

Employment Branch

National Indigenous Australians Agency,

Charles Perkins House,

GPO Box 2191

CANBERRA ACT 2601

Via Email: ISEP@niaa.gov.au

NEW INDIGENOUS SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION PAPER

Dear Sir/Madam,

· RISE (Remote Indigenous Sustainable Enterprises) Ventures is a high-quality provider of CDP services in Katherine in Northern Territory, and Kowanyama/Pormpuraaw. RISE Ventures proactively engages with Indigenous partner organisations to deliver CDP services in Joint Venture arrangements across a number of remote regions and Indigenous communities . We feel that our cross-cultural partnerships model for CDP service delivery provides a dynamic framework for intercultural learning, organisational growth and the attainment of sustainable social impact outcomes.

· RISE Community Art provides an e-commerce marketplace for Indigenous artists in remote Australia to showcase and sell their Art. Rise Art is a registered charity and 100% of all sales revenue is received by the artist which is industry leading and represents an opportunity for Indigenous artists to actively engage in the digital economy in a safe and supported manner.

General Comments

RISE Ventures is firmly committed to improving social and economic outcomes for Indigenous Australians. Flexible and responsive program initiatives that encapsulate community-based, shared decision-making processes and provide the ability to facilitate bespoke responses to market opportunities should be welcomed and encouraged. We feel that ISEP provides the potential to do this and we welcome the opportunity to provide input into the co-design and consultation process.

Indigenous skills, Engagement and Employment Program (ISEP)

1. *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?*

- Access and mobility for jobseekers across mainstream and remote employment service programs needs to be facilitated via structured, facilitated touchpoints. These linkages may be facilitated through accessing specialized service gateways that cross over urban, regional and remote programs. This will enhance Indigenous workforce mobility outcomes and enable jobseekers more flexibility to look for employment opportunities outside of their geographic region or those specific to their nominated provider. Targeted, multi-jurisdictional employment opportunities, customised for Indigenous jobseekers could be developed, supported and facilitated through ISEP funded projects that encapsulate collaboration between remote, regional and urban based employment service providers and employer groups. This kind of approach will facilitate improved workforce mobility for remote Indigenous jobseekers and provide opportunity for remote Indigenous jobseekers to connect to employment opportunities outside of their geographic locations in a structured and supported manner.

2. *How could Indigenous Advance Strategy (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?*

- Reestablishment of Community Action Plans as the cornerstone process for community engagement, community based strategic planning, shared decision making, identification and prioritization of regional goals and key performance indicators. Through the very nature of the Community Action Plan (CAP) process, regional flexibility and responsiveness to regional needs is ensured as the CAP is an inclusive process that encapsulates input from multiple community-based stakeholder groups. CAP's clearly articulate community aspirations, embedding shared decision making in a formative process that then guides and informs program delivery and will ensure clear alignments for any ISEP / IAS funded activities and projects. As part of the CAP process, Regional Workforce Development Strategies should also be developed and implemented.

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

- Many remote and regional employment markets are subject to seasonal and ad hoc external factors that influence and determine overall employment outcomes. These include: Wet Season shutdowns due to inaccessibility and cessation of service delivery, predominance of transient short-term projects in the civil and construction sectors, cultural factors, seasonalised employment opportunities, changes to funding and service delivery frameworks. As these factors are largely not controllable or able to be influenced by the community and/or Providers, randomised regional employment targets that are only based on part-time and full-time employment outcomes become unobtainable and somewhat irrelevant. A more holistic approach to the measurement of employment outcomes, such as “total hours in work / total hours in employment” that is inclusive of casualised and short-term, ad hoc, short-term and seasonalised employment outcomes needs to be considered, developed and incorporated into future approaches to training and employment program development for remote indigenous jobseeker cohorts.
- Key performance Indicators that are aligned to the negotiated goals of a formalised Community Action Plan will give a strong indication of the holistic achievement of agreed target outcomes that have been made on a shared decision-making basis with community based stakeholders. ISEP projects should align with CAP goals and the achievement of identified community aspirations
- A mechanism for Social Impact Analysis as part of ongoing evaluation methodologies. This could be supported through ISEP / IAS funding to build capacity for regionally based Social Impact Assessment capabilities for local Aboriginal and/or related stakeholder organisations (such as Regional Councils / ACCHO’s etc.)

4. *How can we embed shared-decision making in community-based workforce planning?*

- Re-establishment of Regional Workforce Development Strategies (RWDS) as part of a coordinated, community-based, culturally informed, workforce development approach.
- Articulation and formation of localised RWDS will enhance and augment program delivery across a range of funding areas. RWDS embeds shared decision through ongoing consultation with key stakeholder groups, setting agreed targets and measurable outcomes and through the identification and prioritising of regional employment opportunities.
- Linkages with the identified and agreed goals and objectives of the RWDS will support and inform ISEP funding applications, Remote Jobs Program service delivery and guide regional approaches to community development
- RWDS to be embedded and supported as part of ongoing Community Action Plan formation and monitoring processes.

5. 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?

Published research indicates that the inter-cultural environment of mainstream Australian workplaces requires many Indigenous employees to display high levels of cultural agility to achieve successful employment and retention outcomes. For Indigenous peoples in remote areas, many of whom value the continuation and practice of culturally rich traditional lifestyles, this central issue is of critical importance when viewed within the practicalities of a vocational context. The implications of these studies support the notion that widespread government initiatives to increase Indigenous employment are unlikely to result in sustained increases in employment and retention unless inter-cultural considerations are given due attention. As such, ISEP should encapsulate and enable a structured, supported approach for Providers to work with and assist regional employers to build Aboriginal Cultural Capability within their organisations in a measurable and quantifiable manner.

Cultural capability is a broad term that encompasses cultural awareness, cultural safety and cultural competence. Cultural capability is not achieved after one training session or at a single end-point but represents continuous learning that builds over time. ISEP employer initiatives could be based on a recognised theoretical framework, such as Bhabha's "Third Space Theory" which articulates the development of culturally safe, intercultural organisational frameworks that recognise and value all cultural values and provides validity and structure for intercultural learning. Specific ISEP employer initiatives could be inclusive of the following elements:

- Cultural safety is developed and promoted as an organisational value and is negotiated with local Aboriginal communities.
- Policies and procedures are reviewed and refreshed based on Aboriginal staff and community feedback and are aligned with Closing the Gap and self-determination principles.
- Local Aboriginal communities and the organisation negotiate strategic approaches, goals and outcomes that are articulated and documented as part of the Community Action Plan.
- The organisation has systems to determine current proficiency and capability levels and to identify a learning or development plan based on the organisations learning needs.
- The Commonwealth public sector Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Map has broken cultural capabilities into: knowing; doing; and being. It is recommended that a similar tool be developed to assist employers chart the development of their own organisational journey along the ATSI Cultural Capability continuum.

6. How should the ISEP consider a local focus?

Community Action Plans (CAP's) should be reintroduced as a key feature of regional planning processes:


Through CAPs, communities have a central role and a strong voice in setting out a strategic vision for each remote region. These CAPs will guide delivery of the Remote Jobs Programs (RJP) and regionalised ISEP projects in line with the needs and aspirations of communities. Providers will ensure that activities undertaken under their Funding Agreements with the Australian Government align with and support the region's CAP. Each CAP will outline the priorities for social and economic participation and development for the region, as well as an agreed plan of action to achieve the wider objectives of regional stakeholders.

The CAP's will have three key sections:

1. **Community Engagement and Consultation:** Ensures that communities are at the centre of the CAP process; outlines the governance and ongoing engagement arrangements between the community and the RJP / ISEP Provider.
2. **Regional Profile:** Identifies social, cultural and geographical issues that may be unique to the region as well as current opportunities for and barriers to economic participation, development and employment in the region; and also indicates how opportunities may be built on or barriers removed.
3. **Priorities and Action:** Describes the high-level priorities for the region; outlines what Providers and communities will each do to deliver the region's priorities; and how the achievement against the priorities will be measured. This section will guide program and project delivery, including ensuring that ISEP projects and RJP activities are consistent with the CAP.

Through the CAP process, Providers will in consultation with the communities, conduct a comprehensive assessment of the region to identify:

- the demographics of the region and the communities within it
- the employment and development opportunities that exist in the region and the barriers to participation and employment (skills gaps or social disengagement)
- the communities' employment, economic and community-development goals
- existing infrastructure in the communities
- service gaps, economic and social issues and needs
- communities' unique issues, and the strategies and resources required to address these


Chief Executive Officer
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