

GENERATIONOne

# Everybody's Business

A HANDBOOK FOR INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT



## FOREWORD

All around the nation, in businesses large and small, there is growing momentum to employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Employers and Indigenous communities are forging new links and everyone is reaping the dividends – companies gain strong, loyal workforces grounded in cultural diversity and communities face a bright future when their young people are working.

Many forward-thinking employers are creating genuine jobs and career paths. Over 300 corporations, businesses, schools, government departments and community groups now have Reconciliation Action Plans. More than 300 companies have also signed commitments through GenerationOne's Australian Employment Covenant for 60,000 jobs.

This step-by-step instruction manual is packed with practical advice for managers and supervisors who are on the frontline of hiring and retaining staff. We are grateful to the many employers who have shared their stories about making reconciliation a reality at work. The content has been tested with prospective employers and Indigenous staff in many industries and reflects their valuable input.

This handbook was created in close consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and organisations and is a result of collaboration between GenerationOne, the Australian Employment Covenant, Reconciliation Australia and Social Ventures Australia. It reflects our common goal of boosting sustained employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. While each organisation focuses on different stages of work, we all recognise the benefits of sharing effective employment techniques with managers and supervisors.

We strongly endorse this handbook and encourage everyone involved in attracting, recruiting and retaining staff to put these practices into action. Investing in an Indigenous employment program enriches company culture and makes working life better for all staff.



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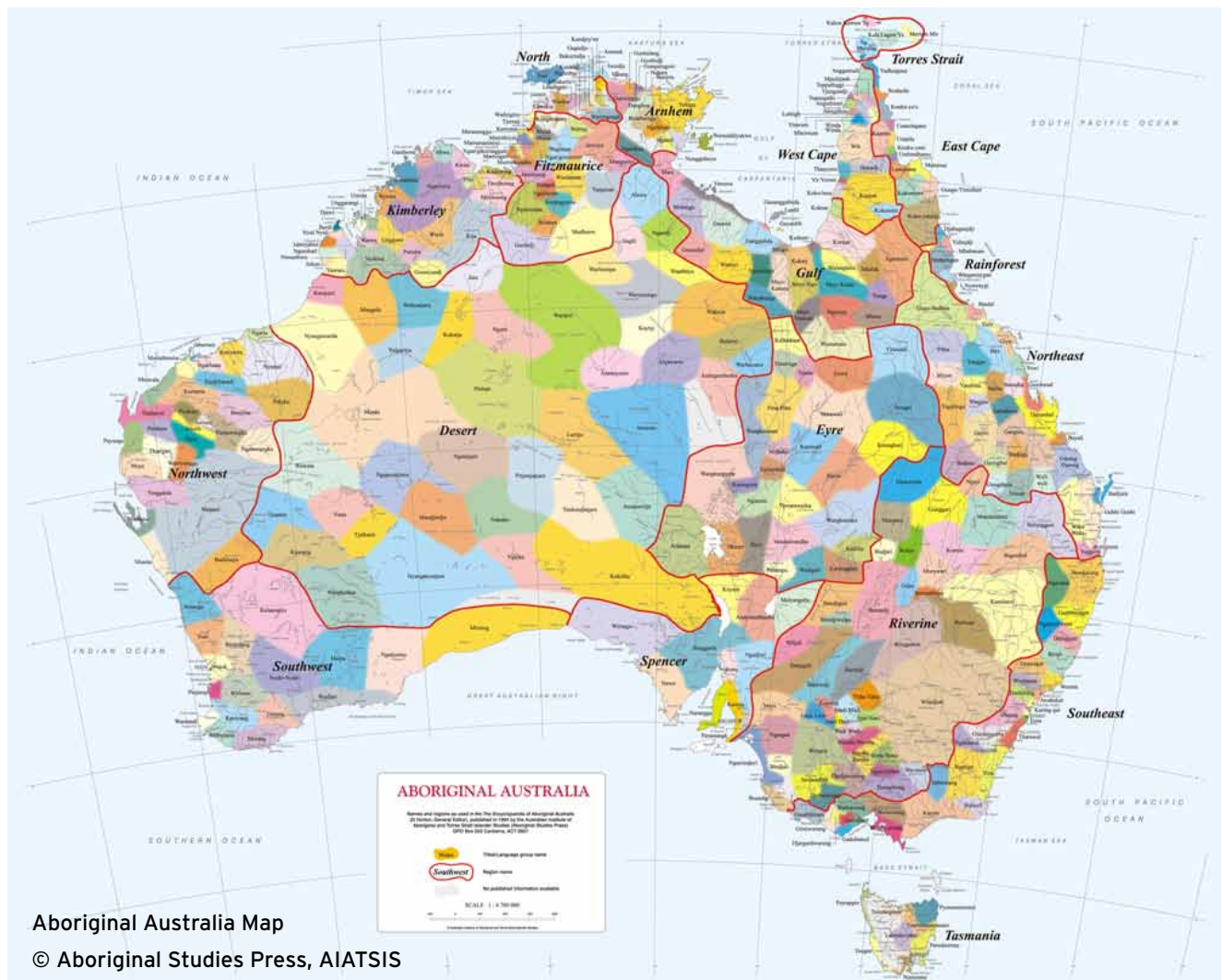


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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND COUNTRY

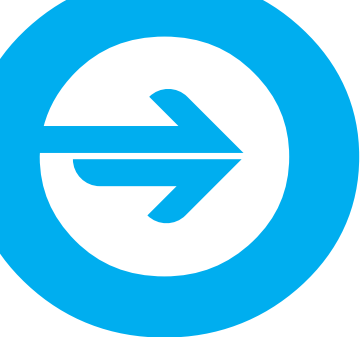
The author acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.



For clarity and consistency, the word Indigenous is used throughout the handbook to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AEC	Australian Employment Covenant, a program of GenerationOne
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
GTO	Group Training Organisation
JSA	Job Services Australia
IEM	Indigenous Employment Manager
IEP	Indigenous Employment Program
IES	Indigenous Employment Strategy
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Day Observance Committee
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
RTO	Registered Training Organisation



# Introduction

Many companies operating across Australia now have well-developed Indigenous employment policies and have been generous enough to share their successes and setbacks for the benefit of other businesses setting out on the same path.

This handbook is based on those experiences and is written for line managers, human resources managers and supervisors. The process of gathering information has revealed an enormous amount of goodwill among employers. This means there is a wellspring of help and support in all sectors of Australian industry for managers and supervisors who want to employ Indigenous people. And there are many knowledgeable people working for governments and non-government organisations who can help. Refer to the appendix for information.

This handbook covers employment policies and procedures that may already be well-known and embedded at many companies. It also explains how managers have applied and adapted these policies and procedures. The examples and insights in these pages come from many sources, including employers and human resources professionals; all are acknowledged at the end of the handbook. The insights apply to organisations of all sizes and in all industries, and show what can be achieved when Indigenous leaders and managers work together to create long-term jobs and strengthen communities.

There are four sections in this handbook:



The first section, Laying the foundation, looks at what needs to be in place before people are hired. This work is usually directed by senior managers and is included here to help supervisors and managers understand the best starting point for a successful employment program.

Sections two and three – Hiring, and Support and Progression – cover the five stages of an employment program that are the responsibility of a manager or supervisor. Information is in three parts:

## 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a summary of the main points

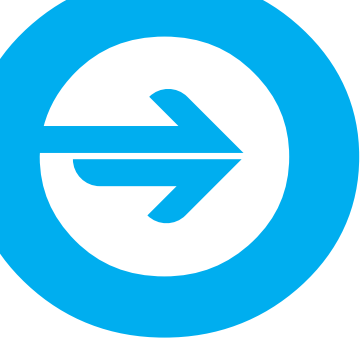
## 2. ACT

- how to get it done

## 3. PROGRESS

- a checklist before the next stage

The fourth section recounts success stories from Indigenous employees and has links to resources and job aids.



## Laying the foundation

The hallmark of a successful, sustainable employment program is solid support from employees at every level of the company. As the manager responsible for helping Indigenous people join the company and build their careers, you should understand the structure and support for the employment program at your company. Programs for Indigenous employment take many forms: some are part of wider diversity strategies, some are established through the Australian Government's Indigenous Employment Program (IEP), and in some cases, the company may not have a formalised program. Even if your company has a well-established Indigenous employment program, and especially if it is new and less structured, you can increase the likelihood of success by checking that the right foundation is in place before you start hiring people.

Support for an employment program can be demonstrated through:

1. A written commitment to the program from the CEO and senior management.
2. Partnerships with local Indigenous organisations, service providers or Job Services Australia providers.
3. An Indigenous Employment Strategy – a blueprint for developing, implementing and maintaining Indigenous employment actions.

*Case study insight: Companies with successful Indigenous employment initiatives wanted to succeed, but not only for moral or “feel-good” reasons. They had a business rationale for making the program work and were committed to Indigenous Australians. In general, these companies had an inclusive approach to all employment — a diverse workforce and an appreciation of diversity built into company values, behaviours and business systems.*

### COMMITMENT

It is important to know why the company has started an Indigenous employment program and to understand its aims. As a manager or supervisor, it will also help to think about what the program means to you personally and how it will impact on the workplace.

Companies can show commitment to Indigenous employment in various ways. The program may be structured for Indigenous employment or Indigenous initiatives may be woven into existing employment processes, depending on what works best for the business.

At a minimum, the company should have a business case that outlines the program's rationale and benefits, and sets targets for investment and implementation. Before recruitment begins, it is also recommended to have a visible commitment to Indigenous employment and economic development through a publicly stated employment target and a procurement policy. These might be incorporated in the following:

- A Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), to be read by staff who are recruiting and supervising Indigenous employees. A RAP is a business plan that identifies a company's reconciliation actions, such as creating sustainable careers and building respectful relationships with Indigenous communities. Reconciliation Australia can support this.
- A public commitment to the Australian Employment Covenant (AEC), a program of GenerationOne. This is a national industry-led initiative to secure sustainable jobs for Indigenous Australians. As a Covenant partner, an employer commits to providing a certain number of job opportunities and workplace support for Indigenous job seekers.



## Understand the business case

The business case helps everyone understand the benefits that can be gained from having an Indigenous employment program. These can include:

- Access to markets and customers. Being committed to Indigenous employment is becoming important when applying for government contracts and private tenders, and it can open up additional business opportunities for companies
- Access to talented people. Finding the right people, particularly when there are labour shortages. Despite Australia's ageing population, Indigenous communities are growing and are a source of capable, committed workers
- Representing customers. Meeting your expectations and making the company more attractive to Indigenous and non-Indigenous customers
- Creating cultural diversity at work. Increasing the cultural mix encourages new perspectives and awareness of business opportunities, and boosts workplace satisfaction
- Enhancing the company's reputation. Being known as an employer of choice and a company that is progressive, inclusive and socially responsible

## Put it in writing

As a manager, you can encourage all employees to show leadership by making the program work. This commitment is strengthened with high-profile program champions such as the senior management team, board members or a respected external adviser.

The CEO and senior managers can lead the way by providing resources and support, backed by a written statement of commitment or a business case. But, regardless of the form, the commitment should be in writing and communicated to every employee.

Successful organisations have long-term diversity employment practices that eventually become their way of doing business. Programs work when staff expect that their colleagues will have different physical characteristics, celebrate different religious festivals and enjoy different leisure activities.

It is also helpful when the company emphasises the need for staff to be resilient and focus on the long term. Successful companies have all faced setbacks along the way so it is important for managers and supervisors to be realistic about what it will take to thrive.

## PARTNERSHIPS – GETTING THE RIGHT SUPPORT

Successful companies do not do it alone; they work within an extended web of determined individuals and organisations. The system, the network, the community is vital.

Companies should seek partnerships with organisations that fit their business model. Companies report success when pooling resources with partners. Case studies show that the best partnerships have a convenor or coordinator who pulls the system together, with defined roles through the stages of employment.

*Employers said:*

*“We make partnerships work because we never take no for an answer. We actively work on nurturing our JSA partnerships.”*

*Karen Sheldon  
CEO, Karen Sheldon Catering*

Partnerships can be built with:

- Organisations that can find potential employees, such as Job Services Australia (JSA) employment services network, Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) panel members and specialist recruitment providers

- Training partners such as group training organisations, registered training organisations, TAFE and people who help recruits become job-ready
- Consultants who deliver cross-cultural awareness and appreciation training to help employees understand the benefits of the program, reduce prejudice and build understanding
- Other companies that can provide Indigenous mentors if a workplace does not have Indigenous staff who can mentor new recruits and their managers
- Local Indigenous communities and service providers, to better understand the uniqueness of people from the area

## AN INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY AND CULTURAL COMPETENCIES

There are many guides to help companies create an Indigenous Employment Strategy (IES); some are listed in the final pages. Ideally, your company already has an IES. If not, it will be important to work with management to create an IES that covers the points below.

Indigenous Australia is as diverse as non-Indigenous Australia. There are many language groups, clans and nations with their own stories, songs, traditions, beliefs and practices. Two very important things to keep in mind: treat people with respect to build trust and avoid making assumptions about the way people should look or behave. Identity can be very personal so do not assume all Indigenous people have the same level of

cultural attachment, understanding, knowledge or identity. Cultural exchange will happen naturally when employees feel comfortable and culturally safe.

### Program resourcing

The employment program will require firm, determined management. Companies should appoint a dedicated Indigenous Employment Manager (IEM) to work closely with line and human resources managers. The IEM does many of the activities described in the next two sections and can also coordinate Indigenous employment.

The IEM must have time to manage the program. This can be intensive, which is why a dedicated staff member is needed. If the IEM is spread too thin, the program will suffer, especially if the IEM does not have a deep understanding of the selection and recruitment process.

If the company cannot employ a dedicated IEM, functions from the role should be allocated to existing managers. Ensure the company recognises the extra time and effort being asked of these managers and informs human resources staff, people managers and recruiters about its commitment to Indigenous employment. All too often, the people who hire staff are the last ones to find out about an IES.





## Locations and roles

The IES should link the number, location and type of jobs with the general business hiring plan. It is essential that business needs drive the hiring plan. Creating new jobs for the sole purpose of bringing Indigenous recruits to the company will not result in successful outcomes for either the company or Indigenous employees.

## Company funding

The business case and IES should establish funding for the program. Many activities will come under the human resources budget for hiring and retention but extra money may be needed for training and support. Government funding may be available through federal, state and local government agencies. See Who can help you section for more information.

## Understanding staff

When examining program resources, it is important to understand the starting point. A company needs to know whether it has any Indigenous employees. This is not based on physical characteristics. Companies can survey staff or use the induction and training programs to identify Indigenous staff. When surveying staff, explain the reason for collecting the information and how it will be used – for example, you could say the information will be used to tailor the employee assistance schemes. However, some employees may be reluctant to disclose this information. A general survey of all staff can also show the company's diversity profile.

### *DID YOU KNOW?*

Indigenous people are not a homogenous group. Before the arrival of Europeans, there were approximately 600 nations in Australia, each with its own territory, language and customs (see map, page 3). Indigenous people often use different terms to describe themselves, depending on where they are from. For example, the following two names are commonly used in the east coast of Australia:

- "Koori" (or "Koorie") in New South Wales and Victoria
- "Murri" in Queensland and far-northern New South Wales

Other regions may use names specific to their clan and language group; here are just a few of the over 600 names:

- "Nunga" in southern South Australia
- "Anangu" in northern South Australia
- "Noongar" in south Western Australian
- "Yamatji" in central Western Australia
- "Martu" in the Pilbara regions of Western Australia
- "Yapa" in western central Northern Territory
- "Yolngu" in north-eastern Arnhem Land of the Northern Territory
- "Palawah" in Tasmania

Some Indigenous people prefer to call themselves Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. If you are unsure, ask if and how people identify themselves. This will be seen as a sign of respect.

## Cross-cultural training

Staff are more likely to understand the benefits of diversity if they are trained in cross-cultural awareness and appreciation. If the budget cannot stretch to training all staff, start with Indigenous program decision-makers, people managers and supervisors and then add to induction training for new staff. Companies with cross-cultural training have better recruitment results and improved retention, so these benefits should be included in the business case to offset training costs.

Training should be part of broader diversity awareness and should not leave staff feeling blamed, exposed or guilty. Incorporating the training into inductions, and training existing staff, is a good way to make awareness and acceptance part of company culture.

## Cultural competency

Training that develops cultural competency should be delivered by an Indigenous professional who links this to company values, as well as general cultural awareness and history. A good trainer will explain how the unique perspectives and cultural characteristics of Indigenous society may result in Indigenous staff working and applying company values in a different way to non-Indigenous staff.

Many of the characteristics of Indigenous culture are also characteristics of successful organisations – respect, trust and willingness to work for the good of the group (or family or team) rather than for individual gain.

Depending on the target groups and positions being filled, training may also need to cover the issues of disadvantage and long-term unemployment, recognising that these are separate from Indigenous culture. While Indigenous people do experience higher rates of disadvantage and unemployment, many Indigenous people have gone on to higher education and hold leadership positions in business, government, and non-profit sectors.



## Indigenous family and social structures

Managers and supervisors need to know how the social organisation of Indigenous communities differs from traditional western structures. Cross-cultural awareness training should explain Indigenous kinship and social structures, and implications for the workplace.

An example of the complexity of Indigenous family relations is that an Indigenous child's father and all paternal uncles are usually considered to be fathers. A child's mother and all maternal aunts are considered to be mothers. This means that parental responsibilities such as legal consent, discipline and personal care can be shared between several relations. In addition, cousins may be recognised as sisters and brothers, and close unrelated paternal/maternal figures may be identified as uncles/aunts.

This means many Indigenous employees face challenges balancing work and additional family commitments. Employees may ask for frequent or extended time off work. As a manager or supervisor, understanding the employee's family structure may help you manage requests for leave and be more understanding and flexible. Building relationships with the extended family may also result in the family putting less pressure on the employee to miss work for family and community events.

*Employers said:*

*"Employers need to have an appreciation of the role and importance of family and the positives and negatives of that."*

*Sarah Larson: HR Coordinator, QLD, ISS Facility Services Australia*

*"If you invest in a family unit they will understand better. It means it's less of an issue if someone misses a community event, for example, a funeral, because you've got people saying, 'you can't come – you've got to work'."*

*Petrina Villaflor: Cape York Project Leader, Skill360 Australia*





## CHECKLIST

Once your company has completed the foundation work, has a solid plan and all participants are aligned to a common program philosophy, then you are ready to start.

Check that the following statements are true before moving to the next stage:

1. I understand my own and my company's commitment to employing Indigenous Australians.

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2. My company has a network of partnerships with roles to play and skills to make the program work. This includes other businesses that employ Indigenous Australians and employment service providers.

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3. My company has developed an Indigenous Employment Strategy.

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4. My company has appointed an Indigenous Employment Manager or has defined and resourced this role.

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5. My company has reviewed the roles, locations and skills needed for program positions.

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6. My company is clear on what it will fund to implement the employment program.

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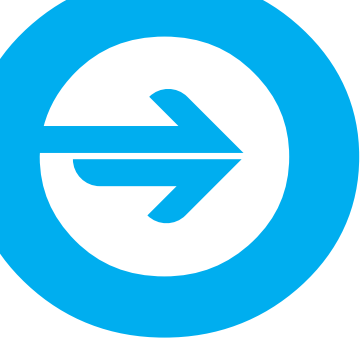
7. My company recognises and supports its Indigenous staff.

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8. Employees have attended cross-cultural awareness and appreciation training.

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If any of these statements are untrue, the company needs to do more work before hiring can begin.



# The Employment Program: Hiring

## Stage 1: Preparing the workplace

### RECOMMENDATIONS

As a manager or supervisor, you will understand the importance of preparation when introducing a new workplace program. Following these steps will help you and your team be confident that everything is in place when the first Indigenous recruit starts work. Remember to remain flexible as the program rolls out. By the end of this stage, you should be taking applications.

Prepare the business:

- Select the roles and locations for which you will be recruiting
- Identify the skills needed for each role and whether these should be acquired through pre-employment training or on-the-job experience
- For pre-employment training, decide whether to work with employment and training specialists to design and deliver programs
- Customise induction training for Indigenous employees
- Prepare skills training plans such as apprenticeship and cadet programs
- Talk with staff so they understand why and when these changes are being put in place

Prepare yourself:

- Start building relationships with the Indigenous community
- Make sure you have personal support structures, such as an Indigenous mentor

### ACT - GETTING IT DONE

#### Select roles and locations

The size of your company and the industry will determine the number and type of Indigenous positions and whether you recruit a pool of candidates or just a few applicants. Some companies target entry-level positions (no experience required) while other companies recruit for all levels, including management.

Start small and set realistic employment targets, especially early in the program. For example, some companies start their Indigenous programs by recruiting cadets and then expand to all jobs as they gain experience. At this stage, be clear on the number of positions, and the locations, that you are responsible for filling. Decide which positions and locations will be targeted for Indigenous recruitment, driven by business needs.

#### Identify skills

Identify the essential and the highly valued skills needed for each position. Decide whether you want skilled applicants or people who can learn on the job. Depending on the candidates, you may need to consider pre-employment training and additional support to help people flourish.

*Employers said:*

*“Our recruitment looks at the potential of candidates. Our focus is all about ‘can they do the job’, rather than do they have previous experience in the role.”*

*Angela Tassone  
Indigenous Employment Program Coordinator,  
Burswood*

## Tap into the experience of others

If a position needs experience or specialist skills, you will need to organise pre-employment training or apprenticeships. There is help available from JSAs, GTOs, RTOs, Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) Panel members or external employment consultants – all of which are subsidised and funded by the Australian Government to improve employment outcomes for job seekers, particularly Indigenous employment.

An employment broker or consultant may have insights into the local labour market. GenerationOne or Reconciliation Australia can help make the initial contact.

## Design or customise inductions

Prepare the induction package and induction process before advertising for people. If your company does not have an induction training manual, this is the time to prepare one and ensure it meets the needs of recruits who may not have worked before. Make the manual accessible to Indigenous employees by including Indigenous artwork and wording. The manual should tell employees what is expected of them and describe their rights and responsibilities, including:

- Workplace practices (hours worked, payroll, lunch and breaks)
- Employee procedures (paid time-off including flextime, performance reviews, issue resolution)
- Benefits (holiday/personal leave, superannuation, transport)

- Company organisational chart, history, mission and values. Include open days or special events that allow families to visit the workplace
- Mentoring programs and other support such as Employee Assistance Schemes

For more information, see Stage 4: On-the-job support.

## Skills training to suit your business

There are many ways of delivering skills training both prior to employment or post-placement. Many successful companies rely on both types of skills training. The federal government provides funding for pre-employment training programs through DEEWR, and the training may be delivered by JSAs, IEP panel members, and/or GTOs/RTOs. Post-placement options such as traineeships and on-the-job training can also be effective, especially when using hands-on, applied learning techniques. Case studies show that practical, applied learning is a powerful aid in developing skills, building confidence and learning about the workplace.

Discuss pre-employment and post-placement training options with your human resources department and company management so you provide skills training that best prepares new employees for their new role and supports them to grow their careers. AEC can assist in navigating the training options and devising a training strategy suited to your business needs. Refer to page 43 for a table that summarises the factors that you and your company should consider when determining the skills training that you will provide to your employees.





Training can be part of the selection process, as people who are not suited to the work may opt out. Case studies show that training gains traction when candidates understand there is a guaranteed job at the end. It is not uncommon for Indigenous candidates to have participated in formal and informal training and been disappointed when this has not led to a job. Starting with the maximum number of graduates that can be employed means you will avoid disappointing and disempowering people who complete the course but do not get a job.

When training recruits, do not assume everyone needs to start from scratch – customise the training based on the background and needs of each person. Companies with successful programs work with recruits on a tailored program, giving people a stake in their professional development and aspirations.

Flexibility in roles and encouraging recruits to explore options will boost the placement success rate. The overriding principle is that training must suit a company's business needs and not be based on a general perception that Indigenous applicants lack the right skills.

Take into account the following when preparing training:

- Build a partnership with a training provider who understands the business and can deliver a training program on time, to budget and with the right philosophy
- Cultural awareness goes both ways – it is important to explain employer expectations and the workplace culture
- Some recruits may have completed certified training but not know how a workplace functions, e.g. what clothes to wear. Basic training in workplace conventions may be needed just as much as skills-based training
- Barriers to employment may become apparent. Be aware that recruits may need help with specialist support, such as childcare or transport
- Family support is vital for Indigenous recruits. Involving families in training can provide reassurance and support for the candidate and start the process of building a relationship with you as the employer. This could include inviting families to an open day during training or to the graduation ceremony



## Staff communication

As with most of the stages, this is not a one-off activity but an ongoing process. This process should engage all staff in understanding they can be part of overcoming the employment disadvantage facing Indigenous people.

Revisit your internal communications plan, share updates with staff and address concerns when they arise. Be aware that you may face resistance or even cases of outright discrimination from staff who perceive that the company is providing special treatment for Indigenous staff. The internal communications plan should provide you and other people managers with positive responses to these concerns.

*What the experts say:*

*“When you look across every indicator - health, employment, education - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to face inequality and disadvantage. It wasn’t until 1967, through the referendum, that the spotlight was put on the inequality and discrimination faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. From there, there was a concerted effort to start to give access to a whole lot of government services and other supports to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to actively contribute to our society. We’ve come a long way since 1967, but there’s still a lot that needs to improve. We all need to work together - government, business and individuals - if we are to realise equal opportunity for all Australian’s in this prosperous country. Everyone has a role to play in ensuring equity is achieved and discrimination is eradicated.”*

*Tom Calma  
Reconciliation Australia Co-Chair*

## Prepare yourself

As a manager who hires and supports Indigenous staff, your job will be made easier when you start making personal connections with the Indigenous community. It will not be enough to attend cross-cultural awareness training. Take the time now to start building relationships with Indigenous community leaders so you can involve them in recruiting and support activities.

If you are unsure where to start, you could:

- Ask a partner organisation that has an Indigenous employment program to make an introduction
- Make contact with Indigenous organisations that have a strong community presence, such as a land council or an Indigenous chamber of commerce
- Talk with people at Indigenous community events such as markets or sports fixtures

Many people will want to help you succeed. Look for a respected community member, such as an elder, who will be your mentor, to provide support and advice. If you cannot find someone immediately, ask for help. This could be from a non-Indigenous person who has a good network and experience with Indigenous employment.

This is a good time to invite local Indigenous people to visit the company. This will demonstrate your commitment to the Indigenous community and local employment, and will get the word out about job openings. Ask a Traditional Owner to do a Welcome to Country at the event. This is an important sign of respect.

## PROGRESS - CHECKLIST

There is always support for managers and supervisors who are new to Indigenous training. If you do not have external financing, refer to the Who can help you section for capacity building and about funding options. You can also assemble an internal working group or join supervisors from local businesses who are developing programs. Asking Indigenous trainees for feedback will help improve the program.

Check that the following statements apply before progressing to the next stage:

1. I have identified the positions to target for Indigenous recruitment.

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2. I know what training and experience is important to succeed in these positions and I have a work-readiness training program in place.

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3. I have an induction training manual that meets the needs of Indigenous employees.

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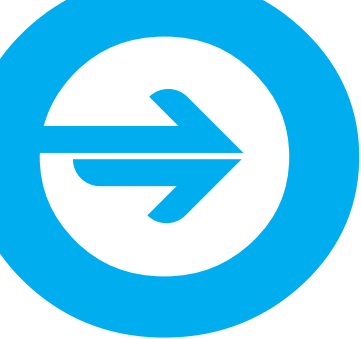
4. I have communicated with all staff about these activities.

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5. I am building relationships with Indigenous communities where the company will be recruiting.

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## The Employment Program: Hiring

### Stage 2: Finding the right recruits

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Share the success of your Indigenous employment journey internally and then externally, which will help build momentum behind your program. GenerationOne is a good platform for sharing employment news.

Advertise widely, talk with local Indigenous leaders and tap into your community networks. Building a recruitment pipeline into the Indigenous community will take more effort than simply advertising and sending emails to your network. If your commitment is genuine, word will spread fast and you should have no shortage of good candidates. Adapt your knowledge of standard recruitment practices for a diverse audience.

Steps for recruitment:

- Write a position description that focuses on skills rather than experience and qualifications
- Write the job advertisement in clear, concise language
- Work out a media strategy for an Indigenous audience
- Use your network and relationships in the local Indigenous community for referrals
- Build your company's reputation in the community as an employer of choice
- Participate in recruitment activities such as job fairs, open days
- Keep your word and don't over-promise positions that cannot be delivered

#### ACT - GETTING IT DONE

##### Write a position description

A position description is used internally to describe the job. It lists roles and responsibilities, the reporting line and any staff who report to the position. However, emphasising prior experience during recruitment may lead to Indigenous candidates believing they will not qualify. Therefore, use the process of creating the job description to identify the skills needed for the job. For example, for a construction worker, list skills such as working with power tools rather than construction site experience.

##### Write an advertisement

A job advertisement is a shorter, punchier version of the position description. The length and language will depend on the media but always use concise language to describe the job, and avoid jargon or elitist wording which may put people off. Depending on the entry level requirements, you may appeal to people's desires rather than their skills. For example, in the advertisement, ask if people enjoy caring for children rather than calling for Early Learning and Education applicants. Consider the design of the advertisement, including Indigenous artwork.

Whether advertising for Indigenous-only candidates or more widely, it is always good practice to include this sentence: "We are committed to achieving a diverse workforce and strongly encourage applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people".

## Work out a media strategy for an Indigenous audience

When thinking about where to advertise, look beyond the usual outlets, especially if you only use mainstream online recruitment sites such as [www.seek.com](http://www.seek.com). The internet may not reach candidates who have limited online access.

Consider using local and Aboriginal newspapers and radio, or university and TAFE Aboriginal study centres – for example, the Koori Mail (or equivalent in your state) and National Indigenous Times newspapers, GenerationOne's Australian Employment Covenant jobs board, local Indigenous cooperatives, community email lists such as the Murri Grapevine, JSA providers with Indigenous clients and Indigenous recruitment service providers.

Set up a recruitment pool for future jobs by advertising a group of positions with an end date and state in the advertisement that applicants may be considered for other jobs. You could also advertise an open-ended pool for similar jobs. When starting Indigenous recruitment, allow more time for advertising positions as it takes time to build your company's positive reputation in the Indigenous community.

When possible, appoint an Indigenous person as contact. For example, one employer increased the number of responses by changing the wording of the advertisement to show that the contact person was Indigenous

("for more details contact the Aboriginal consultant"). Ideally, the contact person should understand the role and the company, and be local or have local credibility. You could test this by speaking with community leaders.

## Networks and recruitment providers

As with earlier phases, use your network when recruiting. Partner organisations may have reached Indigenous applicants using unusual channels, and informal neighbourhood "grapevines" can be powerful. Referrals from Indigenous employees and the community are an important source of talent and, when they are pursued, can build trust and ownership.

More than half the Indigenous population is younger than 25, the opposite to the general community. And young Indigenous people want to work – a recent study by Mission Australia showed that more than one in three young Aboriginal people think that getting a job is of major importance compared with just one in five non-Aboriginal young people.

Tap into the youth market through high schools, universities and TAFEs. DEEWR and JSAs offer youth employment programs such as Australian Apprenticeships and the Compact with Young Australians. You may offer school-based traineeships to build a pipeline of Indigenous candidates coming into the workforce.

If your company works with a recruitment provider, make sure the provider understands your commitment to diversity and how you would like the attraction and selection processes to operate. Challenge the provider to give advice on recruiting Indigenous talent and help attract the right applicants.

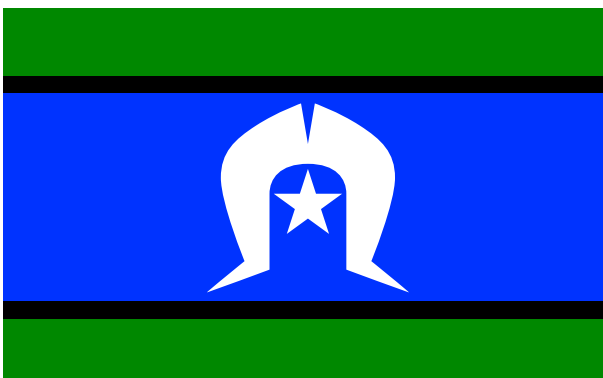
## Be an employer of choice

Indigenous people will want to work for a company that has a positive reputation. Practical and symbolic actions are important. This can be achieved by:

- Participating in Indigenous community events such as sport, markets or the opening of new Aboriginal-owned businesses
- Engaging with elders and Indigenous community organisations
- Flying the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag, especially if you also fly the Australian flag. Flags are available from federal members of parliament
- Recognising Indigenous celebration days throughout the company (display internally and externally)
- Participating in NAIDOC week events



*Aboriginal flag*



*Torres Strait Islander flag*

Community support must be genuine and works best when it is consistent, not just rolled out for recruitment. Indigenous communities are quick to spot someone who is making overtures for personal gain, and one thoughtless act from your company or an employee can undo years of progress. Make sure that promises made to recruits and employees are followed through.

## Other recruitment activities

Think about other creative ways to introduce your company to potential applicants, other than through advertising and emailing networks. For example, offer company “tasters” such as open days and attend job fairs and community recruiting events. Using these avenues when vacancies exist will allow you to speak with participants about real jobs. This is also a good opportunity to build pride and confidence in your existing Indigenous employees, as you can ask employees to speak about their experiences at work. Remember not to throw people in the deep end – this is an opportunity for professional development and to build confidence in public speaking.

When vacancies exist, you could allow applicants to test roles and get a sense of the workplace, meet other employees and build confidence. This may broaden the aspirations of some candidates and encourage them to apply for permanent positions that they might not have considered before a trial.

## Build on your success

Case studies show that after an Indigenous employment program has been in place for more than a few months employee referrals are the best way of attracting Indigenous applicants. This is one of the reasons for identifying the Indigenous employees in the company. Encourage them to make referrals.

## PROGRESS - CHECKLIST

Monitor the success of your recruitment strategy by tracking the number of applicants and the source. Ask applicants how they found out about the job. Don't expect application, placement and retention rates to be higher than rates for non-Indigenous staff.

Check that the following statements apply before moving to the next stage:

1. I have created job advertisements using clear language.

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2. I have placed the advertisements where they will reach Indigenous applicants.

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3. I have asked the Indigenous community for referrals.

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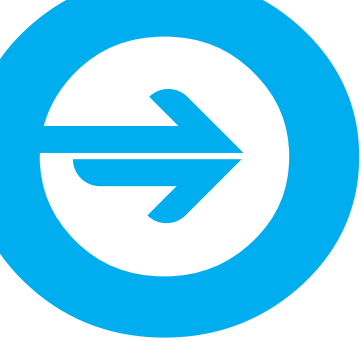
4. I have participated in other recruitment activities such as job fairs.

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5. I have encouraged Indigenous employees to make referrals.

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## The Employment Program: Hiring

### Stage 3: Screening, selection and placement

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

By now you should have Indigenous job applicants. The next stage is to screen, select and employ people. It is important during this phase to:

- Make the entry point as easy as possible for the applicant – screen them in, not out
- Support applicants, particularly if written applications are required
- Adapt your screening and interviewing techniques to suit the applicant
- Select people on merit

#### *Did you know?*

*Job applicants from remote communities may need different support, particularly if they are moving to a larger town or city. Often, people from remote communities do not have birth certificates, identification or bank accounts. English may be a second or third language.*

#### ACT - GETTING IT DONE

##### Screen applicants in, not out

Applicants will feel at ease when their first contact with the company is relaxed and friendly. You may decide not to ask for a CV or resume up front. Some applicants may wish to fill in the application form in the office rather than online. Have a designated person, preferably Indigenous, available to speak with applicants about the job and the style of interview (behavioural, scenario-based, and problem-solving). Write a cheat-sheet with typical interview questions to make sure both parties get the most out of the interview process.

##### Help with documents

Provide electronic and hard-copy application kits for people without internet access. Subject to prescribed requirements, such as public sector standards, assess whether an applicant can apply by completing a personal details form and submitting a resume rather than addressing selection criteria on a job application form.

Depending on your location and local community, some applicants may have trouble meeting company standards for proof of identification and criminal/background checks. Employment service providers like JSAs are funded by government to help candidates with these types of requirements. You could also help the applicant obtain the documents.

#### *Employers said:*

*“The work experience opportunity is a deliberate mechanism to filter potential recruits, who do not then need to go through an interview process. This is found to be a fairer way of recruiting than through traditional interview methods.”*

*Woolworths, Case Study of Success*

##### Adapting screening and interviewing techniques

Be flexible in the screening and interviewing process but try to use the same tools and techniques for all applicants so you can compare people and select on merit.

The best person for the job may not perform well in a standard interview, so think about how to get the most from the process. If the applicant looks uncomfortable, change your interviewing approach to help the applicant relax. For example, instead of asking question after question, pause and spend time talking about the business and the workplace, or ask

the applicant more general questions about the important people in his/her life.

Try to conduct the interview in a place where people can relax, possibly even outdoors. You may meet the candidate informally before the interview, outside the office, to build the relationship.

Some employers have adapted screening and interviewing techniques by:

- Helping applicants prepare for the interview with a phone call from the IEM or a person on the selection panel
- Rewording questions using an informal, chatty style
- Allowing family or other community members to attend the interview
- Holding group interviews, where candidates participate in an activity or group questions

Panel members should be sensitive to the fact that some Indigenous people find it difficult to back themselves because their culture places greater importance on the group rather than the individual. As a result, applicants may use “us” or “we” instead of “I” or “me”.

## Merit-based selection

Employers have found it helpful to create a selection panel, including managers or consultants with Indigenous employment experience, to make a shortlist of applicants and then pick candidates who suit the business. Ask for volunteers from current employees and make sure they understand the company's IES. Panel members will also need the job description and to understand the criteria for rating the applicant and making a recommendation for hire. If possible, include an Indigenous person. Panel members may benefit from attending cross-cultural awareness training that covers recruitment. A refresher course may be necessary.

When establishing the criteria for selection, do not lower the bar for success. Avoid setting people up for failure – it only compounds disadvantage to put someone in an unsuitable job. If you, the applicants and your staff are confident that selection is merit-based, participants will then be competing in an open marketplace. This will avoid resentment about an unfair process. Case studies show that some employers prefer to spend more time training people in pre-employment programs of two to five weeks, to level the playing field. This allows candidates to compete with other applicants if interviews are held. Federal funding may be available to support this approach.



When making a job offer and confirming acceptance, provide employees with the induction package and explain when they will get paid and what to wear. Also, find out whether the new employee needs transport to work or any other help. Make the terms of employment clear in the offer and give the new employee a contact person for questions before the first day of work as this may be their first job.

Communicating openly with unsuccessful candidates will maintain the company's reputation in the community. Rather than sending an impersonal rejection letter, talk with the applicant – be encouraging and give constructive feedback for future interviews.

*Training providers said:*

*Training for real jobs*

*“The training is developed in partnership with Burswood and we also work closely with the job network providers for referral of clients. We stay in touch [with Burswood] through the training and even provide an after-program follow-up. On successful completion of the course, there's a commitment that Burswood will find work for participants. Ninety-nine per cent of the successful trainees do end up being placed in jobs.”*

*Shelley Halse,  
Polytechnic West*



## PROGRESS - CHECKLIST

The next stages deal with on-the-job support and retention techniques. For these to succeed, employees must be hired through a rigorous but supportive process that screens out unsuitable applicants. Taking more time and providing extra resources, such as a selection panel, will pay off by reducing employee attrition and avoiding the job performance problems that can result from poor placements.

Check that the following statements apply before progressing to the next stage:

1. I (or the hiring manager) have agreed to adapt screening and interviewing techniques e.g. using informal language.

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2. I have reviewed my company's application process and know whether and how to support applicants when they are completing forms and gathering documents.

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3. I have considered using pre-employment training to prepare candidates for formal interviews.

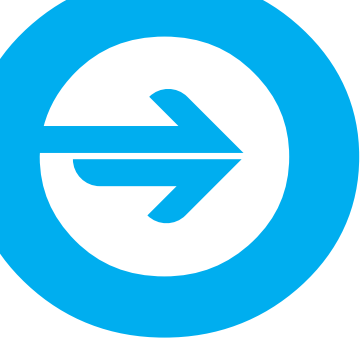
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4. I have assembled a selection panel which understands the criteria for selecting applicants on merit.

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## The Employment Program: Support and progression Stage 4: On-the-job support

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Now that new staff have been hired, you can create an environment for success by:

- Providing orientation, induction training and a culturally appropriate workplace buddy
- Building a professional relationship and keeping an open dialogue
- Encouraging informal mentoring and starting a formal mentoring program
- Understanding barriers to success such as lack of transport, childcare or banking arrangements and establishing after-hours support through appropriate channels
- Asking whether the performance management system will work for Indigenous staff
- Addressing issues or conflicts quickly and sensitively
- Managing fairly and expecting excellence

### ACT - GETTING IT DONE

#### Day One: what to do

For the first day on the job, prepare a schedule that introduces new employees to the workplace without too much formality. If they have not been in the workplace before, keep the first day low-key and meet each new employee one-on-one as well as in a group. Make sure they know where to go and who to ask for.

When business conditions permit, schedule new recruits to start together rather than individually, to build an instant peer group. Assign a buddy (an employee with a similar job) to each new person who can guide them on company practices and give advice. New recruits may settle in more easily if they are shown the canteen and introduced to colleagues. Important qualities in a buddy are common sense, good communication skills and knowledge of any unwritten rules. Make sure the buddy can commit to a long-term relationship.

In Stage 1: Preparing the workplace, we talked about creating an induction manual or package. Think about how best to cover the material with the new employee – in formal classroom-style training sessions on the first day or shorter discussions with experienced staff throughout the first week. If the induction manual is long, create a simple checklist of topics and people who can help the new employee, perhaps in a chart or wallet-sized card.

What the experts say:

*"You don't get equality by treating everyone equal, but the more transparent you are up front and the better you spell out what is expected in a rigorous workplace, the better off you will be."*

Mick Gooda,  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social  
Justice Commissioner

Remember that any transition is difficult. It will take weeks for a new employee to settle in. Plan to provide intensive support by meeting regularly with the new staff member to discuss your expectations of each other. If possible, involve another Indigenous employee or their buddy. Some issues may not surface immediately.

Mick Gooda explains equality:

*"There is a difference between Substantive Equality and Formal Equality. Formal Equality means that if everyone is treated the same they should all achieve the same outcome, whereas Substantive Equality means that you are allowed to treat people differently to reach the same outcome."*

*Substantive Equality allows for some people who need extra assistance to receive it in order to make the playing field level.*

*There is an old saying that says, if you treat unequal people equally, all you end up doing is reinforcing the inequalities".*

Mick Gooda, Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Social Justice Commissioner

Meeting topics could include:

- Understanding the work environment
- Why the employee was selected
- Personal development and training goals
- Expectations of the workplace and quality of work outcomes
- Employee's expectations and how they are settling into the role

Remember that it may take many conversations before the employee feels comfortable opening up to you. At all times, expect excellence. Studies show that Indigenous people, like non-Indigenous people, want to be valued for their contribution.

Did you know?

*Indigenous employees may come across as shy. They may hang back and struggle to look their supervisor in the eye. Handle communications sensitively and directly – messages come across better if they are delivered firmly and directly with the person, rather than in a group or team meeting. Talk respectfully with Indigenous staff members and you learn more about your employee's perspective and approach to work.*

## Build a professional relationship

Building a professional relationship that makes a personal connection is the most important thing you can do for a new employee. You will do this in your own way and each employee will feel different about sharing their concerns, questions and challenges. It takes time, but you will build trust by showing that you care about the employee's success at work, and their family life, and that you want to support that person if personal issues affect performance.

As a manager, you may already have a good working relationship with your staff. For many Indigenous employees, relationships are very important, particularly for retention. Assessing your own leadership and management style will help you to better manage your diverse workforce.

For example, you may already make time for impromptu talks with team members to ask about their work. This is particularly important for new Indigenous staff. If you have an office, keep your door open when possible and block out time in your calendar, letting your staff know this is their time.



During team meetings, recognise and compliment staff on their work. Recognise Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees so that everyone feels equally appreciated.

Some of the approaches shared by successful managers who have built strong relationships with Indigenous employees are:

- Honesty and openness: be tough but fair
- When performance issues arise, show that you understand the situation and respect the person's strengths but do not accept excuses for not meeting job requirements
- Instil high standards to build self-worth, confidence and the ability to compete

*Employers said:*

*"We teach a lot of professionalism – the minimum level we expect is actually very high. We tell them it's up to them to decide on a personal level what they think is right."*

*Stevie Wie*

*Training Manager, Karen Sheldon Training*

## Manage fairly, expect excellence

As a manager, you should expect Indigenous staff to succeed and flourish, just like non-Indigenous staff. There are several things working in your favour – use these to hone your management skills and tailor your style to work well with all staff:

- Employment is a source of pride for most Indigenous employees, not only because a job builds self-esteem but because they become role models
- Indigenous staff who have struggled with complex social and family situations feel proud of their success, driven by will and self-determination
- Indigenous employees want to be valued for their contribution without being viewed through the lens of race

Managing for success means you should empower Indigenous people to meet or exceed performance targets. Encourage staff to talk about their accomplishments and celebrate success. Build momentum for each employee by increasing their responsibilities at the right pace. And always ask for feedback on how you are doing as a manager, as this can be empowering for you too.

## Mentoring

Mentoring provides support and coaching in many situations. Mentoring often works best when the mentor and mentee find each other, so develop the space and time at your workplace for natural mentoring relationships to occur and encourage more experienced staff members to be mentors.

*Employees said:*

*"The biggest problem is that employers don't appreciate the mentoring that is needed [for Aboriginal staff], don't appreciate the support ... Indigenous mentoring is not all about the white workplace. It can be about family."*

*Employed woman,*

*Tamworth, Walk In My Shoes Case Studies*

The amount of formal mentoring, coaching and counselling that you provide will depend on the answers to these questions:

- Do you offer (or plan to offer) these services to non-Indigenous staff?
- Have new employees been unemployed for a long time?
- Do you have the right skills and resources at your company to offer these services?

When designing a formal mentoring program, think about the following:

- Can employees choose their mentor from a pool of mentors or is the relationship assigned by the program coordinator?



- Does the mentor need to be an Indigenous employee? It is important that mentors are selected for their skills and ability to work with new staff, and that they are a good fit for the relationship
- Is there a designated time and place for mentor meetings, and perhaps a budget for meals or attending events outside work?
- What is the timeframe? Support should be available for as long as it is effective. One employer established a structured mentoring program in which staff met with mentors for 30 minutes each week in the first month, an hour a fortnight in the second and third months and an hour a month over the next six months. This resulted in significantly higher retention rates compared to employees who did not have mentors
- Who is eligible for mentoring? Making the program available to all new employees may stem any resentment about special treatment for Indigenous staff
- What is the focus of mentoring? Is it just for workplace development or does the mentor help with issues outside work?

If you ask Indigenous employees to be mentors, consider the impact on their job responsibilities. Putting too much pressure on an employee to be a mentor is unfair, particularly for Indigenous staff who may have mentoring commitments outside work. Instead, appoint mentors based on their ability to coach new employees and their willingness to participate, share and learn.

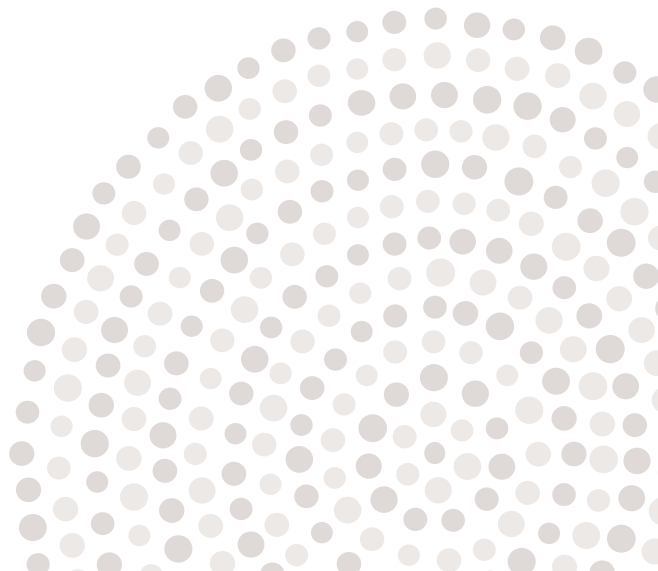
Encourage new employees who joined in a group to meet regularly in the first months. Some Indigenous people may be far from home and will benefit from being with other Indigenous people, even if they are from different communities and language groups.

## After-hours support

If new employees have been long-term unemployed (regardless of whether they are Indigenous or not), they may need extra support. Workplace counsellors provided through Employee Assistance Schemes can offer safe, confidential help to deal with tough issues. Consider offering counselling to other staff members. Ask whether the Employee Assistance Scheme meets the needs of a diverse workforce. If Indigenous staff need support outside normal business hours, other forms of government-funded services may also be available. Contact GenerationOne for more information.

If your company does not employ or use counsellors, an HR manager or the IEM could offer extra support. These staff must be told that the extra work may require after-hours time. The support person, who must have a different manager, may also act as a mediator between the employee and the manager in a difficult situation. Support can be wound back as the relationship between the supervisor and the employee strengthens.

Case studies show that companies who provide new employees support outside of standard work hours may encounter problems in delivering this service. One of primary concern is that the manager in the support role may burn-out and leave the company. Wherever possible, leverage partnerships with JSAs and other organisations that are funded by the federal government to provide Indigenous employees with support outside of the work environment.



## Practical external support

Find out from your manager about budgets to support new Indigenous employees. As with any new staff member – and particularly for people from disadvantaged backgrounds who have little work experience or family financial back-up – companies may offer practical support such as:

- Subsidised or free meals at work
- Uniform or allowance to buy work gear
- Laundry service
- Taxi vouchers or public transport tickets
- Advance payment for work-related travel costs
- Flexibility on pay deposits to bank accounts (offer to split pay into two accounts, one for family obligations, one for work-related expenses such as transport and clothing)
- Team celebration events

Make sure employees know how to access and use these support services, which can build morale and eliminate early stumbling blocks. However, offering preferential treatment to Indigenous staff may cause resentment among non-Indigenous employees.

It is important to understand that Indigenous people have strong family obligations and may be involved in issues outside their control. Staff may need time off for a variety of reasons and at short notice – to settle family disputes, mourn, fix broken relationships or reconnect with their community. As a manager, decide what allowances you will make for paid and unpaid time off, and how to make sure this is fair for all staff. Some employers set a uniform policy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff. Others give managers the flexibility to apply paid-leave policies and extend the definition of immediate family for funeral leave.

### Did you know?

*Indigenous Australians have a significantly lower life expectancy and a suicide rate that is four times the national average. This makes the issue of funerals all too real, particularly in communities where “sorry business” can take up to a month or where travel times are significant.*

## Performance management

Expect Indigenous staff to perform their duties, just as you would for non-Indigenous staff. Take a look at your company’s performance management process to see whether it can be used to give frequent feedback to Indigenous staff so there are no surprises during formal performance management discussions. Involve the IEM and Indigenous mentors when collecting feedback to include in the performance review. Remember to recognise the achievements of all staff –Indigenous and non-Indigenous – as they occur, as well as in the written review and performance management discussion.

Be culturally aware when giving feedback about a performance issue. Understand the challenges that employees may face away from work, particularly if they are feeling isolated from family and community. Be aware that Indigenous employees may feel “shame” more than other employees, so be sensitive about their level of engagement. However, do not be timid or avoid performance issues. Explain the consequences of the person’s behaviour and the impact it has on the team, clients and the business. Ask them to explain their side of events, try to understand the problem and work out a solution together. Then, provide ongoing guidance and reward improved performance.

## What the experts say:

*“The word “shame” has a specific meaning in Aboriginal communities and is related to a complex set of feelings and emotions. It can be described as a strongly negative feeling caused by being the focus of attention or being singled out in circumstances outside of the person’s control. This attention can be positive, such as when a person is being praised or acknowledged in front of others, or negative such as when a person is being corrected or advised in front of others.*

*Aboriginal people might also feel group shame caused by past, and some more recent, events in which Aboriginal knowledge and culture was treated as inferior. It is common for Aboriginal people to feel a lack of cultural safety when dealing with non-Indigenous people and organisations.*

*Shame can totally overwhelm and disempower an Aboriginal person. It can be expressed as shyness; a reluctance to speak up, respond to invitations or answer questions; silence and a preference for collaborative rather than individual activities.*

*When working with Aboriginal people and communities it is important that companies develop and demonstrate cultural competence and organisation-wide respect for Indigenous cultures so that the potential for cross-cultural misunderstandings and shame are minimised.*

*All staff should be aware of the language and behaviours that may cause shame in a community and in the workplace.”*

*Rachelle Towart*

*CEO Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre*

## Conflict and issue resolution

If you are concerned about performance issues, such as lateness or quality of work, always talk directly and respectfully with the employee.

Tips for these discussions:

- Deal with the issues quickly, sensitively and in consultation with those involved – for example, if a conflict involves another employee, include them in the discussion
- Do not jump to conclusions. Try to understand the employee’s point of view
- Avoid becoming emotional, particularly showing frustration or anger. Treat the discussion as an opportunity to educate the employee
- Find a solution to the problem and try to stop the situation recurring. This may mean extra training, implementing a performance development plan or assigning a support person to coach the employee

Remember, you don’t know what you don’t know. If an employee is not performing, she or he may not have been shown the right way. For serious performance issues or breaches of workplace policies, deal with an Indigenous staff member in the same manner as you would a non-Indigenous staff member and state clearly why this is a breach. Fairness is crucial.

## PROGRESS - CHECKLIST

This is the crucial point where you build your relationship with new employees and help them feel part of the business. Do this successfully and you will reap the benefits – staff will be loyal to the business, teams will be strong and cohesive and, ultimately, new and existing employees will perform better and be happy at work.

Check that the following statements apply before progressing to the next stage:

1. I have prepared a day-one schedule which welcomes new employees and teaches about the business.

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2. I have met one-on-one with new employees and discussed our mutual expectations and their understanding of the workplace.

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3. I have put support structures in place for all staff, including formal mentoring and counselling programs and an open-dialogue management style.

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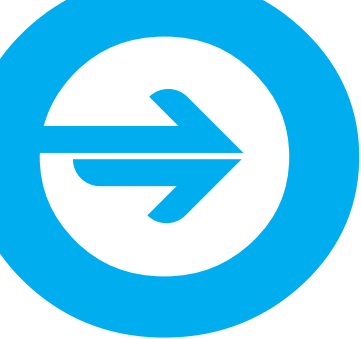
4. I will provide frequent performance management feedback and deal with performance issues as they arise.

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5. I will manage fairly and expect excellence from all staff, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

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# The Employment Program: Support and progression

## Stage 5: Retention and career progression

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Successful companies and managers know that when employees stay for the long term, workplaces are more productive and staff turnover costs are cut. And, by developing Indigenous leaders within the company and in communities, businesses can participate in a virtuous cycle of creating role models and encouraging younger Indigenous Australians to enter the workforce.

In this final stage, it is important to:

- Encourage individual career planning and development
- Establish leadership programs for Indigenous staff
- Recognise Indigenous staff for leadership roles they take on outside the company
- Measure and celebrate the success of your Indigenous Employment Program

*Employees said:*

*[One] important thing is that the companies we work for are committed to doing what we do, so we're not hitting the glass ceiling. We're actually getting the support from the top [for our roles]. It's all about outcomes."*

*Employed woman, Perth  
Walk In My Shoes Case Studies*

### ACT - GETTING IT DONE

#### Encourage career planning and development

Managers should encourage staff to write career development plans that set goals for milestones such as six months, one year, five years and 10 years. If Indigenous staff have not done this, give them extra time and coaching, and encourage them to work with mentors to set professional goals.

Ask what they hope to get from their jobs and where they see their careers going. Inquire about their role models in the office or in the community. It may be useful to have an Indigenous mentor present and recognise that you may need to have many conversations about career prospects and planning, as some Indigenous staff may be uncomfortable discussing their achievements, expectations and goals.

When mapping out career plans (including mentoring and coaching plans), don't make assumptions, instead let staff identify their own aspirations and priorities. Employees should control their own development, in line with their strengths and aspirations. Avoid managing people's career goals – their priorities will probably be different to yours. Your staff may prefer sideways career development, allowing them to move between positions that provide services to Indigenous communities.

Employers say they are encouraged that Indigenous Australians are building careers rather than just landing a job. When discussing the results of your employment program with senior management, share retention and progression statistics and stories, as well as the challenges and methods of overcoming them.

You can take the following steps to encourage career development:

- Arrange job swaps and secondments so Indigenous staff can test different roles within the organisation
- Organise training courses and work-study programs, wherever possible including Indigenous employees
- Advocate for staff to have career coaching and professional development

## Establish leadership programs

Try these steps to develop Indigenous leaders in the business and in the community:

- Encourage Indigenous employees to apply for transfers, secondments and vacancies at more senior positions
- Use wider recruiting networks in the Indigenous community to find applicants for senior executive and management roles, seeking advice from your Indigenous employees on how to encourage others to be part of the company
- Provide professional development, leadership training and support programs for Indigenous employees in senior positions
- Provide opportunities for Indigenous employees to show leadership to their community, with training to speak at job fairs and to the media about their work

Indigenous organisations also offer training and development programs. The Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre is an RTO that offers leadership training, and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has an annual Indigenous Leadership Program on topics such as vision and goal setting, negotiation skills, advocacy and representation, communication and community engagement. Oxfam trains Indigenous leaders to build strong organisations

that can address problems in poor and excluded areas. Jawun runs programs where corporate and Indigenous leaders come together to share their skills and knowledge to create positive change for Indigenous communities.

*Employees said:*

*“Being an Aboriginal family man who has a strong connection to my culture and community, I am often wearing many hats and working long hours. When I leave work, I’m rarely heading home. I am involved in the local rugby team and I am a mentor for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. I sit on a number of boards for local Aboriginal organisations and support several other community organisations and schools through volunteering. My company appreciates that one of their strategic values is to support the community in which they operate, and one of the best ways they can do this is to support me and my work colleagues in fulfilling our family and community obligations.”*

*Bill Bashford*

*Project Manager, Reconciliation Australia*

## Recognise community leadership

It is important to recognise that many Indigenous Australians are leaders in their families and communities, working with local organisations, sitting on cultural committees or mentoring youth.

Ask Indigenous employees if they would be willing to share these experiences with you, and possibly their workmates, to boost understanding of what leadership means in a community and how these experiences can contribute to success at work. Many non-Indigenous staff would benefit from learning the lessons of work-family life balance and the rewards that come from giving back to the community.

## Measure and celebrate success

If your company already has a culture of accountability, this should help when measuring and evaluating the success of your employment program. In the early stages, when developing an Indigenous Employment Strategy, senior management need to be clear about the metrics – the indicators for company performance – that are needed for the program to be judged a success. These metrics must be built into performance plans and reviews of the hiring managers and supervisors implementing the program.

Metrics can include:

- The number of Indigenous applicants and employees
- The average length of service for Indigenous staff (relative to average service for all employees)
- Staff survey results on quality of workplace and appreciation of diversity
- Promotion of individual success stories
- Exit interviews and reasons for leaving

The consequences of under-performance should also be clear: is the success of the program an optional extra or is it fundamental to the strategic success of the business?

Organisations that celebrate achievements often create a virtuous cycle that boosts the program's success, with a pipeline of potential recruits and less risk of problems down the road. The tight-knit family and clan structures of many Indigenous communities mean that successful role models can have a huge impact, encouraging others to follow their lead. There is anecdotal evidence that when community members succeed at work, leaders and elders encourage others to prepare themselves well and then approach the company for work. Within the business, if evidence of success is widely celebrated, people will try harder to succeed and to fix problems as they arise.

## PROGRESS

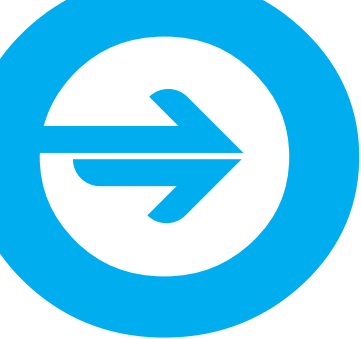
Congratulations, you have done it! If you followed the steps and techniques in this handbook, you should be on the journey of Indigenous employment, with a solid employment program. You are now in the box seat to build teams that will drive company growth and the personal growth of every employee – Indigenous and non-Indigenous. You can also share your knowledge with others in the industry, company and community. Many employers tell of programs evolving over time, as they figure out what works for their business.

The success stories in the following pages tell of the personal triumphs behind thriving Indigenous employment programs that have been planned and implemented with care and respect.









## Success stories & additional resources

### Programmed Group – Henry

Henry enjoys his role with Programmed. He works on the Perth Region Alliance – a Programmed partnership with the Water Corporation in Western Australia – with employees providing services in wastewater, water, drainage, mechanical and electrical trades, administration, finance, business services and asset management across the Perth metropolitan area.

**“My job is a Water Worker,” says Henry. “It’s a good job. I get lots of training and experience.”**

On any day, Henry performs a variety of tasks that can include making repairs on water mains, connecting houses to the main water supply, replacing pipes and other assets and fixing blockages.

**“I’m doing what I like plus I’m around a good bunch of people who make me feel like I am welcome,” he said.**

**“I’d like to be a Team Leader in the future.”**

Henry is just one of many talented employees who have joined the Programmed team.

Another is Aaron, a Water Worker, whose role includes tank cleaning, fitting emergency truck and fire hydrants and other general water services.

Aaron says he enjoys every aspect of his work with Programmed.

**“But I also like that I get to work with my brother, Graham who encouraged me to go for the job,” he said.**

**“There is a lot of opportunity to develop in my work at Programmed and I’m looking forward to managing my own crew one day.”**

Programmed is a leading provider of staffing, maintenance and project services in Australia and New Zealand. The company has signed the AEC jobs pledge and has a 10-year Indigenous participation strategy, which includes recruiting apprentices and trainees. Programmed has recruited 30 trainees and apprentices; 9 of whom have over a year’s service, plus qualified and mature-age hires.

Melissa Donald, Group Manager, Talent, Engagement and Diversity, said the company had a strong focus on providing real jobs, reinforced with structured training, mentoring and career development.

**“We look for people to have long-term career opportunities with us,” she said. “A good example is one of our painters who started with us as an apprentice painter, who was recently appointed to foreman. We’re always looking for great talent to join our team.”**

## SKM - Sam Thorpe

Sam Thorpe was on a fast-track to trouble when he was at high school in Dubbo – at the age of 15, he was in strife with the police and had been suspended from school.

**"I was going to stop going to school," he said. "I was done, I'd had enough. They didn't want me there and I didn't want to be there."**

Defying the odds, Sam hung on until year 10, when a visiting Aboriginal education assistant sounded him out about joining the Beacon Foundation.

**"They wanted me to be a bit of a guinea pig, they thought I fitted in perfectly with the at-risk youth that the Beacon Foundation tries to target," he said.**

The foundation arranged for Sam to work as a labourer at the Dubbo abattoir two days a week and go to school for the other three days. Sam was enjoying having money to spend but he realised he wanted to be more than a labourer. His grades were improving and he was no longer in trouble. He decided to stay at school until year 12.

He met Bill Lawson, from Sinclair Knight Merz, a project delivery firm based in Sydney, after giving a speech about the Beacon Foundation at school. Sam told Bill he wanted to **"work with my hands, drawing and building stuff"**.

Bill arranged a work experience placement for Sam. It went so well that Sam was offered an apprenticeship if he improved at maths.

**"I took the contract back home and thought, wow, look at this," said Sam. "I'm just a kid from Dubbo and here's this big company offering me a job."**

Four years later, he qualified as a draughtsman. But it wasn't easy. Sam lived in an Aboriginal hostel and missed his friends and family.

**"People kept telling me, 'keep going, stay at it' and I did. I got a lot of support from my workmates and ended up making some friends. It's been the best thing I've ever done for myself."**

Bill Lawson remembers Sam being miserable and homesick when he started work.

**"Sam had it really tough," said Bill. "And we, both SKM and Beacon, were on the pumps about trying to keep this young fella there."**

**"What a fantastic story that we can all take some pleasure in. There are 'Sams' in schools all around Australia who have got the ability."**

**"For us as a company to be involved in that space and have this fine young man able to stand up and say 'look, this can be done', that's what corporate social responsibility can be about."**

**"And this is not the Salvation Army. We're still making money, we've got to make money to do this stuff."**

**"We don't have to do it the way it has been done in the past. Governments could never produce a result like this."**

## WHO CAN HELP YOU

This handbook provides a unique perspective gained from the insights of employers who have spent many years developing employment programs. We also recognise and give credit to the body of work produced by other organisations in the area of Indigenous employment. The following pages outline some of the people and organisations that can help with each stage of the journey.

### GenerationOne case studies

*Working it out:* Case studies of success in transitioning long-term unemployed Indigenous Australians into sustainable employment <http://generationone.org.au/training/case-studies>

*Walk In My Shoes* - Survey of Indigenous Australians: Indigenous experiences of barriers and drivers in the employment cycle <http://generationone.org.au/training/walk-in-my-shoes>

### Other Indigenous employment guides

*Aboriginal Employment Guide, WA Health*  
<http://www.health.wa.gov.au/circularsnew/attachments/377.pdf>

*Getting It Right, Employing Indigenous Australians*  
<http://www.scolaro.net.au/wpcgroup/images/stories/pdf/employingindigenoussaustraliansguide.pdf>

*Karreeta Yirramboi*  
<http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au/products/view-products/karreeta-yirramboi.html>

### Cross-cultural awareness

*Reconciliation Australia*  
<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/resources/cultural-awareness/cultural-awareness-training-register>  
Reconciliation Australia has a list of companies that provide cross-cultural awareness training throughout Australia. Make contact with a company in your state that would align well with your business.

*Share Our Pride*  
[www.shareourpride.org.au](http://www.shareourpride.org.au)

Share our Pride is a good place to start with cross-cultural awareness. It is an introductory website that has captured Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultural diversity while keeping it simple to understand.

### Australian Government agencies

*Australian Public Service Commission*  
<http://www.apsc.gov.au/indigenous>

The Australian Public Service Commission works in partnership with APS agencies to provide employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians. There is a range of information, services and tools available to support organisations including Building an Indigenous Employment Strategy-A Starter Kit for Commonwealth Agencies (the Kit).

*Centrelink*

<http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/indigenous/index.htm>

The Australian Government's Department of Human Services has many Indigenous employment programs managed under Centrelink, including cadetships, wage subsidies and youth mobility programs.

*Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Indigenous/>

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is committed to the Australian Government's goal of reducing Indigenous disadvantage and to reconciliation between Indigenous and other Australians. This web site contains information about what DEEWR is doing to achieve the Close the Gap targets as well as outlining the programs, initiatives and services available to help improve the lives of Indigenous Australians. It also provides information for Indigenous Australians interested in working in the Department.

*Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs*

[www.fahcsia.gov.au/indigenous/](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/indigenous/)

FaHCSIA operates 29 Indigenous coordination centres and six regional operations centres around Australia. FaHCSIA supports Indigenous employment with programs and services, grants and funding.

## Employment providers and consultants

*Australian Employment Covenant, a program of GenerationOne*

[http://www.fiftythousandjobs.org.au/AEC\\_JMS/public/findjobs.aspx](http://www.fiftythousandjobs.org.au/AEC_JMS/public/findjobs.aspx)

When a company signs a Covenant Action Plan, GenerationOne's employment team provide support to the company. Employers can utilise the jobs board.

*Aboriginal Employment Strategy*

<http://www.aes.org.au/>

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy has a jobs board for Indigenous Australians. It records Indigenous Australians who are looking for work and contacts people when a suitable position becomes available.

*CareerTrackers Indigenous Internship Program*

[www.careertrackers.org.au](http://www.careertrackers.org.au)

CareerTrackers is a national organisation that connects with potential Indigenous university students and finds private sector placements in a career that aligns with each student's degree. CareerTrackers arranges multi-year internships with the aim of converting to full-time jobs.

*Indigenous Business Australia*

<http://www.iba.gov.au/>

IBA programs provide the means for Indigenous Australians to create wealth and accumulate assets, take up mainstream investment opportunities, create business enterprises that provide additional employment opportunities, and purchase homes.

*Indigenous Jobs Australia*

<http://www.indigenousjobsaustralia.com.au/>

Indigenous Jobs Australia is a jobs board that posts positions for Indigenous Australians. It also lists jobs on the AEC and AES websites.



### *Indigenous Employment Program (IEP)*

[www.deewr.gov.au/iep](http://www.deewr.gov.au/iep)

The IEP supports a broad range of activities that are responsive to the needs of employers, Indigenous Australians and their communities. Support is available for activities that help to achieve the objective of the IEP and that offer value for money. These could include activities that will:

- encourage and support employers to provide sustainable employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians;
- encourage and support Indigenous Australians to take up training and employment opportunities, stay in jobs and enhance their future employment prospects;
- assist Indigenous communities, industry bodies and groups of employers to develop Indigenous workforce and economic development strategies that support local and regional economic growth; or
- assist Indigenous Australians to develop sustainable businesses and economic opportunities in urban, regional and remote areas.

### *Job Services Australia*

[www.deewr.gov.au/employment/jsa/](http://www.deewr.gov.au/employment/jsa/)

Job Services Australia is the Australian Government's free national employment services system.

Your local Job Services Australia (JSA) provider can provide you with support that's tailored to meet your individual business needs, from recruitment advice, to candidate screening and short listing, to skills training for job seekers to suit your business needs. You could also get financial incentives for recruiting staff through Job Services Australia. JSAs are situated locally to every region and businesses can find their local JSA through the JSA website and contact them directly.

## **Training providers**

### *Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre*

<http://www.indigenousleadership.org.au/>

The Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre a not-for-profit company, owned and controlled by Indigenous Australians, that fosters new Indigenous leadership. As an RTO, it offers accredited courses in Indigenous leadership and non-accredited short courses in leadership and mentoring.

### *Group Training Australia*

<http://www.grouptraining.com.au/>

Group Training Australia is a large network of trainees and apprentices. The company ensures that trainees and apprentices fit the job criteria and helps them apply.

### *Indigenous Leadership Network Victoria*

<http://www.ilnv.com.au/>

ILNV is an Indigenous-run non-profit organisation that builds leadership capacities and empowers and unites Indigenous leaders by working with partners and sponsors to deliver mentoring, leadership training, networking and social research.

Skills training	Advantages	Issues to consider/ disadvantages
Pre-employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates are trained for the job with the right soft and hard skills</li> <li>• Candidates have assistance preparing for the interview and recruitment process</li> <li>• Candidates gain a clear understanding of the company's expectations and what the job entails</li> <li>• Candidates are screened, increasing the chances of selecting the right person for the job</li> <li>• Provides economies of scale when sourcing a large number of candidates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increases lead time to recruiting</li> <li>• Requires partnerships, finding the right partner for your training needs is key</li> <li>• Even when government funding is provided for training program, company could incur additional costs</li> </ul>
Company receives direct funding from DEEWR to develop its own pre-employment program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Company can develop its own program</li> <li>• Candidates are trained and supported by staff to company standards</li> <li>• Company can bring candidates in a cohort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing training can be time-consuming and require expertise and accreditation</li> <li>• Requires an IEM or a dedicated staff member to manage the program</li> <li>• Can be costly for small cohorts of candidates</li> </ul>
Company partners with an IEP panel member or training provider to develop a pre-employment program, where the IEP panellist receives and manages the funding from DEEWR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The partner organisation will have specialist skills in Indigenous employment to manage the program</li> <li>• Employer does not need in-house expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates are trained externally and do not have the same understanding of the organisation</li> <li>• Need to find the right provider to deliver the program to company standards</li> </ul>
Post-placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures higher retention rates</li> <li>• Assists the employee to transition better into the organisation</li> <li>• Assists in establishing expectations and areas where further training may be required</li> <li>• Builds better relationship between the employer and the employee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time-consuming</li> <li>• May require a dedicated manager/supervisor to undertake the process</li> </ul>
Apprenticeships and Traineeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combines training and hands-on learning</li> <li>• Candidates are trained in accordance with company standards</li> <li>• An effective way to attract and recruit candidates</li> <li>• Government funded and minimal cost outlay</li> <li>• GTO can source and mentor the candidates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not feasible for all positions</li> </ul>
Informal, on-the-job training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful in the absence of skilled applicants</li> <li>• Company experts can share their knowledge and develop the employee's skills</li> <li>• Candidates are trained to the company standards</li> <li>• Builds a collaborative environment and shared learning experience for both the long-term and newer employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May take longer for employee to be fully productive</li> <li>• A manager, supervisor or experienced employee is required to deliver the training</li> </ul>

### *Queensland Government Indigenous Mentoring Program*

<http://training.qld.gov.au/information/skilling-plans/community-services/indigenous-mentoring.html>

The Indigenous Mentoring Program (IMP) is an initiative of the Community Services Skilling Plan, which develops and implements regional mentoring programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the community sector using an appreciative mentoring framework.

## Indigenous community organisations and Indigenous business networks

### *Supply Nation (formerly known as Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council (AIMSC))*

<http://www.supplynation.org.au>

Supply Nation is a not-for-profit membership body for Australian companies and government agencies who are seeking to buy goods and services from Indigenous businesses. It provides a direct business-to-business purchasing link between corporate Australia, government agencies and Indigenous-owned businesses.

### *Indigenous Community Volunteers*

<https://donate.icv.com.au/donationhome/>

Indigenous Community Volunteers helps communities reach their goals. You can donate money or volunteer to work in an Indigenous organisation.

### *Indigenous Business Council of Australia*

[www.ibca.org.au](http://www.ibca.org.au)

The Indigenous Business Council of Australia represents many Indigenous-owned and managed businesses across the country.

### *Local Indigenous Networks*

<http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/indigenous/indigenous-community-engagement/local-indigenous-networks-lins>

Local Indigenous Networks represent communities, identifying local issues and priorities.

Networks can organise events and run annual groups for men, women and youth.

### *Our Community*

<http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/directories/indigenous?state=&localgov=&suburb=&search=>

Our Community is a directory that lists local organisations. Condensed searches (Indigenous and local) help companies find local Indigenous organisations. Companies can contact Indigenous organisations to discuss event participation.

## Higher education Indigenous centres

### *Tertiary Education Indigenous Centres*

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/sensecyouth/careertrans/teacherresources/catresourcekit/koorie/uni.htm>

There are potential Indigenous employees at university and TAFE. Get involved with the Indigenous units and meet Indigenous people who fit your business needs.

### *University Indigenous Centres*

[http://www.deewr.gov.au/Indigenous/HigherEducation/Programs/Pages/](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Indigenous/HigherEducation/Programs/Pages/IndigenousHigherEducationCentres.aspx)

[IndigenousHigherEducationCentres.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Indigenous/HigherEducation/Programs/Pages/IndigenousHigherEducationCentres.aspx)

Engaging with the Indigenous student services at your local university is a good way to employ graduating Indigenous Australians. Meet students at lunches or mentor a student through their degree.

## Media

*Indigenous Radio Stations*

<http://www.nirs.org.au>

*Indigenous Newsletters*

<http://www.creativespirits.info/resources/newsletters/index.html>

*Koori Mail*

<http://www.koorimail.com/>

*The National Indigenous Times*

<http://www.nit.com.au/>

## Events

*NAIDOC Week*

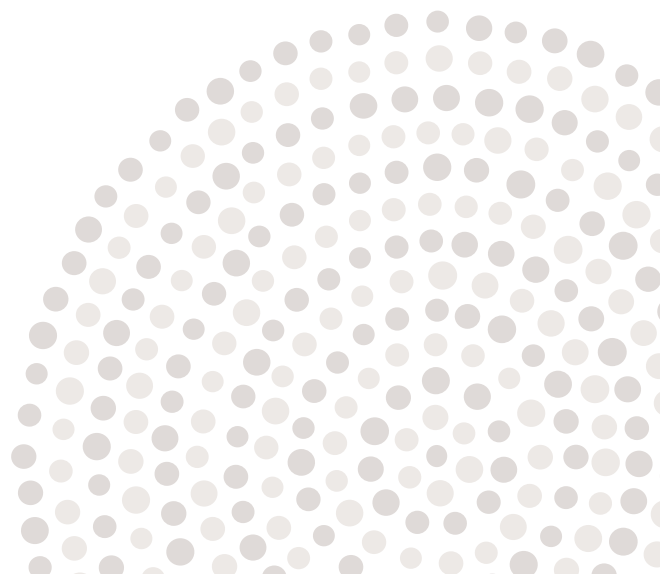
[www.naidoc.org.au](http://www.naidoc.org.au)

NAIDOC originally stood for the National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee, which organised week-long national activities in July. The acronym has since become the name of the week and anybody can host events with an Indigenous focus and register them with the organisation.

*National Reconciliation Week*

[www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw)

National Reconciliation Week in late May/early June is a time to reflect on what makes respectful relationships between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians. It's also an opportunity for people to talk about reconciliation and how to turn disadvantage into advantage.





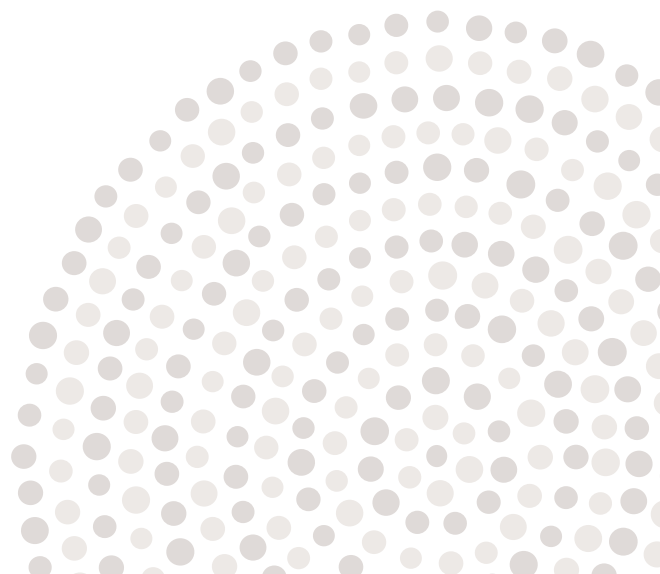
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