Indigenous Cadetship Support Program Evaluation 2019–20

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Overview

The Indigenous Cadetship Support (ICS) program was designed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tertiary students to complete their undergraduate degree and progress into ongoing employment.

The purpose of the evaluation is to measure the effectiveness of the previous ICS and current TAEG-cadetship programs.

The evaluation will also provide an evidence base to inform future directions of Cadetship activities. It is anticipated the evaluation will be undertaken in two phases – the first phase will report by
15 January 2020 and the second phase final evaluation report will be completed by March 2020.

Background

The Australian Government has supported Indigenous Cadetships since 1999. The Indigenous Cadetship Support (ICS) program was previously delivered under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) – Jobs Land and Economy Programme (JLEP) as a standalone program.

On 1 January 2018, the ICS program ceased and transitioned to the Tailored Assistance Employment Grants (TAEG). This provided a more streamlined model for the delivery of Indigenous Cadetships, and brought Cadetship funding in line with IAS requirements. Prior to transition under TAEG, the ICS program had individual Cadetship agreements for 537 Indigenous students with 68 employers.

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) was established on 1 July 2019. Prior to this, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) delivered the functions of the Agency.

The program

The ICS/TAEG-Cadetships is a national program, however, the majority of Cadets are based in Queensland, New South Wales/ACT and Western Australia. The objectives of the program are to improve the professional employment prospects of Indigenous tertiary students by supporting them to complete their undergraduate degree and transition into guaranteed employment.

Description of the program

Cadets undertake full-time academic study, during which the employer disburses a study allowance directly to the Cadet. The employer provides no less than 12 weeks of paid work each calendar year. The employer uses 'best endeavours' to provide the Cadet with the opportunity of full-time employment on successful completion of their course of study.

Under the Cadetship program, payments of up to $14,100 (GST incl.) per annum, per cadet, are provided to the employer comprising:

- up to $12,000 Study Allowance – passed on to the Cadet as a regular income during their study

- $1,000 Book and Equipment Allowance – passed on to Cadet in full at the beginning of each year
- up to $1,100 Administrative Allowance – to cover costs related to administering the Cadetship.

Employers pass the Study, Book and Equipment allowances directly on to the Cadet, but retain the administrative allowance.

ICS/TAEG-Cadets payments are not means tested. Students receiving scholarships and other forms of financial incentives to attend university are eligible to participate.

Pathways into the program

Under the former ICS program, there were two entry pathways into the program:

1. Students, universities and employers registered their details on a website (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet). Parties were able to engage with each other to discuss Cadetship opportunities and apply directly for Cadetship funding.
2. A third-party provider promoted the ICS activity to universities and employers, and facilitated a connection between them. Cadets signed an agreement with the provider, which was submitted to the department before the Cadetship commenced.

Under the new TAEG-cadets program, employers are able to apply for Cadetship funding through the Tailored Assistance Employment Grants process.

Interested students search for Cadetship vacancies, as they would other employment opportunities. Employers and third-party providers can advertise Cadetship opportunities and/or take referrals from Indigenous support centres in universities.

Potential applicants are encouraged to discuss their proposal with their local NIAA Regional Network office before preparing an application.

Evaluation objective

This evaluation will help provide evidence-based policy advice as to the effectiveness of meeting the program's objectives and inform policy makers about possible future improvements to a Cadetship program.

	Evaluation objective	Description
1	Understand the design and implementation	Understand how the Cadetship program has been designed and how it has been implemented
2	Understand the impact	Understand the outcomes of the Cadetship program and the factors that influence these outcomes
3	Understand the policy implications and potential for future impact	Understand how a Cadetship program supports Indigenous participation in education, the workforce and career development/progression

Evaluation questions

Evaluation	Evaluation questions		Sub-questions
1. Understand the design and implementation	1.1	How has the program been implemented?	- Which universities and employers have facilitated/provided Cadetships? - How are Indigenous secondary/tertiary students, universities and prospective employers made aware of the Cadetship? - How much funding has been allocated to the program and what is the unit cost per participant? How does this compare to programs with a similar aim? - What added value (if any) do third-party providers bring to the program?
	1.2	How was the program designed?	To what extent have Indigenous Australians, employers and universities been involved in the design and implementation of the program? What effect did this have on the program relevance?
2. Understand the impact	2.1	Who are the Cadets and what variables impact on their success or otherwise?	- What motivates participants and employers to take part in the program? - What is the educational attainment and employment outcomes of Cadets? Did they complete their degree? If not, at what point did they drop out and why? Did they obtain employment on graduation and if so with whom? How does this compare to non-cadet Indigenous dropout rates? - How do outcomes vary by participant subgroup – age, location, level of disadvantage, area of study, and employment model? - What is the rate of participation in the full 12-week work placement, and what issues affect participation? What is the relationship between participation in the 12-week work placement and participant's educational and employment outcomes? - Which students are more likely to participate in the program? Which students are not accessing the program? How do variables such as study area, gender, and location effect the extent to which students access the program? - What is the relationship between the model used by universities/employers/third party providers to identify, recruit and support cadets, and the level of satisfaction and/or outcomes achieved by participants?
	2.2	To what extent did the program meet the needs and expectations of participants and stakeholders?	What are participant's and employers' experience with the minimum 12-week work placement? What is the average work placement? What are the issues/successes around work placements?

Evaluation Purpose		Evaluation questions	Sub-questions
			• To what extent was the program design relevant to the needs of Indigenous students? • What is the overall level of satisfaction by participants/universities/employers/providers in the program? What factors influence participant/employer satisfaction?
	2.3	Which universities have been most successful in engaging and retaining Cadets?	• How do the universities support their Indigenous cohorts more broadly and Cadets specifically? • Does the university have a Cadetship intake into employment? If so, have they employed Cadets through the ICS/TAEG-cadets program? • How do universities promote Cadetships and utilise Cadets as role models? • Are Cadets eligible for other financial support from the university? • Is there a best practice model that other universities could replicate?
	2.4	Which employers have been most successful in engaging and retaining Cadets?	• How do employers support their Indigenous employees during the work placement? • What specific career advancement opportunities do they provide Cadets/Indigenous employees? • How do outcomes vary by participant and between direct employer and third party provider models? • How many Cadets are placed into graduate employment programs? • Is there a best practice model that other employers could replicate? • What percentage of employers are government – local, state and federal?
3.1 Understand the policy implications and potential for future impact	3.1	What do the outcomes tell us about the efficiency and effectiveness of this program?	• How can the funding model be improved? (For example, could the same outcomes have been achieved with less funding? Could additional resources have enhanced the program outcomes? If so, how? • How can the chances of continued employment and career progression be improved? • What improvements can be made to the collection of data for future evaluation?
	3.2	How does the program compare/relate to other programs?	• What evidence is there about the effectiveness of similar international/national programs? • What other programs could Cadetships leverage off to support Indigenous participation in education, workforce participation and career development/progression?

Evaluation methods and design

The ICS/TEAG-Cadets evaluation should align with the principles of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy Evaluation Framework.[1] The methodology should provide insights to help inform future improvements to the program. The evaluation should focus on a minimum five-year period before the ICS transitioned under TAEG, and offerings under TAEG-cadets since 1 January 2018.

Literature review

A literature review will help address the evaluation questions, specifically at 3.1 – Understand the policy implications and potential for future impact.

Data sources

Prior to transition under TAEG, the ICS program had individual Cadetship agreements for 537 Indigenous students with 68 employers. Data relating to these Cadetships was held in the Employment Services System (ESS) managed by the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business. The data is available in Qlik and can be accessed by NIAA staff.

Other data sources include:

- Commencement Advice Forms
- Acquittal Advice Forms
- Employment Services Outcomes Report – JLEP
- Post Placement Monitoring surveys
- Australian Government Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business employment services (e.g. *jobactive*, Transition to Work ParentsNext, if relevant)
- Relevant Australian Government data linkage projects (if available).

Qualitative research

The evaluation is expected to include some qualitative research through interviews using a sampling approach appropriate for answering the Evaluation questions at Section 4.

Quantitative research

The evaluation is also expected to include some quantitative analysis of existing admin data.

The data

Sources provide data relating to:

- contact details for:
  – employers, and names of universities who have or are delivering ICS/TAEG-cadets
  – current and/or past cadets of the ICS/TAEG-cadets program
  – the NIAA Regional Network (as required)

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[1] Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Indigenous Advancement Strategy Evaluation Framework

- available data on ICS/TAEG-cadets participants drawn from the Employment Services System (ESS) QLIK to identify:

  – name, gender, date of birth and contact details at time of commencement of the Cadetship

  – qualification data including commencement date; expected finish date; subjects studied; university name; residential, semester and workplace address; expected degree completion date

  – Cadetship participation data including if the Cadetship ceased or completed; reason for cessation including employment by work-placement employer or other employer, termination by organisation, commencement of additional study, resignation by cadet or other (free text comment)

  – employer data including employer's name, address and phone number; payment details; job placement (limited information)

- ICS/TAEG-cadets program documents including application policies e.g. eligibility requirements, operational and application guidelines and procedural documents.

Stakeholders and their roles

Governance

The Evaluation Advisory Group (EAG) will provide oversight of the ICS/TAEG-cadets evaluation project. The EAG will consist of officers from NIAA's Employment Program Evolution Team, the Information and Evaluation Branch and Indigenous representation (e.g. an Indigenous staff member).

Stakeholders	Role in the evaluation
Consultant	• Conduct the evaluation
Employment Program Evolution Team	• Manage the consultant's contract and the evaluation project • Provide access to data including participant details, employer and university contacts
Evaluation Advisory Group	• Provide advice on the draft strategy, literature review, project plan and ethics documentation
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Network	• Provide advice on the draft strategy, project plan and ethics documentation
Universities	• Provide information about how they promote/support Cadetships and the type of support offered to Indigenous students more broadly
Employers	• Provide information about how they promote Cadetships and the type of support offered to Indigenous students • Provide data around employment, retention and career progression
Third-party providers (e.g. CareerTrackers and AFL Sports Ready)	• Provide information about how they promote Cadetships and the type of support offered to Indigenous students • Provide data around employment

Cadets	• Provide information about their experience in the Cadetship program and their employment opportunities and future career prospects

Ethics

Ethics approval

Contractors will be expected to seek ethics approval from the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) or another formally registered Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) – if appropriate – to comply with relevant ethical guidelines.

The contractor will be required to provide a draft Ethical Clearance Proposal and Participant Informed Consent Form to the EAG prior to submission. Planning timeframes will need to consider timing of the sitting of the Ethics Committee.

Considerations include:

- De-identification of data and storage of data over time
- Confidentiality in data collection
- How to deliver research findings back to the research participants e.g. community stakeholders.

Timing and deliverables

Date	Phase 1 Deliverables
30 September 2019	Consultant commences
11 October 2019	Refined Evaluation Strategy and Project Plan submitted
16 October 2019	Seek Ethics approval for evaluation; commence Literature Review and quantitative data analysis
8 November 2019	Outcomes of Literature Review submitted
16 November 2019	Following ethics approval Consultant commences qualitative work
15 January 2020	Consultant presents early findings to the EAG
	Phase 2 Deliverables
14 February 2020	Draft results of Evaluation submitted to the EAG
13 March 2020	Final results of Evaluation submitted
27 March 2020	Contract ends

Acronyms

Acronym	Description
AIATSIS	Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ESS	Employment Services System
EAG	Evaluation Advisory Group
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
IAS	Indigenous Advancement Strategy
ICS	Indigenous Cadetship Support
IEP	Indigenous Employment Programme
JLEP	Jobs Land and Economy Programme
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
PM&C	Prime Minister and Cabinet
TAEG	Tailored Assistance Employment Grants
EMP	Employment Programme Evolution