



Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP)

to replace the

Vocational Training and Employment Centres (VTEC), Tailored Assistance
Employment Grants (TAEG) and Employment Parity Initiative (EPI)

RESPONSE TO DISCUSSION PAPER

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Real Futures Pty Ltd
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Real Futures Pty Ltd is an Aboriginal Supply Nation Certified company who has been operational for 10 years. Our Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer have a combined Indigenous employment program history of over 50 years.

Our flagship company Pathways to the Pilbara successfully created a labour market supply chain on the east coast for the resource sector in the west under the Indigenous Employment Program and with collaborative support from the Job Service providers and Industry specific RTOs. The flow on effects can still be seen today with those workers transferring their skills to other industries, business creation, relocation, or staying in FIFO.

The results of economic inclusion were blatantly obvious with families becoming prosperous from hard earned wages, controlling/stopping substance abuse to pass pre-employment medicals and an opportunity to use the many skills acquired when Aboriginal people were being bombarded with training initiatives that were not linked to employment.

Real Futures are VTEC, DES and CDP providers placing over 5000 Aboriginal job seekers into work. We are responding from an earned and honourable position embedded in our communities, delivering on promise, always from a local perspective putting our people first. We know and understand the differing needs of our people when entering a job pathway and how critical economic inclusion is to families and communities. It underpins access to services and action that affect health, housing, education and childcare and has a profound social impact because an income can buy freedom of choice.

We work under strict, respectful Cultural ethics and many large employers seek our advice and Cultural Training to prevent or overcome difficulties and make their workplace Culturally safe and their team Culturally aware.

Real Futures have a long history working in rural, regional, and remote communities and have trusted relationships with various industry groups we have partnered to increase their Indigenous participation and offer entry level jobs.

The challenge has always been negotiating long term sustainable work and motivating local people about the benefits of reducing social and economic dependency.

We worked successfully under the original VTEC contract with remuneration after 26 weeks of continual employment. This meant that our aspirants had to be well prepared for work, understood workplace expectations, their families were prepared and that we had negotiated sustainable long-term positions with the employer if we were to receive payment for our efforts.

Mentoring and any family-based support was available 24/7 through our ROOs (Reach Out Officers). Incentives to stay in work were also life incentives and included technology to stay connected and keep a budget app. At the completion of 26 weeks, we helped to prepare documentation to consolidate debts and/or apply for a car or housing loan with the budget app.

SWEAT EQUITY

It is important to note that Real Futures VTECs have worked closely with JA providers for the past 10 years. Since the contracts changed and required more evidence of "brokered" roles VTECs were no longer able to claim jobseekers that commenced work with a JA brokered role (JA/employer relationship). The Jobseeker was a mutual client and the JA relationship with employer was respected, the VTEC provided or assisted onboarding resources and support and ongoing mentoring because we are connected to our communities and Indigenous job seekers and had partnerships with JAs. In reverse, JAs can claim VTEC brokered employment outcomes without needing the evidence that VTEC has to provide. This, I believe has influenced the % of VTEC successes and there are locations where many outcomes were never claimed.

Unclaimed outcomes also occurred when a service stream cap was met but VTEC relationships with employers meant service streams without an outcome payment available were still referred and started to maintain our relationships.

The future of IAS funded Indigenous-specific employment programs

UTILISE PREVIOUS AND CURRENT INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Over the last 20 years various Commonwealth Departments held responsible for numerous Indigenous employment programs. Whilst no program was seen to be 100% successful in its own right – collectively they provided a very strong model on what can be achieved. Those programs include the (IWS) Indigenous wage subsidy, Indigenous Employment Policy – the (STEP) Structured Training and Employment Program. This program was very effective in supporting Indigenous employment at the local and national levels, with outcome-based contracts directly with employers or providers to meet needs of industry, regional or specified regional, local and national demands.

Contracts brought together Indigenous participants, employers, specific industries with different funding levels for direct employment, traineeships, and apprenticeships. This also stopped the endless cycle of training for training sake – as training support funding was provided that directly led to an employment outcome.

In addition to these outcomes, where larger national employers committed to employing Indigenous staff, part of the funding requirements also provide requirements where employers needed to demonstrate their current culturally safe work places and would be required to further develop this during the project life span.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES – TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT HUB

Regional Development in each location where ISEP is proposed will align providers with emerging labour markets and existing business where Indigenous jobseekers have access to employment and career pathways through ISEP and subsequent referral to REP or NESM when job ready.

Employment networks can be established and the ISEP can become a Training and Employment Hub where employers can trust a smooth uninterrupted transition from training into the workplace.

Many Indigenous jobseekers have not been exposed to the variety of career options, dual qualifications, transferable skills, recognition of prior learning and a training facility that incorporates blended learning and is Culturally respectful and safe in relation to Country and protocol.

ISEP provision should be connected to industry sectors and locations where labour is local or can be sourced. Real Futures have provided onboarding for entry level jobs, traineeships and partial completions and skill sets or just prerequisites that industry find time consuming and difficult to navigate without an Indigenous HR division willing to go the extra mile so the preparatory work for our job seekers is completed in a timely and correct manner to move to the next phase.

ISEP PROVIDER THE CONDUIT BETWEEN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY AND NESM OR REP

Each region (rural, urban and remote), each town or suburb in these regions with socio-economic disadvantage and the subsequent barriers to training, commencing and keeping work that can cease participation. These barriers can be traced beyond towns and suburbs and into families. They may be historical from colonisation and associated trauma. Job seekers may be disassociated with industry because they may have disrespected, dislodged or breached cultural protocol with local Traditional Owners creating a cultural safety issue and blocking participation.

ISEPs delivered by an Indigenous company can communicate effectively to determine how the community respond to a particular industry or employer and reflect on possible solutions. Providers who are familiar with these locations should respond knowing the issues and the opportunities of a region offering tangible, deliverable solutions with examples of implementation and how it will succeed.

Substance abuse, physical abuse, effects of alcohol foetal alcohol syndrome indicated in young job seekers, low literacy skills, recent incarceration, homelessness and lack of transport are common barriers that ISEP can assist NESM, and REP identify and assess for types and levels of employment.

INTERIM LABOUR MARKETS

ISEP negotiate with fast food outlets, local agriculture, local council to provide an interim (say 3- 6mths) job skills program where employers can select potential workers and NESM and REP can make referral to jobs as they come on board. Payment subsidy for each jobseeker and the opportunity to be chosen from the job skills program, for long term employment with an employer, will be the enabler. A period of Job readiness training and any targeted industry specific training included.

ISEP set up small business or social enterprise such as recycling, market garden, barista coffee bar, etc as an interim labour market to help Job seekers develop a work ethic and work skills where NESM or REP providers or the employer can make selection for Industry specific training associated with a job.

Transferable skills will be encouraged and identified to fit the local labour market.

MOTIVATIONAL SKILLS

The desire to work has been substantially affected given the punitive measures within the previous mainstream and CDP services causing jobseeker rebuttal. It is not easy to repair a broken system and there is no way back for Aboriginal communities who have become royalty or welfare dependant. ISEP needs an enthusiastic, multifaceted approach to jobseeker groups to inspire people to dream and set goals. Access to Tv, the internet and social media can be used to find examples of possibilities and create the motivation that will get jobseekers engaged and working toward employment. Keeping busy, learning new things and being able to understand and apply new skills to tasks will require an ISEP champion to energise and gently push job seekers to achieve a win manually and cognitively.

ONBOARDING REQUIREMENTS

ISEP providers can navigate the paperwork required for job application and if not done correctly will exclude applicants early on often without explanation. These can include, ROI (Registration of Interest), application form, online inductions, aptitude testing, detailed resume with referees, tax form, bank account details, medical details, etc.

DRIVER TRAINING AND LICENCING

C and HR Class licencing, creating opportunities for drive time. Advising mature drivers, the shortcut to licencing Motorbike (mophead) licencing for youth

Bus driver licencing for mine site transfers and community travel

COHORTS TO CONSIDER

WOMEN:

Real Futures are delivering the first UN Women's program for a developed Country in Western Sydney called Women's Business 2 Chance Hub. It is closely aligned to our VTEC, JAs, community organisations and training providers. The power, dedication, passion and drive of our women are a cohort to be considered to lead the economy recovery across the Country. Aboriginal women have suffered enormously from poverty, disempowerment, violence, abuse, social and economic exclusion, or disparity. Traditionally, in many parts of Australia the leaders were/are women. We have witnessed the empowerment of women in our community and the determination to achieve and to look after their families, their Country and their Culture. The earth is our Mother and our Mothers are our earth.

YOUTH

ISEP investment in Youth Programs will need complex, well researched individualised activities that are motivating and influencing to steer young people toward vocational training and support. The investment will need to respond to demographics the highlight areas of need from District Education school attendance and exclusion data. ISEP will provide services to enhance or support existing youth programs customised in round table of all involved and create immediate connections to specialist services to treat substance abuse, depression, trauma response, nutrition, health checks and other barriers identified through "truth talking" trusted ISEP relationships.

As youth are moving forward addressing these barriers with other providers ISEP provider will monitor their readiness in an Employment Pathway plan to move into Foundation Skills training (Get Ready for a Real Future) as mentioned elsewhere in this document. ISEP working with REP and NESM providers will detail identified traineeship, apprenticeships, and other job opportunities within local industry. Opportunities for relocation will be supported by ISEP provider to transport to job interviews and arrange long term accommodation and all out of home expense budgeting after the job has been secured.

This can be done with groups to provide support. ISEP will continue mentor and support youth who progress to employment locally or have relocated for brokered employment.

An important detail is to include the youth's family in the process and to keep them updated. Positive reinforcement, goal setting and celebrating milestones and achievements are an important part of the pathway to Employment Journey.

Young people are our future Elders and connection to Culture will be an integral part of each youth's progress with Elders involved as mentors and educators. ISEP will ensure they are entering Culturally safe training and employment facilities with a CS check performed by our team.

The most important thing for our young people is that they understand and appreciate ISEP are on their side and their needs/story will be considered first. This will be continued and affirmed throughout the journey without judgement. Youth will build trust for the ISEP team and start to see their own potential.

EXOFFENDER

In WA Real Futures are working with Serco and consortium to prepare offenders for release with ready Job skills and where possible, a job to go to. ISEP can collect these prisoners and return them to their homelands to link then with NESM or REP providers. ISEP to follow through with their Employment Plan completing all the documentation needed for job search and job onboarding

MIDDLEAGED

This is the hungriest cohort where they may have children, debts and a strong desire to get back into the workforce and provide for the family. Often there is debt accumulated at this time and the Middle-aged cohort determined to make good money.

LGBT COMMUNITY

The Indigenous LGBT community can be supported by ISEP to provide activities to grow confidence and to help explore enterprising ideas. ISEP can provide links to services to assist with specific issues that affect LGBT to overcome potential obstacles for training to work. Real Futures have supported LGBT communities promoting Drag Queen shows (Dunghutti Divas) at high social functions and encouraging business chambers to contract Drag performers for awards and conference entertainment. This has created a sense of acceptance in communities for individuals who have been ostracized because of their sexuality, let alone their Aboriginality in some rural and remote locations. When accepted into community we have seen many young people coming "out" to their families and suddenly being able to continue with their lives where before suicide was a real option. ISEP will support and encourage self-employment or source safe workplaces that accept and promote diversity.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS

NESM and REP providers will require documentation to progress job seekers into work. Sometimes Aboriginal people are overlooked for opportunities because they are unable to produce onboarding documentation. This can be time consuming for providers and they often make commercial decisions to progress ready people quickly with everything already in place.

Real Futures have extensive experience and connections to fast track obtaining documents for jobseekers: including

Identification (Birth Certificate)

Confirmation of Aboriginality

Tax File Number

Superannuation membership

Police check

Working with Children check

Pre-Employment Medicals

Muscular Skeletal Checks

Drug and Alcohol chain of custody checks

PPE requirements

Other resources for work

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

Real Futures have developed a detailed training package for jobseekers that we deliver to NESM in the trial region. It contains the delivery methods for Foundation Skills and Job Clubs and how those skills can be applied to the workplace. Communication techniques, Interviews, telephone edict, body language, dealing with bad days, chronic health conditions, eye and ear checks, knowing your strengths and weaknesses, document presentation, video interviews etc.

Get ready Training

Drivers Licence

ID

Communication

Digital skills

Workplace Health and Safety

First Aid

Workplace Literacy

Employers often request the completion of a skill set prior to commencing work e.g., aged care would like Basic hygiene skills, dealing with the Elderly, infection prevention and First Aid as well as police checks prior to work commencement.

ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS PROCUREMENT

ISEP can help to inform REP and NESM providers of Indigenous local, state and national business options for products and services.

There are many opportunities for business ideas in the Tourism, Agricultural, Resources and Hospitality sectors to foster self-employment and incubate potential. Job seekers can be referred to ISEP to develop a business plan, provide links to pro bono legal and financial assistance and enable a telecentre type office space to conduct the theory component of business. BAS templates, marketing design templates, website creation and other training and ongoing support can be made available. ISEP can facilitate Small Business training and provide scheduled support from professionals to assist new business budgeting and forecasting and to determine if it will be viable within a timeframe.

ISEP can help grow local Indigenous Business by helping to find markets, national and export, and to support services to grow the business and create more employment opportunities. They can help with business registration, insurance, HR advise, Supply Nation certification and First Australians Chamber of Commerce and Industry to link to further support services.

ISEP expertise can provide tender writing workshops for local and regional tender opportunities for registered business such as water cart, fencing, council weed spraying, catering, landscaping etc and promote and source opportunities with local industry and government growing Indigenous procurement.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Many Indigenous jobseekers do not have access to a mobile phone, iPad, laptop or computer but those who do are well versed on maximising use of the equipment. ISEP can compliment the NESM by providing a bank of computers that can be used for multiple purposes including NESM Job search and staying in touch with their digital platform to progress any opportunities. These computers can be used for job start inductions, online applications, searching net and contacting the employer.

REACH OUT OFFICERS (ROOS) MENTORING AND COMMUNITY INTEL

It is important that this investment purchase mentoring services. They are local Indigenous mentors who are community leaders. Elders and respected members of the Indigenous community are trained and employed to provide mentoring at three essential levels: for training, work and home life subtly without disruption. ROOs are equipped with problem solving techniques and resources ie. Uniforms, boots, etc and are available for a ride to work in an emergency. They have the skills to negotiate with an employer and open the communication responses to help create workplace security. ISEP can provide the motivation to get jobseekers enthused about jobs on offer and our ROOs (mentors) can stay connected to keep the opportunity sustained.

CULTURAL SAFETY TRAINING

ISEP would support NESM and REP to help to create awareness and Culturally Safe workplaces by providing Industry Specific face to face or online training designed for the TO Nation where the industry operates and customise it to the type of industry. Cultural differences and Cultural safety create awareness that is imperative to welcome and retain Indigenous workers in a non-Indigenous workplace. Acceptable and offensive behaviours, obstacles, workplace communication and literacy as well as career advance and succession plans can be delivered with the assistance of ISEP providers creating an environment for longer term employment and skill development.

FLEXIBLE INVESTMENT

There is a supply shortage of skilled Indigenous job seekers who are work ready. There is plenty of demand from industry. They have an opportunity to utilize the services of ISEP to take care of all the detail that restricts Indigenous people from Real Futures have well developed pathways to employment and understand the detail of prerequisite requirements across most industry sectors.

NIAAs ISEP flexible investment take into consideration providers like Real Futures who operate in many locations and have well established relationships with TO groups, ACCOs, health, training, and business. The opportunities in regions can change and Real Futures has the capacity to respond quickly to change. The ISEP investment needs to be paid in blocks with project milestones reached to activate next payment due. Reports with participating jobseeker's progress and indicators of advancement submitted. The opportunity to negotiate with evidence of the need for additional resources is to be in place as projects progress and discover additional opportunities for employment or enterprise.

DATA COLLECTION

ISEP could be an opportunity to work with NESM and REP to collect and record data of Indigenous jobseeker caseloads referred to ISEP for mentoring, Employment Pathway, or support. Real Futures experience UN Women's Business 2nd Chance Hub provides detailed data that form indicators of the regions peoples and where they are in their economic and social lifecycle. This information could be used by ISEP providers for large businesses projects in their locations to detail Economic and Social Impact Analysis of their recruitment, employment, and contributions to Indigenous communities. This could also help to inform their RAP and Indigenous Procurement targets.

Indigenous statistics are often misleading and the only real regional data at any time frame needs to be collected from within the community with their permission.

Real Futures are leaders in Indigenous social and economic development and participation. We are available for NIAA discussions at any time as the ISEP and REP criteria develop.

