Innovation in Youth Employment Services Forums: Summary

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Nova Franklin
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V1.0
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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS REPORT

In May and June 2018, the Department of Jobs and Small Business hosted seven youth innovation in employment service forums across Australia. Forums were attended by providers from Empowering YOUth Initiatives, Transition to Work, and jobactive programs; staff from the Department of Jobs and Small Business, and other people from organisations with a keen interest in innovation in youth employment (see page 6 for more information).

The purpose of these forums was to help attendees to:

- Learn from, and inspire, each other to try new ideas that might improve outcomes for young unemployed people;
- Better collaborate and form partnerships into the future.

This document summarises forum conversations based on common needs of young people.

You may like to read the report sequentially, and/or use the overview of young people’s needs (on page 10) to navigate to specific needs you and your team are looking to address within your practice.
INTRODUCTION

FORUM ACTIVITIES

1. Meet and greet
Forum attendees introduced themselves to others during a fast and furious ‘getting-to-know-you’ exercise.

2. Presentations
We heard from Empowering YOUth Initiatives providers and participants about the innovative programs that have been trialled. This helped everyone understand what these experiences can teach us.

3. Best practice discussion
Forum attendees shared the best thing they do to help young people engage in education and employment.

4. Exploring challenges
Forum attendees discussed challenges faced by young people and providers, to help them to participate in activities 5 and 6 described below.

5. What great looks like
Forum attendees spent time understanding what young people would think, say, do and feel if providers did a great job.

6. Making a commitment
Each participant committed to doing one thing that would make more of a difference for young people.
INTRODUCTION

FORUM ATTENDANCE

Our forums were attended by a range of people who provide youth employment services. This included:

- Providers running Empowering YOUth Initiatives, jobactive, and Transition to Work programs.
- Staff from the Department of Jobs and Small Business.
- People from organisations with a keen interest in innovation in youth employment, such as: Universities; the Department of Education; NSW Department of Family and Community Services.

Total Attendees

307

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15</th>
<th>66</th>
<th>69</th>
<th>66</th>
<th>38</th>
<th>53</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>Empowering YOUth Initiatives</td>
<td>jobactive</td>
<td>Transition to Work</td>
<td>Departmental staff</td>
<td>Other related organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Locations

Adelaide
Brisbane
Darwin
Hobart
Melbourne
Perth
Sydney
OUR ASPIRATIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
### OUR ASPIRATIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

**THINK, SAY, DO, AND FEEL**

What attendees believe young people would think, say, do, and feel if we did an amazing job to support them to engage in education and employment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Think/say</th>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Feel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look how far I’ve come</td>
<td>Open up/share stories</td>
<td>Life is OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I turn up to program activities and job interviews because I can see they are worthwhile</td>
<td>Seek support and ask for help</td>
<td>I’m OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve got a job/am doing a course that means something to me</td>
<td>Care for myself</td>
<td>Listened to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a lot to offer</td>
<td>Invest in myself</td>
<td>Respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m earning money</td>
<td>Make changes</td>
<td>Cared for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s OK to dream big</td>
<td>Set and achieve goals</td>
<td>More connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know myself better now</td>
<td>Enrol in and complete a course</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what my strengths are</td>
<td>Look for work or work experience</td>
<td>Worthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m clearer on what I’d like to do</td>
<td>Get a job</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have more skills to get where I’d like to go</td>
<td>Enjoy working</td>
<td>Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have choices</td>
<td>Do my job well</td>
<td>Challenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is challenging but I can do it</td>
<td>Stay employed</td>
<td>Confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to learn more</td>
<td>Buy things</td>
<td>Proud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I now have skills that help me to balance work, social stuff, and my health</td>
<td>Save some money</td>
<td>Equipped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The world doesn’t owe me a living</td>
<td>Consider others</td>
<td>Hopeful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It feels good to contribute</td>
<td>Connect other young people to the program</td>
<td>Purposeful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone believes in me</td>
<td>Support others</td>
<td>Momentum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t want to let others down</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m a role model</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you, that really helped me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NEEDS, CHALLENGES, AND INTERVENTIONS
### KEY NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Build strong service delivery capability to support me (pp 11-15)</th>
<th>Set me up for success (pp 16-19)</th>
<th>Engage me (pp 20-23)</th>
<th>Help me grow my skills (pp 24-26)</th>
<th>Connect me (pp 27-30)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know what works for people like me</td>
<td>Build rapport and get to know me well</td>
<td>Tailor your service to my needs and interests</td>
<td>Help me build my employability skills</td>
<td>Help me connect with employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-design your service with me</td>
<td>Challenge me so I can grow</td>
<td>Interact with me where and when I’m comfortable</td>
<td>Expose me to on-the-job learning</td>
<td>Help me connect with mentors who can guide me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire and support the ‘right’ staff</td>
<td>Help me overcome barriers</td>
<td>Keep communicating and connecting with me</td>
<td>Help me connect with other young people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build partnerships to better support me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

BUILD STRONG SERVICE DELIVERY CAPABILITY TO SUPPORT ME

**Know what works for people like me**
A number of attendees spoke about a desire to use evidence-based practices to design services that support young people to achieve improved employment outcomes. While few seem to have access to a comprehensive review of the evidence, many expressed an intent to collaborate with others in future to compare notes.

**Co-design your service with me**
Some attendees spoke of challenges relating to young people disengaging in their offerings, and reflected on the need to co-design services with young people. Others spoke enthusiastically about the positive impact on young people’s engagement and learning outcomes as a result of involving young people in decisions that impact them.

**Hire and support the ‘right’ staff**
Attendees discussed difficulties in identifying, assessing and retaining the ‘right’ staff, as roles are challenging; and require above average interpersonal skills and commitment. Attendees discussed a range of desirable skills and attributes required by staff who are able to successfully support young people. Others put forward ideas on supporting staff through ongoing discussions, service delivery meetings, training, mentoring and standardised procedures.

**Build partnerships to better support me**
While some providers spoke about a lack of referrals to their services, others spoke about the difficulty in finding services to refer to.
NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

BUILD STRONG SERVICE DELIVERY CAPABILITY TO SUPPORT ME

Know what works for people like me

A number of attendees spoke about a desire to use evidence-based practices to design services that support young people to achieve improved employment outcomes. While few seem to have access to a comprehensive review of the evidence, many expressed an intent to collaborate with others in future to compare notes.

Challenges

No central repository of evidence-based research that providers can refer to. E.g., how to prepare young people for the gig economy; how to support young entrepreneurs; how technology and data analytics can support youth employment services.

The rate of change – when it comes to new types of jobs and what’s required – is relatively fast which can make it difficult for providers to keep up.

The temptation for Empowering YOUth Initiatives providers to draw conclusions based on a small number of participants attending their own programs, rather than referring to evidence-based research.

Few formal networking opportunities exist for providers to share their challenges, lessons learned, and what they find works best for young people.

Some providers are

Gathering best practice research from a variety of sources. Using this information to influence service design and delivery decisions.

Taking time to discuss best practice with their team.

Keen to meet with other providers to compare practices and associated outcomes.
Co-design your service with me

Some attendees spoke of challenges relating to young people disengaging in their offerings, and reflected on the need to co-design services with young people.

Others spoke enthusiastically about the positive impact on young people’s engagement and learning outcomes as a result of involving young people in decisions that impact them.

Challenges

Services are often designed by those who write grant applications rather than front-line delivery staff and young people.

Organisations are not in the habit of involving young people in the design of their service offerings.

Valuable information that could help with service (re)design efforts – around why young people disengage with and/or drop out of programs – is often not collected due to time constraints, and the absence of formal or informal collection methods.

Some providers are

Forming youth advisory groups to help shape the design and delivery of services.

Using a test and learn approach to see what’s effective or not.

Using formal and informal systems to check-in with young people to find out what is/isn’t working for them; asking “how do you think our service can be improved?” These check-ins take place while young people are participating in the program; if they disengage during the program; and, after the program.
NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

BUILD STRONG SERVICE DELIVERY CAPABILITY TO SUPPORT ME

Hire and support the ‘right’ staff

Attendees discussed difficulties in identifying, assessing and retaining the ‘right’ staff, as roles are challenging; and require above average interpersonal skills and commitment.

Attendees discussed a range of desirable skills and attributes required by staff who are able to successfully support young people. Others put forward ideas on supporting staff through ongoing discussions, service delivery meetings, training, mentoring and standardised procedures.

Challenges

Staff with the required skills and experience can be difficult to find, and burnout or turnover in staff working with young people is high.

Staff face a number of challenges including:

- Steep learning curves for those who are new to the job.
- The need to artfully balance administrative requirements against time needed to help clients reach desirable outcomes.
- The need to help young people with a range of complex issues (see page 19): often in the absence of other family and support networks; and/or, outside of normal working hours.

Some providers are

Hiring staff who:

- Have the right attitude; filling skills gaps post employment.
- Are friendly, respectful, patient, and can relate to a wide range of people.
- Encourage and partner with young people.
- Are great listeners, build rapport and trust, know how to have the tough but necessary conversations, communicate with young people in their language, don’t judge, frequently describe what young people are doing well.
- Are responsive, professional, passionate and never give up.
- Are young people themselves.

Matching the most experienced staff to clients with the most challenges.

Supporting staff via:

- Tools and procedures manuals.
- Training and mentoring.

Improving services via ongoing discussions and service delivery model meetings that focus on:

- Understanding the contract and what the Employment Fund can be used for.
- Service delivery developments and aspirations.
- Staff challenges, what they need and what can be done to support their work.
- Prioritisation of tasks.
- Building awareness of programs staff can refer young people to.

Using attendance and drop out numbers to better understand how well individual staff are supporting young people.
Build partnerships to better support me

While some providers spoke about a lack of referrals to their services, others spoke about the difficulty in finding services to refer to.

Challenges
Some providers spoke about their attempts to extend their services beyond what they are best placed (or contractually engaged) to deliver. This may be because:

- There is a dazzlingly wide range of partnerships providers could focus on to extend the support they are able to provide young people.
- It’s not always easy to figure out what services are provided locally, by whom, where various services cross over, and how partnering with different organisations may be beneficial.
- Some areas may lack wrap-around services or educational courses the young person needs.
- The services that providers may wish to refer young people to may be at capacity or have long wait lists.
- Forming partnerships – although an aspiration of many who attended our forums – can be time consuming and providers have multiple (other) priorities they must also juggle.

Some providers are
Referring young people to other services they don’t offer e.g.:
- Other employment service providers
- Wrap around services (support for homelessness, school attendance, mental health issues, etc...).

Partnering with volunteers or business/community groups to co-deliver services.

Building relationships with employers, employer groups, police, registered training organisations, sporting organisations, youth organisations, and mentors who are happy to support young people through jobs, work experience, or exposure to the world of work in some way.

Training or coaching employers to help them better understand young people, better support young people, create workplaces that support and engage young people.
NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

SET ME UP FOR SUCCESS

**Build rapport and get to know me well**
Attendees noted improvements in employment outcomes when staff are able to take the time to explore young people’s challenges, needs and aspirations.

While many spoke of the additional time and effort this requires, a great many attendees made a commitment to do more of this in future.

**Challenge me so I can grow**
Attendees spoke about young people’s lack of self-confidence and, in some instances, motivation when starting programs.

Many offered ideas around ways to challenge young people in an effort to build confidence and enthusiasm.

**Help me overcome barriers**
Young people can face an array of complex challenges.

Attendees identified a mix of strategies they can apply to build young people’s ability to cope with, and overcome, the barriers they are faced with.
Build rapport and get to know me well

Attendees noted improvements in employment outcomes when staff are able to take the time to explore young people’s challenges, needs and aspirations. While many spoke of the additional time and effort this requires, a great many attendees made a commitment to do more of this in future.

Challenges

**Young people won’t always open up.**

Some young people struggle to articulate themselves.

Young people may be sick of repeating their story to different service providers.

Young people may not know what they want straight off the bat.

Providers may not ask enough questions initially.

Providers are likely to be time poor.

It can be tempting to make assumptions e.g., about the type of employment someone might be interested in.

Making assumptions that turn out not to be true can damage the relationship with young people.

Things are likely to change for the young person over time and this new information must be factored in.

The requirement for providers to address compliance issues, as well as providing support for young people.

Time constraints.

**Some providers are**

Having a consistent point of contact for each young person to provide stability throughout their journey.

Making the time to listen.

Using conversations, activities and assessment tools to dig into young people’s:

- Stories.
- Passions, interests, preferences, goals and aspirations.
- Motivations for work.
- Work and study history, employability readiness, capabilities and strengths.
- Contexts, culture and challenges.
- Confidence levels.
- Physical and mental fitness.

Seeking feedback from others whom the young person has interacted with e.g., other providers, teachers, youth workers.

Starting with fun/recreational activities that help young people to engage and relax from the outset.

Playing music, sport and boardgames with young people.

Ensuring they are there when young people need someone to talk to.

Ensuring they deliver on their promises to young people.

Finding and fulfilling a specific need early to build rapport and trust.
Challenge me to grow

Attendees spoke about young people’s lack of self-confidence and, in some instances, motivation when starting programs. Many offered ideas around ways to challenge young people in an effort to build confidence and enthusiasm.

Challenges

Work, or work related study, may not be the young person’s priority.

Young people may not feel as though anything is wrong with where they are at.

Young people may not have anyone in their life who believes in them or encourages them.

Some young people may have had few successes in the past.

Others may have focused on correcting young people’s weaknesses rather than enabling their strengths.

Some young people may believe they are not good enough and lack confidence in their skills and abilities.

Providers may underestimate young people’s ability to engage, commit and follow through.

Young people may be discouraged or put off by the negative perceptions of them held by employers and others in the community.

Young people may not know what their options are or what they are good at.

Young people might not know how to translate their talents into a work related pathway.

Some providers are

Creating high, but realistic expectations for young people to achieve.

Focusing on what’s ‘strong-not-wrong’.

Encouraging young people to do things they wouldn’t normally try.

Creating a ‘safe to fail’ environment that challenges young people to take calculated risks.

Partnering with young people versus doing things for them.

Giving responsibility, expecting accountability, and recognising early wins.

Getting the young person to commit to agreed behaviours, actions and goals via a signed agreement.

Encouraging young people to speak publicly e.g., on the radio, on TV, at forums, on panels.

Regularly checking in on progress against commitments.

Asking tough questions and having the hard conversations – in a respectful and empathetic way – when required.
NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

SET ME UP FOR SUCCESS

Help me overcome barriers

Young people can face an array of complex challenges. Attendees identified a mix of strategies they can apply to build young people’s ability to cope with, and overcome, the barriers they are faced with.

Challenges

Young people may lack:

- Trust, confidence, motivation, resilience.
- Language, literacy and numeracy skills.
- Learning difficulties.
- Physical fitness required to work.
- Money for calls to providers, transport to programs, a haircut, food, toiletries, clean clothes.
- Access to public transport and/or a driver’s licence.
- Positive role models.
- A family.
- A home.

Others may face one or more challenges such as:

- Multiple ‘failures’ in their transition to work.
- Not wanting to look stupid when trying something challenging.
- Short attention spans.
- Smart phone distractions.
- Competing priorities.
- Peer pressure.
- Learning issues.
- Anxiety, depression, other mental health issues.
- Drug addiction.
- A lack of support/disinterest from their family.
- A family or community narrative that says a job is not important.
- A family or community narrative that says the young person should share their income.
- Difficulty in navigating ‘the system’.
- Employers and community who underestimate young people or are prejudiced against them; particularly those with mental health issues, disabilities and those from CALD populations.
- A desire to take up suggested referrals.

Some providers are

Painting a picture of life with a job, to excite the young person and their families.

Keeping formal lessons short and using group activities and discussions in and out of the ‘classroom’ as an alternative to sit down, lecture-style activities.

Acknowledging and celebrating successes.

Finding and fulfilling an early need, to build rapport and trust.

Helping young people to access food, toiletries, showers and clean clothes.

Creating plain language resources, communications, paperwork, forms.

Helping young people to navigate ‘the system’.

Helping young people build their emotional intelligence.

Building resilience by letting young people know that ‘failures’ along the way are normal.

Identifying and working on potential barriers to sustaining (not just getting) employment.

Integrating health, fitness and wellbeing into their services.

Introducing young people to online self-help resources.

Referring young people to wrap around services – mental health support, drug addiction, resilience training, education – that can support young people in ways they can’t.

Helping young people to find a way to get their licenses e.g., connecting them with volunteers who can act as supervisors.
**ENGAGE ME**

**Tailor your service to my needs and interests**

Attendees spoke about time and budget constraints driving the creation and delivery of one-size-fits-all services. Attendees also acknowledged that to achieve desirable outcomes, approaches tailored to different people, local areas, and communities, may be required.

**Interact with me where and when I’m comfortable**

Some attendees reflected on lessons learned around locating their services outside of central areas. Others offered a range of flexible options they’ve tried to improve attendance rates and engagement levels of young people.

**Keep communicating and connecting with me**

A number of attendees expressed a desire to improve their communication with young people. Others offered a range of options. This included the use of technology to support (versus replace) face-to-face interactions.
Tailor your service to my needs and interests

Attendees spoke about time and budget constraints driving the creation and delivery of one-size-fits-all services. Attendees also acknowledged that to achieve desirable outcomes, approaches tailored to different people, local areas, and communities, may be required.

Challenges

Providers feel there’s often a choice to be made between satisfying contractual KPIs and delivering services that will meet the needs of each young person. Similarly, some feel that guidelines, compliance frameworks, and KPIs may constrain innovation and flexibility.

Time pressures and limited budgets may result in one-size-fits-all approaches; a temptation to stick to the initial plan for a young person, even when a change is required; and some young people rolling off programs in instances where additional time may have helped them achieve their goals.

Transitions to and from other programs can be clunky.

Some providers are

Successfully balancing time between working with young people and focusing on administrative tasks.

Understanding that a one-size-fits all approach is unlikely to work for everyone.

Understanding what works well for different people, different local areas, and different communities.

Engaging young people via:
- Partnering with them to establish aspirational goals.
- Providing them with options to choose from when it comes to training, education, their career, and engagement with the service provided.

- Physical, outdoor and interest-based activities.
- Doing some activities that benefit the young person, even though these may not have a direct impact on contractual KPIs.
NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

ENGAGE ME

Interact with me where and when I’m comfortable

Some attendees reflected on lessons learned around locating their services outside of central areas. Others offered a range of flexible options they’ve tried to improve attendance rates and engagement levels of young people.

Challenges

- Formal educational settings may disengage some young people.
- Young people may lack money for transport to programs.
- Young people may lack access to public transport and/or a drivers licence.
- Young people with mental health issues may find it difficult to leave home or make their way to a centre.
- Providers may find it challenging to keep up with changes in technology that allow them to deliver services digitally.
- Providers may need to work outside of regular business hours, to meet with young people who work or study nine-to-five during the week.

Some providers are

- Raising awareness of their services/programs at places young people frequent, e.g., schools, music festivals, wrap around service providers, skate parks, libraries, cafes, and online.
- Mobile services/roadshows that go to young people.
- Locating the service in a place that’s centrally located and easily accessible by public transport and commonly frequented by young people, rather than expecting young people to go out of their way.
- Asking young people where they’d like to meet, rather than having them come to an office.
- Enabling young people to interact with their service virtually, rather than having to participate in person.
- Co-locating their services in centres with others who provide complimentary services to young people.
- Offering services in the evenings and on weekends to support those with other commitments.
NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

ENGAGE ME

Keep communicating and connecting with me

A number of attendees expressed a desire to improve their communication with young people. Others offered a range of options. This included the use of technology to support (versus replace) face-to-face interactions.

Challenges

It’s easy to assume that young people know what’s going on, what’s expected of them and what they need to do next, when in reality, this is not always the case.

Young people may not always get, or respond to, the messages that are left for them.

Some conversations with young people can be really tough.

Some providers may assume that written or digital communications can take the place of one-on-one interactions.

Some providers are

Ensuring they are available when young people need someone to talk to.

Recognising and celebrating young people’s wins.

Asking tough questions and having the hard conversations – in a respectful and empathetic way – when required.

Sending young people reminders before important activities.

Making multiple attempts to follow up with young people who disengage to understand what’s going on and find solutions.

Using technology to:

- Communicate and check-in with young people, including tracking young people’s moods through the use of emoticons, colours or “yes” buttons.
- Share jobs and other news online.
- Run virtual classrooms or mock interviews.
- Create online support groups, including those where young people can support each other at all hours.
- Inspire young people via gamification of activities.
NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

HELP ME GROW MY SKILLS

Help me build my employability skills

Young people may begin programs with little idea of what they might like to do, and few tools to help them find their way.

Attendees shared a range of strategies they use to help young people to identify and achieve their employment related goals.

Exposé me to on-the-job learning

Providers see exposure to on-the-job learning as an invaluable element in assisting young people to find work.

Attendees listened enthusiastically to the ways in which some of their peers currently identify and manage such opportunities for young people.
NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

HELP ME GROW MY SKILLS

Help me build my employability skills

Young people may begin programs with little idea of what they might like to do, and few tools to help them find their way. Attendees shared a range of strategies they use to help young people to identify and achieve their employment related goals.

Challenges

Young people may be unfamiliar with the world of work and what’s required.

Young people may lack:

- A direction that interests them.
- An understanding of what people do in particular jobs.
- The skills to look for jobs.
- A resume.
- The ability to write a cover letter.
- Interview skills.
- The interpersonal skills required to find and keep a job.
- Digital literacy skills.
- The resilience to work their way through red tape.

Young people may find themselves participating in training and education that will not help them to find to work in the long-term.

Some providers are

Realising that leading early interactions with discussions around potential jobs can be off-putting/overwhelming.

Helping young people to understand that the first jobs they have are stepping stones.

Setting realistic expectations around barriers the young person may encounter, helping young people think through how they might react to these barriers if and when they occur.

Exposing young people to industries or roles they may not know about.

Helping young people write their resumes, cover letters, search for jobs, apply for jobs (including coaching and encouraging young people to call prospective employers), and navigate the system.

Partnering with professional recruitment firms who show young people how to go about looking for and applying for work.

Teaching young people to communicate more effectively via eye contact, body language, shaking hands, etc.

Working with employers who are willing to support mock interviews; workplace visits; guest speaker engagements.

Catching public transport or driving young people to job interviews to help reduce anxiety around navigation, and to connect/coach along the way.

Keeping formal lessons short and using group activities and discussions in and out of the ‘classroom’ that focus on learning by doing, as an alternative to sit down, lecture-style activities that are heavily text based.

Revising what’s been taught along the way.

Ensuring that any vocational training the young person undertakes is likely to help them to secure a job.

Brokering agreements with employers to hold jobs while young people undertake required training.
HELP ME GROW MY SKILLS

Exposé me to on-the-job learning

Providers see exposure to on-the-job learning as an invaluable element in assisting young people to find work. Attendees listened enthusiastically to the ways in which some of their peers currently identify and manage such opportunities for young people.

Challenges

Opportunities for on-the-job learning are scarce.
Many young people lack work experience, which is seen as a pre-requisite for a job.
Young people who have tried a range of jobs for a short amount of time each, may appear ‘flaky’ to employers.
Some young people may not have the mental and physical fitness/resilience needed to do a particular job at first.

Some providers are

Setting up opportunities for young people to participate in volunteer or paid work experience, internships, traineeships and apprenticeships.
Talking to young people about industries of interest versus specific jobs.
Having realistic conversations with young people about what the job is and what it will require.
Carefully matching young people to opportunities that are available.
Identifying skills shortages and preparing young people to do these jobs.

Creating programs that consist of a series of short work experience engagements so that young people can explore different types of work.
Involving young people in real projects where they develop employability skills (e.g., leadership, project management, decision-making, teamwork, digital literacy).
Creating social enterprises that offer young people on-the-job learning experiences.
Supporting young people to start their own businesses.
NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

CONNECT ME

Help me connect with employers

Forming connections with employers gives young people valuable learning and employment opportunities they may not have access to otherwise.

A number of attendees spoke about creative ways in which they facilitate these connections by actively supporting employers better understand young people.

Help me connect with mentors who can guide me

A number of attendees spoke about connecting young people to different types of mentors who are able to provide tailored advice and support.

Help me connect with other young people

Young can people find it difficult to interact with their peers. Some spend a lot of time by themselves. This can make them feel socially isolated.

Attendees offered a range of strategies for connecting young people with others their age who might support them in a variety of ways.
NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

CONNECT ME

Help me connect with employers

Forming connections with employers gives young people valuable learning and employment opportunities they may not have access to otherwise. A number of attendees spoke about creative ways in which they facilitate these connections by actively supporting employers better understand young people.

Challenges

The rate of unemployment for young people is relatively high compared to other people.

Entry-level jobs are becoming more scarce and therefore placing young people in these jobs is becoming harder.

Employers may underestimate young people: particularly those with mental health issues, disabilities, those from CALD populations.

Employers may not know how to create inclusive workplaces for those with mental health issues, disabilities, those from CALD populations.

Some young people apply for any job because they feel they don’t have the skills for what’s out there. This can frustrate employers, discouraging them from employing young people.

Disrespectful behaviour can cause adults to remove their support and/or the opportunities they have to offer.

The time delay from commencing recruitment to a job with a large employer can be too long for a young person.

Some providers are

Using their networks to form relationships with employers or employer groups who are interested in supporting young people’s journey to work and/or hiring them.

Helping employers and employer groups to better understand young people's behaviours and needs, including setting expectations with employers around negative behaviours they might encounter, and helping them to think through how they might react to these if and when they occur.

Advocating for young people, e.g., meeting employers to let them know what the young person is good at, and explaining that the young person has what’s needed despite their difficulty with job interviews.

Finding ways to showcase young people’s potential with employers or employer groups who are interested in supporting their journey to work and/or hiring them (e.g., having young people pitch a project to potential employers).
NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

CONNECT ME

Help me connect with mentors

A number of attendees spoke about connecting young people to different types of mentors who are able to provide tailored advice and support.

Challenges
It can be hard to recruit mentors.
Recruiting mentors takes time, sometimes the young person finds another interest in the meantime which means the mentor is no longer suitable.
It can be hard to match the ‘right’ mentor for each young person.
Disrespectful behaviour can cause adults to remove their support and/or the opportunities they have to offer.

Some providers are
Coaching and mentoring mentors themselves, so they can best leverage their skills to support young people.
Connecting young people to mentoring before and during employment.
Using different mentors for different purpose, e.g., educational mentors, career mentors, ‘life coach’ mentors, driving mentors (which take young people where they need to go or accompany young people as they learn to drive).
Having a pool of mentors young people can connect to, rather than one-on-one relationships.

Supporting and encouraging young people who have moved into work to come back and mentor their peers.
Identifying and supporting champions within workplaces who want to support young people on the job.
Recruiting high profile mentors as volunteers.
Connecting young people with mentors who can help them to start their own businesses.
NEEDS, CHALLENGES AND INTERVENTIONS

CONNECT ME

Help me connect with other young people

Young can people find it difficult to interact with their peers. Some spend a lot of time by themselves. This can make them feel socially isolated. Attendees offered a range of strategies for connecting young people with others their age who might support them in a variety of ways.

Challenges

- Young people may spend a lot of time at home by themselves.
- Young people may feel more comfortable spending time with their screens rather than with others.
- Young people may lack the confidence or social skills to connect with others.
- Young people may feel isolated.

When young people are around during the day, their friends may be at school or university. Conversely, when young people need to be at programs or at work, their friends may be free.

Some providers are

- Using group activities and discussions in and out of the 'classroom' to build young people’s ability to connect with each other.
- Enabling young people to support each other face-to-face and online.
- Teaching young people to communicate more effectively via eye contact, body language, shaking hands, etc.
- Supporting and encouraging young people who have moved into work to come back and mentor their peers.
WHERE TO FROM HERE
CONCLUSION

WHERE TO FROM HERE

The Department would like to thank forum attendees for actively collaborating with us to share the ideas listed in this report.

We intend to share this summary with:

- Departmental staff responsible for policy and program development.
- Other agencies working with, and designing programs for, young people.
- Providers designing services for young people.

We sincerely hope attendees will now:

- Follow-through on the commitments they made during forums.
- Continue to use this report when they are looking for new ideas they wish to test with young people.
- Take the time to connect and further collaborate with others they met during the forums.
Thank you