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EAST KIMBERLEY  
**JOB PATHWAYS**

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**Indigenous Skills, Engagement  
and Employment Program  
(ISEP) Discussion Paper**

**EAST KIMBERLEY JOB PATHWAYS RESPONSE**

## About East Kimberley Job Pathways

East Kimberley Job Pathways (EKJP) is a leading Aboriginal controlled for purpose community development organisation, empowering communities throughout the broader East Kimberley region. Our programs and services aspire to improve lives and transform communities by providing pathways for people to fully participate in society. We connect communities, strengthen relationships and networks, celebrate and protect culture, and give meaning to peoples' lives. We do things *with* people, not to or for them. We give people control of their decisions and we respect local knowledge.

East Kimberley Job Pathways was established in 2013 to deliver the federally funded Community Development Program in our region. Our objectives include:

- Providing and promoting avenues to education, training, employment, and business creation opportunities for unemployed people;
- Tailoring employment solutions to our key business and industry groups;
- Working with communities to improve social cohesion and advance ongoing community growth and development;
- Supporting the maintenance and protection of Aboriginal culture and traditions; and
- Advising people in our region in relation to support services available and facilitating advocacy on their behalf.

In December of 2018, EKJP achieved certification against ISO:9001 Quality Management Systems, ensuring our systems and processes are robust enough to withstand changes to our services, and to unearth and develop the opportunities that change presents.

## Discussion questions on the future of IAS funded Indigenous-specific employment programs

How should the Indigenous Skills, Engagement and Employment Program (ISEP) work alongside the new employment services model and the new remote engagement program to build work-ready skills and connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to rewarding, sustainable jobs?

- NIAA is interested in stakeholders' views on whether Indigenous-specific employment investment should target specific cohorts, transition points, regions, industries, barriers, etc.

Currently, EKJP does not have an understanding of the new Employment Service Model, due to the lack of information released, and as such, it is difficult to provide advice on how this program might interface and work alongside ISEP. However, from EKJP's experience in delivering the CDP program, it is clear that a place-based approach to the delivery of employment services that can leverage rather than duplicate is vital to deliver sustainable employment outcomes.

In practice, EKJP collaborates with VTEC and other service providers, as well as the broader community. This is driven in part by the need to avoid duplication and confusion of Job Seekers and is an attempt to provide holistic wrap-around services. For EKJP, it is also driven by the strong belief that collaboration is the best way to support our Job Seekers and clients.

There is diversity amongst the unemployed, including varying levels of skills, ability and capacity to work. Notwithstanding the many barriers and challenges that unemployed Aboriginal people living remotely experience every day.

### COHORT SNAPSHOT

Cohorts in Employment System	Complex barriers impacting ability to work		Limited work-ready ability – experiencing some barriers to employment success		Work Ready needing some support to maintain employment up to 26weeks	
	<b>BARRIERS</b>	<b>SOLUTIONS</b>	<b>BARRIERS</b>	<b>SOLUTIONS</b>	<b>BARRIERS</b>	<b>SOLUTIONS</b>
<b>Identified Support Needs</b>	Drug and alcohol challenges	Activities that encourage engagement and build confidence - social and emotional towards a working future	Social and emotional barriers	Setting / re-assessing work goals	Employer's lack of knowledge culturally sensitive workplace	Build a guide for employers on hiring and working with Aboriginal people
	Complex family and cultural challenges		Dealing with cultural differences	Managing challenges inside / outside the workplace	Lack of suitable housing options	Worker support navigator-mentoring
	Lack of work readiness skills		Managing money	Targeted placed based training that meets local demands	Some social barriers to overcome – including money management	Employer mentoring/culturally appropriate workplace/working and supporting long term unemployed
	Lack of job opportunities that support complex needs	Services that work with individuals to address complex	Housing issues	Choosing the right		
			Lack of driver license and			

	Lack of safe and affordable housing	issues – wrap around	transport issues	job/training option	Driver licenses and transport issues	Focused placed-based approach to addressing driver license issues
	Lack motivation	Source work opportunities and match people to these- placed-based approach	Challenges to access ID	Maintain CDP focus on case management approach to supporting Jobseekers		Work experience placements

**NB: Not a comprehensive list of barriers or solutions**

Industry and business needs and expectations also greatly vary, and regions have challenges and opportunities that are unique to them. The Kimberley region is a classic example of how diversity can impact the one-size-fits-all program design. For example, places like Broome and Kununurra have strong industry base and growth opportunities, where towns like Wyndham and Halls Creek have fewer and limited opportunities. When you consider remote Aboriginal communities, this brings another layer of complexity to the diverse spectrum.

It is recommended that with these challenges any employment program design should enable targeted place-based strategies that can achieve longer-term employment outcomes, and, importantly, place Aboriginal people on the pathway to success. Further, there should be a strong emphasis on partnering and collaboration to ensure integration of employment programs - to avoid duplication and confusion for Job Seekers and clients. Importantly, this would also provide the ability for clients and Job Seekers to have a choice about the types of programs they engage with.

It will be fundamentally important that the language used in program design, reporting and measuring be adjusted to speak from a strength-based perspective and can acknowledge the diversity that exists.

EKJP supports the interim evaluation findings and believes the strategies highlighted below should be encompassed in any program design.

- *a flexible approach: local approaches are required for effective delivery of Indigenous programs that can adapt to region-specific needs;*
- *high quality mentoring and wrap-around services: mentoring is crucial to overcoming participants' barriers to employment in a supportive manner;*
- *devolution of decision-making and governance structures: the delivery of services in partnership with the local Indigenous community;*
- *upfront investment in job readiness: the importance of connections with local services, as well as the need to be responsive to requirements at various stages of the participant's journey and local labour market conditions; and*
- *culturally appropriate workplaces: employers need to take responsibility for this, not solely the employee, service provider or dedicated Human Resources units*

### How could IAS investment be designed to be more flexible and responsive at the regional level, and better meet the needs of the community for Indigenous Job Seekers and employers?

- NIAA is interested in stakeholders' views on more flexible investment that builds on success factors and leverages partnerships and other investments at the local level, including partnerships and opportunities for co-investment with industry.

Enhanced opportunities for locally-driven initiatives are required, and NIAA should have the capacity locally to be responsive to that need. As discussed previously the factors and diversity of job seekers and regions call for placed based partnerships and investment to see proactive approaches and outcomes specific to regions/demographics etc

Leveraging funds for place-based activities and programs is vital to support local success, and NIAA local offices can play a key role in bringing services together in and around regional priorities and assist in driving employment and engagement outcomes. This approach will support partnerships and avoid duplication.

Importantly, any new employment program should have the ability for flexible contractual obligations in service delivery - this would enable alignment with regional priorities, particularly those set by Empowered Communities and labour force needs.

### How should results of the new ISEP program be measured, monitored and evaluated to ensure investment contributes to closing the gap in employment outcomes?

- NIAA is interested in stakeholders' views on how Indigenous-specific employment investment should be monitored and meaningful data collected and made accessible to demonstrate clear outcomes.

Any new measurement tool should not be overly administrative and cumbersome, distracting from the core role of working with people. Key points:

- Focus on people, not the 26-week outcome – it is clear that many placed in work do not achieve the 26-week outcome, even with incentives to the employers
- Collect data that relates to the individuals that are easy to capture and document
- Case studies that reflect practice – data does not always tell the story of what is happening on the ground
- Increase qualitative examples of outcomes (NIAA should view services on the ground it is often difficult to tell stories of service delivery)
- More face-to-face dialogue with service providers that talk about success and challenges in delivering programs (service reviews that are conducted in person, not data-led)
- Develop measures that reflect the personal growth of an individual – not necessarily centred on employment tenure

### How can we embed shared-decision making in community-based workforce planning?

- NIAA is interested in identifying the opportunities for partnerships with appropriate stakeholders in the employment space, and how shared decision-making can be best facilitated, for example through community-based workforce planning.

Changing labour markets driven by external forces such as COVID-19 and diversity of regional priorities make planning challenging. A proactive approach calls for locally-driven shared decision making and efforts that encourage and support place-based decisions to occur.

This approach could be facilitated through service delivery contracts that require providers to collaborate and partner, thus avoiding duplication and strengthening local responses. These approaches should be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively to drive outcomes.

Effective relationship with NIAA is vital to building more effective programs. The NIAA should take a leading role in driving place-based solutions and engagement. This should be measured through 360-degree feedback on the effectiveness of the department to support local collaboration processes.

### How can the ISEP encourage potential employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide safe and culturally appropriate work environments? How can employers' better value the skills and perspectives of Indigenous employees?

- NIAA is interested in understanding how all employers, including Indigenous employers and SMEs, can be supported to further employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Ideally, funds should be invested in the establishment of a service that directly supports businesses in building their capacity and ability to employ Aboriginal people or the long term unemployed.

Elements of this service could include:

- Financial support to attend cross-cultural programs
- Support the development of locally-based cross-cultural training packages suitable for small business
- One on one business support to employers of long term unemployed mentoring similar to current post-placement support
- How to guide/tools for Working with the long-term unemployed - what does success look like, what are things as an employer you could do to improve job experiences, pitfalls and building trust and confidence of long-term unemployed staff

### How should the ISEP consider a local focus?

- NIAA is interested in stakeholders' views on whether defined boundaries are required for the ISEP, or whether applicants for funding under the ISEP are best placed to determine the local region within the context of a specific funding proposal?

Proponents are best placed to define regions particularly if they are local Aboriginal organisations. The economy of scale and better use of resources can likely be achieved by larger boundary areas. However, options should be available for smaller organisations that are locally based to respond to ISEP funding.

A key component of funding criteria must recognise local organisations. It is these organisations that have the local contexts and are best placed to deliver services to local people.