation of a six year combined study and work program, which builds on the skills of young people and at the same time provides them with a challenging study environment.

Secondly, high skilled IT workers tend to concentrate in core metropolitan areas, where the shortage of skills create over-inflated salaries often for relatively inexperienced workers. In these circumstances, firm loyalty is at a premium. Workers tend to change jobs regularly. Adacel has responded by adopting a strategy to create opportunities for skilled young people through a network of software engineering centres in regional centres. It is anticipated that lifestyle advantages and proximity to family and friends, a dynamic work and study environment, and perhaps absence of competitors, will ensure that young workers will consider a career with the firm. To be effective, the company needs to draw on a critical mass of skilled young people. Albury-Wodonga - with good telecommunications infrastructure and a combined population of 75,000 people and around 1,000 year 12 students - was considered an optimal size.

Best practice principles

- Creating high technology jobs for young people in regional Australia.
- Creating an integrated working and study environment.
- Commitment from leading higher education institution to delivering courses in a non-metropolitan environment.
- Partnerships between high technology sector and tertiary education institutions, specifically Melbourne University Private and TAFE.
- Linking young workers into the global economy by building on skill and cost competitiveness.

Who was the lead agency?

Adacel Technologies Ltd.

Who else was involved?

Melbourne University Private, Wodonga Institute of TAFE, local high schools and the Victorian Department of State and Regional Development.

Implementation

Adacel is implementing a business strategy to be globally competitive through developing technologies and a skill base amongst talented young people in rural Australia. The company established the Wodonga Software Engineering Centre as a focal point for working and studying in Albury-Wodonga. The company advertises for trainees on an annual basis and runs information sessions for applicants. Applicants are asked about their broad knowledge, social interests and commitment to the traineeship, as well as familiarity with IT based technologies. The higher education was designed and delivered by Melbourne University Private. The outcome - a Bachelor of Software Engineering (Adacel) program - is certified by the University of Melbourne. The local TAFE undertakes some modules in the initial phases. The company currently has 50 workers involved in traineeships and has advertised for a 2002 intake. It is envisaged that the Centre will employ 200 software engineers. The plan is for other centres such as Mackay to employ the same number.

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Case study 3

Closing the IT Divide-InfoXchange and the Green PC

Background

The InfoXchange is a non-profit organisation dedicated to providing quality up to date online information service to the Victorian community. InfoXchange recognised the growing “digital divide” between low-income households and their more affluent households. The latter were able to afford access to computer technology and internet resources. To help bridge this divide the concept of the Green PC was established whereby outdated computers could be refurbished for sale to low-income households.

In January 2001 InfoXchange obtained funds for an employment program through the Victorian Government Community Jobs Program. The funding was the resource base to provide training and employment for 25 unemployed people to refurbish and update donated computers.

Rationale

The program was seen as a way of providing computer technology to low income households whilst providing employment for young people particularly those who are disadvantaged by long-term unemployment or homelessness. Previously computer technology access had been provided to low-income communities through libraries or community centres. This limited availability (opening and closing times of centres) and didn't provide independent access to a much needed resource. The refurbishment of computers for individual low-income households is a far more equitable and sustainable provision of technological resources both economically and environmentally.

Implementation

InfoXchange was able to attract young people into the Green PC program through the Community Jobs Program which is linked to various communities agencies. The opportunity was advertised broadly through the Community Jobs program. The

program provided a six- month traineeship full-time over a six-month period. The initial training was provided by The Brotherhood of Saint Lawrence (a registered training organisation) and consisted of technician training in PC refurbishment and re-assembly. With the skills gained from the training received Green PC employees were able to recycle computers for sale to low income families, individuals and communities. Three thousand computers have been refurbished and the company is on target to reach its \$1 million dollar turnover required to sustain the viability of the Green PC business.

Lead Agency

The key agency was InfoXchange who initiated the establishment of Green PC. Funding from Victorian Department of Education Employment and Training through the Community Jobs Program assisted with six-month wage subsidies. The Brotherhood of St Lawrence was brought in as the specialist training provider. InfoXchange also established agreements with the Victorian Department of Human Resources and Melbourne University to donate outdated personal computers. Large corporate organisations also donate their computers on a rolling basis.

Best Practice Principles

- Strengthening the industrial employment base.
- Growing commercial businesses out of community based initiatives targeted predominantly at young people.
- Well networked partnerships between community organisations/government departments and private corporations.
- Environmentally sustainable product.
- Employment opportunities with a focus on equity and access for young people.
- High quality employment/training package.

Outcomes

The Green PC is a viable business that has provided 3,000 refurbished personal computers for low-income households. The business is on its third round of government funding and looks towards recruiting new employees every six months.

Two of the original participants in the program have found full-time employment in the IT industry.

Future development of the program is the establishment of a partnership with Hewlett Packard to provide apprenticeships as an exit point for those young people in Green PC wishing to further their employment opportunities in the IT industry.

An attractive outcome is that the Green PC is a business based on the principles of sustainable development. It takes “outdated” but serviceable computers and rather than ending them to the dump, upgrades and turns them into useful and affordable products for low-income communities.

The project is very cost effective for government agencies as well as communities. For the cost of buying a new computer and setting it up in a community centre, the Green PC can upgrade 4 used computers to a high standard and sell them cheaply to households who need them.

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Case study 4

Collaborating with the corporate sector – Work Ventures and Microsoft

Description

A partnership between Work Ventures Australia and global corporate Microsoft has enabled a group of unemployed young people to upgrade IT skills and be fast-tracked into jobs in the IT sector. A 5-day yacht cruise was thrown in by the Ocean Yacht Club for the young participants.

Background

Microsoft Australia established the Microsoft eMpower Australia Campaign to identify opportunities for disadvantaged young Australians to get access to Microsoft's eMpower programs. These programs are designed to provide education, skills training and access to technology. The aim of the Campaign is to "equip these young people with the technological knowledge necessary to participate in society and the workforce". In its first 18 months, the Microsoft Community Assistance Initiative provided \$4.28 million in software and technical support to close to 2,000 non-profit organisations around Australia. Microsoft has prepared background brochures about its various programs under the Microsoft eMpower Australia Campaign including Community Partnership, Community Assistance Initiative, Community Skills Program and Corporate Citizenship Initiative. Details are provided on the company's website www.microsoft.com/australia. The specific initiative under which the project was funded was a Microsoft sponsored community skills program, *Youth IT Skilled Futures*.

Work Ventures Australia is a community based employment and training group with a longstanding track record and commitment in working with at risk young people. Work Ventures have their own IT Centre in Surry Hills in Sydney and their own specialist IT trainers. Work Ventures seeks to establish a constructive learning environment, and they have given priority to providing skills in IT and experience of a workplace environment. Their application to Microsoft was successful. The contribution of Microsoft was a grant of \$20,000 and use of Microsoft training materials and license. The involvement and prestige of Microsoft gave the project credibility with industry.

Rationale

The program was seen as a way of providing intensive and demanding IT training over a 10-week period with good opportunities for employment and further training at the end of it. The target group was young unemployed people. Many courses are too long and unemployed people are often disillusioned with the prospect of being on an endless training treadmill. The project leaders were looking for young people who had an aptitude for computers and enthusiasm to learn but not necessarily formal IT qualifications. The program aims to enhance self-esteem, information technology familiarity and capability and to develop job search skills.

Microsoft's involvement can be seen as a commitment from a good corporate citizen to address the digital divide by putting resources back into community and to support young people gain employment, skills and confidence in the digital economy.

Who was the lead agency?

The project is a partnership between an IT corporate, who provided its imprimatur, funds and a licence to run software training material; and Work Ventures, a community based employment and training organisation with IT capabilities.

Implementation

On receipt of support from Microsoft, Work Ventures advertised for applicants. Interviews were conducted to assess the suitability of candidates. Sixteen students were accepted and fifteen completed the course. The course was based at Work Ventures IT Centre in Sydney and run by skilled trainers. The program aims included basic skills in software support and life skills based on working in teams. Further, the course prepared students for employment by simulating job interviews, designing websites and organising resumes. The course ran for 10 weeks and the program ran for around 20 hours each week. During the course, the students participated in a five-day yacht trip organised by the Ocean Yacht Club of Australia. At the completion of the course, the graduates were presented with a Statement of Attainment in Certificate III Network Administration. Work Ventures supports graduates to find jobs at the end of their training.

Best Practice Principles

- IT skills training for young people
- Good corporate citizenship
- Building team based skills and self-esteem
- Comprehensive approach to learning involving intensive IT skills, workplace experience, job search and team building.
- Fast-track to jobs through IT training for young unemployed people.

Outcomes

A project evaluation was undertaken at the end of the program. The outcomes to date have been positive in that the experience did provide a pathway to jobs and learning for the students. Course comments from students were very positive. It is proposed that the partnership will continue in future with these programs on a regular basis. Of the 14 students who completed the course, the evaluation indicates that:

- 6 gained jobs
- 3 commenced traineeships with a Group Training Company
- 3 commenced other training
- 2 continued to seek traineeships and employment.

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Case Study 5

Using local resources to create jobs – Salty Seas

Description

The Beacon Foundation is a “not for profit” registered charitable Trust and Public Benevolent Institution located in Tasmania. Its sole purpose is to address high youth unemployment. The Beacon Foundation believes that real jobs need to be created for young people rather than short-term programs that lead to frustration and resentment. Beacon was established in 1988 by a group of business people and concerned citizens in Tasmania who were concerned at high youth unemployment and wanted jobs for young people that provided dignity and self-respect. The group was critical of the bureaucratic and short-term nature of many training programs for young people.

Action by the Beacon Foundation through its wild oyster project led to the creation of Beacon Seafoods (now salty Seafoods), a commercially viable business independent of the Foundation. The Foundation put its own funds into the project and sold it off to the supervisor and one of the trainees (in fact the trainee of the year) at the end of the establishment period. The project created 15 jobs for young people, accredited training in aquaculture and a viable new business in St Helens Tasmania.

Background

The Foundation selected St. Helens in Tasmania for its initial youth employment project due to its demographic and geographic features. The area is diverse with a mix of tourism, recreation, fishing, mining, agriculture and forestry activities. The group undertook a number of investigations into promising market opportunities. Youth unemployment rates were high. Until recently there were no post-compulsory schooling educational options for young people. The town of Launceston was seen as the next step for many young people in terms of post- secondary education and employment opportunities.

Rationale

The Beacon Foundation objective is to create dignified “real jobs” for young people that are locally based using private and government resources. With this in mind the Foundation investigated local opportunities and resources to commence a youth employment project. With few opportunities available in the rural, forestry and tourism, an assessment concluded that the most viable option was in the aquaculture sector in the form of oyster harvesting in St. Georges Bay at St. Helens. The Beacon Foundation was a catalyst in getting the oyster farming project up and running. Its starting point was to undertake market investigations of possible businesses, concluding that exporting “wild oysters” to the Sydney fish markets would support a viable business.

In identifying this opportunity Beacon became aware of conflict in the St. Georges Bay community between oyster farmers and recreational users due to the proliferation of wild oysters. Rather than see the conflict as an impediment to the project Beacon saw this an opportunity to create local employment using the naturally found resources of wild oysters for harvesting and farming.

In order to attain the project objectives – real jobs, self-respect and dignity for young people – Beacon sought an approach that would lead to commercialisation after the initial 12 month start-up period. The group took the view that there were many potentially commercial projects that could provide good jobs for young people that weren’t being taken up because private returns were not high enough.

Implementation

The Beacon Foundation consulted with the oyster farmers and the Bay Users group to determine the viability and practicality of harvesting wild oysters as part of a clean-up effort in the St. Georges Bay. Both groups were supportive of such an innovative concept with the oyster farmers actively co-operating to support the project.

Detailed business plans were established for the initial four years. Council and State Government agencies were consulted in the planning process. The Beacon Foundation applied for State and Federal funding but was unsuccessful. The Foundation was determined to realise the potential of the project and decided to use its own funds to support a one year project that would establish commercial sustainability.

Advertisements were placed in local papers for trainees to participate in the project. A supervisor with management and aquacultural skills was appointed for the initial period. An accredited Registered Training Organisation agreed to provide much of the training on-site. The organisation became eligible to attract trainee subsidies. A program was established with the St.Helens Career Centre. The Centre provided a level 3 Aquaculture Traineeship for 15 young people. With the support of the existing oyster farmers wild oyster harvesting commenced.

As a shortage of rack space limited harvesting of the wild oysters and this threatened the project. The project required diversification to maintain commercial sustainability. Further, the wild oyster supply to the Sydney fish Markets was also expensive due to high freight costs. To diversify the group decided to shift into processing and packaging of both wild and farmed product. This solution led to the creation of Salty Sea, which has become a locally based commercially viable business.

Financial records suggest that the initial stage resulted in a financial shortfall of \$75,000. A sum of \$460,000 was expended on training and \$385,000 was received in income. The \$75,000 shortfall was made up by reimbursement from the Federal Government. Given 15 jobs were created, the cost of \$5,000 per job is considered low.

Lead agency

The lead agency was the Beacon Foundation who provided support and funding for the Wild Oyster project. It was their continued persistence and belief in the potential of the project that resulted in the creation of 15 real jobs for young people. Local oyster farmers were a key component to the success of the project along with the dedication of the young people involved.

Best Practice Principles

- Real work opportunities for young people in a commercially viable business.
- Local employment base using local resources.
- Employment linked to recognised training.
- Business planning to determine commercial viability.

Outcomes

- 15 real jobs have been created for young local people.
- All young people have completed a level 3 Acquaculture Traineeship.
- During the project 3 trainees were poached (which Beacon actively encouraged) by the oyster farmers.
- A wild oyster market has been established interstate.
- An Oyster Processing Enterprise has been established creating 5 local jobs with potential for 40 real jobs.
- Wild Oyster clean-up is underway to be supplemented by Work for the Dole program for non-commercial oysters.
- Local, Federal and State media recognition of the project and its objectives.

Beacon is seeking to replicate the project in northern Tasmania and throughout Australia. In the St Helens area, the group has identified opportunities in forestry (manferns), agriculture (fencing), domicillary (home help, odd jobs) and construction (rock construction). The group is actively looking to engage other projects throughout Australia and has entered into partnerships with a number of communities to use the Generic template developed in St Helens.

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Case study 6

Koori Horticulture Project – Sunraysia

Description

The project involves a group of young koori people undertaking horticultural apprenticeships. The aim is to establish a commercial koori enterprise providing quality jobs at the end of the three-year period. The project is coordinated by Sunraysia and Murray Group Training Ltd with the support of the local aboriginal community, a local nursery - Boulevard Nursery - and federal and Victorian government agencies. Major objectives of the project are the establishment of a Koori owned enterprise, skills development and full time jobs for those completing their apprentices.

The official employer is Sunraysia and Murray Group Training Ltd, a group training company. The project has confronted a number of major challenges. One is cross cultural partnerships between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. This has been addressed by aboriginal supervision of the apprentices and involvement in the project Steering Committee. Another is the coordination of a range of stakeholder groups, funding and training organisations.

Background

The project was initiated by the Sunraysia and Murray Group Training Ltd (SMGT). The group training company worked with the local aboriginal community, Boulevard Nurseries and the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and the Environment to create opportunity young kooris. Young kooris are highly disadvantaged in the regional labour market. The target group was young kooris aged between 15-24 years who were interested in and had a capacity to work in horticulture. The project involves the employment of 5 aboriginal apprentices from the local community. The apprentices receive training in literacy and numeracy, nursery management, planting zantedeschias, personal development, and, later in the program, business management skills.

One of the distinguishing features of the project is the relationship with a local nursery, Boulevard Nurseries. The apprentices work at the nursery and receive training from horticulturalists based at the nursery. The project is described as a business

within a business. The koori team is contracted by Boulevard Nurseries to plant bulbs.

Public funds are available for 3 years to support the project. The apprentices are employed by SMGT, and supported by the Victorian Youth Employment Scheme, which provides \$12,500 per year for each apprentice. Additional funding support is provided by the Department of Employment Workplace Relations and Small Business (DEWRSB). A Steering Committee meets every two months to discuss the project and evaluate performance. In addition to representation from SMGT, the Steering Committee comprises:

- Representatives of the Koori Business Network,
- Boulevard Nurseries,
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission,
- DEWRSB,
- Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment and
- Victorian Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Rationale

The rationale for the project is the high unemployment amongst young kooris in the region and the shortage of indigenous enterprises. The project is explicit about the outcome of the project - a viable business run by skilled young people who complete their apprenticeship. Many kooris work in the viticulture and horticultural industries but most jobs are on a seasonal basis. The establishment of more koori owned and managed businesses is consistent with indigenous aspirations of economic independence, and more skilled jobs for young people.

Best practice principles

- Building community based partnerships between the koori community, business and local training organisations.
- Coordination between local initiative and state and federal funding agencies.
- Explicit focus on the creation of a new enterprise to be owned and run by project participants.
- Koori leadership in terms of strategic direction, consultation, management and supervision.

- Long term planning and implementation cycle to enable the project objectives of sustainability to be achieved.
- Building self-esteem and confidence amongst the apprentices involved in the project.

Who was the lead agency?

The lead agency is SMGT. The project was initiated by the company in liaison with the local aboriginal community. Given the number of stakeholders, some persistence and patience was required to get the project up and running. SMGT employs the apprentices, convenes the steering group and is responsible for day to day management.

Who else was involved?

Boulevard Nurseries – provides nursery facilities and on-site training staff for the project.

- Department of Natural Resources and Environment provides funds to support the project.
- Department of Employment Workplace Relations and Small Business support the project through the Koori Business Network and funding support.
- The Victorian Department of Aboriginal Affairs liaises with the local koori community.
- Sunraysia Institute of TAFE provides the core trade training. Apprentices who complete the course will be awarded the Certificate III Horticulture (Production).

Implementation

SMGT worked in collaboration with the local aboriginal community to develop the design of the project and to bring in the other private, education and government stakeholders. The apprentice in-take selection was taken from young people who had previously participated in the federally funded New Apprenticeship Access Program. An aboriginal supervisor was appointed to manage the apprentices. The project commenced in September 2000 and will be completed in September 2003.

Apprentices split their time between working at the nursery and TAFE. Training in the early part of the course focuses on horticultural skills, and developing the financial skills of the participants. Later stages will concentrate on business management skills.

Participants nominated a number of factors that have enabled good results to be achieved to date:

- Patience and persistence in the design and implementation phases to ensure good coordination.
- Selection and recruitment of young kooris who had an interest in horticulture and commitment to the project.
- Back up transport to get apprenticeships to work and TAFE.
- Excellent koori supervision and community support for the project and involvement in individual problems.

Given the project will not be completed until 2003, it is not possible to evaluate the results, particularly the primary objective – the establishment of a viable koori owned enterprise providing good jobs for young kooris. The steering committee meets every two months to assess progress and resolve difficulties.

Outcomes

The project will not be completed until 2003. Although there are a couple of turnovers amongst the apprentices, there is a high level of commitment and enthusiasm for the project.

Milestones include:

- 50% of participants will complete their apprenticeship.
- All participants will be involved in income earning activities including contract work.
- Broad budget targets were set for income earning activities (not disclosed)
- A koori owned and managed enterprise would be operational at the end of the project.

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Case study 7

An integrated approach to youth services - City of Onkaparinga

Description

The City of Onkaparinga is developing and implementing a new youth services model. The model involves a strong commitment to young people including research, participation, information exchange, infrastructure and a new approach to enterprise and skills development. It emphasises an integrated approach to young people recognising that valuing, communicating and listening to young people are essential stepping stones to improve social and employment outcomes. One innovation is the establishment of the Reynalla Enterprise and Youth Centre, which nurtures ideas and entrepreneurial activities amongst young people and is considered a central element of the youth services model. Employment outcomes have been delivered through the establishment of TASTY young designer gallery and activities for young designers and Reefside Surf N Sail, which provides business training for young people (see implementation).

Background

Onkaparinga is the largest local government area in South Australia with a population of 140,000. It is a diverse area in southern Adelaide encompassing industrial, service-based and rural activities, and a large residential population. The city is young and diverse with 34,000 young people aged between 12 and 24 years and one quarter of the area's population was born overseas. Within the area many young people are disadvantaged. The area has high youth unemployment rates, low school retention rates, low tertiary qualifications and social and geographic isolation.

Since 1998, the city has been putting in place a new youth service model. Priority has been given to involving young people up-front rather than having older people speak on their behalf. Over 220 young people and 90 stakeholders were involved in needs assessment, which included surveys, forums, focus groups and interviews. The model contains five strategic directions.

Local precinct model Council divided into five precincts and provided each with a dedicated Youth Development Officer. This established the infrastructure to

support youth participation, identify and monitor youth needs, promote youth activities, collaboration and networks and the mobilisation of resources.

Regional Resource Centre The Centre provides a hub for information exchange, research and referral for and on behalf of young people. It is a meeting place for young people with facilities for recreation, training, meeting and hire.

Regional Youth participation A forum has been created to encourage young people to participate. Training is available for young people to support a greater voice in participation. Elected representatives, policy makers and the community will have access to a youth voice on regional and local matters.

Regional Youth Sector A regional peak network has been established representing the local precinct networks, government and non-government sectors and the voluntary sectors.

Reynalla Enterprise and Youth Centre Council funds the Centre to provide for personal development, employment and training, enterprise and life skill programs. It is designed to provide these services throughout the whole community. Mission Australia are contracted to manage the Centre.

Rationale

The rationale for the approach is to develop comprehensive strategies to respond to the needs and priorities of young people, rather than focussing on the problems of youth. This requires new partnerships and opportunities for young people and new partnerships between young people, the community sector and local government. The emphasis is on supporting young people taking a leadership role, identifying solutions and taking action. Skill development strategies are central and entrepreneurial initiatives form a part of the comprehensive strategies. The model seeks to combine short-term actions with the long term implementation of strategies designed to make young people central to the development process.

Best practice principles

- Developing community infrastructure to support young people.
- Careful research of young people's issues

- Giving young people responsibility and control
- A holistic approach to youth services emphasising positive attributes rather than problems.
- Encouraging entrepreneurialism and business start-ups

Who was the lead agency?

City of Onkaparinga is the lead agency. The new youth services model has strong support from the elected councillors and officers. The essence of the model – to provide young people with skills to enable participation – indicates that the aim is to make young people themselves the central agents.

Who else is involved?

Major regional stakeholders in the community sector are all involved in the project. Other participants include Mission Australia and Infoxchange.

Implementation

Two entrepreneurial initiatives have emerged out of the Reynalla Enterprise and Youth Centre. In 1999, the centre worked with young designers to explore opportunities in retail, merchandising and fashion design. A store has been established within the Centre, a new brand TASTY launched, and a marketing plan put into operation. Reefside Surf N Sail aimed to established a viable business in water and leisure activities. The project provides business experience and training for young people. The centre worked with young unemployed people, beach users, Mission Australia, community groups and the City of Onkaparinga to purchase an existing business with an exclusive permit to operate on three southern Adelaide beaches. The business received seed funding from Mission Australia and Kick Start funding. Both TASTY and Reefside are managed by Mission Australia at Reynalla as part of its contract to run the Centre on behalf of City of Onkaparinga. The management structure for both enterprises includes an Enterprise Coordinator, project coordinator, and four youth representatives. The team conducts weekly team meetings and participants are invited to participate in decision making.

Outcomes

The new youth services model has put in place new structures, policies and programs that aim to bring young people to centre stage in the development of strategies, decisions and actions that impact young people in the area. The “bottom up” approach is designed to give young people a sense of their own worth and responsibility in the area. The establishment of social enterprises has assisted young people develop their ideas for business ventures, provided work experience and training in “real” initiatives.

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Case study 8

Working with kids at risk – NSW Links to Learning in Wollongong

Description

Wollongong Youth Centre successfully applied for funding under the NSW Government's Links to Learning Program. The project involved working with young people at risk in local high schools. These kids were considered at risk because they were chronic truants or had behavioural problems. The aim was to create an environment where the kids could develop their skills and learn in a positive community setting rather than in a more restrictive school room environment. Links were maintained with the schools to monitor performance.

The first course undertaken in 2001 was a permaculture course, which combined new competencies but also ongoing support from tutors and case managers to assist the students build bridges back to the education and training system. Key competencies included resilience, access to technology, literacy and numeracy. The initial course was for 10 weeks with students attending 2 days a week. Some students attended school on the other days whilst others were involved in the project because they had been suspended from school.

Background

Links to Learning is a program run by the NSW Department of Education and Training designed to help young people aged 12 to 24 years who have left school early or who are students at risk of leaving school early. It aims to create new opportunities for learning and to encourage them to re-enter mainstream education or training.

The program provides funding assistance to community organisations and Local Councils in New South Wales. Successful applicants undertake innovative and creative activities with young people in informal learning settings, and then link participants back to education and training.

Community based organisations "deliver packages of education and training activities to develop key skills and abilities in personal planning, goal setting, time and resource management, communication, learning to learn, processing informa-

tion, problem solving, developing cultural understanding and using technology". Training is activity based – using arts, recreation, fun and expression. The project provides individually tailored support services plus education or training pathways planning to link participants back to school or to further training or educational options.

Rationale

Many kids are falling down the cracks in the formal education and training system. A driving force for the program is to identify kids at risk at an early stage and put them in a setting that is fun, more informal and yet provide them with more specialist support. It is seen as a partnership between the state government, schools and community based organisations. The community based approach for implementation of projects means that organisations develop local strategies to best meet the needs of local young people.

Best practice principles

- Identifying kids at risk at an early stage
- Working with kids in a creative and supportive environment, where they can special support.
- Collaboration between education and community sectors.

Who was the lead agency?

The Wollongong Youth Centre, funded by Wollongong City Council, is the lead agency.

Who else is involved?

The Department of Education and Training designed the program, and funds and monitors its performance. DET identifies schools at risk and informs the school principals about the program. The school chooses young people at the program and contacts parents for permission for the kids to participate in the program. The De-

partment of Community Services provided support through its community welfare workers.

Implementation

The youth centre assigned a project coordinator who has specialist education skills. The course was conducted at Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre, a highly respected community centre that has its own market garden. A specialist permaculture teacher was put on to work with the kids. The course was successful in motivating kids in further study. A number of students enrolled to continue studying an accredited horticulture course. The strength of the program is its early identification of youth at risk and remedial action.

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Case study 9

Ballarat Group Training – Building partnerships with the community

Description

Ballarat Group Training is broadening its activities to provide work and training experiences for young people in Ballarat. Two recent projects are one with aboriginal kids and school based apprenticeships with six local high schools.

Indigi Kids is a partnership with the Ballarat Aboriginal Cooperative. This pilot program has provided pre-employment training for young indigenous kids at risk. Distinguishing features of the program are the partnership with the Ballarat Aboriginal Cooperative to select kids and manage the program and the provision of cultural education for employers.

The school-based apprenticeships program was set up in 1998 by Ballarat Training Company. The program offers apprentices for year 11-12 students that are looking at combined work and learning experience in their last two years of school. The program combines work experience, education and training, mentoring and accreditation towards the Victorian Certificate of Education.

Background

Group Training Australia and its network of 120 group training companies in industry and regional areas is a unique Australian innovation. The network provides for 14% of total traineeships in Australia. They are funded under a joint policy arrangement between state and federal governments. Under the program group training companies (GTCs) take on apprentices and trainees and hire them out to local businesses at award wages. They also take responsibility for their training. This is an advantage to businesses, particularly small medium enterprises that may have a demand for labour but not on a full time basis. Previously firms had to commit to a three-four year indenture.

GTCs enable firms to make use of apprentices and trainees when needed. GTCs take responsibility for administration, rotating people between different businesses, employing young people and looking after their training. Although age restrictions

have been lifted on apprentices and trainees, GTCs predominantly look after young people looking for entry-level jobs.

GTCs are primarily a business service. They screen employees to assess their suitability for employment and they can offer advice on how to improve employability skills. But they go beyond a business service by offering employment opportunities for young people often in disadvantaged communities and they offer pastoral care and often a support network for their workers. One of their main attributes is their flexibility. Indeed, there is significant variation in the functions and quality of service offered by different GTCs. In addition to their labour hire services, some have become registered training organisations (RTOs), established New Apprenticeship Centres, provided careers counselling services and developed new school based apprenticeships with schools.

Ballarat Group Training is one of a number of innovative GTCs that are active in regional Australia.

Best practice principles

- Developing regional partnerships to coordinate the delivery of employment and training outcomes.
- Innovative ways of maintaining young people in job and training pathways.
- Making training an attractive option for local employers
- Cultural education for employers (in the case of Indigi Kids).

Rationale

The rationale for the projects was to provide practical and interesting training for young people who may be considered at risk. In relation to Indigi Kids the partnership between the Group Training Company and the Ballarat Aboriginal Co-operative gave the aboriginal community greater control over the selection process, management and cultural education provided by the program. This provided young people with an incentive to participate in the project. The school based apprenticeship program served a number of objectives. It was able to meet the demands of local employers for young employees. The apprenticeships provide year 11-12 students with combined work and education opportunities within their region, mentoring and advice about career options. For Ballarat Group Training the

projects were a new business opportunity in an area that supported young people in Ballarat.

Who was the lead agency?

Ballarat Group Training.

Who else was involved?

Ballarat Aboriginal Cooperative are the partners in Indigi Kids. Six schools participate in the school-based apprenticeship program, which receives support from regional engineering, hospitality, commercial and retail firms. The program is supported by the Federal Government's New Apprenticeship Program.

Implementation

Ballarat Group Training has special client liaison officers responsible for managing the programs. Management committees have been established to oversee the programs. Funds are allocated (more information required - check this section)

Outcomes

Both programs are getting good results. Indigi Kids is only in its first year but has managed to get 6 of the 12 students placed in employment. Two have been awarded with traineeships. The school based apprenticeship program has been running since 1998. It has an intake of around 50 students per year, which is a good result for a regional centre. The program is popular with the six high schools and local employers, particularly in the retail sector. Another significant result is that it is resulting in higher retention rates (around 85-90%), which is much higher than for students of comparable skills in year 11-12.

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