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The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)

Submitted by email: SEFuture@dewr.gov.au

To the Department

Gamburija Gangga means 'talking language' and is the Foundation Skills for your Future Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Digital (LLND) pilot in Doomadgee. It is delivered through a partnership between Corporate Culcha, My Pathway and the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation (ALNF).

We have co-created an approach with the Doomadgee community centred around the exploration, and ideally, preservation of the local Gangalidda language. The program enables multifaceted outcomes including new employment pathways, improved social inclusion and a connection to culture. It integrates place-based training, mentoring and assessment with cutting edge, accessible technology and resources to empower community members.

Historically, LLND programs have not considered the specific existing education levels, learning styles and the cultural needs of remote communities, and have subsequently achieved poor uptake and outcomes. The costs of RTO's delivering training can also be prohibitive in these areas due to isolation, travel and a shortage of accommodation in communities.

By co-designing new community-owned and run LLND projects, meaningful and sustainable training can be delivered in these areas. Local people know the barriers, needs and issues faced by potential learners in their community. They will also have a unique understanding of the factors that will drive successful engagement with any LLND project. Future success will also be governed by the stability of the foundation skills training and the value that can be proved from foundation skills development.

We feel with consideration of these factors, a national approach to remote LLND can be designed. One that has the flexibility needed for delivery in a range of remote communities, but which strives to close the gap by building aligned foundation skills across the nation.

Regards,

Paul Dodd
Founder
Corporate Culcha

Nicole Oke
Managing Director
My Pathway

Mary-Ruth Mendel
Co-founder and Co-chair
The Australian Literacy and
Numeracy Foundation



How can the foundation skills training be designed to draw on the strengths, and meet the needs, of learners in remote Australia?

Designing LLND approaches which offer ‘hidden learning pathways’ will be far more successful than traditional skill development in classroom settings. Our model develops English LLND skills alongside the exploration of traditional languages using the ALNF’s Living Languages digital platform. Learning occurs through interactions with the languages across multiple mediums. This ‘two-way learning’ has proven successful and is appealing to a large proportion of the community. It is a model that could be modified to fit any traditional language that is still being spoken by at least a few people in any community.

We have found flexible delivery to be instrumental to retention in our pilot, with many barriers to planned daily engagements occurring regularly. Flexible entry and exit timeframes, as well as a range of learning methods and opportunities using cutting edge, accessible technology and resources should be implemented in future training to ensure success.

How should a foundation skills remote program be designed to respond to local needs?

It is not reasonable to assume remote communities will be able to design and deliver effective LLND foundation skills courses alone, or without guidance from knowledge leaders. We suggest the DEWR invest in the development and support of several “off the shelf” learning models, that can be tailored to fit the needs of specific communities. These models must include the delivery of skills training by relevant organisations, either to initially, or in an ongoing way, train relevant project staff; or to offer ongoing direct training to participants alongside local mentoring.

It is imperative that meaningful and local engagement and consultation occurs from the very beginning and that local community members have their voices embedded in what the model looks like from conception to implementation. This level of buy-in is essential to the community feeling like the program is theirs and takes into account cultural strengths, which will encourage their engagement and participation with co-designed LLND programs.

Early engagement should be offered to all possible stakeholders in any project. This includes first and foremost the learners and the teams who will support them, and also local employers, accredited training providers and other support organisations. The local community is best placed to determine the appetite for learning, and the unique barriers delivery may face. Involving local employers and supports will ensure that training outcomes are relevant and tailored to local opportunities.



How could Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations be better supported to deliver appropriate training?

Upskilling community-based staff should be a key focus of future training. Community-based project roles should be built into all future training approaches and would ideally account for the majority of roles in any project. Specific training would target any identified gaps ensuring the skills developed are relevant to the local community. Training should also support project staff to gain nationally recognised certifications that will support the quality of their work during and beyond the project.

Succession planning and practical on-the-job capacity building opportunities should be considered to help ensure the long term sustainability of allocated resources. Taking an agile approach to the structure of community-based project roles would reduce the impact of staff choosing to move between communities.

How should results of the foundation skills remote program be measured, monitored, and evaluated?

A social impact study would provide the most meaningful and valuable evaluation of program impact. It could measure the long term social and economic benefits derived from existing or future projects. This would require commitment and would identify a more holistic value to inform funding requirements.

A robust and well-designed study may allow future projects to report on simpler measures, such as participants graduated, and use the initial study findings to assess the broader impact that has likely been generated.

The Foundation Skills for your Future pilots provide an opportunity to begin assessing the long term outcomes for the cohorts involved. We suggest the DEWR considers developing case studies of participants at one, three and five year intervals. This would include impacts to their family and close connections, providing a comprehensive picture of outcomes and the long term effects that can be generated by these programs.

How could the foundation skills sector, including the workforce, be better supported to deliver in remote Australia?

New LLND projects will require long term funding commitments to ensure they are able to train and upskill key staff in their roles until the benefits are realised by the wider community. Ideally, these commitments should be in place for a minimum of five years and to achieve optimum results, extend well beyond this initial period.



What opportunities are there for the Commonwealth, state, and territory governments to work together to better support foundation skills delivery?

A national approach to future training would achieve far greater consistency across states and territories. By tailoring an 'off the shelf' model to individual communities, consistent and comparable delivery across the nation could be achieved, while retaining enough flexibility to ensure programs remain engaging and address local needs.

Existing employment and training programs at all levels should tap into future foundation skills training to avoid replication.