Program Review –Thematic Summary

WHAT CONSTITUTES EFFECTIVENESS IN LEADING TO A REDUCTION IN LONG-TERM YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT?

Background

A desktop review was undertaken of over 70 organisations across Australia that deliver alternative employment programs for young people. The desktop review involved identifying programs and interpreting available information regarding their definition of effectiveness, as well as their measurement and evaluation practices.

Five themes emerged through the desktop review, which are aligned with SVA's Fundamental Principles for Youth Employment report as well as SVA's Employment Perspectives paper. The five themes will guide the literature review, they are: soft-skills, individualised support, demand-led skills development and job opportunities, integration across systems and preventative approaches.

Below is a thematic summary of how the programs reviewed define effectiveness (through any available evaluations as well as web content) and how their activities align to the themes.

1. Development of soft skills

- Dismantle: build relationships communication, confidence, teamwork, self-esteem, address life goals and experience a sense of community within the program.

- SYC: connectedness, motivation goal setting; personal self-worth.

- Backtrack: self-confidence; social identity; self-determination, improved student behaviour, resilience, engagement and improved community engagement.

- Skilling Australia Foundation talks about the following soft-skills: gaining support in identifying interests and potential career paths, learning how to communicate and present yourself in professional environments, gaining confidence to get public transport, exposure and links to professionals, discipline, punctuality, respect, workplace safety, co-operation, job interview preparation, teamwork, leadership skills, problem-solving skills, taking initiative.

- Career Trackers defines the following skills as effective: Increased professional contacts, confidence, motivation, self-esteem, personal connections, work ethic, preparation for the future, resilience, eagerness, professionalism, attendance/punctuality, time management; relationship building, attention to detail, patience. Career trackers emphasizes the importance of helping internship participants understand the importance of Indigenous perspectives and culture, along with how a strong sense of self is essential for wholesome career development. An emphasis on soft skills development contributes to the development of communication skills, allowing for intern participants to conserve with people from different backgrounds and circumstances.

- Ganbina: increased self-confidence and self-belief; trusted and supported relationships; more positive role models and community leaders; stronger community networks.

- Beacon Foundation: MyRoad Outcomes, and High Impact Program Outcomes are two initiatives which target the development of confidence, resilience, communication skills and meaningful career aspirations; "We've achieved a great deal in this time to support young Australians transition from education to meaningful employment by building connections between industry, educators and the community. (Beacon Foundation, 2018, p. 2)".

- Hands on Learning (Supported by Save the Children): notes the importance of intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, and self-management skills for the development on vulnerable students, http://handsonlearning.org.au/cutting-edge-ongoing-evaluation/.

2. Individualised support

A key finding from 'Education to employment: designing a system that works' (McKinsey and Company, 2012) is that the best transition programs involve employers and education providers working with their students early and intensely.

- Dismantle: mentoring: individualised support, holistic, wrap-around support, providing young people with practical skills that can be translated into relevant industry.

- AIME: 1:1 mentoring support.

- STREAT: wrap-around support including individual case management, linkages to other specialist service providers (drug and alcohol, mental health, housing services), group life skills programs and creative and social activities.

- Skilling Australia Foundation: offers an intensive 3-week job-readiness program developing essential 'soft skills' of participants to set the foundations for the 12-month mentored traineeship or work placement.

3. Demand-led skills development and job opportunities

Relevant, meaningful and authentic interventions that lead to real job opportunities.

- Dismantle: Build practical hands on skills.

- SYC: Sustained employment, work readiness skills.

- Skilling Foundation: work readiness skills, gain skills and knowledge required to succeed in the workforce of the 21st century and ultimately to secure sustained ongoing employment, knowledge and skills development.

- Career Trackers: job readiness skills, knowledge and experience, business/ professional writing skills. Offers an Internship program - with fortnightly and monthly contact/ meetings with a student advisor; ongoing networking activities; access to scholarships and other financial support; job training and workshops.

- STREAT: hospitality programs including accredited Cert II courses and work experience programs. We also provide workplace training and mentoring across our cafés, kitchens and bakery.

4. Integrated approach

Working alongside other systems such as education, health, training, youth justice and defining success as achieving better outcomes in these areas. A key finding from McKinsey and Company (2012) is that employers, education providers and youth live in parallel universes.

- Backtrack: school suspension rate, legal issues, education, employment. Offers a 3-week job-readiness program developing essential 'soft skills' of participants to set the foundations for the 12 month mentored traineeship or work placement.

- STREAT: housing: assistance and support in finding a safe and long term place to live through partnerships with a wide range of housing services across Melbourne.

- Ganbina: increased knowledge of education and employment and increased access to job opportunities - > Year 11 and 12 retention rates; Year 12 completion rates; university participation; increased transition to further education/ training; increased employment and labour force participation levels; increased economic participation and social integration of young Indigenous people.

5. Preventative approaches

- White Lion: risk prevention workshops in schools and communities; mobile outreach services.

- South West Connect: aim is to reduce and ultimately prevent youth suicide; to remove the stigma of mental illness and create a supportive and inclusive community.

- AIME: preventative approach; mentoring initiatives are intended to minimize the risk of employment/educational/community disengage.

- Dismantle: preventative approach; proactively seeks to engage young people in programs to minimize the risk of disengagement.