

'AN OASIS OF INTEGRATION IN OUR COUNTRY':

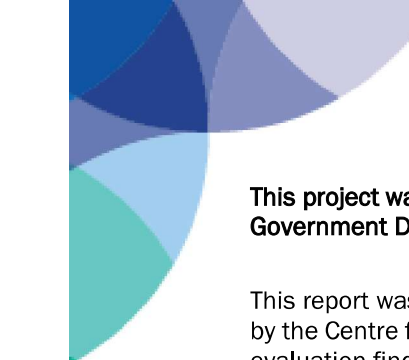
*Evaluation of the
Multicultural Enterprise
Development Project*

Prepared by the Centre for Social Impact,
The University of Western Australia

April, 2022

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This report was commissioned by Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC) and was prepared by the Centre for Social Impact at The University of Western Australia (CSI UWA), based on the evaluation findings of the Multicultural Enterprise Development program, a social intervention designed to assist people from refugee and migrant backgrounds improve their employment opportunities and social integration through targeted support.

Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, CSI UWA acknowledges that their operations are situated on Noongar land, and that the Noongar people remain the spiritual and cultural custodians of their land, and continue to practise their values, languages, beliefs and knowledge. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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Metropolitan Migrants Resource Centre, Multicultural Futures

The Metropolitan Migrants Resource Centre (MMRC) is a not for profit settlement service organisation providing culturally appropriate, client centred services that meet the needs of refugees, humanitarian entrants and newly arrived migrants. Multicultural Futures (MF) is a charitable organisation who works in partnership with government and other service providers to support migrants and refugees as they build a new life in Australia.

Centre for Social Impact


The Centre for Social Impact (CSI) is a national research and education centre dedicated to catalysing social change for a better world. CSI is built on the foundation of three of Australia's leading universities: UNSW Sydney, The University of Western Australia, and Swinburne University of Technology. Our **research** develops and brings together knowledge to understand current social challenges and opportunities; our postgraduate and undergraduate **education** develops social impact leaders; and we aim to **catalyse change** by drawing on these foundations and translating knowledge, creating leaders, developing usable resources, and reaching across traditional divides to facilitate collaborations.

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Disclaimer

The opinions in this report reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Centre for Social Impact nor MMRC.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Multicultural Enterprise Development (MED) Project was designed to assist people from refugee, humanitarian or culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds to improve their employment opportunities and social integration through targeted support.

Multicultural Enterprise Develop Project Overview

The Multicultural Enterprise Development (MED) Project was designed to assist people from refugee, humanitarian or culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds to improve their employment opportunities and social integration through targeted support.

Unemployment is the biggest threat to migrant communities and their ability to actively participate in Australian society. People from refugee and migrant backgrounds face significant challenges in gaining employment and integrating socially within the mainstream society for a number of reasons including, having poor social networks, low English language proficiency, lack of local work experience, non-recognition of qualifications, and high levels of discrimination in the labour market.

Although many migrants and refugees successfully gain employment within the first few years of arrival, a small group continues to struggle and is at elevated risk of remaining long-term on welfare. Actuarial analysis by the Department of Social Service (DSS) reveals that on average, migrants and refugees who currently receive income support are likely to be on income support for 30 years over their lifetime. The MED Project was funded through the Commonwealth Government under the DSS's 'Try, Test and Learn' Fund Tranche 2 designed to support people at risk of long-term welfare dependence. It was a joint initiative of the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC) and Multicultural Futures (MF). Business Foundations (BF), was a partner in developing and delivering part of the intervention. The Centre for Social Impact (CSI UWA) evaluated the project.

The project delivered enterprise development support through two streams: a Collective Enterprise Incubator Program (Stream One); and an Individual Enterprise Accelerator Program (Stream Two). Stream One was comprised of two separate social enterprises located in the North Metropolitan and South Metropolitan areas. Stream Two delivered a modified NEIS program.

The number of participants in each Stream is presented below:

STREAM	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Stream One North	53
Stream One South (World Music Café)	44
Stream Two NEIS	58
Total	155

Evaluation Focus

Across all projects the evaluation examined the processes applied and the impact of the pandemic on program delivery. For the Stream One projects the evaluation captured the extent to which participants gained: Australian work experience; English language competency; applied skills and knowledge; employment vision and pathways; and social connections and increased confidence through their participation in the program. For Stream 2, the evaluation examined the participants' experience of being in the program, and the extent to which participants gained: enhanced occupational competencies; Australian self-employment experience; self-employment clarity and pathways; and social connections and increased confidence through their participation in the program.



Methodology

The evaluation was designed as a mixed-methods evaluation, comprised of both quantitative data (administrative data, surveys and DSS Data Exchange data) and qualitative data (focus groups, interviews, and meeting notes). In this report the various projects are examined separately.

Stream One Collective Enterprise: North

Program Model

The Stream One Collective Enterprise Incubator Program North provided culturally-competent business training and support to build the skills, knowledge and confidence of low, or semi-skilled, refugees and migrants while they gained work experience in building a collective enterprise as a group.

Eligibility Criteria

- Refugee or migrant background;
- aged between 16 and 64;
- receiving income support or are at risk of welfare dependence or of exclusion from economic participation;
- have a right to work in Australia.

Project Design

- MMRC was the backbone organisation for this intervention coordinating the recruitment, logistics of training with the external partner, AMEP North Metropolitan TAFE.
- The project offered culturally-appropriate enterprise development and small business training alongside embedded English language learning and practical work experience in developing a social enterprise. The main components of the program were:
 - Business training through North Metropolitan TAFE
 - English language training through North Metropolitan TAFE (CSWE course)
 - Applied skills training by MMRC
 - Business training through the establishment of social enterprise (event catering and market training)
 - Extra English support (in addition to TAFE CSWE course)
 - Individual case managed psychosocial and business support as needed
 - Crèche and interpreting support as needed
- Participation in the program entailed attending for 2 school terms (over 20 weeks) with 3 sessions per week for 4 hours per session (of which 12 hours per week were in class and 2 hours were distance learning).
- It was optional to attend for a further 2 terms for one session per week. This included online training and work experience in food or craft markets (in Mirrabooka or Nollamara Markets).
- The project was delivered in the North Metropolitan area based around Balga and Mirrabooka.



Recruitment and Participation

- Recruitment occurred as a result of marketing and promotion by MMRC, and word of mouth once the program commenced.
- Referrals from community leaders increased as the program progressed.
- Recruitment through Jobactive providers, did not eventuate, despite attempts to promote this.
- In total 53 participants took part in the project across 3 cohorts (classes).

Impact of COVID-19

Measures were put in place to help participants stay connected with the project during the COVID-19 lockdown period in 2020:

- Social media platforms were used to communicate and disseminate teaching materials;
- a closed YouTube channel was created for clients unfamiliar with websites to use safely and with confidence;
- production of video teaching sessions were recorded and telecast to participants on the closed Facebook and YouTube channels;
- one-on-one sessions at MMRC were set up for clients who did not have access to computers and the internet;
- hard copies of teaching materials were made available at the MMRC office.

Key Findings

- The project was effectively delivered and achieved the aims of helping people from refugee and migrant backgrounds acquire skills and competencies in order to better understand the Australian working environment, have improved social connections and increased confidence.
- More women than men joined the project and efforts to attract more men were met with little success.
- Having competent and compassionate staff who can relate well to the needs of the participants was identified as a key factor in the project's success.
- The psychosocial support received, especially the crèche facilities and the interpreting support, was highly valued by the participants.
- Participants valued the training they received and reported that it gave them a broad understanding of how to do business in Australia. Many of the skills developed, such as computer skills, were recognised as being valuable not just for employment but for day-to-day functioning as well. There was broad consensus, however, that more applied training and work experience would have been helpful. Nevertheless, participants reported that the project had given them confidence to find work and greater clarity around options for employment and training.
- The English training and support was a standout of the project for many participants, many of whom noted an improvement in their personal lives due to greater social connection fostered through improved English competency. Participants made significant improvements in their Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) scores.
- A significant benefit of participation in the project were the social connections and increased confidence gained by the participants. The program created a safe environment where friendships could be made and where they could explore how to participate in the broader Australian society together.



Stream One Collective Enterprise: South

Program Model

The Stream One Collective Enterprise Incubator Program South provided culturally competent business training and support to build the skills, knowledge and confidence of refugees and migrants while they gained work experience in building a collective enterprise as a group. The aim of the enterprise was to cover three main elements of experiential learning:

1. Develop employability skills, or transferable work skills, such as teamwork, communication skills, problem solving, initiative, planning and organising, decision making, and self-management;
2. Provide local industry work experience and references; and
3. Build social, community and industry connections.

Eligibility Criteria

- Refugee or migrant background;
- aged between 16 and 64;
- receiving income support or are at risk of welfare dependence or of exclusion from economic participation;
- have a right to work in Australia.

Project Design

- The MED Project staff worked alongside participants to determine the needs of the cohort, co-designing the program. The result of this process was a social enterprise entitled the World Music Café (WMC).
- This program allowed participants to develop business skills, English language proficiency, events management and hospitality skills through practical hands-on experience creating, coordinating and delivering the World Music Café public events. The main components of the program were:
 - Business, event management and hospitality training in a classroom setting;
 - event management and hospitality experience through the delivery of ticketed World Music Café 'Dinner & Show' events to the public;
 - producing an online WMC tv-magazine style show in response to the COVID-19 lockdown directives (from April – July 2020).
- At the start of the project training was delivered as one full day a week for the duration of the 8-week term. As the program progressed this changed to half day sessions in the afternoons, two days a week.
- Whilst the training material was repeated each term, it became more complex as participants gained more practical experience and knowledge through the work experience opportunities.
- Participation in the project was not linear; participants could attend one or more training sessions (terms) and their involvement in the WMC could be continuous or intermittent.
- The event management practical experience component of the program continued as the project progressed.
- Training was given in the Southern suburbs of Perth around Southern River and Thornlie.



Recruitment and Participation

- Recruitment was initially done through the MF multicultural network channels.
- As the program evolved, TAFE AMEP students were recruited into the project.
- Recruitment through Jobactive providers, did not eventuate, despite attempts to promote this.
- In total the project ran over seven terms, and 44 people participated.

Training and Activities

- The training component of the project was developed according to the social enterprise that emerged, the needs of the participants and the skills of the project officers.
- The WMC enterprise hosted public ticketed events on weekend evenings and on Sunday afternoons depending on the venue location and target market, showcasing multicultural music and dance featuring both professional and community participants. Project participants were responsible for all other aspects of the event management, including catering, event planning, marketing, front-of-house, customer service, photography, filmmaking, and MC duties.

Impact of COVID-19

Measures were put in place to help participants stay connected with the project during the COVID-19 lockdown period in 2020:

- Social media platforms were used to communicate with trainers and to connect with fellow participants;
- the training component moved online via Zoom and maintained a healthy attendance;
- the World Music Café team shifted from presenting live events to creating an online digital show to celebrate cultural diversity and multicultural artists;
- in-house digital film production skills were developed with the help of an external production consultant who mentored the enterprise participants in creating a digital WMC Show;
- the pilot WMC Show featured interviews with local musicians, live event footage of local artists, cooking demonstration segments and recipes, plus testimonials from the WMC team members.

Key Findings

- The project was effectively delivered to enable participants to learn by doing. The project achieved the aims of helping people from refugee and migrant backgrounds acquire skills and competencies and gain practical experience. This enabled participants to better understand the Australian working environment, have Australian work experience that could be listed in their CV, and have improved social connections and increased confidence.
- Whilst the community consultation at the start helped to determine the best social enterprise to meet the needs, skills and interests of the potential participants, a longer consultation and co-design process would be beneficial in the future, to better tailor the project and ensure strong engagement from the start.
- Having skilled and connected staff enabled the rapid development of the training material and the establishment of the social enterprise.
- For some, participation in the project was more short-term and once they had the necessary experience and confidence they applied for work or training elsewhere. In these cases the project was a stepping stone to future employment and provided participants with valuable credentials to put in their CVs. The main reasons for withdrawing from the project was to work or study. Others maintained their involvement with the project.

- Although the classroom-based training sessions covered the foundations of establishing and working in a business, the main learning vehicle was working in the WMC itself. Participants were involved in the design and decision making of all aspects of developing and running the social enterprise. This empowered them to take risks and gave them confidence to have trust in themselves.
- The project provided opportunities for participants to build friendships and expand their social networks. This was greatly appreciated and was identified as one of the main strengths of the project.
- This project has continued beyond the lifetime of the Try, Test and Learn MED project. The viability of this model rests with the commitment of the participants to continue to engage in the project - and be recompensed for their labour, either through profit-sharing, or casual employment arrangement - as well as the ongoing support provided by the highly-skilled MF staff.

Stream Two: NEIS Individual Enterprise Accelerator Program

Program Model

Stream Two of the MED Project delivered a modified NEIS program tailored to meet the needs of people from refugee or migrant backgrounds, who are underrepresented in the government program. The intention of the intervention was to provide a culturally competent and suitably modified program (pre-NEIS and NEIS) to better address the needs of the target cohort. Participants from refugee/migrant backgrounds with small business acumen and an interest in starting their own business, were offered tailored support to develop their small business idea through an adapted 3 week pre-NEIS program. For those who had their business plan approved, this was followed by twelve month mentorship in the NEIS program. The project provided participants with culturally-appropriate accredited small business training, business mentoring and personalised support in the first year of the new business, and (for those who were eligible) income support for up to 39 weeks. Participants gained enhanced occupational competencies, Australian self-employment experience, and self-employment clarity and pathways.

Eligibility Criteria

- Refugee or migrant background;
- aged over 18 years;
- receiving income support or are at risk of welfare dependence or of exclusion from economic participation;
- working fewer than 15 hours paid work a week;
- be available to participate in the pre-NEIS training;
- be able to work full time in their NEIS business once business plan approved;
- have a right to work in Australia.

For the NEIS business to be eligible, it had to be:

- Independent, lawful and capable of withstanding public scrutiny;
- assessed as commercially viable by a NEIS provider;
- established, located and operated solely within Australia;
- new – established businesses not eligible;
- structured so that they will have a controlling interest over the NEIS business for the duration of the NEIS program.



Project Design

- MMRC was the backbone organisation for this program coordinating the recruitment, logistics of training with the external partner, Business Foundations (BF), and offering psychosocial and business support as needed. BF delivered the practical training (pre-NEIS) component and managed the mentoring component of the program.
- Although the Stream Two NEIS program had to follow the accreditation guidelines and could not be substantially altered, certain modifications were made to the way it was delivered. The main component of the program were:
 - MMRC recruited participants
 - MMRC assisted eligible participants to enrol in the program
 - BF vetted participants' business ideas
 - Pre-NEIS training provided by Business Foundations
 - Additional support given to participants
 - Psychosocial and business support given as needed
 - Culturally-appropriate mentoring support given during the NEIS phase.
- Across the various cohorts pre-NEIS training was delivered in the MMRC offices, Mirrabooka library's computer lab, the Girrawheen Hub and the Canning River Eco Education Centre.

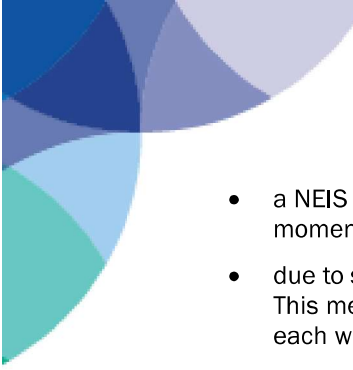
Recruitment and Participation

- Recruitment was primarily through MMRC channels and word-of-mouth once the program gained momentum. In the last phase of the project it was marketed as "Start a Business from Home", to better reflect the pandemic business setting. Eligible and interested participants were enrolled through the BF website. Assistance with enrolment was provided by MMRC staff.
- Recruitment through Jobactive providers was less successful despite attempts to engage providers.
- Eligibility requirements around number of hours in employment were relaxed slightly as the program progressed since suitable candidates could not participate because they were engaged in the workforce for more than the cut-off amount of 15 hours of paid work a week.
- Most of the participants were women and this points to the issue that many people (mostly men) were ineligible to join the program because they needed to work to support their families despite being highly motivated to start their own businesses. Future iterations of the program need to address eligibility requirements to address these challenges.
- In total 68 participants were enrolled in the pre-NEIS program and 53 completed the training, representing an average completion rate of 78%. This is much higher than the mainstream NEIS completion rate of 63% seen by BF. Twenty-five Business Plans were submitted, representing 47% of participants who completed training. There were 16 participants who commenced the formal NEIS program, with one awaiting commencement. This represents 32% of the participants who completed training. This is considerably lower than the BF benchmark of 68% of participants completing training commencing the NEIS program.

Impact of COVID-19

Program delivery had to be adapted as a result of the pandemic, in the following ways:

- All training moved to an online format;
- the pre-NEIS training was extended to give participants more time;
- virtual mentoring sessions were developed for all NEIS participants at that stage of the program to ensure that they continued to get the support they needed;

- 
- a NEIS community Facebook group was set up to connect all participants and keep the social momentum of the program going.
 - due to social distancing directives, limited numbers could work in the computer lab at a time. This meant that the group had to be split and participants only had 1 day in the computer lab each week.
 - social media platforms and phones were used to check in on the welfare of the participants.

Key Findings

- The project was effectively delivered to enable people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to participate in the NEIS program. The project supported people across all stages of the program, and provided practical and psychosocial support to facilitate participation. By incorporating culturally-appropriate modifications to the training material, and modifying program delivery in a number of ways, participants were supported to submit their Business Plans and some progressed to running their businesses in the NEIS program.
- In total 68 participants were enrolled in the pre-NEIS program and 53 completed the training, representing an average completion rate of 78%. This is much higher than the mainstream NEIS completion rate of 63% seen by BF. In total 25 Business Plans were submitted, representing 47% of participants who completed training. There were 16 participants who commenced the formal NEIS program, with one awaiting commencement. This represents 32% of the participants who completed training. This is considerably lower than the BF benchmark of 68% of participants completing training commencing the NEIS program.
- The program enabled participants to gain enhanced occupational competencies and Australian self-employment experience. Participation in the program enabled people to have greater clarity around employment and training pathways.
- The program helped people to increase their social connections and make friendships. The Outcomes Evaluation presented evidence of the individual stories of impact and change.
- Participants needed to have a good command of English and computer skills to be able to participate effectively in the program. Having existing support networks helped people participate fully in the program. Recent arrivals who lacked support networks and understanding of the mainstream society could not participate effectively.
- Discussions with MMRC and BF staff highlighted the importance of having a collaborative approach across organisations in order to capitalise on resources, ensure efficiency and avoid duplication of activities.
- The main outcome of the Stream Two NEIS program was participation in the program itself. Despite the lower rates of Business Plan submissions and commencements into the formal NEIS program, these figures represent a significant achievement of participation and engagement in the NEIS program by people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Without the modified program delivery it is highly unlikely that these people would have participated in the mainstream NEIS program, as stated by MMRC and BF trainers.



INTRODUCTION

Background

Unemployment is the biggest threat to migrant communities and their ability to actively participate in Australian society (Abdelkerim & Grace, 2012). People from refugee and migrant backgrounds face significant challenges in gaining employment and integrating socially within the mainstream society for a number of reasons including, having poor social networks, low English language proficiency, lack of local work experience, non-recognition of qualifications, and high levels of discrimination in the labour market.

The Multicultural Enterprise Development (MED) Project was an initiative set up to assist people from refugee, humanitarian or culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds¹ improve their employment opportunities and social integration through targeted support. The MED Project was a joint initiative of the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC) and Multicultural Futures (MF). Business Foundations (BF), a not for profit New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) provider, was a partner in developing and delivering part of the intervention.

The project was designed to train and support people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to improve their employment opportunities and English skills, build confidence and develop their business ideas into income-generating enterprises. The project delivered enterprise development support in Metropolitan Perth through two streams: a Collective Enterprise Incubator Program (Stream One); and an Individual Enterprise Accelerator Program (Stream Two).

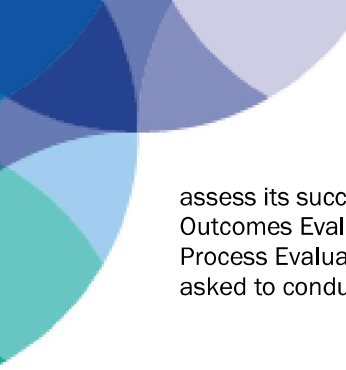
The Collective Enterprise Incubator Program (Stream One) provided culturally-competent business training and support to build the skills, knowledge and confidence of low or semi-skilled refugees and migrants while they gained work experience in building a collective enterprise as a group. It was comprised of two separate social enterprises which were located in the North Metropolitan and South Metropolitan areas. The Individual Enterprise Accelerator Program (Stream Two) delivered a modified NEIS program, tailored to meet the needs of people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Participants were recruited and screened to determine which stream was most appropriate.

The MED Project was funded through the Commonwealth Government under the Department of Social Services 'Try, Test and Learn' Fund Tranche 2 which was set up to explore ways to support people '*at risk of long-term welfare dependence through small-scale trials aimed at improving workforce participation*'. To be eligible to participate in the MED Project, the potential participant had to satisfy the following criteria: be living in Metropolitan Perth, Western Australia; have a refugee, humanitarian entrant or CaLD background; not currently be employed or in education; and be at risk of long-term unemployment.

Prior to the program receiving funding, a pilot phase was trialled and key learnings helped to inform the design of the MED Project. Phase 1 of the MED Project ran from March 2019 to June 2020. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, the DSS granted the program an extension. Phase 2 of the MEDP was delivered between October 2020 and March 2021. Although the core aims of the program remained the same, the program needed to be modified in to address the changing conditions brought on by the pandemic.

MMRC was the backbone organisation, responsible for running the overall program. Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia (CSI UWA) was contracted to evaluate the initiative and

¹ For the purpose of this report the term 'people from refugee and migrant backgrounds' includes people who are refugees, humanitarian entrants and people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.



assess its success in achieving the specified outcomes. CSI were originally contracted to conduct the Outcomes Evaluation for the MEDP program, with MMRC staff documenting and conducting the Process Evaluation. Upon completion of the program, there was a contract variation and CSI were asked to conduct both evaluations. This report presents the findings of this process.

Report Outline

The following section looks at the context of the report and presents some of the barriers and challenges to employment faced by people from refugee and migrant backgrounds in Australia. Next, the evaluation approach and methodology are outlined. The Multicultural Enterprise Development (MED) Project is made up of three distinct projects: the Collective Enterprise Stream One North and South projects and the Stream Two modified NEIS project. These are examined and evaluated in turn and presented in separate chapters. This is followed by some concluding thoughts on the overall MED Project.

CONTEXT: BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES TO EMPLOYMENT FACED BY PEOPLE FROM REFUGEE AND MIGRANT BACKGROUNDS IN AUSTRALIA

The development of the MED Project initiative was informed by the Priority Investment Approach to Welfare, which is the Australian Government's approach to welfare investment. The approach uses actuarial analysis to estimate Australia's overall future lifetime welfare costs, as well as the cost of future payments to populations at risk of long-term dependence on welfare (Department of Social Services, 2019). The Try, Test and Learn Grant was established to support innovative approaches to assist people at risk of long-term welfare dependence.

This section explores migration trends in Australia and more specifically in Mirrabooka, Balga and Cannington, areas where the MED Project was trialled. Next, changes to employment are explored, followed by a discussion of barriers to employment encountered by new and emerging migrant communities. The 'scarring' impact of the pandemic on employment trends are then discussed and this is followed by an examination of networks and social capital on migrant employment.

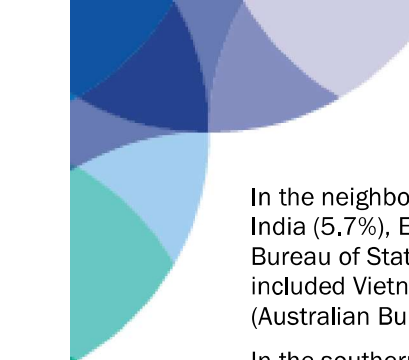
Migration in Australia

As 30 June 2020, over 7.6 million migrants were living in Australia, representing 30% of Australia's population (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021). The largest group of overseas-born migrants continues to be from England, while migrants from India and the mainland China were second and third, respectively (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021). New Zealand, the Philippines, and Vietnam were the next highest groups (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021). England and New Zealand were the only two countries in this list of top six groups where the migrant rate had decreased between 2015 and 2020, while migration showed growth in the other countries, especially from India and China. Migrants from these two countries tend to arrive on the skilled migration scheme. Most migrants to Australia are skilled visa holders holding a Bachelor degree (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021).

While the English-born population (213,900) is by far the largest in WA (and second only to NSW at 30 June 2016), in terms of CALD countries of origin, WA has a sizeable population originally from India (53,400), the Philippines (33,400), and Malaysia (32,300) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021). However, migrant populations are not evenly distributed across either the state or Perth.

Migration in Mirrabooka, Balga, and Cannington

The 2016 census records that in the northern suburb of Mirrabooka, the most common countries of birth outside of Australia were Vietnam (8.7%), Myanmar (5.2%), Iraq (3.0%), New Zealand (2.1%) and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2.1%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016c). Apart from English, the most common languages spoken at home included Vietnamese (11.5%), Arabic (8.3%), Macedonian (3.6%), Somali (2.9%), and Burmese (2.8%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016c). Thus, Mirrabooka therefore has a comparatively high percentage of established CALD and traditionally refugee communities, such as Vietnamese, and newer refugee communities, such as Iraqi and Somali.



In the neighbouring suburb of Balga, the most common countries of birth outside of Australia were India (5.7%), England (3.3%), Myanmar (2.8%), New Zealand (2.8%), and Vietnam (2.7%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016a). Apart from English, the most common languages spoken at home included Vietnamese (3.4%), Punjabi (2.8%), Arabic (2.8%), Macedonian (1.6%), and Hindi (1.6%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016a).


In the southern suburb of Cannington, the most common countries of birth outside of Australia suggest a higher concentration of populations more likely to have arrived on skilled migrant visas. These are India (12.4%), mainland China (5.9%), Philippines (4.6%), Malaysia (3.8%), and Indonesia (3.1%). Apart from English, the most common languages spoken at home included Mandarin (9.4%), Punjabi (6.5%), Indonesian (3.2%), Arabic (3.2%) and Cantonese (3.0%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016b).

Balga, Mirrabooka, and Cannington have higher rates of unemployment than the state (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). Indeed, the unemployment rate in Balga-Mirrabooka was so high in the 2016 census year (24.3% compared to the Perth-wide unemployment rate of 5.9%), it made local news headlines, with Stirling City Council vowing to reduce the rates (Leaver, 2016). According to the Small Area Labour Markets (SALM) report of March 2021, the unemployment rate for Balga-Mirrabooka remained between 19% and 20% in the twelve months leading up to that period, while in Cannington, it hovered between 7% and 9.5% (Australian Government, 2021).

These unemployment rates may be partially explained by the number of new migrants without skilled migrant visas, and hence to factors such as lower levels of English proficiency. Of the 26,800 migrants arriving in the Wanneroo and Stirling LGAs between 2012 and 2017, 25% had family visas, 8% had humanitarian visas, and 68% had skilled migrant visas (Sainsbury, 2017). Forty-three percent of humanitarian migrants in WA settled in the Wanneroo and Stirling LGAs (Sainsbury, 2017). English proficiency and labour market outcomes for Balga-Mirrabooka are strongly correlated (Sainsbury, 2017). Thus, for those with high English proficiency, the unemployment rate was 9%, while for those with no English proficiency, the unemployment rate was 20% (Sainsbury, 2017). The proportion of the jobactive caseload in WA classified as CALD is 16%, whereas the proportion of the jobactive caseload in Balga-Mirrabooka classified as CALD is 44% (Sainsbury, 2017). Similarly, the proportion of the jobactive caseload in WA classified as refugees is 7%, whereas the proportion of the jobactive caseload in Balga and Mirrabooka classified as refugees is 19% (Sainsbury, 2017). In Mirrabooka, the jobactive caseload by country of birth correlates with that of high humanitarian intakes (past and present), as well as new and emerging migrant communities (Sainsbury, 2017):

- Myanmar – 7.8%
- Vietnam – 6.2%
- Sudan – 4.7%
- Iraq – 3.8%
- Afghanistan – 3.1%
- Ethiopia – 1.8%
- Iran – 1.8%

The term, ‘new and emerging’ identifies migrant and refugee communities that have recently arrived in Australia and may need additional support in the settlement process (Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia, 2019). Mirrabooka and Balga are areas of high migrant populations from new and emerging migrant communities. This is coupled with low percentages of education attainment and socioeconomic status. At the time of the 2016 census, the median weekly household income in Mirrabooka was \$1,094 per week compared to the state average of \$1,595 (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016c), while the median weekly household income in Balga was \$1,147 per week (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016a), and for Cannington \$1,287 (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016b). The most common occupations in Mirrabooka included Labourers (22.0%), Technicians and Trades Workers (16.1%), Community and Personal Service Workers (14.6%), Machinery Operators and Drivers (10.5%), and Sales Workers (10.2%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016c). The most common occupations in Balga included



Technicians and Trades Workers (17.0%), Labourers (16.3%), Community and Personal Service Workers (15.2%), Professionals (11.7%), and Machinery Operators and Drivers (10.9%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016a). In contrast, Cannington had a higher percentage of Professionals (17.6%), followed by Technicians and Trades Workers (14.8%), Labourers (14.8%), Community and Personal Service Workers (14.2%), and Clerical and Administrative Workers (11.2%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016b).

Changes to Employment in Recent Years

Employment plays an essential role in ensuring an individual's economic survival, social participation, social standing, self-empowerment, and overall health and wellbeing (Nunn et al., 2014; Udah et al., 2019). In contrast, unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, is the most significant cause of poverty and disadvantage in Australia (Humphery et al., 2004). Unemployment places financial and emotional stresses on families, which can lead to family conflict and separations, social isolation and unhealthy coping behaviours, psychological distress and physical health problems, homelessness, and a range of disadvantages for children in these families (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2020; Humphery et al., 2004). Finding a job becomes increasingly difficult the longer a person is unemployed, as they potentially lose skills and networks, face the stigma associated with being long-term unemployed, or become discouraged and leave the labour force (Cassidy et al., 2020).

Despite the benefits of employment, gaining and retaining employment has become more competitive in recent decades. In high income countries like Australia, the nature and structure of employment has altered significantly in recent decades, due to the increased casualisation of the workforce, a decline in the manufacturing sector, and an emphasis on further education (Nunn et al., 2014). The rise in credentialism from the 1970s onwards closed access to many jobs for those without higher education at the same time that higher education became more expensive (McDowell & Christopherson, 2009). These shifts in the marketplace have provided both a range of opportunities and challenges for new job seekers, whether they are young people or new migrants (Nunn et al., 2014).

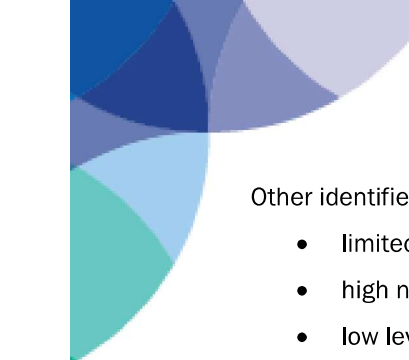
Employment Barriers for New and Emerging Migrant Communities

Many migrants and refugees successfully gain employment within the first few years of arrival (Department of Social Services, 2021). However, a small group continues to struggle and is at elevated risk of remaining long-term on welfare (Department of Social Services, 2021). On average, migrants and refugees who currently receive income support are likely to be on income support for 30 years over their lifetime. It is estimated that if their situation does not improve, in 20 years' time, 50% of this group will be receiving income support payments (Department of Social Services, 2021).

Unemployment is the greatest threat to new and emerging communities and their ability to actively participate in Australian society (Abdelkerim & Grace, 2012). Yet compared to those who arrived on skilled migrant visas, new and emerging migrants are more at-risk in a competitive labour market and to economic shocks (Abdelkerim & Grace, 2012). New and emerging migrant communities therefore tend to experience both social and economic disadvantage.

What are the key reasons that put these new and emerging communities at risk? The main identifiers of a new and emerging community include (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, 2019):

- a lack of established family networks, support systems, community structures, and resources; and
- unfamiliarity with, and challenges accessing, mainstream services.



Other identifiers could also include:

- limited English language proficiency;
- high numbers of refugees;
- low levels of formal education;
- financial vulnerabilities; and
- difficulty in finding long-term and sustainable employment.

Vulnerable individuals from communities that have grown rapidly in Australia might also fall under the term, especially if they have limited family networks and community structures—notably women, partner visa holders, older persons, or those with limited English (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, 2019). Additionally, while there may be well-established Afghan communities across Australia, the combined specificities of identity and migration experience of more recent Afghani arrivals mean that many of these newer communities are considered new and emerging communities (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, 2019).


Some new migrants lack the formal recognition of their qualifications in Australia, making it difficult to access the labour market and gain employment (Udah et al., 2019). For others, their overseas qualifications are recognised at Australian universities in fulfilment of postgraduate studies, but are not easily recognised by Australian employers (Udah et al., 2019). Additionally, the period spent waiting for qualifications to be recognised can lead to unemployment, underemployment, or occupational downgrading, in which individuals work in fields or areas outside or below their expertise (Udah et al., 2019). In cases of occupational downgrading, the longer a person works outside their area of expertise, the more difficult it becomes for them to enter the workforce at an appropriate level (Udah et al., 2019).

Discrimination cannot be discounted as a factor in unemployment, especially for individuals from Africa (e.g., Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea), who experience higher labour market discrimination, resulting in high levels of unemployment (Udah et al., 2019). Discrimination in the workplace reflects broader social and political xenophobia in Australia, especially in relation to the latest wave of humanitarian migrants. While legislation exists to guard against racial discrimination in immigration policies and employment, widespread negative attitudes toward asylum seekers, along with discrimination against people from middle eastern and African regions in particular, demonstrate ongoing the xenophobia among Australians (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008). Humanitarian migrants are often the focus of this negativity in the labour market, due to the perception that they are less likely to integrate, and for other reasons such as appearance, name, language ability, and accent (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008).

'Scarring' and COVID-19

New migrants, like young people, have entered a job market impacted by both the economic downturn of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and the end of the mining boom (de Fontenay et al., 2020). Workers in a weak job market are likely to show the pervasive effects of 'scarring.' Scarring occurs when an adverse experience – which is associated with macroeconomic conditions – has negative long-term impacts on the labour market outcomes on workers (Borland, 2020). Most studies have found larger scarring effects for entrants with low levels of education than those with high levels of education – possibly four times larger for those who have not completed high school than for college graduates (Borland, 2020). Workers aged 20-34 experienced nearly zero growth in real wage rates from 2008 to 2018, and workers aged 15-24 experienced a large decline in full-time work and an increase in part-time work (de Fontenay et al., 2020). Furthermore, workers are now less likely to enter the occupation of their choice (what we might call 'meaningful employment'). That is, they are more likely to find jobs in less attractive and lower-paying brackets, and worryingly, poor initial outcomes are likely to have long-term effects on a worker's future labour market outcomes (de Fontenay et al., 2020).

A recent scarring experience has been COVID-19. In thinking about the labour market impacts of COVID-19, we must consider the impacts on those seeking to enter the labour market, and who face a considerably more difficult time gaining employment (Borland, 2020). The casualisation of the



workforce and the emergence of the gig economy in high income countries disproportionately affect people from CALD backgrounds (Public Health England, 2020). In addition to providing some form of employment, trends towards casualisation and the gig economy offer some benefits and opportunities, such as flexibility while studying and the opportunity to refine employment interests and preferences through firsthand, paid experience (Bowman et al., 2015). However, these trends come with significant drawbacks and inequities, including little job security, underemployment, poor conditions, and, for those in low-waged and low-skilled employment, few prospects of moving into better-paid work or of gaining the benefits of permanent or secure employment (McDowell & Christopherson, 2009). These unenviable conditions are brought into sharp relief and exacerbated by economic shocks, including that occasioned by a pandemic.

In Australia, COVID-19 created a decrease in the demand for labour at an unprecedented scale and speed; among the adult population, the total hours worked decreased by 9.5 percent in one month, from March to April (Borland, 2020). Consumer-facing roles—such as in retail, hospitality, events, fitness, and entertainment industries—were negatively impacted by COVID-19, due to loss of hours or employment, and potential ineligibility for JobKeeper, the Federal Government’s monetary scheme to enable longer-term employees maintain a formal connection with their (eligible) employer (Atkins et al., 2020). Worryingly, young women are much more likely than men to report losing their job due to COVID-19 (Carson et al., 2020; Kabátek, 2020). The effects among young women are likely due to the greater representation in the industries directly impacted by COVID-19, and to their increased caring responsibilities during the pandemic, leading to a possible ‘she-cession’ (Carson et al., 2020).

Networks and Social Capital


An individual’s context (i.e., life circumstances) includes factors that affect their employment. A third (33%) of all new immigrants to Australia reported experiencing difficulties finding their first job, reflecting a number of the above key difficulties experienced by new and emerging communities (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021):

- a lack of Australian work experience or references (65%);
- a lack of local contacts or networks (29%); and
- language difficulties (25%).

However, among recent migrants who have had a job since arrival, almost half (48%) received some form of help to find their first job, most commonly from friends or family (69%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021). That is, personal connections and networks are instrumental for connecting migrants and refugees to job opportunities and information about the labour market (George & Chaze, 2009; Nunn et al., 2014). Yet, not all individuals from new and emerging communities are likely to have extensive networks.

Local work experience and networks are associated with human capital. Hence, a focus solely on skills or qualifications can obscure the relevance of other important forms of capital, such as access to social and occupational networks (Bowman et al., 2019). One’s upbringing, neighbourhood, household income during childhood, and countless other factors impact the opportunities, economic resources, and social networks and knowledge to which one has access (Bottrell & Armstrong, 2007). These are important components of human capital that are, in turn, crucial to the attainment of meaningful and sustained employment (Bowman et al., 2019). Thus, it is important to note that the distribution of human capital and opportunities for human capital development are not distributed evenly across geography or socioeconomic status; people from households and neighbourhoods of low socioeconomic status often have fewer opportunities to develop their human capital, and thus experience more difficult transitions to employment (Bowman et al., 2019).

Lack of human capital disproportionately affects migrant women. Indeed, women often have less access to influential people, thereby leading to fewer or lower-paying job opportunities (George & Chaze, 2009). According to the latest ABS data, women who are recent migrants and temporary residents had a higher unemployment rate than their male counterparts (8.3% vs 3.9%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021). A study of South Asian newcomer women in Toronto found that two kinds of capital: pre-existing capital and self-created capital (George & Chaze, 2009). Pre-existing informal and formal capital facilitated the newcomers’ settlement by providing information,



orientation, resources, or actual employment (George & Chaze, 2009). Self-created capital, however, offered opportunities for these women to find more appropriate jobs that were in line with their areas of expertise (George & Chaze, 2009). The latter form of capital was developed by building networks through volunteer work, hobby classes, or co-op programs, and these women put considerably more effort into developing this type of capital (George & Chaze, 2009). A caveat to the study is that the subjects of the study could speak English and were mostly well educated, as more than half had university degrees (George & Chaze, 2009).

EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Purpose

This Evaluation sought to determine the worth and value of the projects, with a strong focus on the experience of the participants and the impact of the projects on their lives, as well as documenting the process of designing and implementing the program.

The Centre for Social Impact UWA (CSI UWA) was contracted by MMRC to develop an Evaluation Plan and conduct the Outcomes Evaluation for the MED Project. CSI developed processes and procedures to assist MMRC to track the evolution and delivery of the program for the Process Evaluation. Upon completion of the program CSI UWA was subsequently asked to conduct the Process Evaluation alongside the Outcomes Evaluation and integrate all the findings into one final Evaluation Report (this report).

For the Stream 1 Collective Enterprise North and South projects the Outcome Evaluation aims to capture the extent to which participants gained:

- Australian work experience;
- English language competency;
- Applied skills and knowledge;
- Employment vision and pathways; and
- Social connections and increased confidence through their participation in the program.

For Stream 2, CSI UWA will look at the participant experience of being in the program, and report on evidence of outcome indicators, around the following:

- Enhanced occupational competencies;
- Australian self-employment experience;
- Self-employment clarity and pathways.

Key Evaluation Questions

Process Evaluation Questions for Stream 1 and 2:

The following questions guided the Process Evaluation:

- To what extent did the program recruit the intended target audience?
- How was the pre-NEIS training program adapted to assist the target audience?(only NEIS program)
- Were program activities implemented as intended? What needed to be modified and why?
- Which project activities were most successful? Why, and why not?
- How did COVID-19 influence program delivery?
- How satisfied were participants with the project?

Outcomes Evaluation Questions:

The following were the key Outcomes Evaluation questions for Stream 1: Collective Enterprise North and South:

- To what extent has the project enabled participants to gain Australian work experience that can help them in their journey to employment?
- To what extent did participants improve their English language competency as a result of participation in this project?
- To what extent has the project given participants applied skills and knowledge that can help them in their journey to employment?
- To what extent has the project given participants greater clarity around employment vision and pathways?
- To what extent has the project improved participants' social connections and given them increased confidence?
- What is the overall impact of the project on the participants?

The following were the key Outcomes Evaluation questions for Stream 2: NEIS Individual Enterprise:

- How effective were program modifications in supporting participants to develop a Business Plan and participate in the NEIS program?
- To what extent did the program enable participants to enhance their occupational competencies?
- To what extent did the program give participants greater clarity around self-employment and alternative employment pathways?
- To what extent has the program improved participants' social connections and given them increased confidence?
- What is the overall impact of this program on the participants?

Data Sources and Collection

Table 1: Data sources

Data sources	Description
MED Project administrative data	MMRC records MF records BF records Outcomes tracking template
Survey findings	2 rounds of surveys on the Qualtrics online survey platform delivered by CSI

Focus group findings	2 focus groups per site conducted by CSI
Interviews	Several interviews conducted by CSI with key stakeholders
Evaluation meeting notes	Meeting notes documenting the evolution of the program
DSS Data Exchange (DEX)	Government database documenting key demographic and assessment scores pertaining to the program participants
Activity Work Plan Reports (AWP)	Quarterly reports documenting key changes, adaptations and good news stories relating to the program delivery
The Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)	Pre- and post-program surveys on core skills. Assessments conducted by North Metropolitan TAFE staff

Methodology

The evaluation for the MEDP was designed as a mixed-methods evaluation, comprised of both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods, as presented in Table 1.

Project Administrative Data

A number of administrative records were used to track participant trajectories through the program. The various project partners kept attendance records and records on the types of activities delivered. This data was analysed to inform the evaluation. CSI UWA designed a Process Evaluation Recording Document to help the project partners identify and capture relevant data.



Surveys

Two end of program surveys were designed by CSI corresponding with Phase 1 and Phase 2 (COVID extension) of the program. Round 1 surveys were delivered in July and August 2020 and Round 2 surveys were conducted in March 2021. The surveys were delivered on the Qualtrics online platform. The surveys were structured around the key evaluation questions and captured participants' perception of the program and feedback on various program elements.

The survey response was varied across sites, as seen in Table 2, which presents the combined data of Round 1 and Round 2. The Stream 1 North Metropolitan project had the highest participation rate (94%). For this project interpreters were used, where needed, to help participants complete the survey. Stream 1 World Music Café had the next highest participation rate (30%). As will be discussed in the report, this project had a different participation and engagement model which may explain the lower survey participation rates. The Stream 2 NEIS project had the lowest survey participation rates (16%). It is important, therefore, to be mindful of these participation rates when making inferences from the survey results presented in this report. Nevertheless, when considered next to the other data sources, such as focus group findings, the survey results can help to answer the evaluation questions and provide evidence of program impact.

Table 2: Number of participants and respondents, per stream

Stream	Number of participants	Number of responses (total)	Participation rate
Stream 1 North Metropolitan	53	50	94%
Stream 1 World Music Café (South Metropolitan)	44	13	30%
Stream 2 NEIS	58	9	16%
Total	155	72	

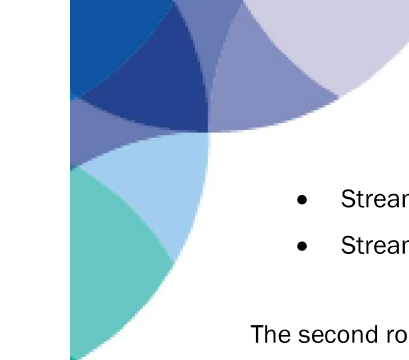
Source: administrative data

Focus Groups

As with the survey, there were two rounds of focus groups held for each cohort. Questions at the focus groups revolved around the key evaluation questions (see Section 0), but provided a relaxed environment in which discussion could evolve to centre on other aspects of the program. This method allowed for a broader range of data, including feedback on areas not assessed in the survey. It also provided valuable personal insight into the impact of the program on individual participants.

The first round of focus groups were held in June 2020, following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions in Perth:

- Stream 1 North on 8 June 2020, with 13 participants. The Northern focus groups employed the assistance of Arabic and Burmese bilingual workers.

- 
- Stream 1 South on 15 June 2020, with 5 participants.
 - Stream 2 on 22 June 2020, with 7 participants.

The second round of focus groups was held in March 2021:

- Stream 1 North on 8 March 2021, with 10 participants. The Northern focus groups employed the assistance of Arabic/Farsi and Burmese bilingual workers.
- Stream 1 South on 10 March 2021, with 5 participants.
- Stream 2 (NEIS) on 11 March 2021, with 4 participants. This focus group was facilitated via the Zoom platform.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders across the various projects across the duration of the program to determine how the interventions were progressing. Interviews were recorded and notes were taken. Key stakeholders included staff delivering the projects across all sites, as well as key administrative personnel.

Evaluation Meeting Notes


Evaluation meeting notes were taken throughout the duration of the project to track progress. These notes informed the evaluation analysis.

DSS Data Exchange (DEX)

Data Exchange (DEX) is the repository for program performance reporting to the DSS. Program staff upload data onto DEX using predetermined templates. This information can then be synthesised into reports on participants' demographic characteristics and assessment scores. For this evaluation DEX data was used to extract summary demographic data about participants on the Stream 2 NEIS project.

Data Limitations

- **Contractual changes:** CSI were originally contracted to conduct the Outcomes Evaluation for the MEDP program, with MMRC staff documenting and conducting the Process Evaluation. Upon completion of the program, there was a contract variation and CSI were asked to conduct both evaluations. CSI therefore conducted the evaluation based on the data collected by MMRC and supplemented this with additional primary data collection in the form of interviews with key stakeholders post program.
- **Different ways of capturing administrative data:** It is important to note that there was not a consistent approach used to capture administrative data. CSI UWA designed a Process Evaluation Recording Document to help the project partners identify and capture relevant data. Although this template was used, each organisation had its own administrative structures and each project was designed differently. As a result, this evaluation reports on different data across the projects. As far as possible attempts have been made to use comparable data.
- **Low survey responses and survey bias:** As discussed above, participation rates varied across the various projects. Participation was highest in the project with consistent contact with participants and where interpreting support was provided. This variation in survey responses



has a bearing on the analysis of the data across the projects. It is also important to be aware of survey response bias where participants feel obliged to give favourable responses to the survey questions out of gratefulness for the project, or because of their positive feelings towards project staff. The independent nature of the survey was explained to the participants, nevertheless, this has to be taken into account when considering survey findings. This cohort was reluctant to answer some questions and the voluntary nature of the surveys means some data is missing.

- **Low attendance at focus groups:** With the exception of the Stream One North focus groups, attendance was low at the other ones. Although the focus groups provided rich qualitative data, it is important to note that the insights gained were for a subset of the groups. This was mitigated by having open-ended questions in the survey.
- **Challenges using DEX data:** Project partners classified data in different ways when uploading it onto the DEX platform. This data was considered, but for comparability reasons it was decided not to use much of this information for the evaluation.

Presentation of Qualitative Data in Report

Within the report the following coding system was used to denote qualitative evidence:

- Focus groups: (FG) followed by a number (1 or 2) to differentiate the focus groups, and a stream category: North, South or NEIS
- Interviews: the same protocol applies

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical matters were taken into consideration:

- **Informed participation and consent:** The *National Statement for Ethical Conduct in Human Research* states that participant consent must be informed and voluntary. All evaluation participants were provided with Participant Information Sheets outlining the purpose of the evaluation, how the information they provided was going to be used, and the risks and their rights regarding their participation and data. After reading the Participant Information Sheet and having any questions addressed, all participants signed a Participant Consent Form;
- **Privacy and confidentiality:** Participants were assured that no individual would be identified in the reporting of results and that data would be securely stored at CSI UWA;
- **Cultural and social sensitivity:** the evaluation team were briefed on any cultural, gender or social considerations which may have had bearing on the evaluations.



STREAM ONE COLLECTIVE ENTERPRISE: NORTH

Introduction

The Stream One Collective Enterprise Incubator Program North provided culturally-competent business training and support to build the skills, knowledge and confidence of low, or semi-skilled, refugees and migrants while they gained work experience in building a collective enterprise as a group. It was located in the North Metropolitan area based around Balga and Mirrabooka.

Theory of Action

The Theory of Action (Figure 1) describes the mechanism through which processes are delivered to achieve the desired outcomes. Participants from refugee/migrant backgrounds are offered support to increase their employability and social integration through participation in a collective enterprise that provides business and embedded English language training. Additionally, participants are given case-management support in response to their individual needs. The program enables participants to gain Australian work experience, applied skills and knowledge, employment vision and understanding of alternative employment pathways. Participants also gain improved English language skills, increased social connections and confidence. This enables participants to engage in employment, and/or in education and training leading to work, and have improved community participation. The ultimate goal is for participants to have sustained independence from welfare, and to be socially integrated within the broader society. There are a number of external factors and assumptions underpinning this Theory of Action, such as: eligible people are interested in participating in the program; potential participants will have existing skills to enable an enterprise to be established; on-the-job training is an effective way to build employment pathways and foster social inclusion; and participants remain committed over time.

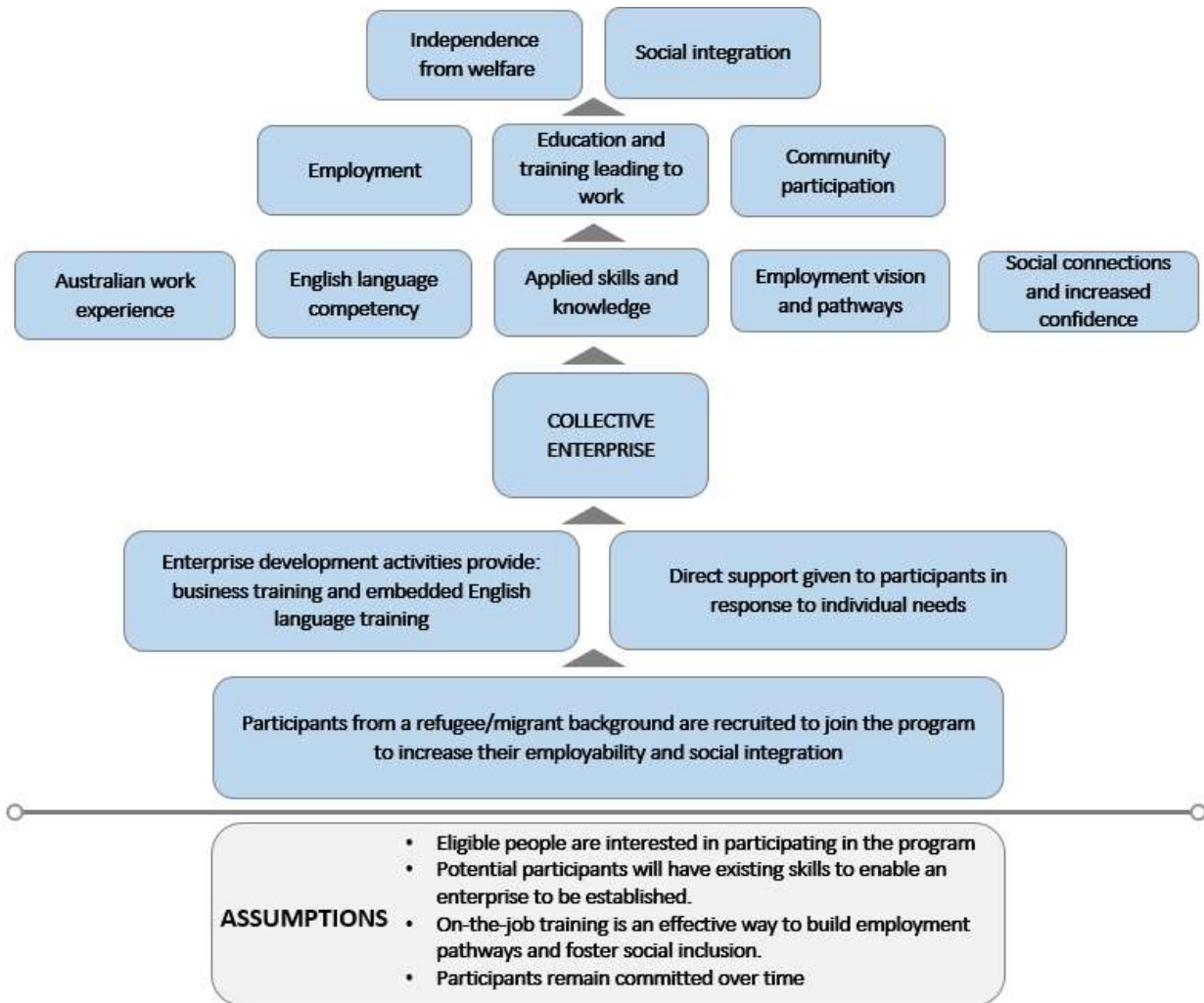


Figure 1: Theory of Change – North Metropolitan Program

Program Model

Figure 2 visually presents the program model which details the program structure and intended impact of the intervention. Through participants' involvement in the program, their participation in the collective enterprise combined with the targeted training provided an environment for learning and acquiring valuable skills and experience. Participants' involvement in the program leads to various outcomes: participants gained Australian work experience; improved their English language competency; acquired applied skills and knowledge; gained employment vision and pathways; and developed social connections and increased confidence. These outcomes are intended to lead to participants' social inclusion and ensure that they are free from dependence on welfare.

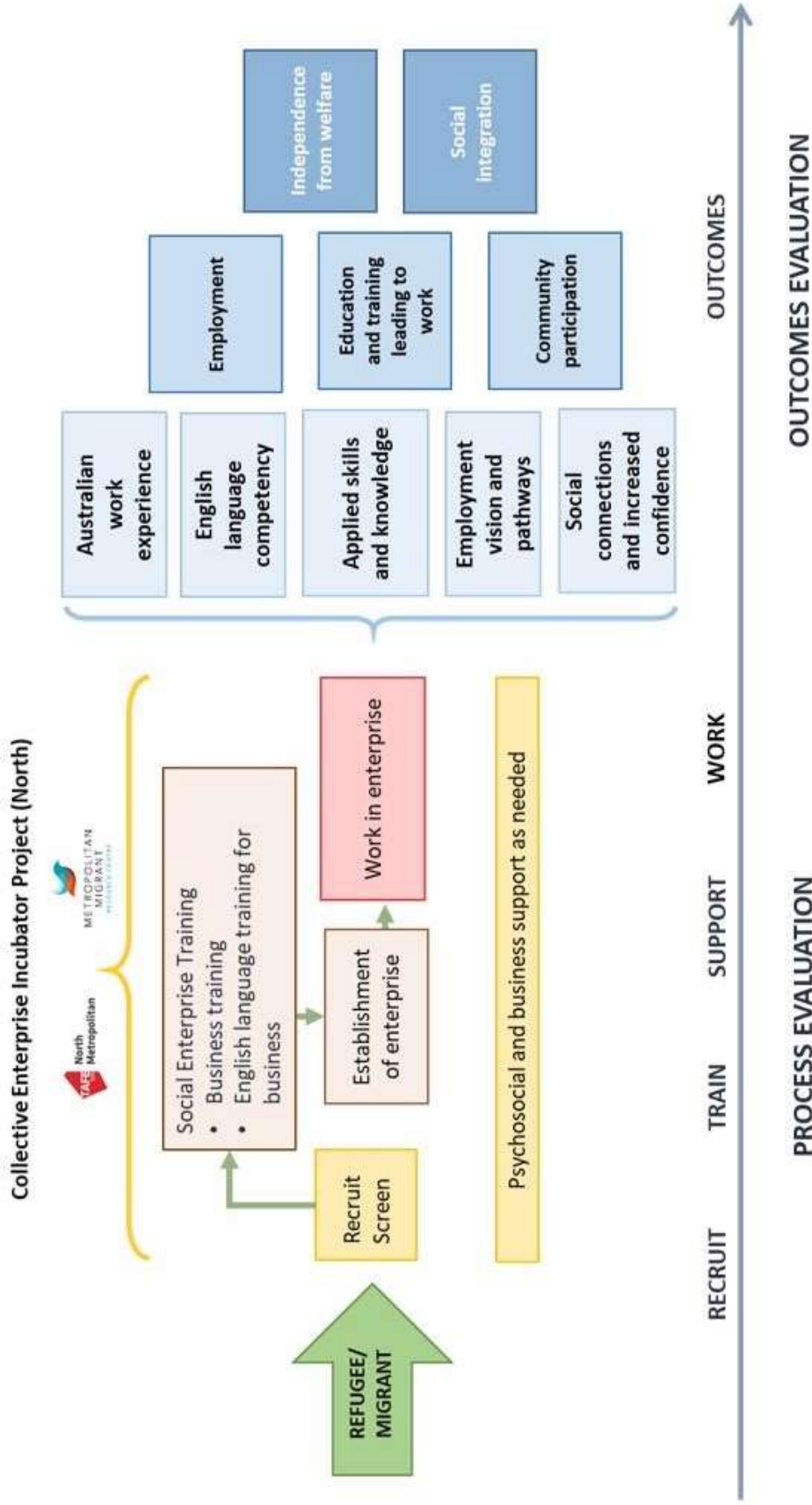


Figure 2: Program Model - Collective Enterprise Stream One (North Metropolitan)

Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Table 3 presents some demographic information of the project participants across the three cohorts that participated in the program. In total there were 55 participants from 15 different countries. The vast majority of the participants (95%) were women and the average age across all cohorts was 38 years. More than half had at least one child under the age of 5 years.

The majority (17) came from Iraq, 9 came from Somalia, 6 from Afghanistan, 5 from Myanmar, 3 came from Lebanon, 3 from Syria, and 3 from Ethiopia, 2 were from Brazil and two from North Sudan, the remaining recipients were made up of one person from China, DRC, Somalia, Palestine, and Tanzania. They spoke eleven different languages with the most common language being Arabic. Most participants have been in Australia for more than five years, but Cohort 3 had 50% of participants who had arrived post 2015. A large proportion of the participants received Centrelink payments.

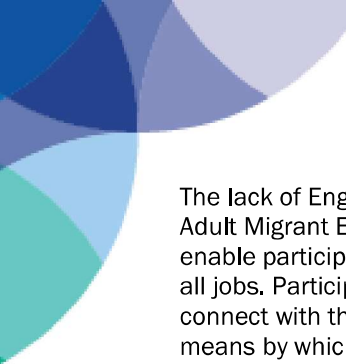
Table 3: Demographic information of participants, Collective Enterprise North

	Cohort One	Cohort Two	Cohort Three	All Cohorts
Total Number	23	16	16	55
Average Age (years)	38	39	37	38
Number of women (%)	100% women	80% women	100% women	95% women
Number of different nationalities (country of origin) in cohort	10	6	5	15
Top countries of origin	9 Somalia 6 Iraq	8 Iraq 3 Lebanon 2 Syria	5 Afghanistan 4 Myanmar 3 Iraq	17 Iraq 9 Somalia 6 Afghanistan
Number of people with more than 1 child under 5 (%)	57%	69%	31%	53%
People receiving Centrelink payments (%)	57%	86%	81%	73%
Number of people who arrived in Australia since 2015 (%)	22%	38%	50%	35%

Source: MMRC program records

Challenges Faced as Migrants and Refugees in Australia

Participants shared their experience of some of the challenges they felt as migrants/refugees in Australia, especially the difficulties encountered trying to gain employment. There is a requirement for applicants for some jobs in Australia to have five years' work experience in Australia to be eligible for some jobs. Participants noted that they could not get work experience related to their fields: '*I worked 21 years in my country as an electrical engineer, but that doesn't count here.*' (FG 2 North). Another participant stated that in Brazil, they had eight years of academic and training experience, but this work experience did not 'count' when searching for a job in Australia.



The lack of English competency was a major obstacle faced by many of the participants. While the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) course offers 500 hours of language classes, these only enable participants to reach a basic level, and this was not enough for participants to be eligible for all jobs. Participants' lack of English skills also caused a barrier when accessing information to connect with their community, including seeking employment. Attaining employment within itself is a means by which participants would be able to connect with their society, but this in turn requires English skills.

For many participants, not having family living nearby to help with young children resulted in young parents, often mothers, having to pause their English studies and careers for at least three years when having a child. Participants recounted that they felt that their unemployment led to discrimination against them.

Cultural differences also affected participants, including discrimination for wearing a headscarf. These cultural differences affected how participants engaged with society: *'I am very shy to speak, in my culture women do not speak up.'* (FG 1 North). Another participant recounted how the cultural differences they faced moving to Australia actually helped them, stating: *'I came from a country that didn't value me. When I came here, I had nothing, and nothing to lose. Australia has given me a future. I am working towards that.'* (FG 1 North).

Program Process

Program Components

Eligibility criteria for the Stream One participants were:

- Refugee or migrant background;
- Aged between 16 and 64;
- Receiving income support or are at risk of welfare dependence or of exclusion from economic participation;
- Have a right to work in Australia.

MMRC was the backbone organisation for this intervention coordinating the recruitment, logistics of training with an external partner (AMEP North Metropolitan TAFE), delivering additional training, and offering psychosocial and business support as needed. The project offered culturally-appropriate enterprise development and small business training alongside embedded English language learning and practical work experience in developing a social enterprise.

The main components of the program were:

- Business training through North Metropolitan TAFE
- English language training (CSWE course)
- Business training through the establishment of social enterprise
- Extra English support (in addition to TAFE CSWE course)
- Individual psychosocial and business support as needed
- Crèche and interpreting support as needed

Program Structure

Participation in the program entailed attending for 2 school terms (over 20 weeks) with 3 sessions per week for 4 hours per session (of which 12 hours per week were in class and 2 hours were distance learning). In addition to those requirements, it was optional to attend for a further 2 terms for one session per week. This included online training and work experience in food or craft markets (in Mirrabooka or Nollamara Markets).

Venues

Training took place in the North Metropolitan TAFE premises. The Balga TAFE training room and crèche facilities were secured at reduced cost for the duration of the project. Practical training was carried out in the commercial kitchens of the Herb Graham Community Centre. Sudbury Community House crèche facilities were also used. These venues are central and well known by the community. The venues were therefore highly suitable.

Recruitment

MMRC held a number of information sessions where potential participants were invited to hear about the Stream One and Stream Two programs (see Figure 3). Participants were told about the various projects and they were assessed as to which project would be most suitable for them. Generally, unless they had a clear idea about a business they wanted to set up, they were directed to Stream One.

Most recruitment occurred as a result of marketing and promotion by MMRC, and word of mouth once the program commenced. Referrals from community leaders increased as the program progressed. Staff working on the project (bilingual works and crèche workers) also were instrumental in recruiting participants through word of mouth.

As part of the program design, it had been envisaged that participant recruitment would come from referrals from jobactive providers in order to ensure recruitment of participants with refugee/CaLD background in receipt of Centrelink benefits. However, this did not eventuate. Although initially some jobactive providers arranged for participation in the program as fulfilling mutual obligation requirements, this was not communicated to all consultants and on a number of occasions participants had their Centrelink payments cut off when the participants were engaged in MED Project activities. This was identified as an ongoing problem across all the projects in the program. As the program progressed there were a number of adaptations made to improve the delivery of the project.




Figure 3: Promotional material for the Collective Enterprise

Cohort Characteristics:

Cohort 1 (2019) – 23 participants were recruited made up of participants from diverse cultures and speaking several languages (Arabic, Somali, Kurdish). Two bilingual workers were needed as the average English level proficiency was very low. Participants in this cohort had a shared business idea (food industry) which resulted in improvements to the program delivery in terms of speed of the session, cohesion of group, and facilitated the promotion of work experience.

Cohort 2 (2020) – the number of participants was reduced to 16. Participants were predominantly from one language background, however, the level of English proficiency still low requiring the presence of a bilingual worker. Additionally, the participants had different business ideas which added an additional layer of complexity. This cohort was affected by the lockdown during school term 2 (march-June 2020) as participants faced a number of IT barriers.

Cohort 3 (2020 – 2021) – the number of participants was reduced further to 14, made up predominantly from people from 3 languages backgrounds (Arabic, Burmese, Farsi/Dari). The project aimed to give opportunity to the Burmese and Afghani communities that had been on the waiting list.



The group was not interested in food production and had no business interest in common. Participation in the project was cut short as a result of the contract coming to a close. This resulted in participants not being able to gain any practical experience.

All participants signing up to the project remained throughout the duration. There were wait lists for joining the three groups. The majority of participants were female and many had been in Australia for over 5 years. It was acknowledged by project staff that the gender balance and length of stay in Australia was not representative of the overall refugee/CaLD population. Attempts were made to recruit predominantly males to take part in the program for the second intake (Cohort 2), but demand was overwhelmingly from women with very little interest in participation from men. This was the case across all groups in the Stream One North project.

These adaptations show that the project staff were able to learn from the program delivery and modify the recruitment strategy as needed. Cohort size is critical since it determines the quality of attention that can be given to participants. Having the right mix of people from various cultural backgrounds and language groups is also important, especially when English language proficiency is low and bilingual workers are needed to interpret. Matching people with similar business interests is also important in this project since it enabled the right resources and experiences to be delivered.

The multicultural component of the program design was liked because it offered participants an opportunity to improve their listening skills, especially when people had different accents. It enabled them to learn about different cultures, different lives and religions: *'we learned about other cultures and shared our own. We learned to respect each other.'* (FG 2 North). The cultural mix helped participants connect with each other *'the program helped us to understand that we are the same, we have the same dreams and desires and hopes for the future.'* (FG 2 North).

North Metropolitan TAFE Training

The main components of this training were:

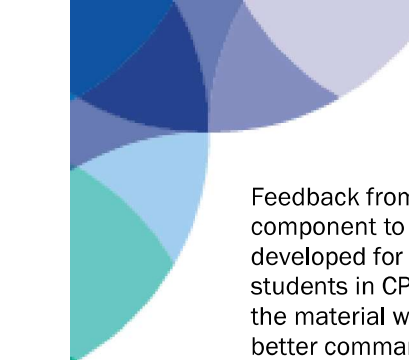
- Business training
- English language proficiency

North Metropolitan TAFE (NMTAFE) Adult Migrant English (AMEP) staff developed a tailored program based on their START (start-up) small business training course which includes accredited units in both Certificate in Spoken and Written English and small business. Participants worked on 'START!' a workbook published by NMTAFE and funded by Department of Education and Training. Through the course, participants covered eight steps to launching a small business in Australia. The main focus was not only on the English language for business component but also on computing skills that assist participants in running their current or future business and undertaking their future course. Topics covered included the following Essential Business Skills:

- Financial management and customer service
- Effective communication and negotiation
- Leadership and planning

English language training delivered the nationally accredited Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWEs). Based on the outcomes of the initial assessments, participants were enrolled in four different levels of the CSWEs:

- 10725NAT Course in Preliminary Spoken and Written English (CPSWE)
- 10727NAT Certificate I in Spoken and Written English (CSWE I)
- 10728NAT Certificate II in Spoken and Written English (CSWE II)
- 10729NAT Certificate III in Spoken and Written English (CSWE III)



Feedback from the lecturers reported that they found it challenging to deliver the business training component to students with varying levels of English language competency. The workbook was developed for students with a Certificate II or III English level, as well as with high literacy skills. The students in CPSWE and Certificate I struggled to follow the content and in the process of explaining the material with the help of interpreters, the momentum of the class was interrupted. Those with a better command of English felt that the pace was too slow. Classes for the first cohort had 3 interpreters and an additional teacher who assisted, especially in the computer sessions. This provided the lecturer and students with much needed support.

Lecturers recommended that ideally the business training component of the MED Project should be modified according to language level. Should this not be feasible then screening and recruitment should select participants with English skills at CSWE III levels or above.

Lecturers were very competent and were able to adapt and modify the material as required to suit the target audience. Participants gave positive feedback on the quality of the learning experience, with all participants stating that lecturers met all expectations or exceeded expectations.

The following observation was made by one of the lecturers, highlighting their observations of the benefit of the intervention: *'As a lecturer, I am very satisfied with the participants' progress. They have made very good progress. Though all the staff involved have had to be quite flexible, it is certain that the participants have benefited from the course, in that they can socialise with others, learn about business while improving their language, learning and numeracy skills, and also undertake some work experience as part of the course to be able to get back into the work force. Therefore, the program has been very rewarding to the lecturer and beneficial to the participants.'* (TAFE lecturer feedback October 2019).

MMRC Training

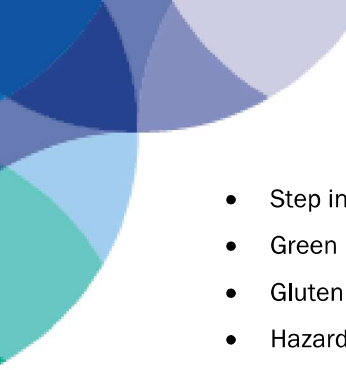
MMRC provided training in the following areas with the assistance of bilingual workers where necessary. In many cases the course materials were developed and delivered in house. Topics covered included online training and information sessions.

The following online training sessions were delivered with the assistance of bilingual workers:

- [I'M ALERT Food Safety - City of Stirling:](#)
- All About Allergens for General Food Service
- AHA Hospitality and Tourism COVID 19 Hygiene Course
- AHA Hospitality and Tourism COVID 19 Hygiene Officer
- AHA Healthy Mind Menu
- WorkSafe SmartMove

The following information sessions were also held:

- Cultural competence training
- First AID
- Work Health and Safety
- Cultural Competence
- Financial wellbeing
- A Morning with a professional Chef
- Food Business
- Start a Social Enterprise
- Social Media for Small Business

- 
- Step into volunteering
 - Green Business
 - Gluten Free and other allergens
 - Hazards in the kitchen
 - Hospitality, communication and customers services
 - Workstation & Kitchen Ergonomics
 - Stress & Conflict Management in the Workplace
 - The Journey of Australian English
 - Citizenship, Consumer Rights & Human Rights

Training was also given in resume writing and creating a portfolio resume. The project offered extra English teaching support provided by MMRC staff, in addition to the TAFE Certificate II in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) course, through group sessions as well as face-to-face training.

As the program developed the material presented was modified to address the needs of the various cohorts. For example, if the cohort was not interested in the food industry, MMRC removed some of the material relating to this and added new material. Additional material was added around managing stress, financial wellbeing, family and domestic violence issues and regulations around leaving children on their own at home.

Computer training was a cornerstone of the support offered. This was especially valuable since some participants had no computer literacy skills. Although the computer skills taught were rather basic (for example how to read and write emails), for some participants this was incredibly valuable since it addressed a digital literacy need. One participant commented that she was '*like a child learning to stand.*' (FG 2 North) with the computer training she received.

Practical Work Experience

Another important component of the project was creating and coordinating real work experience, for example gaining experience in the food industry by focusing on catering businesses and food/craft markets. The participants experienced and learned practical aspects of running a business:

- **Event catering:** costing and budgeting, timeframes and time management, menu planning, how to take orders, customer services, researching wholesale and retail options in the area, working in a team and sharing responsibilities, prioritising tasks, accessing risks and occupational health and safety matters, costing, setting up tables and food display/presentation, waste and recycle management.
- **Market trading:** costing and budgeting, timeframes and time management, menu planning, how to take orders, customer services, researching wholesale and retail options in the area, working in a team and sharing responsibilities, prioritising tasks, accessing risks and occupational health and safety matters, costing, rules and regulations for traders, application to trade, insurance, planning trading event, creating a check list, operating a till, setting up and packing up stall, food display/presentation, waste and recycling management, sales technics, market research and market testing.

Some practical session were delivered in a commercial kitchen covering topics such as, hygiene, food preparation and hazards. With one of the cohorts (Cohort 1), once the training was completed, the participants worked as a group to develop a commercial catering enterprise called 'Sisters on a Mission' capitalising on the strong cooking skills and catering interest based on their own cuisines which were predominant amongst this cohort.

Participant Feedback on Training Component

The participants stated that they appreciated the staff who helped them through the project since they *'encouraged us to learn with respect.'* (FG 1 North). Consequently, they felt that they had more confidence and felt supported and encouraged. Some participants in this program had previous negative experiences of school and learning: *'I was terrified of school, it was very hard. In this project we are supported by our sisters Michelle and Janete.'* (FG 1 North). In the focus groups participants stressed how competent and compassionate the trainers were and how much they valued their input. Survey findings reveal that overall trainers engaged very well with the class as almost half the responses indicate that expectations were exceeded, as seen in Figure 4.

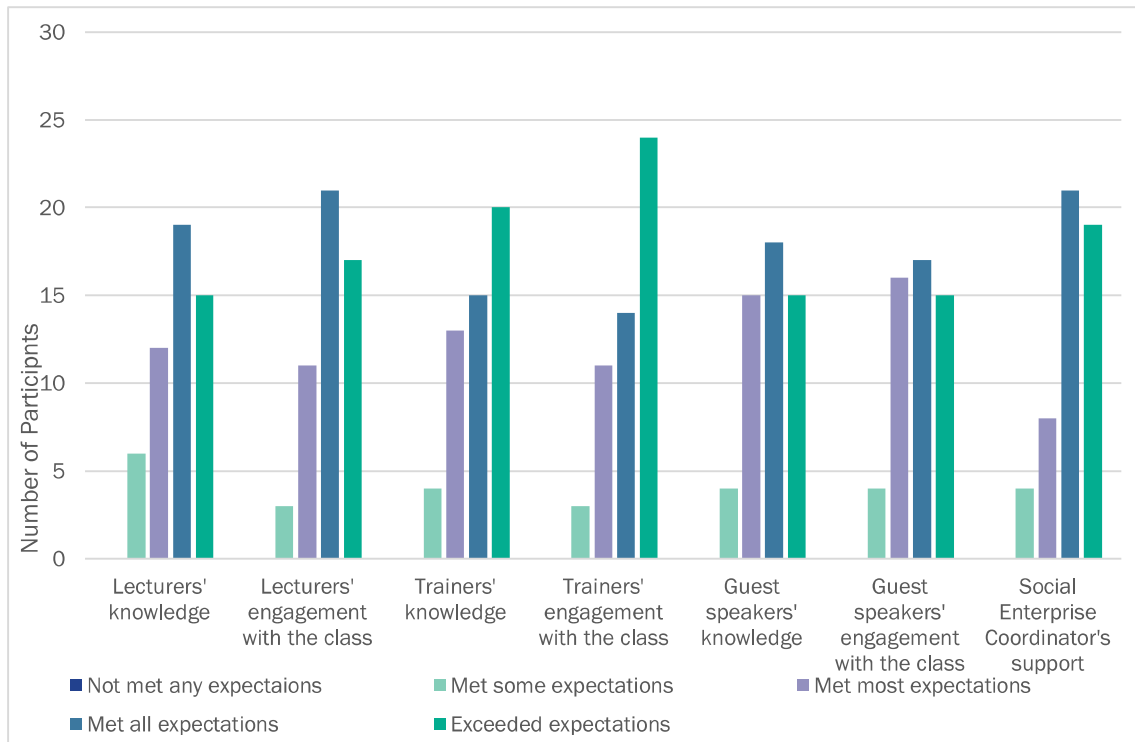


Figure 4: Extent to which course facilitators met participants' expectations – survey findings (n=52)

In the survey participants were asked whether the content of the classes and the pace of the classes met their expectations. As can be seen in Figure 5 overall the responses regarding the pace and context are relatively consistent. The majority of participants felt that their expectations were met or exceeded.

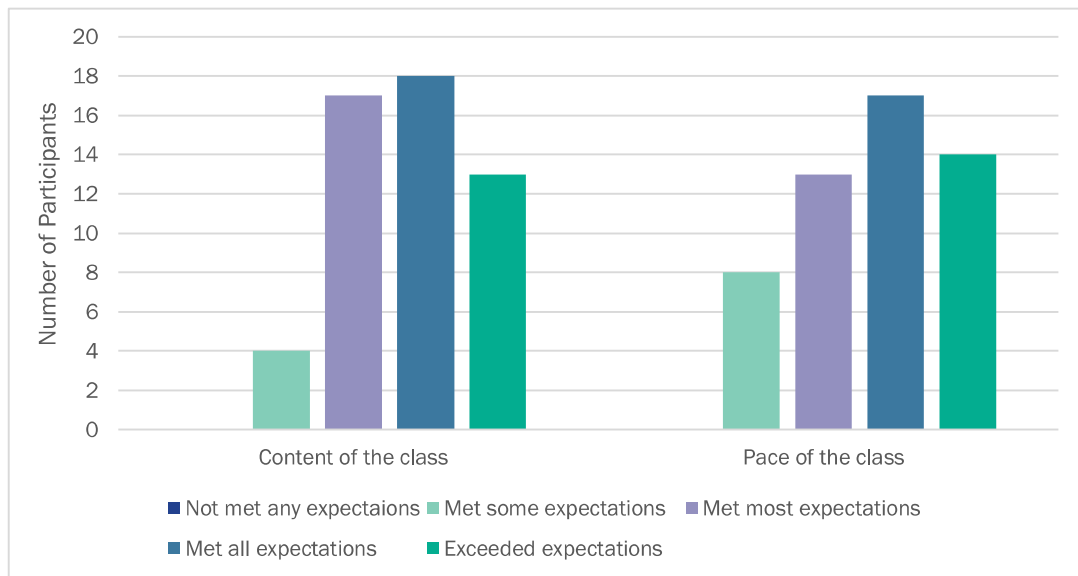


Figure 5: Extent to which class features met participants' expectations – survey findings (n=52)

Participants were also asked what changes they would recommend to the program. The following responses were the most popular:

- More computer literacy training (26% of participants listed this change)
- More practical based training (26% of participants listed this change)
 - Participants voiced that the program should have less theory and more practical components
- More English training (20% of participants listed this change)
 - Includes grammar and confidence in speaking
- Extended training times (8% of participants listed this change)
 - 'Have longer training time to let us digest information & the knowledge learned.' (Survey 1).

Psychosocial and Additional Support

Crèche

This was a significant component of this project and enabled many women with young children to participate 'If we don't have crèche worker it would be hard to participate in the program.' (FG 2 North). Having the crèche helped women to concentrate on the material and engage socially without having to look after their children. Crèche facilities in TAFE Balga were used at first and then there was a switch to another nearby site (Herb Graham Centre) due to capacity constraints. Although this was widely acknowledged by the participants as being very helpful and a deal-breaker for their participation in the program, this component of the MED Project was the most problematic for logistical and cost reasons. Project staff pointed to the need for clear communication channels between all participants in the program as being essential when managing the complexity of arranging child care support.

Interpreting Support

The level of English language skills of the participants was varied, with most having only very basic English language skills at the start of the program. Interpreters were hired to give language support to participants with very low, or no, English language competency. The first cohort had significant need for interpreting support and three bilingual workers were hired to assist the participants with the course content. In addition, participants were given interpreting assistance outside of classroom settings where needed.

Food

MMRC provided participants with breakfast and morning tea. It was understood that food provided an opportunity to socialise and connect with each other. This had to be adjusted as the project progressed due to funding constraints.

Supplies and Targeted Financial Assistance

Participants were provided with notebooks, pencils and USBs. In addition, they were given financial assistance to pay for their TAFE student cards and parking permits. As the program progressed some of this support was not provided due to budget constraints.

Referrals

When a need was identified, MMRC staff referred participants to appropriate service providers. For example, a number of participants had experienced trauma and were in need of counselling support. They were referred by MMRC to the appropriate services.

Advocacy

MMRC staff also acted as advocates for the participants when necessary. An example given was MMRC staff interceding on behalf of one of the participants who had been unfairly treated by a driving school who had refused to refund classes that had been paid for and cancelled by the instructor. The manager of the driving school made racist comments towards the participant who demanded an apology, which was made with MMRC's involvement.

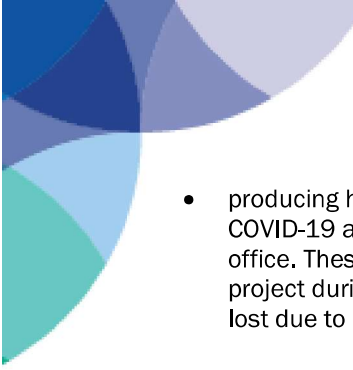
All participants who completed the program gained a certificate and this was greatly valued. In the survey they were asked how important they felt gaining the certificate upon completion was to them. The responses were (n=50):

- Extremely important = 14%
- Very important = 48%
- Important = 32%
- Partly Important = 6%

Impact of COVID-19

While COVID-19 period presented particular challenges including the cessation of classroom-based teaching at the Balga NM TAFE campus, MMRC responded by providing innovative solutions to address these challenges including through the following:

- existing social media platforms familiar to many clients, such as 'WhatsApp', were used to communicate and disseminate teaching materials. With this transition to a digital learning platform, MMRC have also created a closed YouTube channel as well as create an online place for clients unfamiliar with the websites to use safely and with confidence.
- production of video teaching sessions which were then recorded and telecast to participants on the closed Facebook group and closed YouTube channel
- one-on-one sessions at MMRC for particular clients who do not have access to computers and the internet

- 
- producing hard copies of teaching session notes, booklets, slideshows and facts sheets (e.g. COVID-19 and R U OK) which were made available for all clients to collect from the MMRC office. These measures proved effective in ensuring participants remained connected with the project during the COVID-19 period and minimised the gap in content and teaching that has been lost due to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020 on classroom based face-to-face classes.

Key Learning on Program Delivery

The Project Facilitator identified a number of key learnings relating to the program delivery:

- The mixed language and ability levels of the various participants created a number of challenges. The courses had to be run in a simple way to cater for the participants with the lowest skill sets. It would have been good to have been able to divide the classes into ability, since then those with higher competencies could have progressed faster.
- Classes which had several bilingual workers could only progress slowly because of the challenges of ensuring all the language groups understood the material.
- The project would have benefitted from having more financial support and to have been delivered over a longer period.
- Although there was a lot of collaboration between organisations, the project would have benefitted from having clearer lines of communication between the project partners and clarification on roles and responsibilities.
- The adaptations made to the program delivery ensured that project participants could remain engaged and participate in the program.
- Case worker support meant that participants were able to address any challenges they were experiencing and receive prompt referrals, where needed.

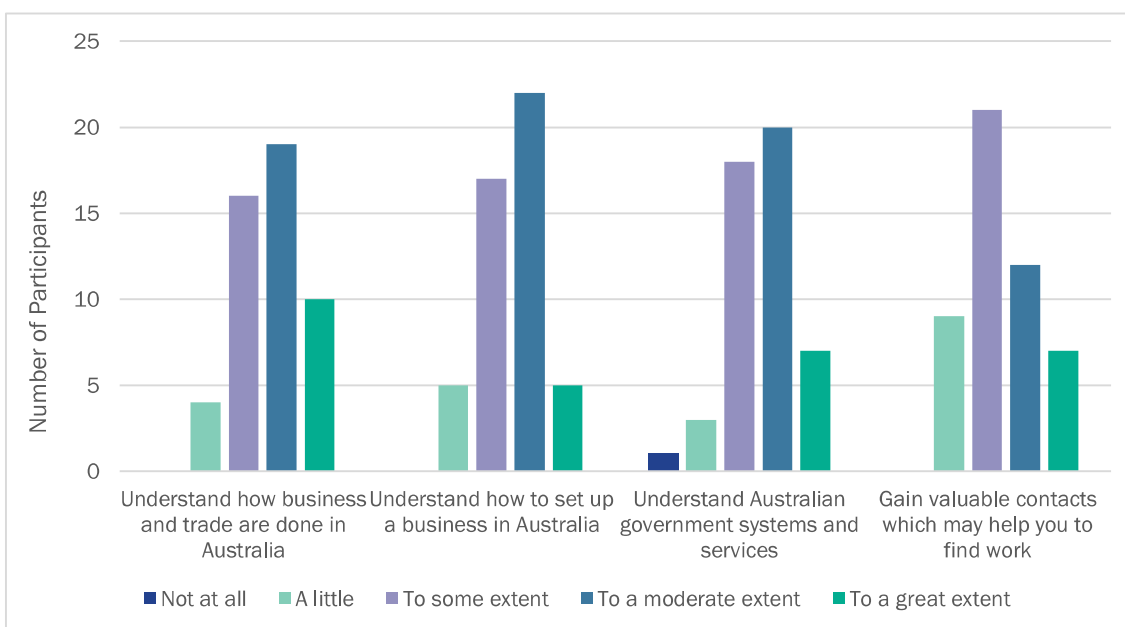
Program Outcomes

Australian Work Experience

Participants in the focus groups highlighted their lack of Australian work experience as one of the biggest barriers to them joining the workforce, despite their relevant experience in other countries. The structure of the program itself was centred around the theory and basics of business: tax, insurance, and employee obligations. While participants valued this training and knowledge, there was a general consensus that topics were covered at a generic level and there was not sufficient applied training. Participants uniformly expressed the desire to have undertaken some work experience or apprenticeships as a part of the program, which would have given them Australian work experience to have on their resumes following the program. Furthermore, there was discrepancy in participants' feedback on the pace of the program, with some participants expressing that they wished they had had more training in English and business, and others expressing that the pace of the program was too fast. This reflects the participants' varying skills. The general consensus was that the program was helpful in giving general information, but not in specific knowledge and work experience.

In the survey, participants were asked whether the project helped them understand the context of working in Australia. Figure 6 shows that most participants believed that the program helped them better understand how to work in Australia to some extent, to a moderate extent or to a great extent.

Figure 6: Extent to which material regarding Australian work experience met participants' expectation – survey findings (n=49)



These findings show that the program has enhanced their knowledge, and understanding of: how business and trade are done in Australia; how to set up a business in Australia; and how government systems and services operate. Additionally, most participants felt that they had gained valuable contacts that could help them find work in Australia.

English Language Competency

Many of the participants in the Northern cohort were recent arrivals to Australia, with varied English skills. While many were aware of the Government-sponsored AMEP language program, not all were able to take it. Those that did enrol in the AMEP course explained that it is taught in a more traditional format, with a structure which focuses first on the alphabet and numbers before advancing to conversation. Many participants who did not attend this course could not for a variety of reasons, but mostly due to their childcare obligations. Therefore, it was highly beneficial for all

participants that embedded English language training was included in the program in a more social environment alongside the adaptation of the TAFE – ‘START’ small business program. Participants’ vocabulary was expanded and their confidence in speaking improved through the teaching format of ‘lessons as conversation’, a confidence which impacted the participants’ lives outside the program: ‘When I go to pick up my kids from kindy I can now mix with the other parents. That is fantastic.’ (FG 2 North). Another participant also noted that it was important for her to have gained the skills to be able to communicate in case of an emergency: ‘My son was my motivation to participate and improve. If something happened to him I have to be able to communicate.’ (FG 2 North).

The English component of the program made a big difference to many of the participants. In the focus group, one stated: ‘before the program my English was 1%, now it is 40%.’ (FG 1 North). Participants felt like the program gave them the freedom to improve their English in a supportive environment that celebrated their individual and collective achievements. There was also an increase in confidence, with one participant saying that the program taught her to speak louder and overcome her shyness.

The discrepancy in English skills was identified as a hindrance for some of the participants with higher level of English competency. They expressed that they would have liked to have extended their language skills, but due to the lower levels of some of the participants this could not happen.

In the survey participants were asked the extent to which the program helped their English language competency. As can be seen in Figure 7, most participants stated that they had improved their English comprehension and their spoken English to some extent or to a moderate extent. In addition, they reported having improved confidence speaking English.

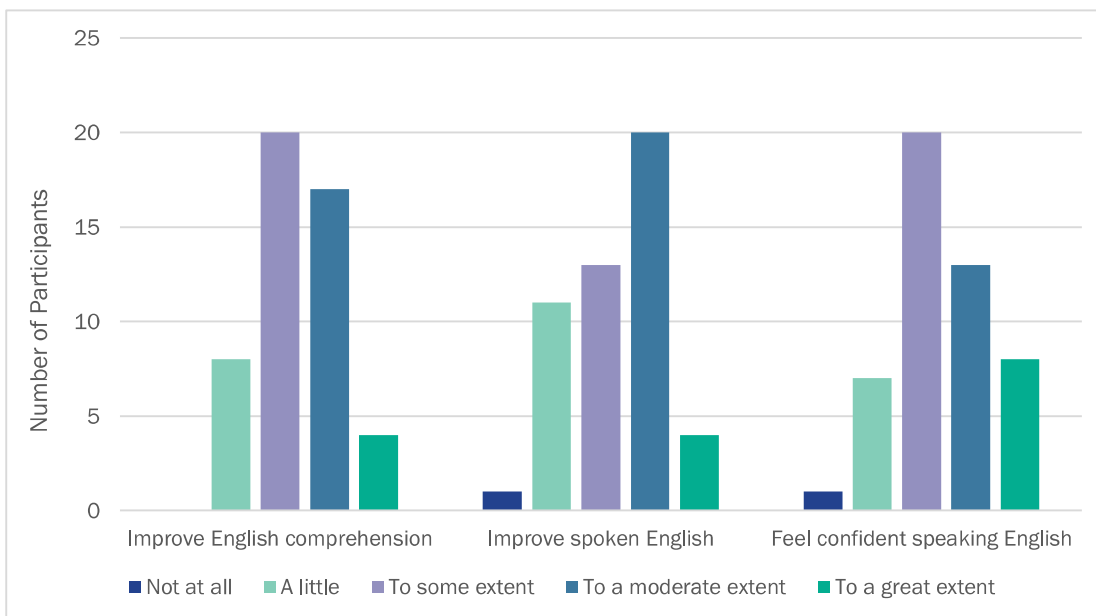


Figure 7: Extent to which their English language competency had improved (n=49)

Assessments of Change in Core Skills Pre- and Post- Intervention

As part of the intervention, participants in the program were assessed on their core skills by North Metropolitan TAFE staff using the Australian Core Skills Framework.

What is the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)?

The Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) is commonly used as national reference point for assessing performance levels in five core skill areas:

- Learning
- Reading
- Writing
- Oral Communication
- Numeracy

There are a number of skills levels ranging from PLA (lowest) through to PLB 5 (highest).

The following analysis presents the results of the pre- and post- program assessments across the 5 cores skills areas.

Learning

Figure 8 shows the changes in learning competencies (Learning 01 and Learning 02) pre- and post-program, whereby the hatched bars denote the assessments conducted pre-program and the solid bars represent the post-program assessments. Across all learning related units the program had positively impacted the capacity for participants to learn. This can be seen with the number of participants assessed at a preliminary level (PLA, PLB) reduced post-program and with a significant increase in the number of participants assessed at a level 2 standard post-program.

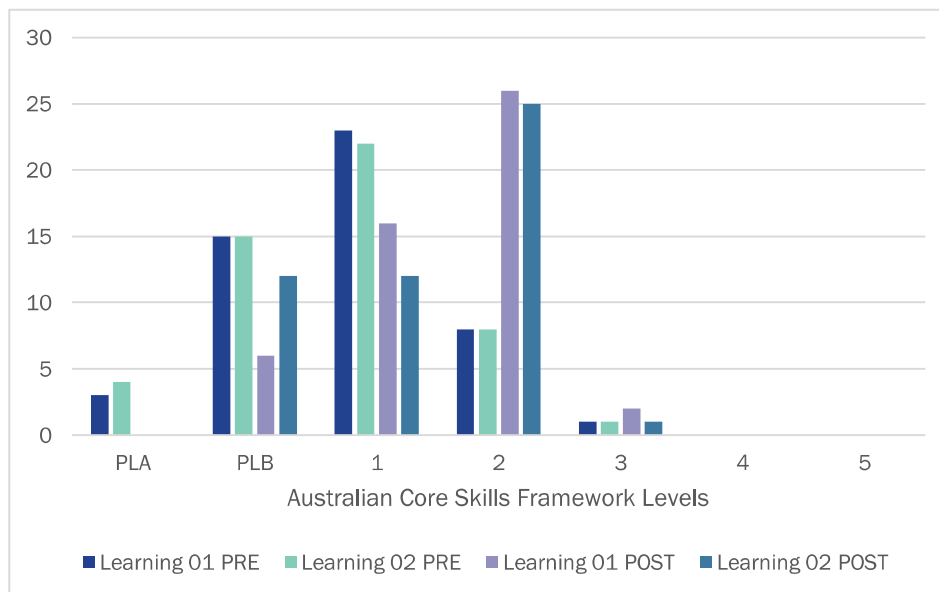


Figure 8: Participant's skill level assessment of learning related units pre- and post- program. Skill levels are based on the Australian Core Skills Framework (n = 50)

Reading

Figure 9 shows the changes in reading competencies (Reading 03 and Reading 04) pre- and post-program, whereby the hatched bars denote the assessments conducted pre-program and the solid bars represent the post-program assessments. Across all reading related units, the program had positively impacted the capacity for participants to read. The number of participants assessed at a preliminary level (PLA and PLB) and level 1 reduced post-program and there was a significant increase in the number of participants assessed at a level 2 standard post-program.

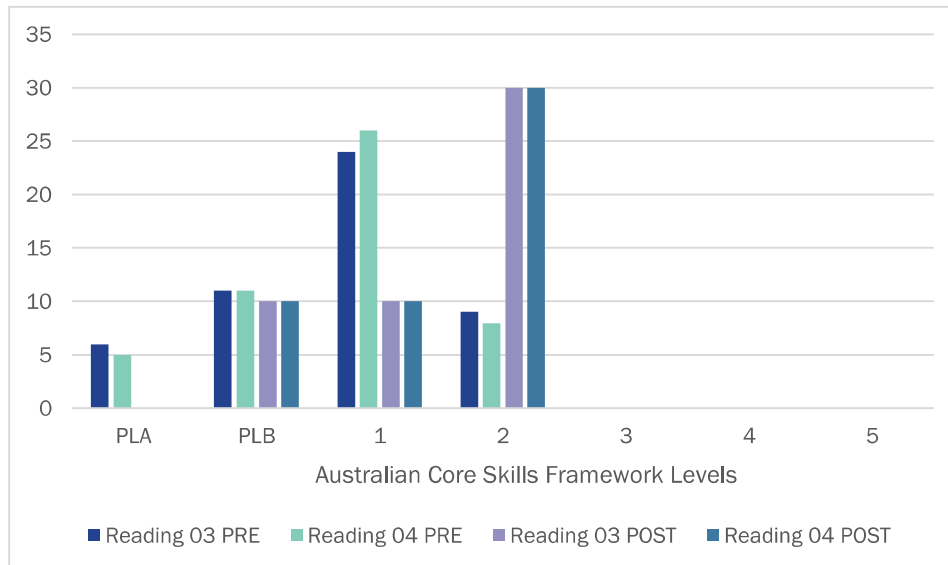


Figure 9: Participant's skill level assessment of reading related units pre- and post-program. Skill levels are based on the Australian Core Skills Framework (n = 50)

Writing

Figure 10 shows the changes in writing competencies (Writing 05 and Writing 06) pre- and post-program, whereby the hatched bars denote the assessments conducted pre-program and the solid bars represent the post-program assessments. Across all writing related units, the program had positively impacted the capacity for participants to enhance writing skills. The number of participants assessed at a preliminary level (PLA and PLB) reduced post-program and there was a significant increase in the number of participants assessed at a level 2 standard post-program.

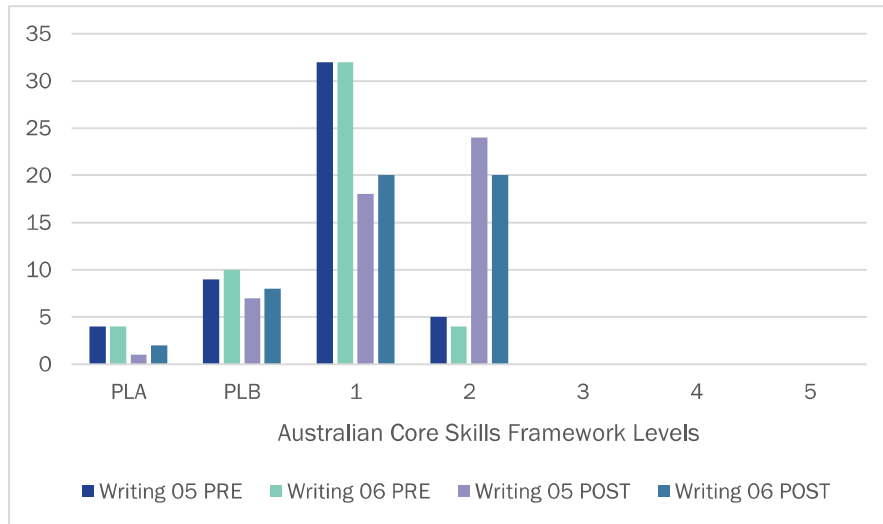


Figure 10: Participant's skill level assessment of writing related units pre- and post-program. Skill levels are based on the Australian Core Skills Framework (n = 50)

Oral Communication

Figure 11 shows the changes in oral communication competencies (Oral Communication 07, Oral Communication 08) pre- and post-program, whereby the hatched bars denote the assessments conducted pre-program and the solid bars represent the post-program assessments. The assessments reveal the development of oral communication skills during the program. The number of participants assessed at a preliminary level (PLA and PLB) and level 1 reduced post-program and there was a significant increase in the number of participants assessed at a level 2 standard post-program. In comparison to other core skill areas, oral communication skills of the participants pre- and post-program were assessed at a relatively higher level (i.e. there were no participants at a PLA level and there were a number of participants with communication skills at level 3).

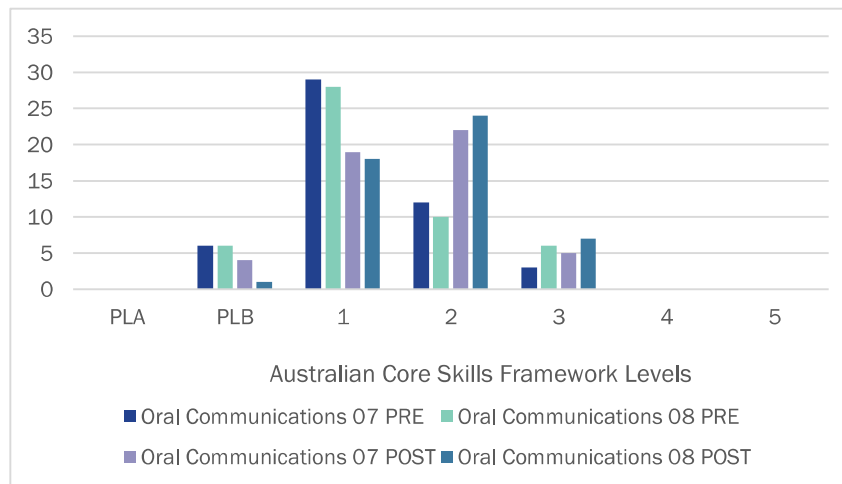


Figure 11: Participant's skill level assessment of oral communication related units pre- and post-program. Skill levels are based on the Australian Core Skills Framework (n = 50)

Numeracy

Figure 12 shows the changes in numeracy competencies (Numeracy 09, Numeracy 10, Numeracy 11) pre- and post-program, whereby the hatched bars denote the assessments conducted pre-program and the solid bars represent the post-program assessments. Across all numeracy related units, the program had positively impacted the capacity for participants to apply and comprehend numerical concepts. The number of participants assessed at a preliminary level (PLA and PLB) reduced post-program and there were no participants assessed at the PLA level post-program. There was a significant increase in the number of participants assessed at a 1 and 2 standard post-program. In comparison to other core skill areas, participants had low ACSF pre-program numeracy scores. However, the post-program assessment highlights the improvement in this area as there is a clear shift towards higher numeracy scores.

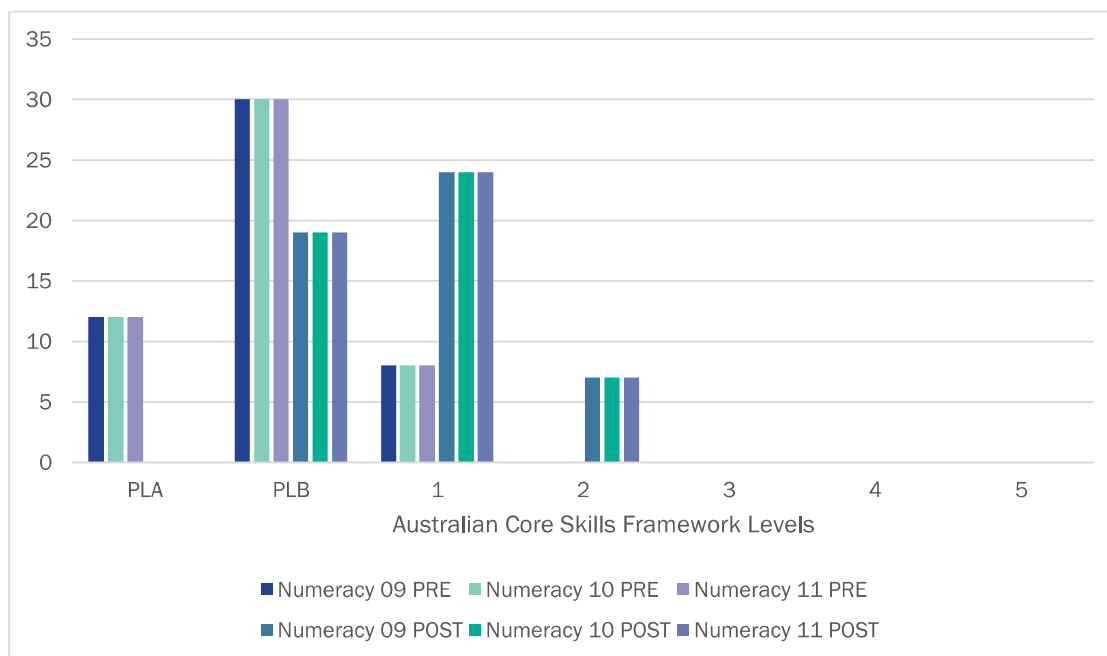


Figure 12: Participant's skill level assessment of numeracy related units pre- and post-program. Skill levels are based on the Australian Core Skills Framework (n = 50)

These assessment results demonstrate a clear improvement of core skills. Improvement in levels of English alone was a great benefit of the program, allowing participants to engage with the broader community and allowing them to pursue other career or educational goals.

Applied Skills and Knowledge

Participants in the North focus group stated that they already had many skills to run their own business, but that the program added to these, teaching them how to collaborate and work as a group and this was valued by many participants. They learnt specific business-related knowledge in areas such as food hygiene, first aid, occupational health and safety, and computer skills, tax returns, ABN and social media.

Participants noted that they learned practical skills such as training on insurance, workers' compensation, food hygiene, first aid, occupational health and safety, and computer skills. The latter was especially valued by many since their skills were low and they realised that much of Australian life is navigated online. Participants noted in the second focus group that they wanted more focus on computer skills. Some participants had no prior computer experience, so although the computer skills taught were very basic (such as writing an email), it was very valuable as it addressed a digital literacy need.

One participant stated that the content was '*important not just for business, but for life.*' (FG 1 North). These skills helped the participants have more confidence. They stated that they created a strong

group which supported each other and did not have jealousy. The program enabled some participants to feel empowered and to better navigate Australian society and pursue employment.

The survey asked participants to reflect on how the project helped them gain applied skills and knowledge that could help them in their journey to gaining employment in Australia. *Figure 13* presents the findings and shows that most participants were able to develop skills for the Australian workplace to some extent, or to a moderate extent. The findings reveal a mixed level of confidence in developing their CV's with a few participants stating that they did not feel at all confident in this. However, this activity was not the primary focus of the project.

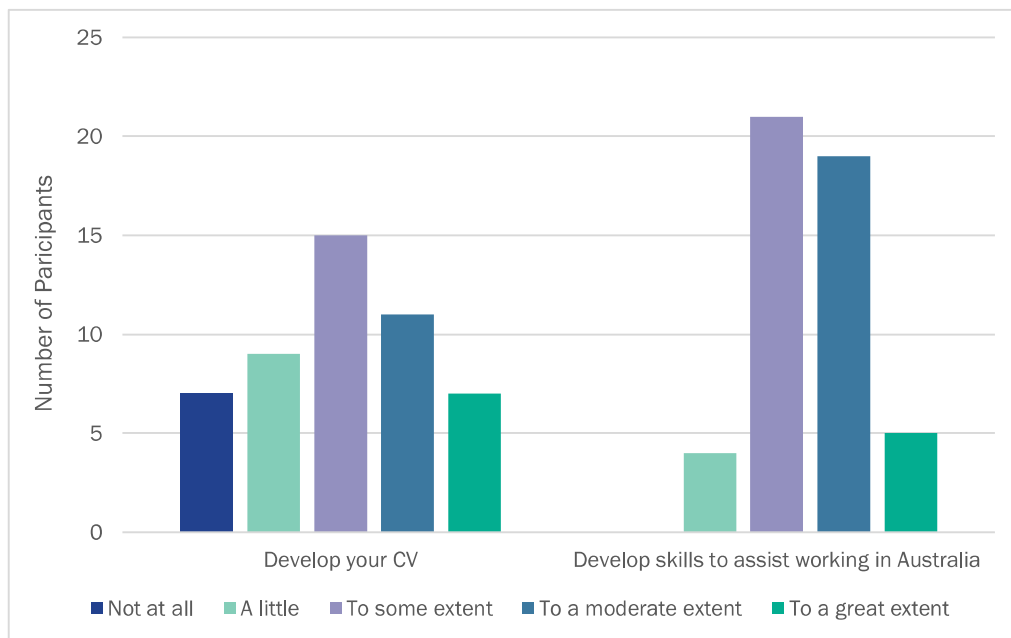


Figure 13: Extent to which program helped participants' gain applied skills and knowledge (n=49)

Employment Vision and Pathways

Participants in the first North Metropolitan focus group stated that they already had many skills to run their own business, but that the program added to these, teaching them how to collaborate and work as a group. This was valued by many participants. Participants in the second focus group mentioned that they had developed a support network made up of the program officers who could assist them in a number of ways, such as acting as a referee in an application letter, providing advice on courses and advice or broader matters as well.

In the focus groups, the employment vision and pathways created by the program were highlighted as a key benefit from the program, with a participant from the Northern cohort stating, '*[the program] expanded my options.*' (FG 1 North). Another stated that as a result of a first aid course they attended, they want to volunteer with the Red Cross. One participant stated that they are confident that they will find work since they now know the rules and basics of doing business in Australia.

The survey asked participants to what extent participation in the project had helped them gain employment vision and a better understanding of alternative pathways.

Figure 14 shows that overwhelmingly that the project has helped participants in this domain.

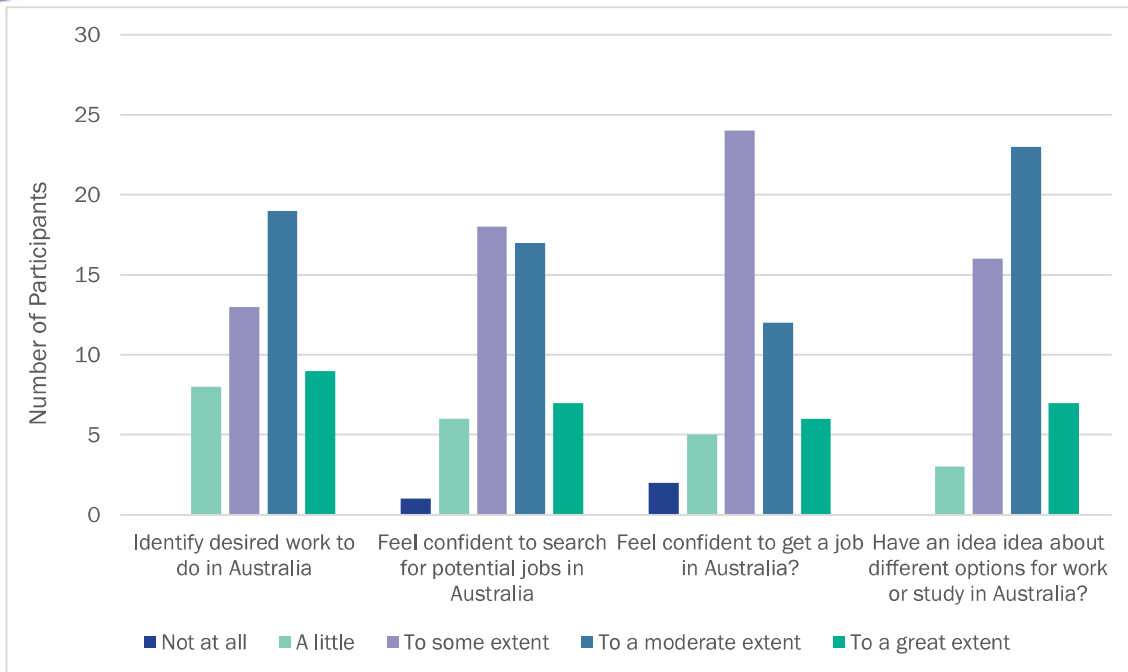


Figure 14: Extent to which program has helped with employment vision and pathways (n=49)

Participants stated that the program helped them identify suitable work or study options that they would like to do in Australia. Most participants also stated that they felt confident to some, a moderate, or a great extent, that they could search for, and attain work in Australia.

The overwhelming majority of respondents said that they would undertake further training or studies in the next twelve months, as seen in Figure 15.

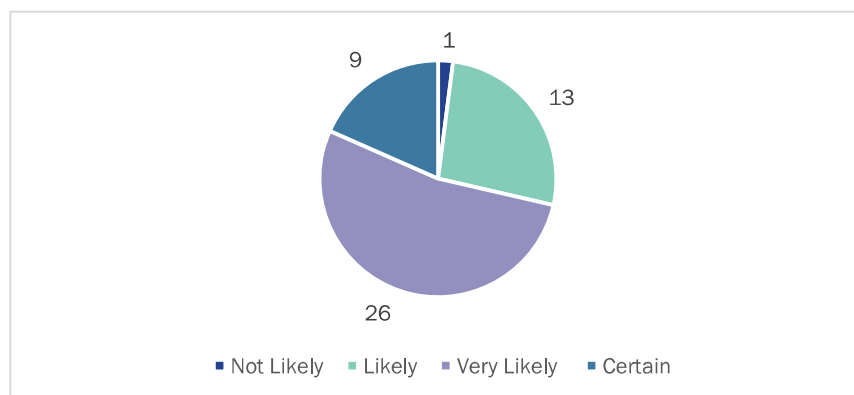


Figure 15: Likelihood of participants undertaking further training or studies in the next twelve months (n=49)

MMRC administrative data shows that of the 53 people who participated in the program, 4 had gone on to part-time work, and 18 had gone on to further education or training, including clients who gone on to do Community Services and Aged Care and English as a Second Language courses.

Social Connections and Increased Confidence

The project had a strong focus on improving social outcomes for the participants. There was a strong social component underpinning the course. Participants in the focus groups highlighted that the program helped them feel more a part of Australian society through gaining experience of work and life outside the home. Some stated that this helped them to define their role and identity within Australia: *'If you want, you can do anything in Australia. You can be anyone you want to be.'* (FG 2 North). For some of the participants, this was especially meaningful and empowering due to their cultural background: *'women and men are not equal in my culture.'* (FG 1 North). Some participants went on to encourage other women in the community to join the program.

As new immigrants to Australia they explained that they wanted to engage in the wider society, but before joining the program they didn't know how to do this. Being part of the program gave them a sense of self-worth and an identity outside of their family circle. One participant stated: *'in the beginning I felt worthless; only bringing up kids. Now I have something else,'* (FG 1 North) with another participant saying, *'before I was just a mum. Now I realise that I am still useful.'* (FG 2 North). Some of the women were proud that they could set an example to their children that they were studying. One woman recounted how her child was proud of what she was doing, boasting: *'My mother is studying in a course!'* (FG 1 North). These statements highlight the frustration that many women feel when they perceive themselves as defined only by their roles as mothers and homemakers. The important work of childrearing is often undervalued by society and this can compound women's feelings of low self-worth and frustration. The project offered an opportunity to explore these ideas and help to reframe their perceptions of themselves.

Participants stated that they enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to learn about different cultures, often done through food tasting. They enjoyed cooking together, and in the process learning from each other and their respective cultures: *'To have a business it's important to know about the different cultures around us.'* (FG 1 North).

Participants' appreciation for the social aspect of the program is reflected in the survey results. As seen in

Figure 16, the majority of participants stated that the program had been beneficial in assisting them to connect with, and feel confident within the community. The program helped participants meet new people, make new friends and connect with the local community. Respondents stated that they felt more confident in the wider community and they felt that they could more actively participate in Australian society. Finally, most participants stated that they were hopeful about their future in Australia.

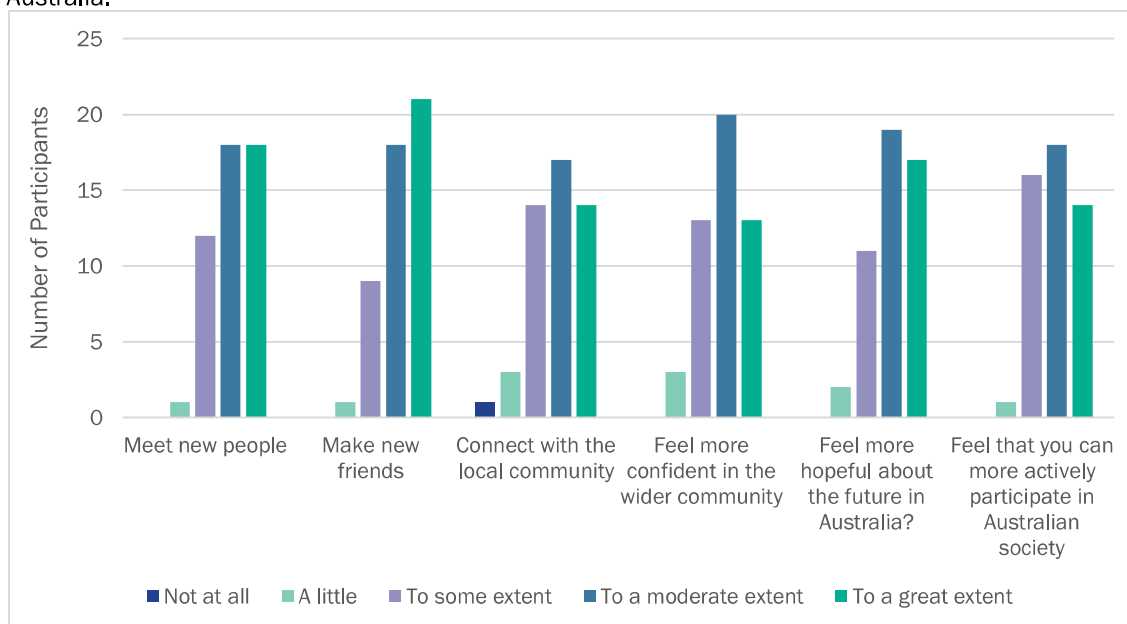




Figure 16: Extent to which program helped with social connections and increased confidence (n=49)



Conclusion

This Process and Outcome Evaluation demonstrates that the Stream 1 North project was effectively delivered and achieved the aims of helping people from refugee and migrant backgrounds acquire skills and competencies in order to better understand the Australian working environment, have improved social connections and increased confidence.

Whilst the program was effective in recruiting the target audience (participants from a refugee or migrant background), more women than men joined the project. Efforts to attract more men were met with little success. It is difficult to know whether this reflects a higher demand for programs such as this one amongst women, or whether men from refugee and migrant backgrounds had no interest in participating in programs like this. In future, a co-design process with a broad range of potential participants would be valuable to tailor the program to demand, interest and skills.

The project was successful in achieving the medium-term outcomes. Participants valued the training they received and felt that it gave them a broad understanding of how to do business in Australia. Many of the skills developed, such as computer skills, were recognised as being valuable not just for employment but for day-to-day functioning as well. There was broad consensus, however, that more applied training and work experience would have been helpful. Nevertheless, participants reported that the project had given them confidence to find work and greater clarity around options for employment and training.

The English training and support was a standout of the project for many participants, many of whom noted an improvement in their personal lives due to greater social connection fostered through improved English competency: *'When I go to pick up my kids from kindy I can now mix with the other parents. That is fantastic.'* (FG 2 North). Those who were more competent in English going into the program, however, typically did not advance at the same rate as those at a lower level. In future, the program would benefit from the ability to have different training levels in order to extend those with higher skills.

A significant benefit of participation in the project were the social connections and increased confidence gained by the participants. Many had reported that as recent migrants they were eager to expand their social networks but were unsure of how to do so. The program created a safe environment where friendships could be made and where they could explore how to participate in the broader Australian society together. For many this offered a sense of wide possibilities: *'if you want, you can do anything in Australia. You can be anyone you want to be.'* (FG 2 North). They all valued the opportunity to get out of the house and meet new people: *'Coming is better than staying at home.'* (FG 2 North). This points to the value that a program such as this one can have on the lives of migrant women, many of whom feel marginalised and alone in their homes.

When asked to outline what they perceived as the most significant impact of the program from their perspective, the Project Facilitator stated that they were able to witness the transformation in the participants firsthand. When they joined the program many of the participants were shy, with little confidence, some did not even meet their gaze. As the program progressed their confidence increased and they gained an *'open attitude to try new experiences.'* (Interview North). The program empowered the participants in two significant ways. It helped them to: *'not dwell on the trauma of the past, but focus on the beauty of where they are now and the possibilities of the future; and it helped them to trust in themselves.'* (Interview North). The social enterprise was the vehicle through which all the other aspects could be addressed: *'I was able to help in their emotional growth, break through the walls that were erected, build relationships of trust. The MED project was there for them.'* (Interview North).

Participants expressed that the project had been very beneficial to them, especially in providing applied English language training and giving them social connections and confidence. Many expressed that they would like to see the program continue into the future: *'I think projects like these are very beneficial for the participants that take part and I hope it can continue to help and uplift other participants to take part in the wider community.'* (Survey 1 North).



STREAM ONE COLLECTIVE ENTERPRISE: SOUTH

The Stream One Collective Enterprise Incubator Program South provided culturally-competent business training and support to build the skills, knowledge and confidence of refugees and migrants while they gained work experience in building a collective enterprise as a group. Training was given in the Southern suburbs of Perth around Southern River and Thornlie.

The South Metropolitan Collective Enterprise followed a similar model to the North Metropolitan program, with the distinction that the social enterprise was created through collaboration between the MED Project staff and participants at the start of the program. The MED Project staff worked alongside participants to determine the needs of the cohort, co-designing the program. The result of this process was a social enterprise entitled the World Music Café (WMC). This program allowed participants to develop business skills, English language proficiency, events management and hospitality skills through practical hands-on experience creating, coordinating and delivering the World Music Café public events. Participants were supported by the MED Project staff throughout the program.

Theory of Action

The Theory of Action (*Figure 17*) describes the mechanism through which processes are delivered to achieve the desired outcomes. Participants from refugee/migrant backgrounds are offered support to increase their employability and social integration through participation in a collective enterprise, the World Music Café. The project provides participants with events management and hospitality skills and experience, business development training and embedded English language training. Alongside classroom-based activities, participants gain real-world experience through hosting 'Dinner and Show' multicultural supper club events under the 'World Music Café' banner. Additionally, participants are given case-management support in response to their individual needs. Through participation in the project, participants gain Australian work experience, applied skills and knowledge, employment vision and understanding of alternative employment pathways. Participants also gain improved English language skills, increased social connections and confidence. This project enables participants to engage in a viable enterprise, pursue alternative employment, and/or in education and training leading to work, and have improved community participation. The ultimate goal is for participants to have sustained independence from welfare, and to be socially integrated within the broader society. There are a number of external factors and assumptions underpinning this Theory of Action, such as: eligible people are interested in participating in the program; potential participants will have existing skills to enable an enterprise to be established; on-the-job training is an effective way to build employment pathways and foster social inclusion; and participants remain committed over time.

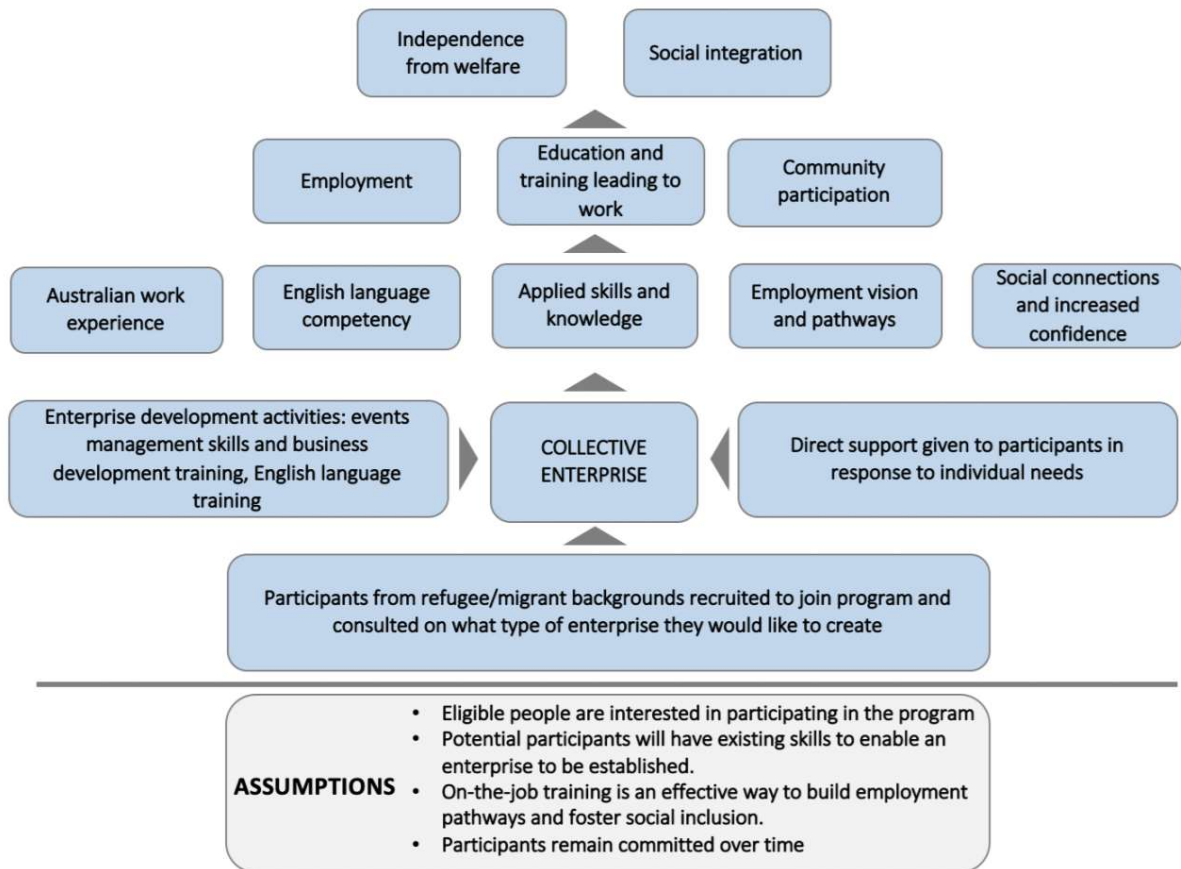


Figure 17: Theory of Change – South Metropolitan Program

Program Model

Figure 18 visually presents the program model which details the program structure and intended outcomes of the intervention. Participants were recruited to the program and received training framed around the World Music Café social enterprise. Their participation in the collective enterprise, combined with the targeted training, provided an environment for learning and acquiring valuable skills and experience. Participants' involvement in the program lead to various outcomes: participants gained Australian work experience; improved their English language competency; acquired applied skills and knowledge; gained employment vision and pathways; and developed social connections and increased confidence. These outcomes are intended to lead to participants' social inclusion and ensure that they are free from dependence on welfare. .

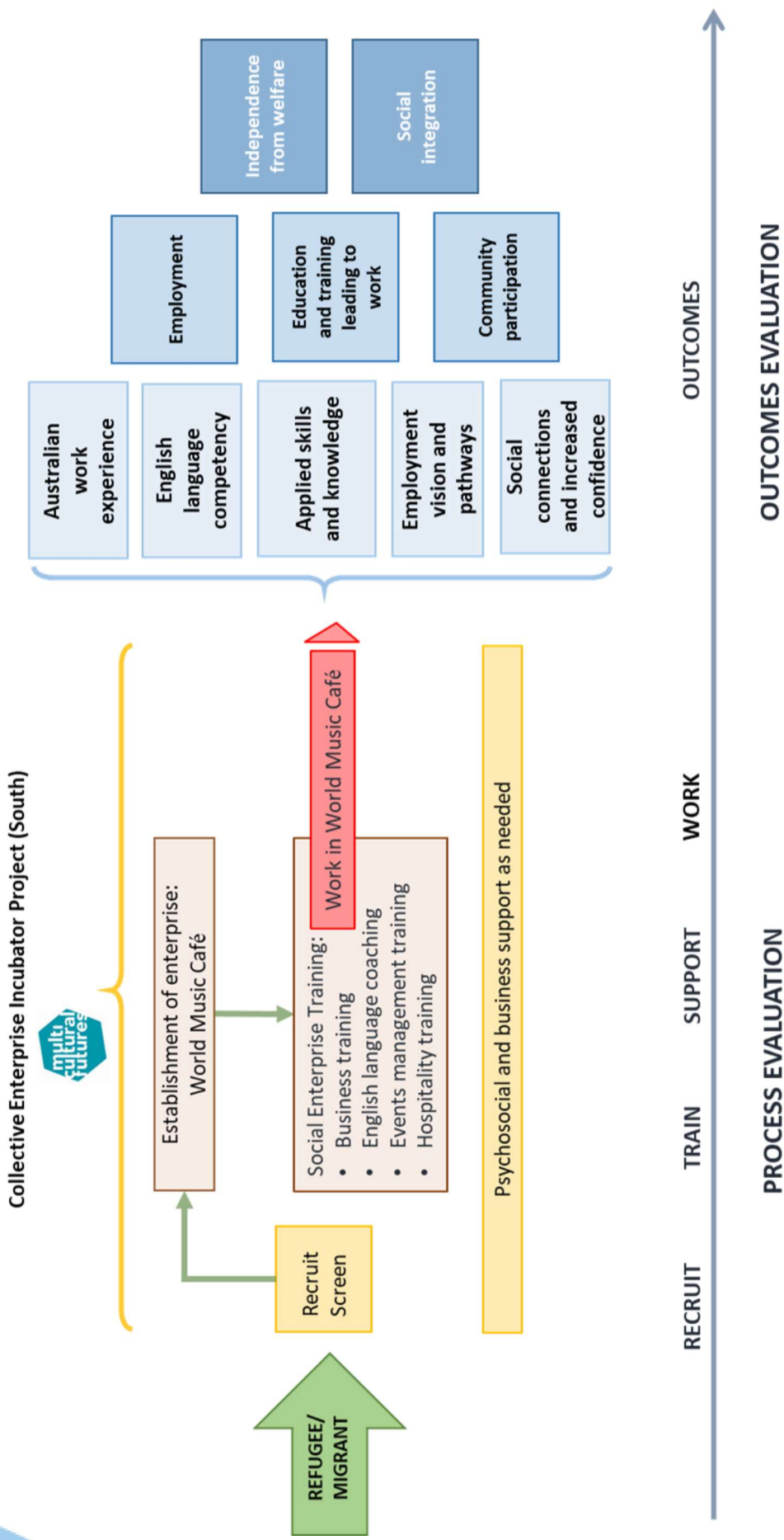
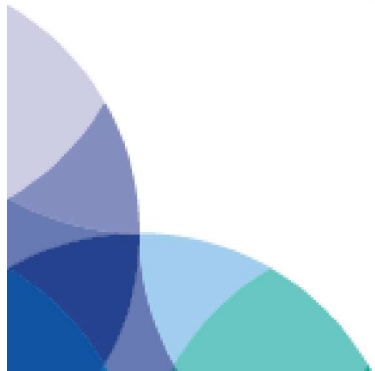


Figure 18: Program Model – Collective Enterprise Stream One (South Metropolitan)

Demographic Breakdown of Participants

Table 4 presents some demographic information of the project participants. In total, there were 44 participants from 20 different countries. The vast majority of the participants (86%) were women and the average age was 33 years. In this program, some participants had children, both young and older than five years of age, but none had more than one child under 5 years of age.

The top countries represented were Afghanistan (14), China (6) and Lebanon (3). A small proportion of the participants received Centrelink payments (16%), however, this may be a result of a reluctance to provide this information in the surveys. Most of the participants had been in Australia less than 5 years (77%)


Table 4: Demographic information of participants, Collective Enterprise South

Demographic information of participants	
Total Number	44
Average Age (years)	33
Number of women (%)	86% women
Number of different nationalities (country of origin) in cohort	20
Top countries of origin	14 Afghanistan 6 China 3 Lebanon
Number of people with more than 1 child under 5 (%)	0%
People receiving Centrelink payments (%)	16%
Number of people who arrived in Australia since 2015 (%)	77%

Source: MF program records

Challenges Faced as Migrants and Refugees in Australia

Participants in the focus group discussed some of the challenges they face as refugees and migrants in Australia. They expressed the difficulties they faced trying to gain employment. They stated that without Australian work experience they do not have confidence to apply for work. Some participants stated that they ask themselves 'Will I be able to be good enough? Can I be one of them?' (FG 2 South). Although some participants were highly qualified (for example, professional musicians and



accountants) their certifications were not recognised in Australia. Some were unfamiliar with the process of going about getting a job: 'In my country I didn't need a CV and work experience. Everyone knew me.' (FG 1 South). Language was seen as a particular barrier that had to be addressed before they could be considered 'good enough' to get work (FG 1 South).

Some stated that it was difficult to assimilate into Australian society. One young woman who arrived in Australia from Africa stated that when she arrived she felt overwhelmed and did not know what the social rules were. She feared that she would not integrate within the broader society and would never be able to work with people from different cultural backgrounds. She struggled to understand the body language of the mainstream society.

Institutional and systemic racism was also highlighted as being problematic for some. One woman explained that when she experienced abuse from her husband she left him and went to a refuge. However, when she tried to get support from the Department of Human Services she was told 'you came to Australia just to get benefits.' (FG 2 South). This made her feel very exposed and vulnerable. Additionally, being the only black woman in many of the classes she took at TAFE made her acutely aware of the 'us and them' dialogue around her. She thinks she may be hyper-sensitive because she has experienced racism so often and finds that people do it so covertly and may not even realise that they are being racist.

Another young woman came to Australia as a refugee from Afghanistan. Arriving in Australia with her family, she found everything different. Life was difficult for her. Although she was never directly insulted for being a headscarf-wearing Muslim woman, she senses that she is different to the mainstream and was fearful of engaging with people from different cultures.

Program Process

Program Development

Eligibility criteria for the Stream One participants were:

- Refugee or migrant background;
- Aged between 16 and 64;
- Receiving income support or are at risk of welfare dependence or of exclusion from economic participation;
- Have a right to work in Australia.

The establishment of the project by Multicultural Futures (MF) (the lead service delivery organisation) was slightly delayed in the Southern Metropolitan area because of contract signing delays with the Department of Social Services. Once this was finalised attention turned to establishing a social enterprise as the vehicle for the delivery of the project. Multicultural community consultation meetings were coordinated, using their extensive contacts, to gain direct community input into co-creating a valuable social enterprise experience with a practical purpose for the participants. This consultation phase was important and established a respectful relationship between the facilitator and the initial participants. It also included gaining feedback from experienced industry professionals, relevant to the participants' collective enterprise interests, to ensure the planned social enterprise had realistic ambitions and genuine potential for business success. Some of the community's initial social enterprise ideas, such as a mainstream catering business, were discounted upon the advice of the experienced industry professionals, since they were deemed to be unviable.

Based upon the experts' advice, and the skills and expertise of the MF staff, the concept of a 'World Music Café' multicultural supper club/events business was selected in July 2019. The training program was then designed accordingly based on the skills required and the specialist tutors and teaching staff were selected and contracted. An administrative challenge faced was that the partnership budget for the Collective Enterprise South was not finalised until September 2019 making event planning for the Collective Enterprise South program very difficult. The first WMC event was held in September 2019, seven weeks after the first day of training began, and very motivating for the participants having to create and market a real industry event so quickly.



Program Structure

At the start of the project training was initially delivered as one full day a week for the duration of the 8-week term. As the program progressed and the training venue moved to the local TAFE facilities, the program was offered as a half a day session in the afternoons, two days a week. The project was delivered through the following components:

- Business, event management and hospitality training in a classroom setting
- Event management and hospitality experience through the delivery of ticketed World Music Café 'Dinner & Show' events to the public.
- Producing an online WMC tv-magazine style show in response to the COVID-19 lockdown directives (from April – July 2020)

In total the project ran over seven terms, from July 2019 to the close of the project in March 2021. At the time of writing this report, World Music Café is continuing its ongoing successful operations after the completion of the MED Project. Participation in this project was more fluid than the other MED Projects. Whilst the training material was repeated each term, it became more complex as participants gained more practical experience and knowledge through the work experience opportunities. The event management practical experience component of the program continued as the project progressed. Therefore, participation in the program was not linear. Some participants attended the business training during one term only, others attended a number of terms. Many continued being engaged in working on the WMC events throughout the duration of the project, but did not attend thematically repeated training sessions during the week.

Venues

For the initial stage of the project (Term 1) the training was held at the Amherst Village Community Centre in Southern River. After one term, the training delivery moved to the AMEP classroom facilities at South Metropolitan TAFE at Thornlie, which was beneficial for attracting new participants to the MED Project. However, the facilities were only available in the afternoons after 2 pm, which clashed with school pick-up times and limited the number of parent participants that could commit to the training schedule of two afternoons per week.

Practical hospitality training was also held at a closed café in Roleystone in the southeast hills area of Perth. The many WMC events were held at different venues across the south of Perth. Whilst this was beneficial for gaining new customers and marketing the WMC events, there were added transportation challenges as many of the participants do not drive and Ubers had to be ordered, which added to the costs.


Recruitment

Recruitment of participants was initially done through the extensive MF multicultural network channels. Some participants were initially hesitant to commit to the voluntary WMC training until they understood the benefits of the social enterprise project. Once the benefits were evident, others joined through word of mouth.

Moving to TAFE in Term 2 and rescheduling the training to two afternoon sessions each week was beneficial for attracting new migrant AMEP students. Recruitment was done by visiting AMEP classes and speaking directly to potential participants. As this recruitment strategy evolved, participants in the project were invited to speak to the AMEP classes and endorse the project and explain the benefits of participation. This was the most successful recruitment strategy. Externally recruited participants were all willing to come to the TAFE campus for training.

It had been expected that jobactive providers would refer suitable participants to the project, but as with the northern MED Project, this did not eventuate. It was discussed that there was little interest in cooperating with the MED Project since the direct benefit of participation was not understood, despite there being much discussion and explanation with key people. This remained an ongoing issue throughout the life of the project and a missed opportunity for jobactive providers.

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The Project Facilitator stated that it was challenging to keep some participants engaged if they did not commit to volunteering at the WMC events on weekends or in the evenings and see the practical outcome of the events training.

Duration in Project

There were 44 active participants registered in the project between July 2019 and December 2020. Table 5 shows the number of terms attended by the participants. Approximately half of all participants attended one term. The figure falls away as the number of terms increase.

Table 5: Participation in the program- number of terms attended

Number of terms attended	Number	Percentage
1	21	48%
2	11	25%
3	6	14%
4	3	7%
7	3	7%

At the end of this period, fourteen participants were ongoing, 25 had withdrawn, and an additional five had withdrawn but were open to assisting with WMC events (see Table 6).

Table 6: Participation in the program – status upon program completion

Outcome	Number
Ongoing	14
Withdrawn	30 (5 willing to assist at WMC events)
Total	44

The reasons for withdrawing varied with some participants listing multiple reasons. By grouping the reasons thematically, the main reasons for withdrawing fell into seven main categories, as seen in Table 7. The main reason stated by participants for withdrawing from the project was 'work' (a third of all participants). Studying and family reasons were also cited by many participants. It is interesting to note that one of the participants changed from this project to the NEIS project. This is to be expected since the nature of the project assumes that as people get trained and gain new skills they will go off and get employment, or pursue more target training elsewhere. As stated by the Project Facilitator, the engagement in the social enterprise for many participants is 'a transitional thing' and is to be expected (Interview South).

Table 7: Reasons for withdrawal from the project

Reason for withdrawal	Number	Percentage
Work	10	33.3%
Studying and work	3	10%
Family	3	10%
Pregnancy/new baby	3	10%
Studying	2	6.7%

Changed to different stream	1	3.3%
Moved out of area	1	3.3%
N/A	7	23.3%
Total	30	100%

Most of the participants were undertaking some form of studying upon withdrawal from the project. Table 8 shows that the majority (22) were studying only AMEP, four were studying both AMEP and a TAFE course, one participant was studying TAFE, and three were studying at university.

Table 8: Place of study or further training

Studying	Number
AMEP	22
AMEP/TAFE	4
TAFE	1
University	3
N/A	14

Training

The aim of the enterprise was to cover three main elements of experiential learning:

4. Develop employability skills, or transferable work skills, such as teamwork, communication skills, problem solving, initiative, planning and organising, decision making, and self-management;
5. Provide local industry work experience and references; and
6. Build social, community and industry connections.

Many of the participants in the Southern cohort had existing skills, educational qualifications, and English language competency. Therefore, the program was adaptable and encouraged participants to develop their skills through the enterprise, which necessitated a different program structure than the Northern cohort. For example, participants with filmmaking skills were given specific job duties and responsibilities to create social media clips as part of the marketing team. Other participants with strong cooking skills formed the WMC kitchen team that planned the menus and prepared the catering. The World Music Café enterprise hosted public ticketed events on weekend evenings and on Sunday afternoons depending on the venue location and target market, showcasing multicultural music and dance featuring both professional and community participants. Generally, the training participants did not perform at the events, although several participants did provide some quality performances in hip hop, Jamaican dance and classical cello. Mostly participants were responsible for all other aspects of the event management, including catering, event planning, marketing, front-of-house, customer service, photography, filmmaking, and MC duties.

Training Component

The training component of the project was developed according to the social enterprise that emerged, the needs of the participants and the skills of the project officers. The project was able to leverage the skillsets of the staff who had extensive event and arts management business experience. They were able to tap into their networks to quickly and effectively create training and mentoring programs whilst establishing a social enterprise to pull it all together.

The in-class training component covered all aspects of:

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- Social enterprise principles, collective enterprise goal setting
- Event management, project management skills
- Business planning, entrepreneurial mindset
- Marketing, branding, audience development
- Financial planning, budgeting
- Funding, grants, sponsorship, donations
- Occupational Safety and Health, risk management
- Catering enterprise skills, food safety
- Production management, event logistics
- Customer service and hospitality skills
- Artist management, contracts, legal compliance

The teaching staff and trainers included:

- Event management trainer and social enterprise facilitator
- English Language Trainer and support worker, Guest industry trainers and speakers on a range of topics such as OHS, risk management, employability skills, resume writing, business entrepreneurial skills. Hospitality and barista skills trainer, catering skills mentor
- TV production consultant (when the events training shifted to an online TV show during the COVID-19 lockdown)

Practical Work Experience

A key component of this project was the practical work experience offered through the World Music Café events. In total, there were 10 WMC events delivered over 18 months from September 2019 to March 2021:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|--|
| • Term 1 Aug-Sept 2019 | 1 event | Gosnells Bowling Club |
| • Term 2 Oct- Dec 2019 | 2 events | Amherst Village Community Centre |
| • Term 3 Feb-April 2020 | 0 events | COVID-19 lockdown from March 2020 |
| • Term 4 May-July 2020 | 1 'event' | Online TV-magazine WMC Show |
| • Term 5 Aug-Sept 2020 | 3 events | Roleystone café concert (2), Kidogo Arthouse |
| • Term 6 Oct – Dec 2020 | 1 event | Roleystone café concert |
| • Term 7 Feb-Mar 2021 | 2 events | Corporate booking (2) Harmony Week functions |

Apart from making the TV-magazine WMC Show in response to the COVID-19 lockdown restricting live events in 2020, all the above bookings were public functions relying on ticket sales from the general public or corporate booking fees. This created an authentic business transaction experience for the participants that was an integral part of the real business development training.

Another beneficial factor of developing ticketed public events was that the ticket-purchasing public that came to the WMC shows wanted to support the initiative and were very positive towards the participants and their collective efforts. This created a very positive experience for the participants when interacting with the public and boosted their confidence, English language skills and motivation for the practical work experience.

Participant Feedback on Training Delivery

Focus group feedback stated that the input from the various lecturers and invited guests was very useful, providing the participants with targeted insights, skills and support. Participants stated that they valued the variety of experiences and opportunities that the program offered. An example given was the opportunity that was provided to some participants to be interviewed for the TV program and that this challenged them and extended their skills.

This specialised training helped the participants to understand the cultural context of mainstream Australian society and gave the participants practical tools to help them navigate everyday life. An example of this was the cultural awareness course that was part of the hospitality training, which taught participants about body language, hand shaking, and eye contact. This was very well received and gave participants confidence in how to interact with the broader community members.

In the survey participants were asked to what extent features of the training program met their expectations.

Figure 19 shows that for those who responded to the survey (8 responses), the content and pace of the program met or exceeded their expectations.

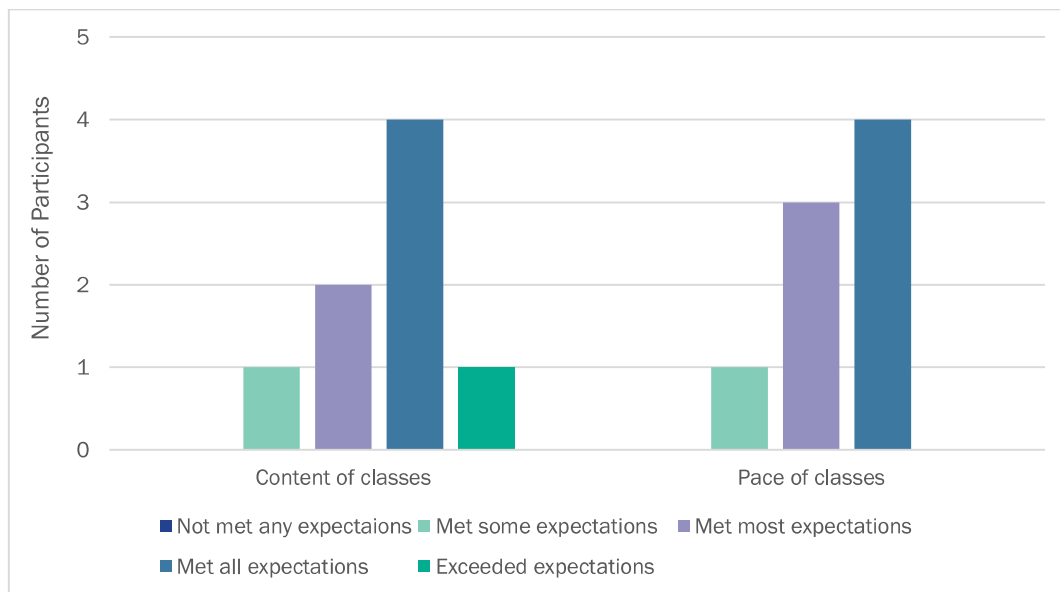


Figure 19: Extent to which class features of the World Music Café's program met participant's expectation (n = 8)

Likewise, when they were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the quality of the teaching, the respondents overwhelmingly stated that the trainers met or exceeded their expectations (see

Figure 20). Respondents reported that they especially valued the training in event hosting, public speaking and social media advertising.

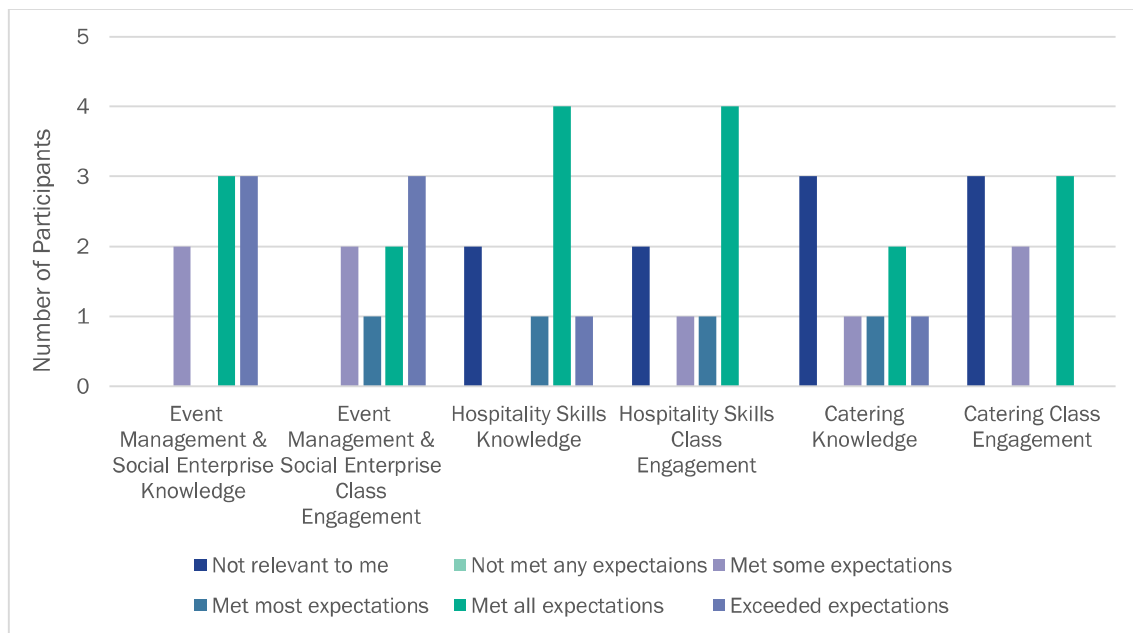


Figure 20: Extent to which facilitators of the World Music Café program met participant's expectation (n = 8)

Psychosocial Support

Crèche

The TAFE crèche facilities were not available to the MEDP participants in the South in the afternoons. Initially, a childcare worker was hired on a casual basis for training sessions, but the arrangement was not utilised by participants, so it was not continued. Some participants occasionally brought their young children to class if necessary, which was acceptable for everyone.

Interpreting Support

Telephone interpreting support was utilised occasionally for specific participants with limited English language proficiency, which was helpful but not sustainable. Most participants were able to be assisted by the English language support worker that was present in every class.

Referrals

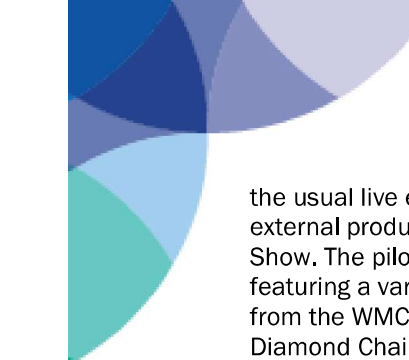
MF was able to refer participants to its other services including mental health, settlement services and crisis accommodation support, however this was not utilised by the participants.

Advocacy

All participants received Certificates of Participation each term and the Social Enterprise Facilitator wrote employment references as required by participants.

Impact of COVID-19

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 created significant challenges for the delivery of live events and the enterprise training program. In response to the pandemic social distancing directives, the training component moved online via Zoom and maintained a healthy attendance with participants adjusting well to the new format, using their smart phones and home computers to connect with trainers and fellow participants. The World Music Café team shifted its focus from presenting live events to creating an online digital show to celebrate cultural diversity and multicultural artists. From April-July 2020 the WMC tv-magazine style show was produced, instead of 61 Evaluation of the Multicultural Enterprise Development Project



the usual live events. In-house digital film production skills were developed with the help of an external production consultant who mentored the enterprise participants in creating a digital WMC Show. The pilot World Music Café Show featured interviews with local musicians, live event footage featuring a variety of local artists, cooking demonstration segments and recipes, plus testimonials from the WMC team members. The 30-minute show was filmed and edited by Chisenga Katongo of Diamond Chain Media (one of the participants) and was produced and directed by World Music Café social enterprise facilitator, Jon Cope, with production consultancy by former ABC TV Executive Producer/Director and Film and Television Institute CEO, Graeme Sward. This WMC Show production has since been used for various presentations including the 2021 Fairbridge Festival, a Murdoch University lecture on community cultural development, and for local government community development presentations.


Once the COVID-19 social distancing restrictions were lifted, the face-to-face training resumed, and three live events were delivered in September 2020. Although successful in producing a profit, the events after the COVID-19 lockdown have been tenuous with some customers initially wary of engaging public events. In February 2021, the resumption of COVID-19 restrictions in WA had a negative impact on the motivation of the team since many participants had families deeply affected by the global pandemic, which impacted their mental health.

The aim of the re-designed program was to find a flexible means by which to continue the project, with the potential to adapt and continue both online and live formats later on. These changes embody the spirit of the program, which was centred on connection, collaboration, and celebration, with participants and staff working together: *'the aim is not to do something for people, it's to do something with people.'* (Interview South).

Key Learnings on Program Delivery

The following are some of the key program learnings made by the Project Facilitator:

- Ideally, there would have been more time available for community engagement and consultation to research and explore potential social enterprise ideas based on the participants' skill-sets and past business experience. If people are inspired, engaged and their ideas are genuinely listened to, then a more trusting relationship can be formed and participants will be more invested in the enterprise.
- Empowerment is a great motivator for participants and provides significant opportunities to learn. Participants need to be given the power to make their own decisions, whether they be successful or otherwise. An important role of the facilitator is to work with the participants to reflect on the decisions in order to consolidate their learnings.
- Transferable work skills, such as teamwork, communication skills, problem solving, planning and organising, decision making, and self-management, are best learned through doing, not just in a classroom training discussion.
- Real industry situations and engagement with authentic experienced industry professionals, provides for a valuable training experience that is inspiring and motivating.
- The enterprise development should remain fluid and adaptable to the changing circumstances or external factors, e.g. COVID-19 and moving to an online TV-style program, or the changing skills sets available as new participants join or older participants leave.
- The initial one-year training timeframe is unrealistic in terms of establishing a new enterprise, designing the training program, undertaking the training, and starting to establish a real business experience. Realistically, two to three years are required to establish the enterprise and develop a profitable business model.
- Social enterprise profit-sharing, or legitimate casual employment arrangements, are also motivating factors for the participants, who may need to justify their time commitment to the enterprise training program, either for themselves, their partners, or their families.



Program Outcomes

The following section reports on the findings from the focus groups, interviews and surveys. Survey response rates were low for this program therefore care should be taken when interpreting the quantitative results.

Applied Skills and Knowledge

Participants in the WMC were enthusiastic about the skills gained through the program, stating that the program taught them teamwork and collaboration: *'I learned things about myself. I learned how to be part of a team, how to give instructions as well as take them. I also learned that I can organise things well and I am capable of being involved in creating an event.'* (FG 2 South). They listed a number of transferable skills that they had gained, such as communication skills, teamwork, how to follow instructions, and problem solving, alongside specific work-related skills, such as marketing and risk assessment. Participants commented that the training was multi-focussed. For example, one trainer not only taught barista and serving skills, but he also trained the participants in problem solving, e.g. how to deal with customers' various needs and how to handle complaints. As part of the training, they were given practical experience in lots of different fields and were put in positions that challenged them to work under pressure. An example shared by one of the participants was that they were asked to be MC at one of the events. They had never done this before and the opportunity filled them with confidence that they could overcome their fear of public speaking.

Participants were part of the decision-making process and for some this was a new experience: *'Before I played in an orchestra but had no experience of decision-making. Making decisions was empowering.'* (FG 1 South). They were given practical experience in lots of different fields and were put in positions that challenged them to work under pressure. A participant was given the opportunity to work as an MC in one of the events, and another helped Jon with marketing, social media and graphic design for 3 months and gained valuable work experience which they could put on their CV. As part of the marketing experience, they had to distribute flyers. They valued this experience since it helped them to build their confidence by approaching people and speaking to them in English.

One woman who had emigrated to Australia from Mongolia explained that waitressing in the events helped her to learn not to be shy and talk to customers. She became so confident speaking to people that she was asked to give a 15 minute presentation to a group of 50 people in an event hosted by the City of Armadale – South East Multicultural Network Meeting. She spoke about being united in diversity to reduce social isolation and the challenges faced by newly arrived migrants: how they face significant mental health issues due to social isolation. She became an ambassador for newly arrived migrants with the aim to help them to become socially connected. Her message was: *'don't stay at home, get out and meet people, and engage with your local community.'* (FG 2 South). She directly attributed her ability to engage in that event, and continue her community development work, to her involvement in the WMC. She said that the program helped her with public speaking and understanding body language so that she could feel confident presenting in public. Additionally, the connections she made in the program helped her to understand how best she could serve her community.

In the survey participants were asked to what extent the program content met their expectations regarding Australian work experience. Figure 21 shows that for those who responded to the survey (7 responses), the majority believed that the program helped them to gain applied skills and knowledge of doing business in Australia. They had a better understanding of the basics of setting up a business and the Australian government systems and services. Importantly, many felt that they had gained work experience and valuable contacts to help them find work.

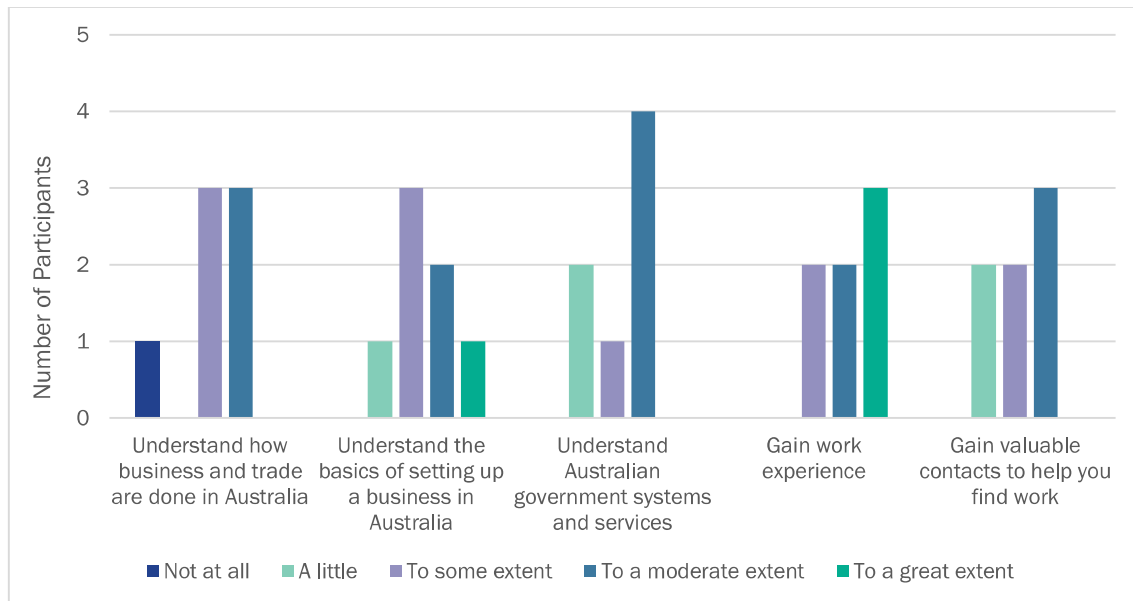


Figure 21: Extent to which content regarding Australian work experience met participant's expectation (n=7)

Australian Work Experience

One of the core components of the World Music Café is that participants learn by doing. This model gives participants valuable work experience and transferable skills which they have been able to put into their CVs. The CV training received was considered especially valuable, and having work experience for the CV was a bonus. These applied skills were seen as very useful for many different settings, and were taught alongside training in problem solving skills (e.g., how to deal with customers' needs and handling complaints), teamwork, how to follow instructions, and problem solving. The skills and knowledge gained from participation in the World Music Café were greatly beneficial towards helping participants seek and gain employment. In the survey participants were asked to what extent the program helped them gain Australian work experience that they could capitalise on to gain further work. Figure 22 shows that of those who responded to the survey (7 responses), the majority believed that the program helped them to market the skills they gained through the WMC in their CVs to help them gain employment.

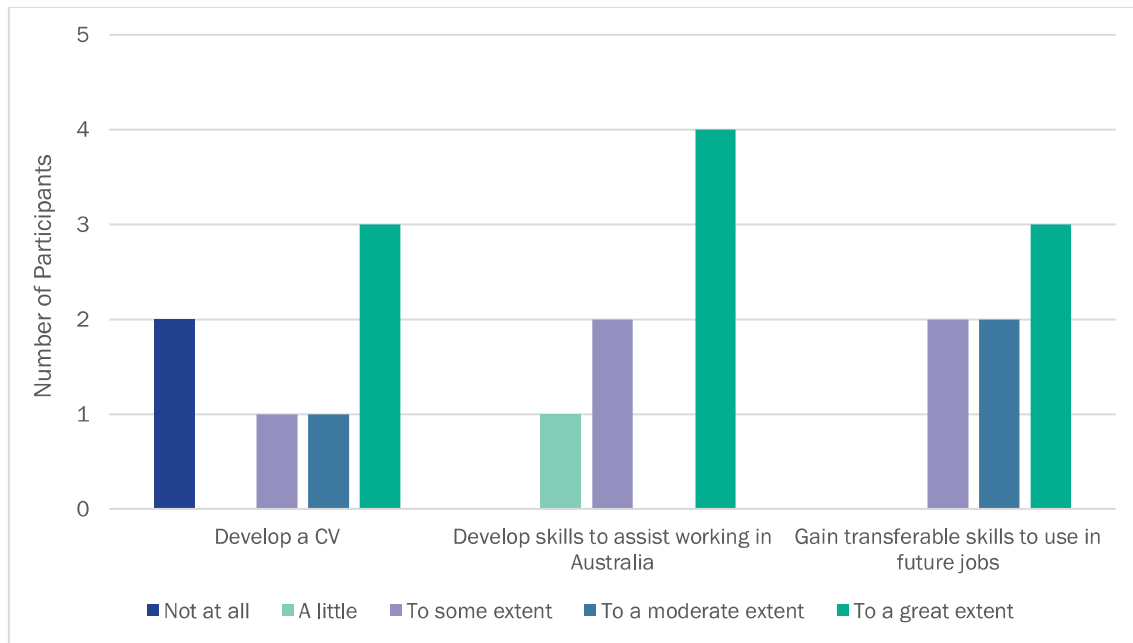


Figure 22: Extent to which outcomes regarding applied skills and knowledge met participant's expectation (n=7)

English Language Competency

In the focus groups all the participants had a good command of English. Some of the participants in the program, however, had lower English competency levels. The opportunity to improve English language skills through the program was valued by all. The environment of support created by the WMC was helpful in empowering participants to build their confidence to realise their career aspirations. One participant stated that when they arrived in Australia they had a desire to study nursing but had no English and little confidence. The WMC gave them confidence to learn with people from different cultures in a safe and non-judgemental environment. Because of this, they have continued with their English courses and have completed the AMEP and Certificate 4 in Spoken and Written English. They plan to study for the IELTS and then continue to university to study nursing.

The survey data corroborates these findings, as seen in Figure 23. Of those who responded to the survey (7 responses), all participants improved their English comprehension, spoken English, and confidence speaking English, with the majority doing so to a moderate or great extent.

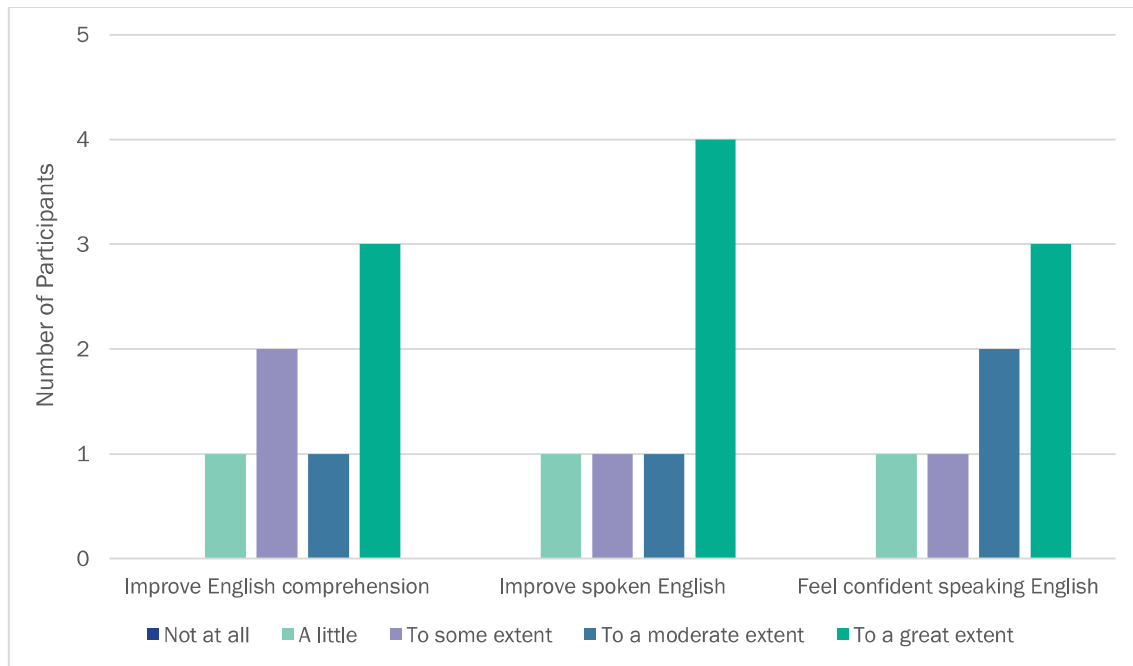


Figure 23: Extent to which participants' English language competency improved (n=7)

Employment Vision and Pathways

Participants highlighted that the WMC provided them with new skills and boosted their confidence. Many stated that although working in the WMC was not the work that they wanted to do long-term, participation in the program gave them confidence to look for work closer to their interest areas, and opened their eyes to other career opportunities and life options.

One participant explained that the program helped them to clarify what they wanted to do and what they needed to do to get there. They stated that they wants to continue with nursing in the short-term with the long-term goal being to study neuroscience. Alongside vocational clarity, the program also helped them address some of the difficulties they were facing around understanding body language and social cues. With the training they received they are confident that with these tools will help them to fulfil their goals.

Another participant was a keen photographer and was encouraged to pursue this hobby by becoming the WMC's official photographer. They honed their skills and prepared a portfolio. Initially they volunteered at events but as they improved they were able to charge for their services. They now wants to study photography in order to set up their own business and explore different opportunities for paid work. Their dream job is to work in child protection and family support and photography is seen as a way earn money to realise their ultimate goal. *'I always want to learn new things – I never give up.'* (FG 2 South).

The focus group data is supported by the survey data (Figure 24).Of those who responded to the survey (7 responses), all felt that participation in the program had helped them to identify work that they would like to do in Australia, with most agreeing with this a little, or to some extent. Participants also felt that they had an idea of different options for work or study in Australia and all felt that they were prepared to find a job in Australia.

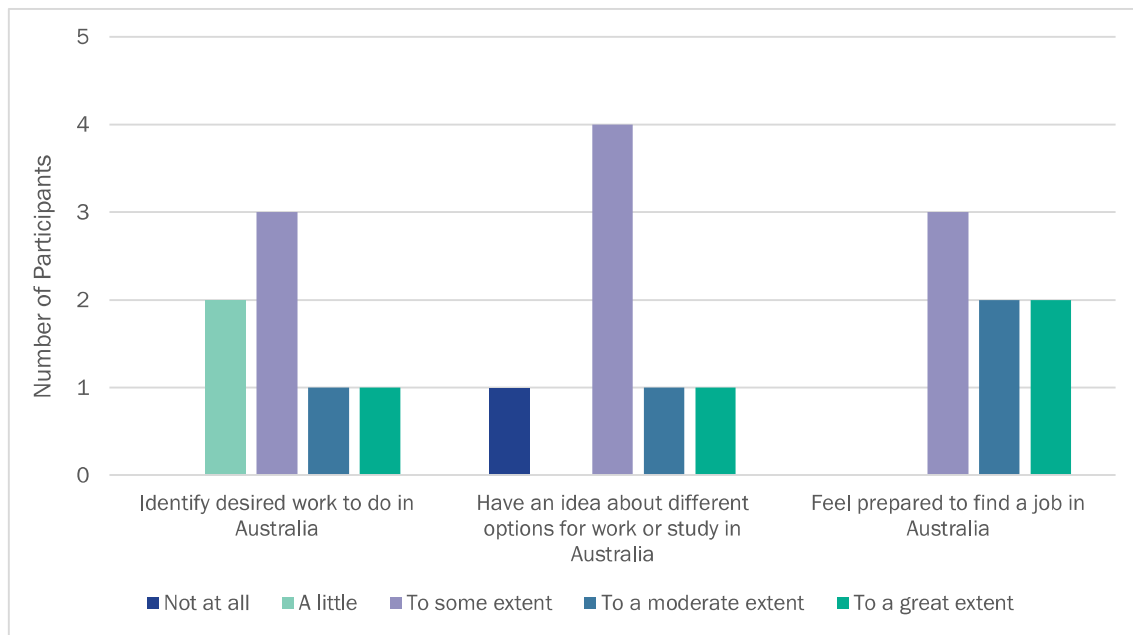


Figure 24: Extent to which program improved employment and training pathways

MF administrative data show that of the 44 participants in the program, 18 went onto employment (9 full-time and 9 part-time employment) and 4 went on to further education (3 to TAFE and 1 to university).

Social Connections and Increased Confidence

There was consensus amongst the focus group participants that the program created an environment that was conducive to making friends. They stated that there was a broad mix of cultures (with 20 nationalities represented), religions and ages, and that this led to them *'making friends from many countries.'* (FG 2 South). The program helped them build connections and support each other: *'if an idea was presented to the team and they like it there is a feeling of being valued.'* (FG 1 South). A WhatsApp group was created for the participants to keep in touch. They also used social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to stay connected.

The program helped some of the participants who had suffered trauma by providing a safe space for them. One participant stated that the program provided safety and calmness, especially when she had to go into a refuge and had significant trauma and uncertainty in her personal life: *'the WMC was a safe place that helped me to heal.'* (FG 2 South). The WMC not only provided an important space to explore her experiences of being a migrant in Australia, but also enabled her to examine Australian society as a whole.

The WMC program gave participants the confidence to feel that they could contribute and be valued members of society. It helped many participants understand the mainstream culture and feel confident interacting with people from other cultures. The program's strong focus on celebrating and respecting diverse cultures helped participants feel valued: *'People would talk and ask about our culture. Everyone was very kind and respectful. There is an understanding that we are all multicultural and that is our strength.'* (FG 2 South). The program helped participants to connect by focusing on the similarities between cultures, not the differences: *'we all have the same outlook on life.'* (FG 2 South). Another participant stated: *'what unites us is the multiculturalism that makes us feel at home.'* (FG 2 South). They explored ways in which they could integrate into, and shape, mainstream Australian society.

Survey findings reveal that of those who answered the question (6 responses) the overwhelming majority felt that the program helped them socially (Figure 25). They reported that they met new people, made friends, connected and felt confident within the wider community. Additionally, most felt hopeful about their future in Australia and felt more confident that they could actively participate in Australian society. The main response from participants on how the program has specifically impacted them socially was through the interaction with the wider community: *'organizing social events is the most important influence that allows you to socialize more and make different new friends. Meeting new people from different walks of life opens up opportunities for a job and hobbies.'* (Survey 2). The program's social aspect was therefore conducive for both making friends and for opening up potential employment opportunities for participants.

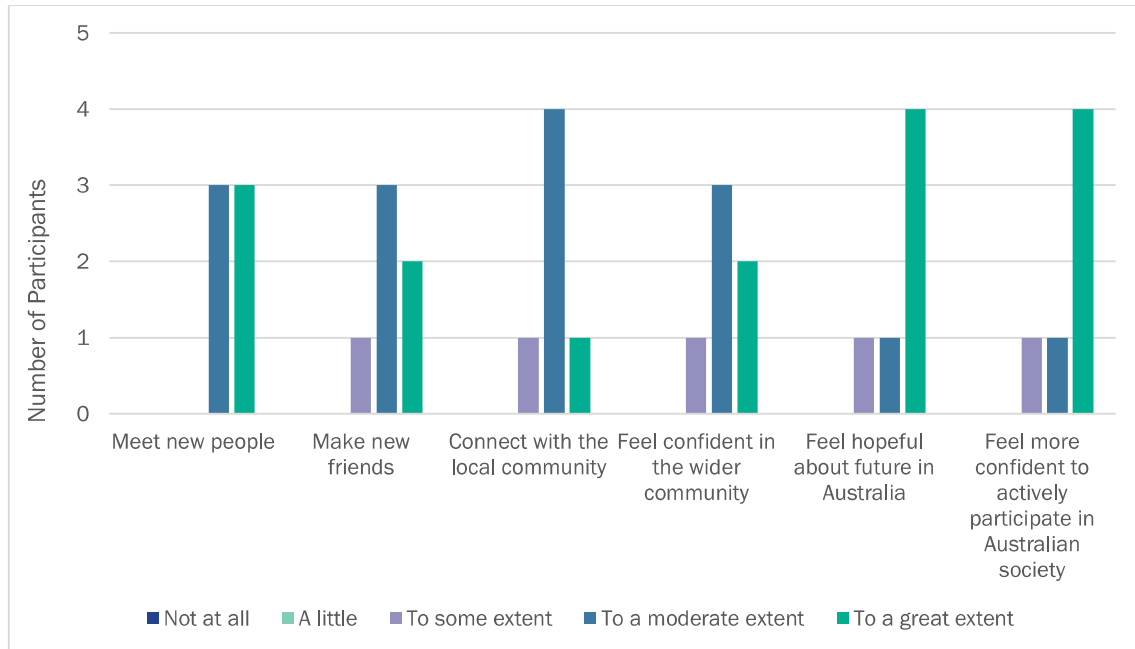


Figure 25: Extent to which outcomes regarding employment vision and pathways met participant's expectation (n=7)

This was summarised by the Project Facilitator: *'I have found that the sense of community, social connection and belonging has been a significant outcome of the enterprise approach. The opportunity to personally contribute creatively to the development of the initiative has been very motivating for some of the key participants as opposed to just being recipients of a standard training program.'* (Interview South).



Conclusion

This Process and Outcome Evaluation demonstrates that the Stream 1 South project was effectively delivered to enable participants to learn by doing. The project achieved the aims of helping people from refugee and migrant backgrounds acquire skills and competencies and gain practical experience. This enabled participants to better understand the Australian working environment, have Australian work experience that could be listed in their CV, and have improved social connections and increased confidence.

The project undertook community consultation at the start to determine the best social enterprise to meet the needs, skills and interests of the potential participants. This was a useful process which enabled the project to set up the collective enterprise quickly and create the training content around it. The Project Facilitator observed that a longer consultation and co-design process would be beneficial in the future, to better tailor the project and ensure strong engagement from the start. Having highly qualified and connected staff enabled the rapid development of the training material and the establishment of the social enterprise.

In this project the training component revolved around the creation of the social enterprise, the World Music Café, with a strong focus on developing transferable skills (for example, event planning, problem solving, teamwork). Although the classroom-based training sessions covered the foundations of establishing and working in a business, the main learning vehicle was working in the WMC itself. Participants were involved in the design and decision making of all aspects of developing and running the social enterprise. This empowered them to take risks and gave them confidence to have trust in themselves.

By its nature, this training model was much more fluid than the other MED projects. Participants could attend one or more training sessions (terms) and their involvement in the WMC could be continuous or intermittent. For some, their involvement was more short-term and once they had the necessary experience and confidence they applied for work or training elsewhere. In these cases the project was a stepping stone to future employment and provided participants with valuable credentials to put in their CVs. Others maintained their involvement with the project, assisting with the events when it was convenient to do so.

The project provided opportunities for participants to build friendships and widen their social networks. This was greatly appreciated and was identified as one of the main strengths of the project: *'From the first day I walked into the door, I was welcomed like a son or a brother. The WMC project has given me a sense of family outside my own and I have an exterior sense of community. It has added great value to my mental health as I have friends that I can speak to as a form of making informed decisions and getting further guidance'*. Participants were able to connect with each other and explore ways to engage within the broader society. This shared exploration of belonging was highly valued by many participants, as expressed by one of them: *'You don't have to sit for years wondering 'who am I?' and 'where do I fit in?'*(FG 2 South).

This project has continued beyond the lifetime of the Try, Test and Learn MED project. The viability of this model rests with the commitment of the participants to continue to engage in the project - and be recompensed for their labour, either through profit-sharing, or casual employment arrangement - as well as the ongoing support provided by the highly-skilled MF staff. Regardless of the long-term viability of this business model, the project has proved to be a successful vehicle for people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to build skills, gain work experience and develop strong social connections. Participants valued the project and appreciated the training and skills they received: *'The Australian government has done a great thing with this program. It has looked after us.'* (FG 2 South). The project enabled them to engage with the wider community, improve their confidence and feel they are productive members of Australian society: *'I feel I'm one of them now.'* (FG 2 South).



STREAM TWO: NEIS INDIVIDUAL ENTERPRISE ACCELERATOR PROGRAM

Introduction

NEIS Program

The New Enterprise Initiative Scheme (NEIS) program is a long-standing program run by the Department of Education, Skills, & Employment and delivered by NEIS Providers, typically Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). The program is designed to help those who are unemployed, or on welfare payments, start up their own business. The program provides specialised business mentoring during the first year of business operation and enables eligible participants access to a NEIS allowance (equivalent to the JobSeeker Payment). To be eligible to participate in NEIS, participants need to first undertake pre-NEIS training and develop a Business Plan. Training covers 12 modules linked to Certificate III in Small Business Operations. NEIS training normally runs 9 days over 3 weeks.

Stream Two: NEIS Individual Enterprise Accelerator program

Stream Two of the MED Project delivered a modified NEIS program tailored to meet the needs of people from refugee or migrant backgrounds. The program was delivered by Business Foundations (BF), the largest NEIS provider in WA, with support from the MMRC. The intention of the intervention was to provide a culturally competent and suitably modified program (pre-NEIS and NEIS) to better address the needs of the target cohort. Across the various cohorts pre-NEIS training was delivered in the MMRC offices, Mirrabooka library's computer lab, the Girrawheen Hub and the Canning River Eco Education Centre.

Theory of Action

The Theory of Action (Figure 26) describes the mechanism through which processes are delivered to achieve the desired outcomes. Participants from refugee/migrant backgrounds who have small business acumen and an interest in starting their own business, are offered tailored support to develop their small business idea through an adapted pre-NEIS program, followed by twelve month mentorship in the NEIS program. The project provides participants with culturally-appropriate accredited small business training, business mentoring and personalised support in the first year of the new business, and (if eligible) income support (NEIS Allowance and Rental Assistance) for up to 39 weeks. The project provides participants with a tailored three-week pre-NEIS program where participants gain enhanced occupational competencies, Australian self-employment experience, and self-employment clarity and pathways. The ultimate goal is for participants to have sustained independence from welfare, and to be socially integrated within the broader society. There are a number of external factors and assumptions underpinning this Theory of Action, such as: eligible people are interested in participating in the program, potential participants have existing business acumen to create their own small business, small business mentoring is an effective way to build employment pathways and foster social inclusion, and participants remain committed over time.

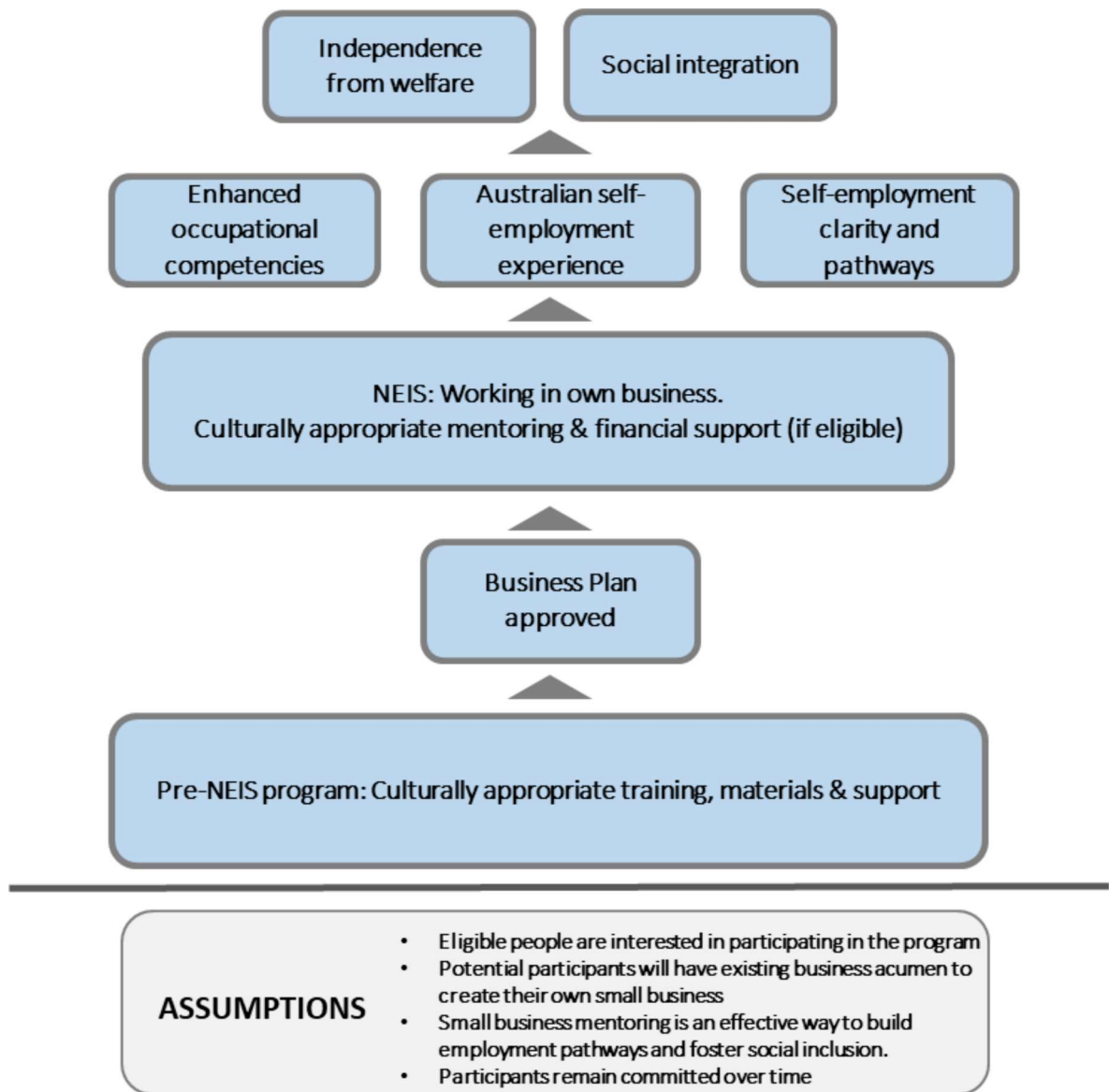
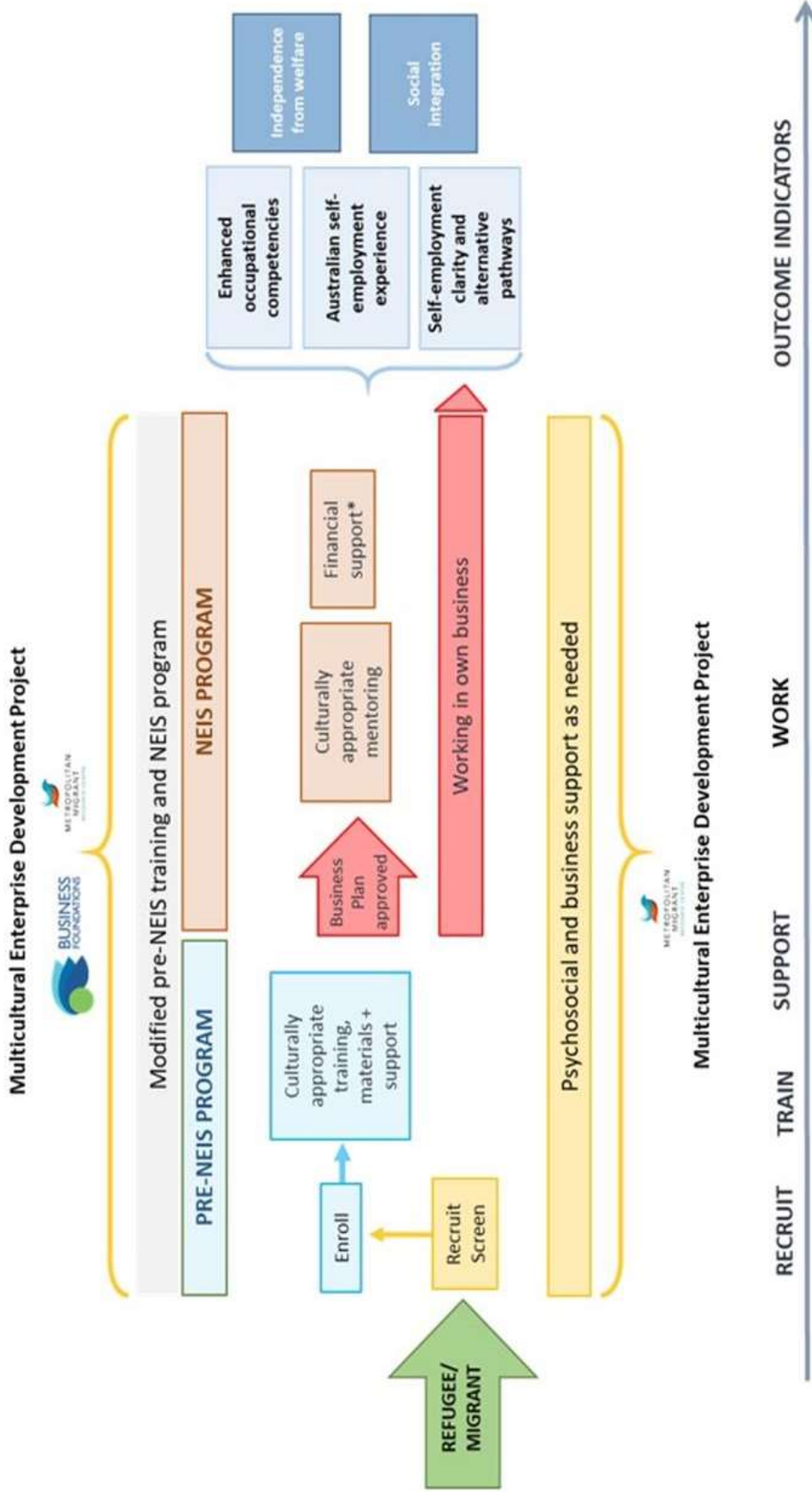


Figure 26: Theory of Change – Stream Two NEIS program Program model

Figure 27 visually presents the idealised program model which details the program structure and intended impact of the intervention. Eligible refugees and migrants who have business acumen and an interest in starting their own business enter the modified pre-NEIS training program which provides culturally appropriate training and support. Once participants have their Business Plans approved they enter the formal NEIS program and receive culturally-appropriate mentoring and financial support (if eligible) whilst working in their own business. Participation in the program leads to enhanced occupational competencies, Australian self-employment experience, and clarity around self-employment and alternative career pathways and social connections. These outcomes are intended to lead to participants’ social inclusion and ensure that they are free from dependence on welfare. Psychosocial and business support is provided throughout the duration of the program to the participants as needed.



*only available to people currently receiving an eligible Centrelink benefit

Figure 27: Program Model - Individual Enterprise Stream 2 (NEIS) Program context



Challenges and Barriers Faced by Refugees and Migrants

Most of the Stream Two NEIS participants had been in Australia for several years and had a good command of English. Education levels varied, with some having university degrees, whilst others had not completed secondary school. Many of the participants had long experience of being in the workforce before moving to Australia, working in various sectors (such as, teaching, IT, and professional music). Nevertheless, participants in the focus groups discussed the challenges of finding work in Australia. Many faced similar challenges to the ones faced by participants in the other programs: degrees and qualifications not being recognised and perceived discrimination due to poor language skills or cultural background. One participant stated that although they were highly qualified and experienced, having been employed as a university professor in their home country, they were unable to practice in Australia as their qualifications were not recognised. Furthermore, certification and accreditation were very difficult to get and expensive to obtain.

Participants also highlighted their English comprehension as a barrier, as various jobs require a high level of English competency: *'Employers don't focus on your knowledge, only on your English competency'* (FG 1 NEIS). Participants recounted difficulty passing the IELTS exams, with one participant stating that they had tried four times and failed each time. This was a significant source of distress for the participant.

Limitations with the Mainstream NEIS Program

Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), such as Business Foundation, report that the pre-NEIS program is challenging even for the mainstream Australian population due to the fast pace of delivery and the volume of material to be covered. Interviews with key stakeholders working in the training sector highlight the challenges faced by people from refugee and migrant backgrounds accessing and completing the NEIS program. They point to the short duration of the pre-NEIS training courses and the fast pace of program delivery. Additionally, they comment that people with English as a second language often struggle to understand some of the specialised language and concepts. Consequently, they report that they have had very few people from refugee and migrant backgrounds enrolled in pre-NEIS programs and progressing into the NEIS program. Business Foundation staff commented that without targeted culturally aware training this cohort *'would drown in the mainstream NEIS'* (Interview NEIS).

Participants' Demographic Characteristics

DEX data was used to determine the demographic characteristics of the Stream Two NEIS participants. As discussed in Section 3, there were discrepancies in the way that data was inputted into the online portal. DEX data reported there being 49 Stream Two NEIS participants, as opposed to the administration records, which reported 58 participants. The following analysis therefore does not cover all the participants in the program.

Table 9 presents the countries of origin of the Stream Two NEIS participants. Iraq was the birthplace of the largest percentage of participants (7), followed by mainland China (6).

Table 9: Participants by country of birth as a percentage of total group (n=49)

Participants by country of birth (DEX data) %	
Others	36%
Iraq	14%
China (mainland)	12%
Somalia	8%
Iran	6%
Myanmar	6%
Zambia	6%
Brazil	4%
Lebanon	4%
Syria	4%

Arabic was the most commonly spoken language at home among the participants (31%), followed by English (16%), Mandarin (10%) and Somali (8%), as seen in Table 10.

Table 10: Participants by main languages spoken at home as a percentage of total group (n=49)

Languages spoken at home (DEX data) %	
Arabic	31%
Others	20%
English	16%
Mandarin	10%
Somali	8%
Bemba	4%
Portuguese	4%
Burmese	2%
Cantonese	2%
Chin Haka	2%

Most participants (13) were between the ages of 30 to 34 and the majority can be considered in the middle stage of their working career, being in the 30 to 54 age bracket (38 out of 49 participants). This is illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11: Number of participants by age group (n=49)

Age group (DEX data)	
15-19	1
20-24	0
25-29	2
30-34	13
35-39	7
40-44	4
45-49	7
50-54	7
55-59	3
60-64	4
65-69	1

As with the other programs, women were overrepresented in the program. Table 12 shows that there were 41 women in the program representing 84% of participants. This is higher than the mainstream NEIS program where the gender breakdown is 63% women (Interview NEIS).

Table 12: Participants by gender (n=49)

Gender (DEX data) %	
Male	16%
Female	84%

Table 13 illustrates that despite most participants time of arrival to Australia being unknown, for those included in the DEX data, an overwhelming majority of participants have been in Australia for at least five years.

Table 13: Years in Australia (n=49)

Years in Australia (DEX data)	
Less than 1 year	1
3 to 5 years	1
5 years or more	15
Unknown	32

Table 14 presents a summary of the highest level of education attained by participants in the Stream Two NEIS program. Secondary school education is the most common level of education attained amongst participants (19 out of 49), followed by a Bachelor degree (10 out of 49).

Table 14: Participants by highest level of education (n=49)

Highest level of education	
Secondary	19
Certificate level	2
Advanced diploma level	2
Bachelor degree level	10
Postgraduate degree level	2
Other education	2
Unknown	12

Program Process

Program Components

Eligibility criteria for the Stream Two participants were:

- Refugee or migrant background;
- Aged over 18 years;
- Receiving income support or are at risk of welfare dependence or of exclusion from economic participation;
- Working fewer than 15 hours paid work a week;
- Right to work in Australia;
- Be available to participate in the pre-NEIS training;
- Be able to work full time in their NEIS business once business plan approved;
- Have a right to work in Australia.

For the NEIS business to be eligible, it had to be:

- Independent, lawful and capable of withstanding public scrutiny
- Assessed as commercially viable by a NEIS provider
- Established, located and operated solely within Australia
- New – established businesses not eligible
- Structured so that they will have a controlling interest over the NEIS business for the duration of the NEIS program.

MMRC was the backbone organisation for this program coordinating the recruitment, logistics of training with the external partner (Business Foundations), and offering psychosocial and business support as needed. Business Foundations delivered the practical training (pre-NEIS) component and managed the mentoring component of the program. Although the Stream Two NEIS program had to follow the accreditation guidelines and could not be substantially altered, certain modifications were made to the way it was delivered. The main component of the program were:

- MMRC recruited participants
- MMRC assisted eligible participants to enrol in the program
- BF vetted participants' business ideas
- Pre-NEIS training provided by Business Foundations

- Additional support given to participants
- Psychosocial and business support given as needed
- Culturally-appropriate mentoring support given during the NEIS phase.

Recruitment

Interested people from a refugee or migrant background were introduced to the Stream Two NEIS program by the MED Project staff via information sessions. Following this, potential participants were invited to attend an 'Unlock your big idea' (Figure 28) workshop where they could have their business idea assessed by the BF and MED Project staff. Eligible and interested participants were enrolled through the BF website. The enrolment process for the Government program is very detailed and program staff identified this as a potential barrier to potential participants joining the program. Assistance with enrolment was therefore provided by MMRC staff, if needed.

The recruitment process was refined as the program progressed. The last phase of the project marketed the program as 'Start a Business from Home', to better reflect the pandemic business setting.

The eligibility requirement around number of hours in employment were relaxed slightly as the program progressed. There was a realisation that suitable candidates could not participate because they were engaged in the workforce for more than the cut-off amount of 15 hours of paid work a week.

Many refugees and migrants have to work a number of jobs (e.g. as Uber drivers or cleaners) to make ends meet and cannot (and many do not want to) survive on the income from benefits. The original eligibility criteria excluded this cohort. The decision was therefore made to relax the criteria somewhat to enable people with part-time work, who were willing to commit to participate in the program fully, to join in order to develop their business.

Pilot Phase

The pilot phase ran from November 2018 in Mirrabooka with 8 participants. During this phase a number of key learnings were made that helped to shape the delivery of the program. One of the main learnings was that participants needed to have a number of skills and competencies to participate effectively in the program. Participants had varying degrees of English language competency and initially it was trialled delivering the program using interpreters. One session was run with 3 different interpreters and it was found that this was a slow and complicated process, showing that the program could not be delivered effectively in this manner. Although the desire to do the business training was there, this program could not be delivered to people with very low English language and computer literacy skills. It became evident that the program could not be run through the use of interpreters. Therefore the decision for the program going forward was to accept people who had good English skills (writing, speaking and comprehension), as well as numeracy and computer skills. From this pilot program participants felt that the time periods were too intense, they required more time to complete tasks in order to prepare their Business Plans.

Figure 28: Information sessions



Modified Training

The following were the main components of the modified training provided to Stream Two NEIS participants:

- MMRC helped BF understand different cultural norms in order to inform how to adapt the material.
- Different training schedules were trialled (4 days over 3 weeks, 4 days over 4 weeks and 5 days over 3 weeks). This varied format meant that the training was delivered at a slower pace between school hours (9.30 am - 2.30 pm) which was more convenient for migrant parents with school age children. It also allowed more time to complete tasks in class, such as registering an ABN, applying for home office approval, and conducting online market research.
- Slides and materials were simplified and adapted by BF to make the material relevant to the cohort.
- Rather than having to write the 20 page Business Plan from scratch, business models were prepared using 'Canva' a user-friendly tool that helped participants get their ideas down.
- Extra one to one assistance provided to complete the Business Plan during the fourth week, with a business tutor employed during the training to assist those higher needs ESL participants
- Provided a computer lab to enable participants (who often did not own their own computers, or have internet at home) to complete tasks. USBs were provided to participants to store their material.
- Digital literacy support. Most participants were computer literate, but those who had low skills were given additional support.
- There was a conscious effort to deliver the material in an engaging manner.
- Examples used in the material was more representative of a multicultural audience so that they could see 'someone like me' (Interview NEIS) in the materials.
- Several guest speakers were invited to present during training (e.g. business advisers and previous NEIS alumni) to increase participants' awareness of existing business networks.
- Started a WhatsApp group for communication with the broader group. This was a good avenue to share tips and to keep the participants engaged and connected.

Observations Made by Trainers Regarding Participation in the Program

The following observations were made by the trainers regarding participation in the Stream Two NEIS project:

- Many people from migrant backgrounds who wanted to participate in the NEIS program were ineligible due to work or study commitments (over 15 hours per week).
- Some were not able to attend the training during the day because they worked during the day, and would have preferred evening classes.
- Potential participants were fearful of losing Centrelink payments if their business did not earn income after 9 months.
- Lack of support from family members stopped certain people from participating.
- Difficulty in accessing and affording commercial kitchens for food-based businesses was a challenge for participants entering the NEIS stage of the program.
- Many participants felt overwhelmed and confused by local government requirements for food business approval which were perceived to be complex and excessive.

- Two women did not have permanent addresses during the training as they were victims of domestic violence and had been staying in refuges/ temporary accommodation. This was problematic when enrolling in the program.
- Some participants lacked basic literacy skills and hence required someone to help them complete forms, read material and type up their Business Plan. This was an added cost for the program.
- Some participants stopped communicating with the project staff after the training phase ended (although communicating through WhatsApp received more responses than email or phone calls).
- The program did not cater to the needs of most migrant men. Although many attended the info session they were not eligible due to work commitments.

Participant Feedback on Culturally-Appropriate Modifications and Support

Although none of the participants had experience of doing the non-modified NEIS program (indeed, it was an eligibility criteria that they not have undertaken the NEIS program in the past), they all acknowledged that without the support provided by MMRC and the BF trainers they would not have been able to complete the program. Participants in the focus group identified that the support provided throughout the program was invaluable, with a participant stating that they needed *'someone to hold my hand'* (FG 1 NEIS) whilst doing the program.

However, some participants identified areas where further support was required, most noticeably around the duration and pace of the training. Despite the program being modified to include an extra week to cover the training, all participants shared the view that the course was too short and covered a lot of material in too fast a pace: *'three weeks helps to wake up the brain, but you don't feel you are fully qualified after that.'* (FG 2 NEIS). Some participants stated that they thought that the training component of the program should have lasted 2-3 months instead, in order for all the principles and processes to be fully understood. Some stated that although they appreciated the course and learned a lot, they did not receive training on certain elements that would have helped their business, such as online presence and websites. Some were overwhelmed by the amount of material.

These perspectives were reflected in the survey (Figure 29), where the majority of respondents (7 respondents) indicated that timing was an issue, and when asked about areas of improvement to the survey, a respondent stated that they would have liked *"more time to complete the course so that you can learn more comfortably, enjoying the learning journey and not stressed to the max."* (S1). Besides this, participants felt that the program was delivered in a clear way. They felt supported in preparing their Business Plans and understood what was expected of them throughout the program and why they were doing the various activities.

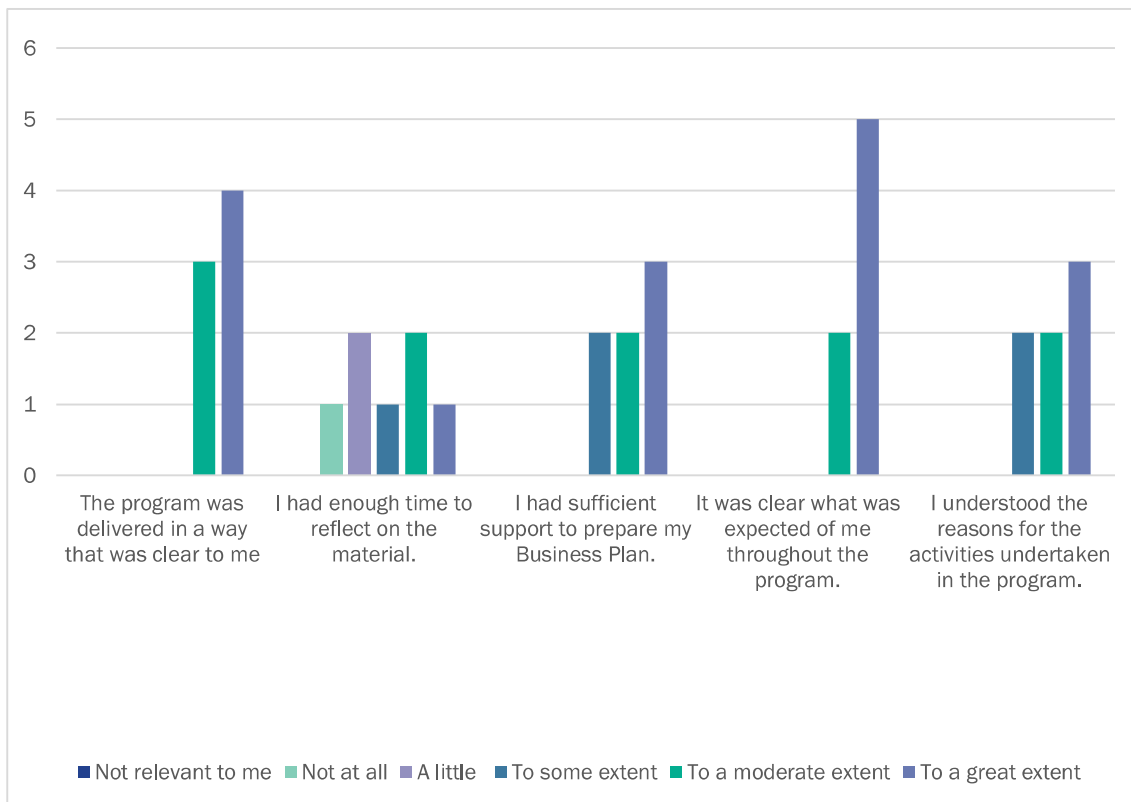


Figure 29: Extent to which features of the NEIS program met participant's expectation (n = 7)

Trainers

The trainers were very skilled and brought additional skills to the teaching practice. In addition to being a business trainer, one of the teachers also had experience teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) and drama training. These skills were brought to bear in the training sessions where material was brought to life and modified in engaging ways. Trainers maintained contact with participants during the mentoring and maintained the support beyond the lifetime of the program. This was not normally part of the NEIS training.

Participant Feedback on Culturally-Appropriate Training

The participants singled out the skills of the BF trainer '*[the trainer] explained the program clearly. She was well trained and very organised.*' (FG 2 NEIS). Participants from the various multicultural background felt respected and included and appreciated the trainer's skills with this: '*She is open and caring. She does not judge anyone. She is open-minded – the perfect person for a multicultural focus. She went over and beyond.*' (FG 2 NEIS). Focus group participants stated that the trainers went out of their way to give them support: '*they have taken us under their wings and looked after us as friends. It makes you want to continue.*' (FG 2 NEIS). The trainers acted with respect and kindness and this was greatly valued: '*they don't judge us for not speaking English well and think we are stupid. They don't see colour or religion. They see you as a person. They see our hidden ability and encourage us.*' (FG 2 NEIS).

The quality and commitment of the trainers and support staff was a significant factor in the overall success of the project.



Culturally-Appropriate Mentoring

Upon completion of the pre-NEIS training, and once they had their Business Plan approved, participants commenced working in their own business. During this phase of the NEIS, participants were matched with a qualified business mentor who had been given cultural competency advice to ensure that they delivered culturally appropriate mentoring. This mentoring, which continued for twelve months following the completion of the pre-NEIS training, involved monthly meetings (telephone and face-to-face) to guide the participants through the first year of running their business.

Participant Feedback on Culturally-Appropriate Mentoring

In the focus group some of the participants discussed how valuable the mentoring input had been: 'If I didn't have a mentor I'd be lost' (FG 2 NEIS). For some the mentors helped to keep the participants business on track: '*I was lost after I got the Business Plan. My mentor helped me to keep the momentum going.*' (FG 2 NEIS). Mentors gave encouragement and targeted advice based on their extensive experience. One participant commented how the mentor pointed her in the right direction to books and videos where she could go to get more information to address her questions.

However, not all participants were able to get the support they wanted from their mentors. One participant commented that her mentor was very busy and could only give her a small amount of time, even though she acknowledged that this was valuable. Another participant stated that they struggled to get in touch with their mentor (the pandemic was unfolding during this time). Another participant stated that they felt intimidated to ask too much of the mentor and they '*felt like I was on my own.*' (FG 1 NEIS).

When asked about the support received throughout the program in the survey, however, the majority of respondents (five) stated that they felt supported either 'to a moderate extent' or 'to a great extent' while preparing their Business Plan, with program material as a whole and in areas outside the program. Differences in mentoring relationships are to be expected since there are many variables at play that can influence the success of a mentoring relationship. Nevertheless, there is evidence that in this program the participants benefited from the relational support they received from their mentors.

Psychosocial and Additional Support

Social support was built into the teaching model of the Stream Two NEIS project in two main ways:

- Staff and participants had morning tea and lunch together. This provided an opportunity to socialise, build rapport and talk about non-work matters. It enabled staff to identify any issues that were arising and address them accordingly.
- Graduation ceremonies provided an opportunity to celebrate and were structured around a party setting with food, music, photographs and social connection. This was seen as an important way to build confidence in a joyful, multicultural setting.

Case work support was also provided to participants by MMRC, providing childcare facilities and advocating on their behalf. An example of this was MMRC staff assisting participants to get access to payments from jobactive providers.

MMRC staff were able to secure reconditioned computers for participants who did not have their own from the Men's Shed organisation.

Impact of COVID-19 on Program Delivery

Due to the pandemic, Business Foundations, had to adapt the program delivery to be able to continue to deliver the program. The following modifications were made:

- all training moved to an online format;
- the pre-NEIS training was extended to give participants more time;
- virtual mentoring sessions were developed for all NEIS participants at that stage of the program to ensure that they continued to get the support they needed;

- a NEIS community Facebook group was set up to connect all participants and keep the social momentum of the program going.
- due to social distancing directives, limited numbers could work in the computer lab at a time. This meant that the group had to be split and participants only had 1 day in the computer lab each week.


MMRC staff also increased engagement with participants through phone contact, WhatsApp, and one-to-one contact at MMRC offices to check how participants were dealing with social distancing directives, home schooling, online program delivery and encouraging them to keep connecting with the project.

Business Foundations' training staff reported that Classes 5, 6 and 7 were all run during the Government mandated lock-down periods as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdowns caused a great deal of uncertainty in the business world with micro and small businesses being particularly affected. BF staff stated that *'this external factor scared numerous participants away from following through with their businesses'* (Interview NEIS). Moreover, the additional financial support provided by the Federal Government through its Coronavirus supplement to regular benefit recipients, caused many potential NEIS participants to stop and pause about committing to as lengthy and involved program as NEIS (correspondence NEIS staff).

Key Learnings on Program Delivery

The following were some key observations made by BF trainers regarding program delivery:

- The paperwork required by NEIS is a barrier for this group of CALD clients and the registration process should be simplified.
- When the info sessions were delivered, more than half of those people interested were ineligible due to work/study commitments but were highly motivated to start their own business. These people are currently missing out on self-employment opportunities, such as NEIS, because they are having to remain in low paying jobs to support their families.
- Some of the participants had other commitments (such as part time work, English study or volunteering commitments) and this meant that many missed some of the training sessions. In its current format the program is not the best fit for most migrant clients. There is a need for ongoing training/ support and more flexible delivery options (i.e. training spread out over more weeks, classes offered weeknights/ weekends)
- Some of the participants had health conditions (supported by medical certificates) that meant that they required special assistance completing the work and greater flexibility with homework/ start times. It was necessary to check with doctors and jobactive providers to determine the participant's capacity for work.
- Computer lab training was essential, therefore, ideally two days of training in the computer lab should be provided per week in the future.
- Transport was a barrier for some of the clients since they did not have their driver's licence and hence they had to rely on public transport. This made attending the computer lab at the Girrawheen Hub very difficult, therefore, trainers organised lifts for the participants on those days.
- Ongoing catch-ups with their fellow NEIS participants would be very beneficial for these clients as they provide a much needed support network when starting their business.
- Local government could play a significant role in reducing the barriers for many new CALD businesses by providing subsidised commercial kitchen hire at their facilities as well as streamlining the approval process for food businesses.



Program Outcomes

Participation in Program

The main outcome of the Stream Two NEIS program was participation in the program itself. Table 15 presents the Stream Two NEIS program overview showing the number of participants who took part in the project and their trajectory across the program. The table reports on the number of participants who:

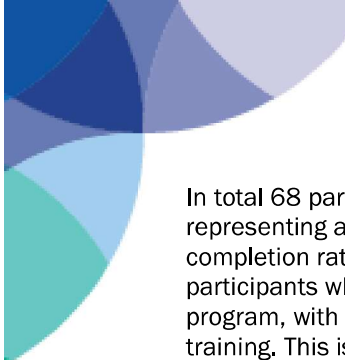
- were enrolled in the pre-NEIS training
- completed the pre-NEIS training (52 hours)
- submitted their Business Plans for approval (a stage required within the NEIS application process)
- formally 'commenced' the NEIS program (completed training and Business Plans were approved)
- are awaiting commencement (participants who are still 'open' within the BF system: they have submitted their Business Plan, but are experiencing some form of delay in completing their Commencement requirements. They are either awaiting insurance information, council permits or some other paperwork requirement required in order for them to start their business.)
- 'Expected Commencement Rate' refers to a calculation based upon the addition of 'Awaiting Commencement' participants and 'Commenced' participants as a percentage of all those who completed training.

Table 15 outlines the figures for the Pilot Phase for the sake of comparison, however, this phase was not part of the MED Project and hence does not form part of the evaluation. In the following analysis, the trajectory of the Stream Two NEIS participants are compared to the mainstream NEIS participants as experience by BF.

Table 15: Stream Two NEIS program participation and trajectories

Class	Month of training	Participants Enrolled	Completed Training	% Completed Training	Submitted Business Plans	% Submitting Business Plans	Awaiting Commencement*	Commenced	% Commencing*	Expected Commencement Rate**
Class 1 (Trial/Pilot phase)	Nov 2018	10	5	50%	3	60%	0	1	20%	20%
Class 2	June 2019	16	9	56%	2	22%	0	0	0%	0%
Class 3	August 2019	9	7	78%	6	86%	0	5	71%	71%
Class 4	October 2019	11	8	73%	7	88%	0	4	50%	50%
Class 5	February 2020	11	9	82%	5	56%	0	2	22%	22%
Class 6	October 2020	12	11	92%	5	45%	1	4	36%	45%
Class 7	February 2021	9	9	100%	0	0%	0	0	0%	0%
Total (excluding Pilot Phase)		68	53	78%	25	47%	1	16	30%	32%

* participants who submitted Business Plan but not yet progressed into NEIS program; ** addition of 'Awaiting Commencement' and 'Commenced' participants as a percentage of all those who completed training



In total 68 participants were enrolled in the pre-NEIS program and 53 completed the training, representing an average completion rate of 78%. This is much higher than the mainstream NEIS completion rate of 63% seen by BF. In total 25 Business Plans were submitted, representing 47% of participants who completed training. There were 16 participants who commenced the formal NEIS program, with one awaiting commencement. This represents 32% of the participants who completed training. This is considerably lower than the BF benchmark of 68% of participants completing training commencing the NEIS program.

As the program evolved, training participation rates improved dramatically. BF state that this was a result of them getting better at identifying those for whom the program could provide benefit and adapting their delivery to suit their needs. However, the numbers of participants submitting Business Plans and progressing into the formal NEIS program did not kept pace with the number of people finishing the training.

Why this is the case is hard to surmise. BF have commented that: *'classes 5, 6 and 7 were all run through the COVID-19 period in which the lockdown enforced by the State and Federal Governments caused a great deal of uncertainty in the business world with micro and small businesses particularly affected. It would be safe to assume that this external factor scared numerous participants away from following through with their businesses. Additionally, during this period the additional levels of support provided by the Federal Government through its Coronavirus supplement to regular benefit payments did cause many potential NEIS participants (not just those coming from the MMRC program) to stop and pause about committing to as lengthy and involved program as NEIS.'* (Correspondence with BF staff).

Importantly, as reported by BF, more people gain employment after doing the NEIS program, than businesses get created. This is because through the intensive learning and exploration of their networks participants are better placed to capitalise their skills and act upon opportunities available to them. MMRC records show that 8 participants had gone into employment from the program (4 into full-time work and 4 into part-time positions). In addition, 4 participants progressed into education or training including TAFE certificates or Diploma courses with a business focus.

Despite the lower rates of Business Plan submissions and commencements into the formal NEIS program, these figures represent a significant achievement of participation and engagement in the NEIS program by people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Without the modified program delivery it is highly unlikely that these people would have participated in the mainstream NEIS program, as stated by MMRC and BF trainers.



Case studies of NEIS Participants²

Case Study 1: Domestic Violence – Art Therapy

M was a NEIS participant who, whilst studying for her pre-NEIS course, experienced serious personal hardship in her life regarding immigration difficulties and family and domestic violence. Due to the latter (and a subsequent restraining order) M was unable to access her personal documents, including immigration paperwork, when she was notified by the Department of Immigration that her Visa was about to expire. This put M in a position of extraordinary stress and hardship, but, with the support of the MMRC, she managed to navigate through the serious situation whilst completing her pre-NEIS training and soon after started her NEIS program successfully. Her business is in art therapy and holistic therapy using the visual arts to help domestic violence survivors (with an emphasis on survivors with English as a second or other language). M is planning on undertaking an online Diploma of Counselling in order to add extra health services to her business at a later date.

Case Study 2: Chinese and Vietnamese Dumpling Catering and Cooking Classes

H was made aware of the Stream Two NEIS program through other members of the Perth Vietnamese-Australian community, and soon after contacting the MMRC, H registered for the program stating that *'it was just what I was needing'* to start her Chinese and Vietnamese dumpling catering and dumpling cooking classes business. Even without a fluent level of English, H was able to excel in the intensive training, whilst compiling a thorough, and ultimately successful Business Plan. After graduating from this section of the program H began her business's production at her Church's commercial kitchen in the Swan Valley. Not long after this, with further MMRC administrative support, H began selling her dumplings and other fare at the Mirrabooka Night Markets over the summer of 2019-20, as well as conducting her cooking lessons from her Church. However, the COVID 19 restrictions severely curtailed H's operations, but she rapidly adapted to the situation, adjusting her business to online and phone ordering, and applying a 20% surcharge for deliveries whilst reaching a usage deal with her Church with regards to safe kitchen usage. Since the relaxation of the restrictions, H resumed her full business activities, as well as accessing support from the MMRC whenever needed.

Case Study 3: Videography, Photography and Production Company.

J owns and operates her own production company called 'Sona Images' which specialises in corporate and non-fiction photography and videography. Since completing her first project – a short promotional film about MMRC and Business Foundations facilitation of the NEIS program, J has gone on to successfully create full productions for private and public viewing. An example of her business success is being awarded funding and a partnership with ScreenWest to create content for high-traffic viewing at Yagan Square in Perth. The work shown was a documentary about an African-Australian medical worker who also has to live and cope with mental illness.

Case Study 4: Community Based Catering

S was referred to the program through a Disability jobactive provider. She had learning difficulties and had low English language and computer literacy skills. MMRC and BF supported S with her learning difficulties, including referring her to literacy programs. S has worked during the post-training program very closely with MMRC staff, with great enthusiasm and dedication intent on achieving her business and personal goals. She continued through the program at a solid pace to own and operate her own community-based catering business.

² Case study data from MMRC administrative records and focus group sessions



Case Study 5: Makeup Workshops for Women from Multicultural Communities

R is a make-up artist who saw that there was a dearth of products and services that are appropriate for women and men with dark skin tones. She recognised that multicultural people were often left out of the makeup and skin care industries in Perth and that this could make them feel excluded. She attended the Stream Two NEIS program and started selling suitable products and running her own makeup workshops to help people from multicultural communities: *'I think unfortunately we only see one shade, or one race, being represented all the time – a lot of the time it starts to feel like there's no place for us, and I want young people to realise that there is a space for you.'* You can see a video of her story here:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=737119530466856>

Enhanced Occupational Competencies

Participants in the focus groups stated that the course helped them to have greater confidence that they could run their own business. They valued the training they received in all aspects of setting up and running a business.

One participant stated that although they already had planning and organisational skills, doing the program and working on their Business Plan helped them to *'prove it on a piece of paper'* (FG 1 NEIS) and in so doing is able to demonstrate her skills to potential employers.

The training also helped the participants realise what they were capable of. One participant said that before the program her business was very small, now they are a brand, with a logo, an ABN number and a business profile on Google: *'The NEIS program has really helped. Before I didn't think I had it in me to make and sell things. Now I say 'I can do it.'* (FG 2 NEIS).

Case Study 6: Mums and Bubs Massage

R was a midwife in her country of birth. She moved to Australia 8 years ago but her qualifications were not accepted and she has to retrain to be able to practice as a midwife in Australia. She was dismayed that she could not work and was keen to put her training to use in some way. Through participation in the program she was able to set up a business related to her profession: a pre- and post-natal Mums and Bubs mobile massage business for women from India, Pakistan, Malaysia and Bangladesh. She stated: *'The impact of this program has been huge for me... This certificate has proved that I have skills and they're useful. It shows that I can be productive member of society.'* (FG 2 NEIS).

In the survey, participants expressed that the NEIS program enhanced their occupational competencies (Figure 29). Of those who responded (7 responses), the majority felt that the program assisted them in understanding how to plan for the future using tools such as vision statements. They believed that the program had helped them to develop key marketing strategies, improve their digital literacy and create a viable Business Plan

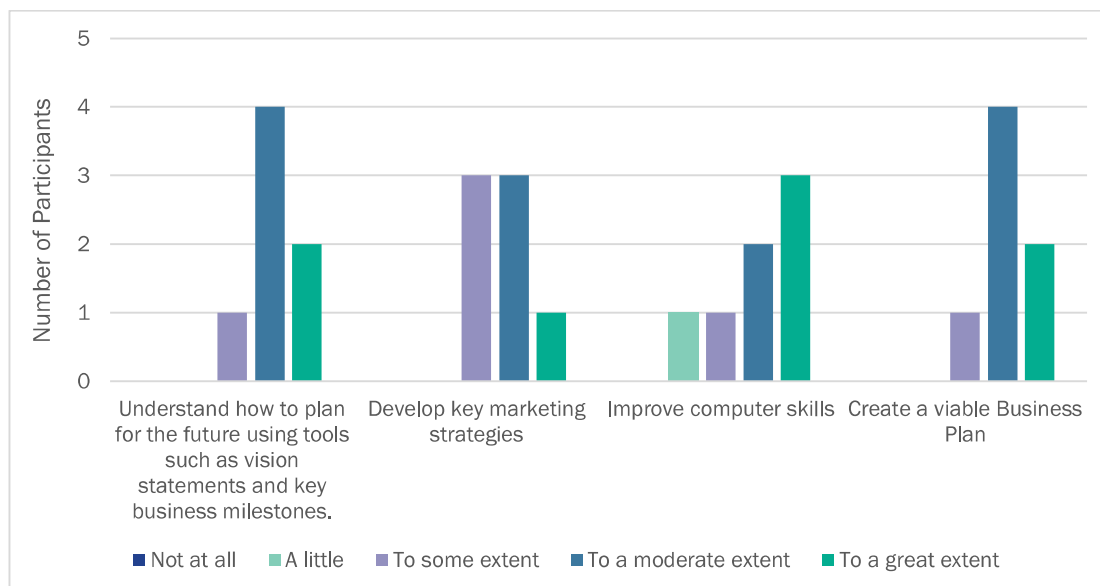


Figure 30: Extent to which the program enhanced occupational competencies (n=7)

Australian Self-Employment Experience

Through participation in the Stream Two NEIS program some participants gained self-employment experience. The culturally-appropriate mentoring support was designed to assist people as they gained experience working in their own business. In the focus groups some participants stated that the program had enabled them to establish their business in a way that they would not have been able to do without the NEIS scaffold.

While participants indicated that the process of creating the Business Plan helped them to realise whether their idea was sound and whether they would pursue it, a theme that was consistent across

Case Study 7: Art Studio and Workshops

A is an artist and art teacher who came to Australia 8 years ago. Through participation in the program she set up her art practice and studio where she sells her art and gives art workshops for the broader community. Through participation in the project she gained the skills to achieve this: *'This program was an eye-opener for me. I knew what I wanted to do, but didn't know how to go about achieving it. I didn't know how to create my brand. Now I have confidence and I'm entering my second year listing. I'm paying off bills with my income. This opportunity is everything to me. I want to grow. This is my dream. This is my job.'* (FG 2 NEIS).

participants was the frustration with the lack of seed funding and financial support to progress the business into the NEIS phase. One participant stated, *'if I work on my business I don't eat'* (FG 2 NEIS). There was confusion around how to access funding, who was eligible for Centrelink assistance, and what the processes around this were. Although some participants had been referred to Many Rivers (an organisation that provides micro credit for people to set up their business), many expressed dissatisfaction with this and confusion on how to progress.

However, when asked in the survey about the extent to which the program helped participants to both set up and run a business, participants were more positive, as seen in Figure 30. Of those who responded (8 responses) most felt that the program had helped them to understand the Australian workplace environment, government systems and services, and the requirements for starting a new business in Australia. Their training also helped them understand how an idea for a business would fit into the broader Australian economy.

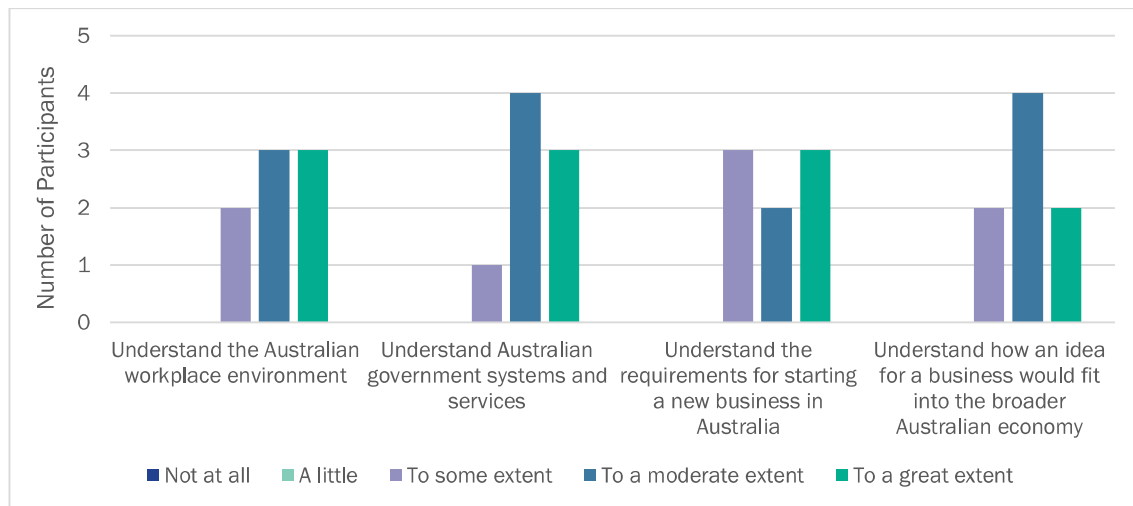


Figure 31: Extent to which the program gave the participants Australian self-employment experience and improved understanding of doing business in Australia (n=8)

Self-Employment Clarity and Pathways

Many participants stated in the focus groups that the program had helped them to better understand the realities of doing business and the options for employment and training available to them. Through the program some participants were able to set up their business and thrive in the experience of doing so. One participant commented: *'The program has been a revelation to me. I didn't know I had it in me, didn't know I had the strength. NEIS has shown me what I am capable of. It has given me confidence. I say: 'I am better than this. I can do more. I can be more.'* (FG 2 NEIS).

Case Study 8: Jewellery-making

F has been living in Australia for a number of years. She has a disability which has impacted her ability to work and learn. Her experience in the program has helped her to manage her disability. The targeted support she received enabled her to prioritise her health and participate at her own pace. With help from the trainers and the mentor she set up a jewellery-making business and trades online on Facebook and Instagram, as well as in markets across Perth. *'I want to participate in the workforce, I want to survive in this country. When I feel sick I get support from the other students and from the trainers. It feels like a family. I am able to share this experience with other people in my community and let them know that they too can start a business.'* (FG 2 NEIS)

In the survey (7 respondents), respondents indicated that the program helped them to understand available employment and educational pathways (Figure 31). All respondents indicated that they were likely (four respondents), very likely (one), or certain (two) to continue with further training or education. The program therefore appears to have given participants understanding of the pathways of self-employment, and to have encouraged participants to seek out further avenues of training and employment.

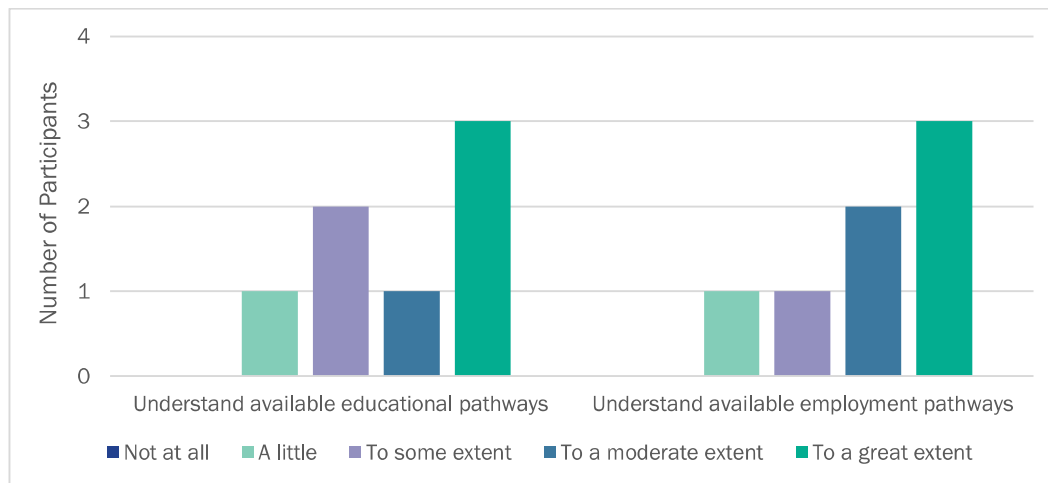


Figure 32: Extent to which the program gave self-employment clarity and understanding around alternative employment pathways (n=7)

Social Connections

An important outcome of the Stream Two NEIS program was the opportunity for participants to extend their social networks and make friendships. In the focus groups, the participants stated that they have developed strong connections with the other participants and with the trainers as well: *'the course became a community of support, it became a family. When someone did not attend we wondered what was happening to them and got in touch.'* (FG 2 NEIS).

Additionally, the program provided an opportunity for participants to learn about different cultures, as stated by one participant: *'before the NEIS program I only socialised with people from my own community. The program opened my eyes to the broader community and now I have friends from everywhere.'* (FG 2 NEIS). They valued the social connection so much that some did not want the program to end: *'when graduation happened I didn't want to graduate because I did not want to be separated from them.'* (FG 2 NEIS).

The trainers commented that women were overrepresented in the project and this offered many of them an opportunity to explore new pathways to participate in society. The program helped women get out of their houses and explore different activities, especially women whose main task had been childrearing and homemaking. Some participants stated: *'I love using my brain again and getting out of the house. I am not just a housewife and wife. I've been feeling very trapped in that role.'* (FG 2 NEIS). The trainers said that some of the women claimed back some control over their lives and were able to define themselves in different ways.

The survey responses echo the findings from the focus groups. Figure 32 shows to what extent the program helped participants socially. Of the 7 survey responses, all felt that the program had helped them feel more confident to actively participate in Australian society, feel more confident in the wider community and feel more hopeful about their future in Australia. Likewise they responded that the program enabled them to meet new people and make new friends.

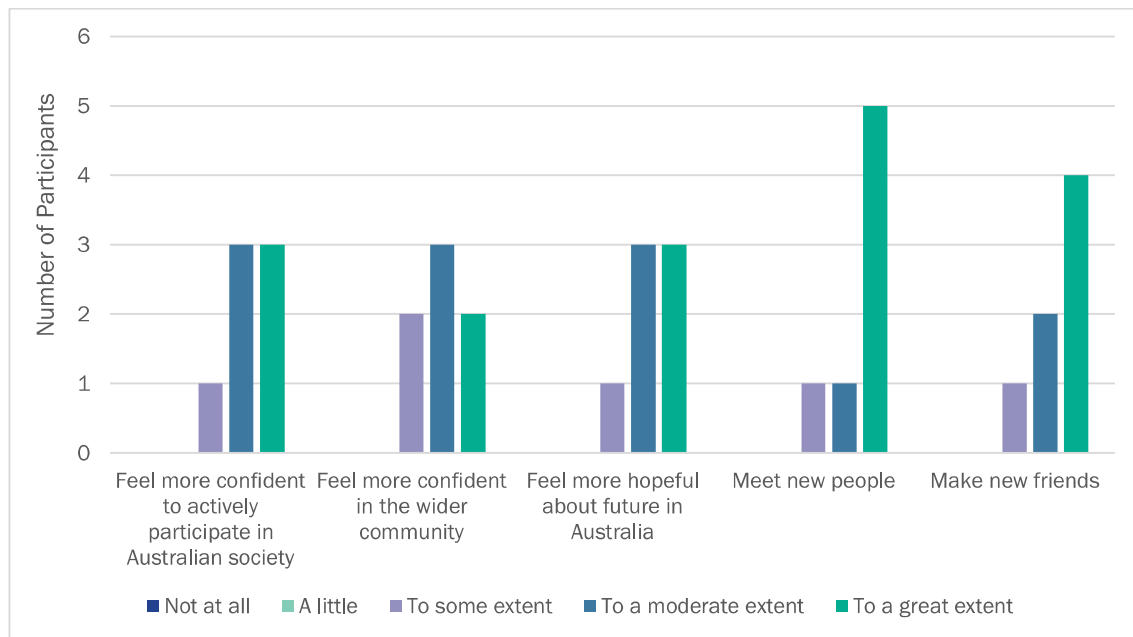


Figure 33: Extent to which the program enabled social connections and feeling of inclusion (n=7)


Conclusion

This Process and Outcome Evaluation demonstrates that the Stream 2 NEIS project was effectively delivered to enable people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to participate in the NEIS program. The project supported people across all stages of the program, and provided practical and psychosocial support to facilitate participation. By incorporating culturally-appropriate modifications to the training material, and modifying program delivery in a number of ways, participants were supported to submit their Business Plans and some progressed to running their businesses in the NEIS program. The program enabled participants to gain enhanced occupational competencies, Australian self-employment experience, have greater clarity around employment and training pathways, and have increased social connections.

In total 58 people participated in the Stream Two NEIS program with a higher training completion rate than the mainstream NEIS program. Although this did not translate into submitted Business Plans and progressing into the formal NEIS program for all participants, it still represents a significant achievement. Of those who did progress, their journeys through the NEIS program show the benefits that a program such as this one can have for people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Additionally, at completion of the program, 8 participants had gone onto employment and a further 4 continued in their training. Therefore, this modified program is a successful enabler of the ultimate outcome that underpins the NEIS program, which is assisting people to work and become independent of welfare.

The pilot phase of the program (pre-Try, Test and Learn support) helped to identify where the mainstream program was failing people in this cohort. It also helped to identify the people who could best be served by a modified pre-NEIS course. It became evident that participants needed to have a good command of English and computer skills to be able to participate effectively in the program. Additionally, it was recognised that people who had been in Australia for a number of years and had existing support networks were better placed to take advantage of the program, in comparison to new arrivals who lacked this support and understanding of the mainstream society.

Recruitment was primarily through MMRC channels and word-of-mouth once the program gained momentum. As with the Stream One programs, recruitment through Jobactive providers was less



successful. Most of the participants were women and this points to the issue that many people (mostly men) were ineligible to join the program because they needed to work to support their families despite being highly motivated to start their own businesses. Future iterations of the program need to address eligibility requirements to address these challenges.

MMRC staff recognised that women from minority communities are disproportionately impacted by cultural expectations. The program was developed to empower participants (predominantly women) both financially and socially. Some were supported to start a business whilst raising their family. Others were able to explore different identities and roles they could have outside of their domestic setting, even if they did not progress to starting their own business. Therefore, the success of the program cannot be merely assessed by the number of businesses that were created. Instead, it is important to consider how the participants' lives were changed and improved through being part of the program. The Outcomes Evaluation presented evidence of the individual stories of impact and change.

Discussions with MMRC and BF staff highlighted the importance of having a collaborative approach across organisations in order to capitalise on resources, ensure efficiency and avoid duplication of activities. In this program a number of organisations participated in different ways. MMRC and BF designed the main elements of the program, but they also tapped into the monthly markets organised by MercyCare, and The City of Stirling provided the Girraween hub and library for program activities. Looking into the future, it is important to explore the intersection of economic and community development. In particular, it is important to see how small businesses can be supported within their communities to get established, for example, by providing access to commercial kitchens (for catering businesses, for example), or providing seed funding to help small businesses get established.

The changing nature of work in Australia is making the NEIS program more important as it is forecast that increasingly people will be self-employed and working under an ABN in the future. Demographically Australia is also changing, with immigration making Australia more culturally diverse. However, a critique often levelled at the NEIS program is that it employs a one-size-fits-all approach and hence has poor participation rates of people from minority backgrounds. The Stream Two NEIS program showed that with suitable modifications (including a tailored, better resourced and slower pre-NEIS training program and culturally-appropriate mentoring support), previously excluded groups can be supported to participate in the NEIS program and thrive. New funding structures need to be explored that support this model which is likely to benefit other cohorts as well, such as people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The impact of this program on the lives of the participants cannot be underestimated with the trainers stating how they saw some of the participants 'blossom' over the duration of the program and feel more connected and integrated within the broader Australian society. In the words of one of the participants: *'I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks and gratitude to all who supported me during this NEIS journey – my trainers [names] and finally MMRC for giving us this opportunity. It is truly a fantastic initiative from MMRC to create this opportunity which is like an oasis of integration in our country.'* (testimonial from MMRC administrative records).



CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There is much evidence that people from refugee and migrants communities can be especially vulnerable to long-term unemployment in Australia, with associated implications on social integration and wellbeing. The MED Project was designed to address this by providing targeted support to enable participants to improve their understanding of working in Australia, gain a number of work-related skills, and improve their social connections and networks. This section reflects on some of the overarching lessons gained from the program.

As illustrated in the preceding evaluation, the MED Project has been successful in achieving the aims of improving employment opportunities, English skills, confidence and social connections of people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. This was addressed through three different projects with very different program models. Each project addressed the overarching aims in distinct ways and was developed to meet the varying needs of the cohorts. Generalisation across all the projects is not possible, however, there are broad observations that can be made.

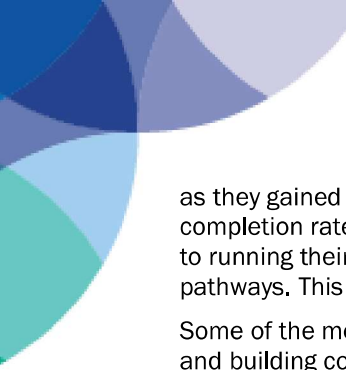
All the projects recruited the target audience (people from refugee or migrant backgrounds), although overwhelmingly more women than men participated. It is evident that this program satisfied a significant need for skill development and social connection within this cohort of women. This also reveals that many people (mostly men) were unable to participate in the program because they needed to work to support their families and hence did not meet the eligibility criteria, despite being highly motivated to participate. Future iterations of the program should address the eligibility requirements in order to have a more balanced representation.

Across all the projects activities were delivered efficiently and, when necessary, modifications were made to improve operations. Having skilled and committed staff who were able to respond quickly and sensitively to changing situations was key to this. This was especially the case when COVID-19 lockdowns meant that program delivery needed to be altered. All projects continued and participants were maintained engaged and motivated. This was reflected in the feedback given, which consistently revealed that participants were very satisfied with the program.

Both Stream One projects addressed the program aims in different ways and illustrated the value of different program components and approaches. For both models the outcome evaluation findings showed that participants gained valuable skills and competencies and gained greater clarity around employment vision and pathways. Regarding Australian work experience, the Southern project had a stronger focus on this since the program model pivoted around experiential learning within a collective enterprise, the WMC. Participants gained hands-on experience working in the WMC, which they could promote within their CVs. This also enabled participants to put their English skills to practical use. Participation in the training activities was fluid, with many people engaging in the program in a more ad hoc manner, and withdrawing to enter employment or education once they felt they had gained enough from the program. The success of the WMC is revealed by the fact that it has continued beyond the life of the MED Project, with several participants continuing engagement.

The Northern project, on the other hand, had a stronger focus on social enterprise and English language training within a classroom setting. Participants were exposed to a richly structured training program with a strong psychosocial component. Participation in the Northern project was stable, with all participants staying for the duration of the training. Participants in this project commented that they would have liked more practical experience, however. English language training was central to the Stream One North project, since most of the cohort had very low English language competency. The specialised training developed by the project partner, North Metropolitan TAFE, was highly valued by the participants and was identified as one of the most important outcomes of the program. The program helped participants to practice their English skills within a supportive environment and end of program assessments revealed that significant improvements were made by most participants.

The Stream Two project was designed to address some of the shortcomings identified in the government's NEIS program that sees very few people from refugee and migrant backgrounds participating. Although the Stream Two project could not be substantially altered, the modifications made to the program enabled successful participation by many participants. This is one of the most significant outcomes of the project, which saw a higher training completion rate than the mainstream NEIS program (as recorded by the RTO training partner Business Futures). Trainers commented that



as they gained more experience delivering the modified pre-NEIS training participation and completion rates improved. An added benefit of the project was that for those who did not progress to running their own business, the project gave them greater clarity about employment and education pathways. This resulted in several participants applying for work or entering further education.

Some of the most important outcomes of the MED Project were around improved social connections and building confidence, as stated by the participants and trainers alike. The program provided a safe space for participants to explore ideas around identity and belonging within the broader Australian society. Social connection is critical to enable refugees and migrants to navigate their new life in Australia. This program gave participants the space to explore this and made them feel like valued members of society.

In conclusion, overwhelmingly participants valued the project and appreciated the training and skills they received: *'The Australian government has done a great thing with this program. It has looked after us.'* (FG 2 South). Many have been encouraged to engage with the wider community and in so doing have improved their confidence and sense that they are valued and productive members of Australian society: *'I feel I'm one of them now.'* (FG 2 South).

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