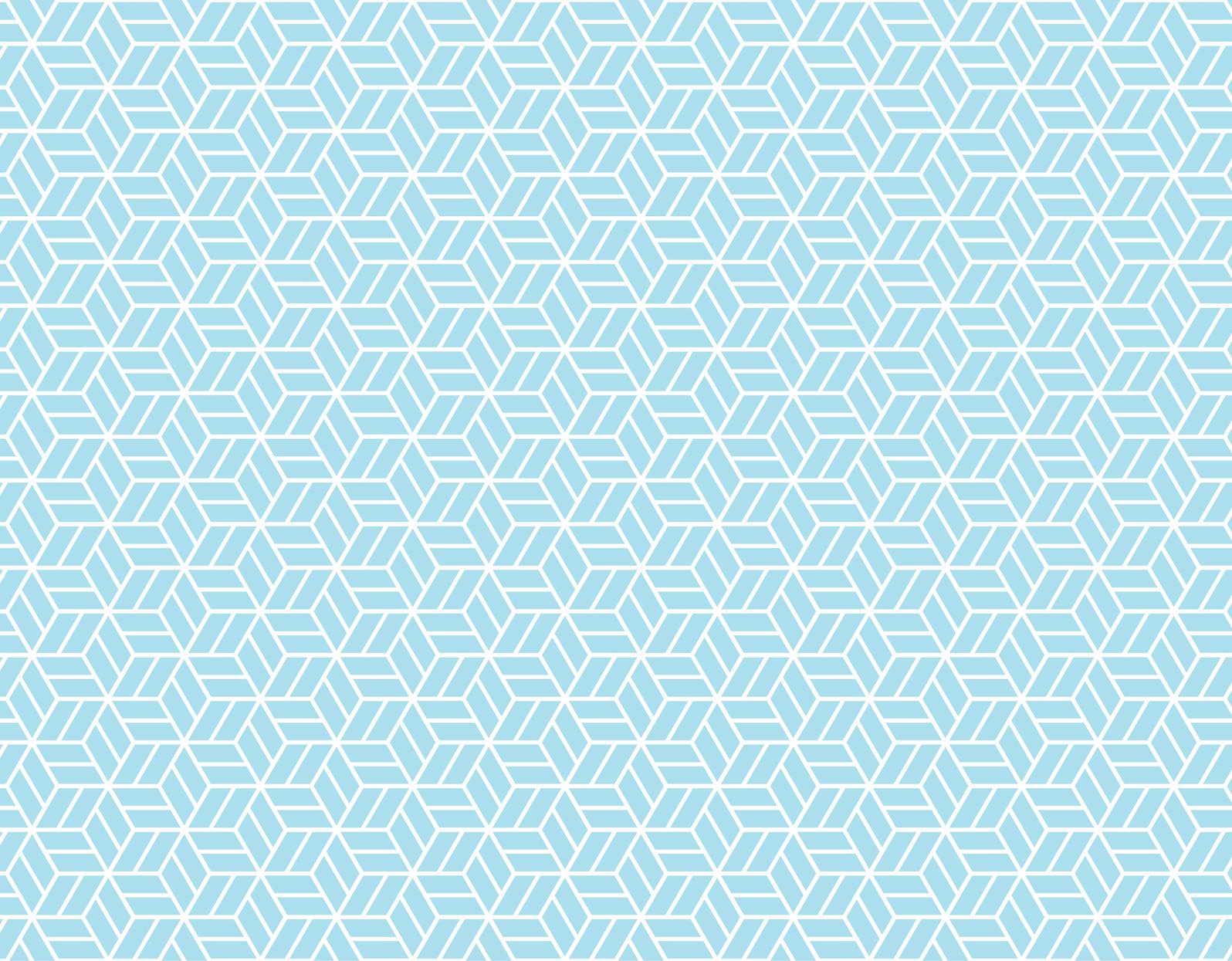


Transition to Work  
Community of Practice:  
**Practice Guide**



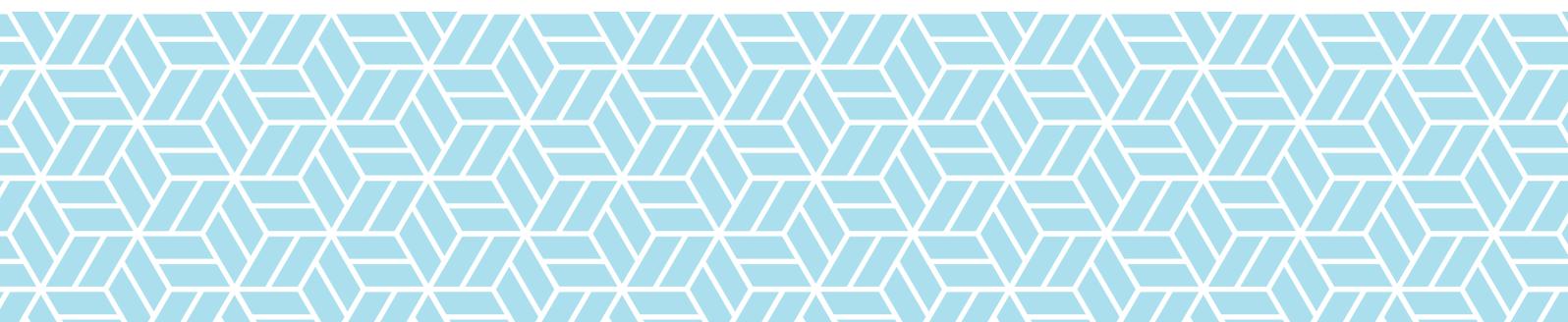
Diane Brown with Sally James, Shelley Mallett, Niamh McTiernan, Nicholas Orchard and Emma Cull



People want to have savings, people want to go to other countries, people want to explore, people want to do things. If you don't have a full-time job you can't do that. I just want to get out there and work.

I just need a job so I can move ahead in life.

**Kevin, TtW Participant**



# Transition to Work Community of Practice: **Practice Guide**

Diane Brown with Sally James, Shelley Mallett, Niamh McTiernan, Nicholas Orchard and Emma Cull

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**Brotherhood of St Laurence**

**t** +61 3 9483 1183

**f** +61 3 9417 2691

**w** [www.ttwcommunity.com.au](http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au)

**Authors** Diane Brown with Sally James, Shelley Mallett, Niamh McTiernan, Nicholas Orchard and Emma Cull

**Editing** Jane Yule @ Brevity Comms

**Design and print management** Stuart Pettigrew Design

**Photographs** Courtesy of TtW Community of Practice organisations

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# Acknowledgments

The content for this Practice Guide was developed by the Youth Transitions Service Development Team at the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL), in collaboration with BSL's Research and Policy Centre and the Transition to Work Community of Practice (TtW CoP).

It draws on the Education First Youth (EFY) Foyer Practice Framework, which was inspired by the work of Colin Falconer, who first developed Advantaged Thinking during his time as Director of Innovation and Strategy at the United Kingdom (UK) Foyer Federation.

The BSL Youth Transitions Service Development Team includes:

- Diane Brown (Research and Service Development Manager, Youth Transitions, and lead author)
- Sally James (Principal Advisor for Youth Transitions)
- Professor Shelley Mallet (General Manager, BSL Research and Policy Centre)
- Niamh McTiernan (Practice and Service Development Manager, Youth Transitions)
- Nicholas Orchard (former Senior Manager, Transition to Work)
- Emma Cull (Program Development Manager, Youth Transitions)

In particular, we would also like to acknowledge and thank Julia Baron (Youth Development Coach, Creating Futures for Youth) and Jo Buick for their contributions to the development of this Practice Guide.

To develop this Practice Guide, BSL led a co-design process with the Transition to Work Community of Practice. Collectively, the CoP organisations tested and refined a number of foundational documents and tools; the feedback and expertise of their managers and CEOs, and the Youth Development Coaches and Employer Engagement Officers of each of these organisations (listed below), was instrumental in the development of this Practice Guide:

Workways | Gen-Z Employment | Vocational Partnerships Group | Schools Industry Partnership | Australian Community Support Organisation | Colony 47 | YouthWorX NT | Joblink Midwest | Anglicare South Australia | Brophy Family and Youth Services

# Glossary

<b>ATEP</b>	Apprenticeship and Traineeship Employment Partners
<b>BSL</b>	Brotherhood of St Laurence
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CIC</b>	Community Investment Committee
<b>CILG</b>	Community Investment Leadership Group
<b>CoP</b>	Community of Practice
<b>DoE</b>	Department of Employment
<b>EEO</b>	Employer Engagement Officer
<b>EFY Foyers</b>	Education First Youth Foyers
<b>LLN</b>	Language, Literacy and Numeracy
<b>NGIV</b>	Nursery and Garden Industry Victoria
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PPS</b>	Post-placement Support
<b>RIL</b>	Recognition of Informal Learning
<b>SEW</b>	South East Water
<b>SMEs</b>	small to medium employers
<b>TAFE</b>	Technical and Further Education
<b>TtW</b>	Transition to Work
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education Training
<b>WRST</b>	Work Readiness Skills Tool
<b>YDC</b>	Youth Development Coach
<b>YTP</b>	Youth Transitions Program

# About this Practice Guide

This Practice Guide outlines the Advantaged Thinking approach and the model being used in TtW CoP sites around Australia. Designed for practitioners, educators, employers and policy-makers, it is intended as an implementation tool for TtW CoP services.

## Section 1

This section has three parts: Introduction, Policy Context and the Theoretical Framework.

### Introduction

- The origins of the core Community of Practice Model
- The political context within which the Transition to Work service was commissioned
- The Community of Practice – including the motivation for its establishment, its scope and ambition, governance structure and stages of development

### Policy Context

- The changed context of employment and education that young people seeking to transition to independent adulthood must navigate
- A critique of the current employment services system as it relates to young jobseekers
- The need for a new approach to working with young people, and with employers, including a brief overview of the available evidence

### Theoretical Framework

- The theoretical concepts that have informed the development of the CoP Model, including the capabilities approach, inclusive growth and social capital
- How these high-level concepts align with an Advantaged Thinking approach

## Section 2

### The Model

This section outlines:

- The scope of the TtW service with regard to the key domains of a young person's life
- Advantaged Thinking as a practice approach
- The Five Key Practice Areas – Place, People, Opportunities, the Deal and the Campaign
- Harnessing Community Effort

The Section also outlines the core components of the Model:

- The Four Services Offers – Vocational Guidance, Co-designed Planning, Skills and Capabilities Building, and Real World Opportunities
- The Four Phases – Guidance and Exploration, Work Preparation, Workplace Opportunities, and Post-placement Support

## Section 3

### The Model in Practice

This section details how the core components of the Model are put into practice by:

- Outlining our approach to working with business, including the establishment of the Community Investment Committees
- Providing checklists of practice principles for the Five Key Practice Areas of Advantaged Thinking
- Summarising the key components of the CoP Model staffing structure
- Outlining the techniques used in the delivery of the CoP Model – including Coaching, Experiential Learning, Group Work and Personal Planning
- Demonstrating how the Four Phases are operationalised through key steps and activities, and supporting tools and resources
- Explaining the different ways in which the CoP Model can be implemented at the local level by using illustrative case studies and photos from across the Community of Practice

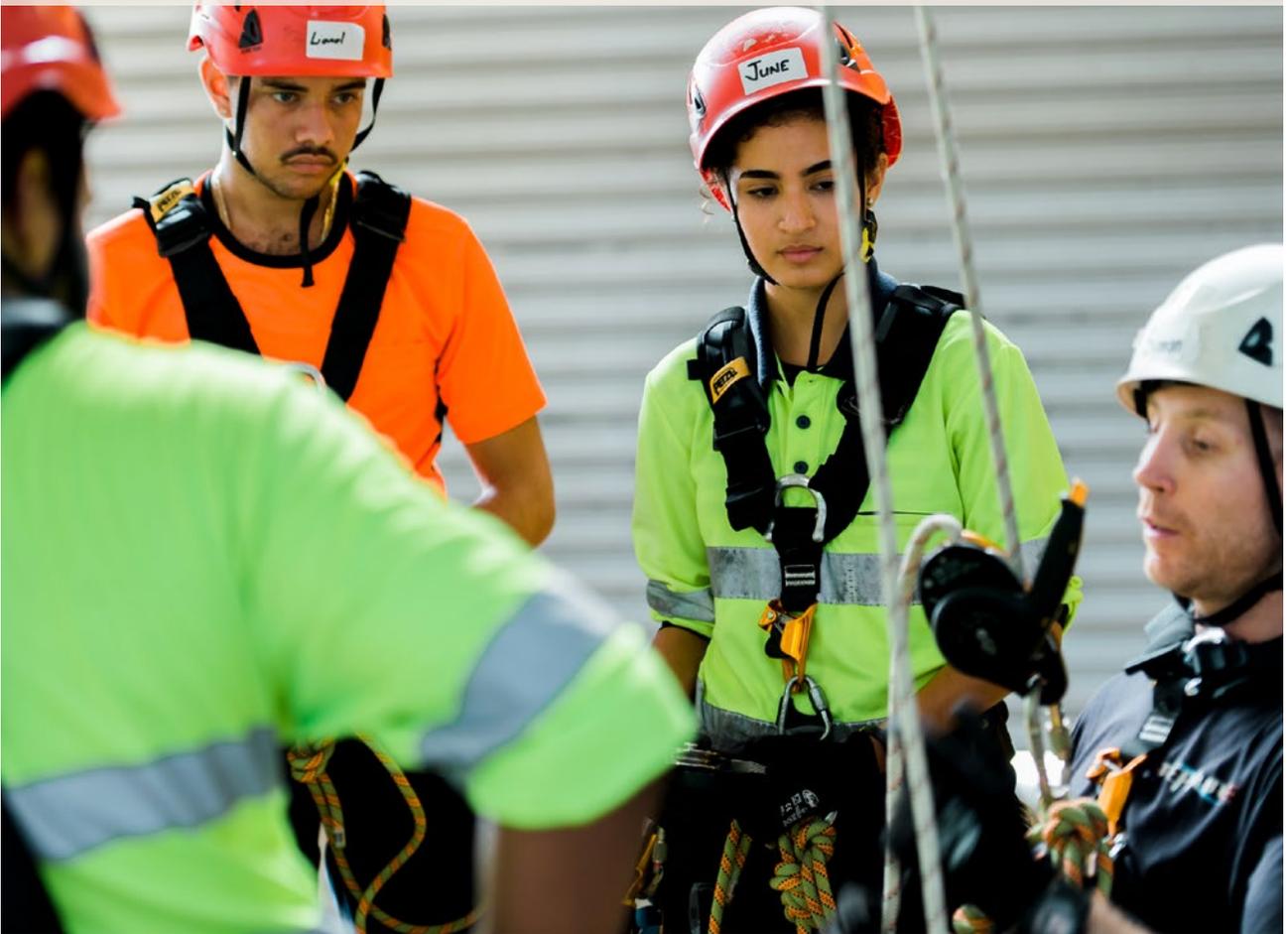
## Section 4

### Research and Evaluation

This section outlines:

- The approach being taken by the BSL's Research and Policy Centre in its evaluation of the Community of Practice
- The key evaluation research questions

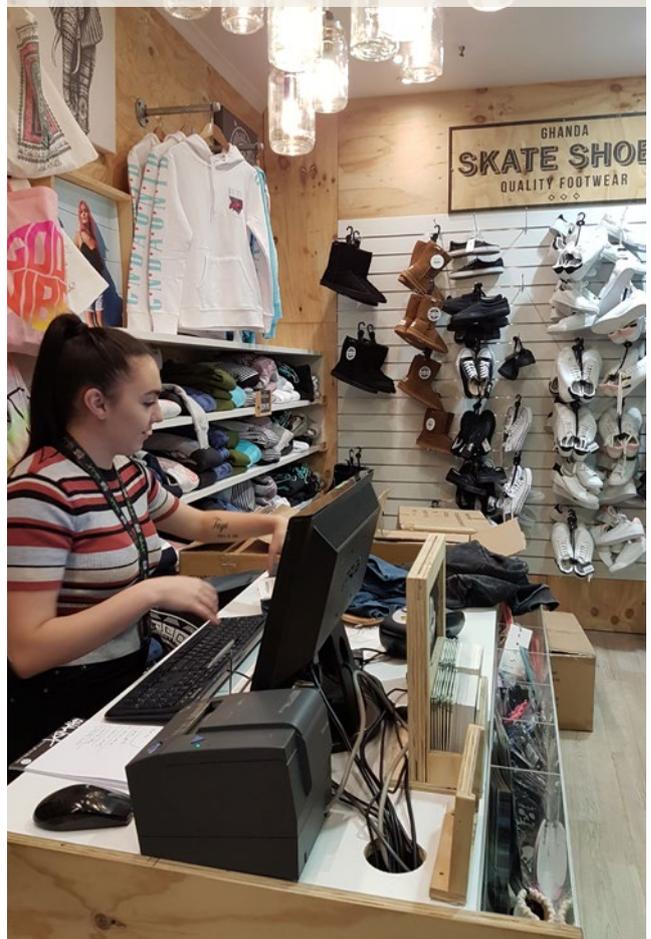
YouthWorX NT – high ropes accreditation



VPG – Cairns Hardware Trade Centre



Workways Gippsland – Carly at work



# Section 1

## Introduction

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## Theoretical Framework

- The theoretical concepts that have informed the development of the CoP Model, including the capabilities approach, inclusive growth and social capital
- How these high-level concepts align with an Advantaged Thinking approach



# Introduction

This Practice Guide was developed by the Service Development Team at the Brotherhood of St Laurence, in collaboration with BSL's Research and Policy Centre and the Transition to Work Community of Practice.

The Guide outlines the Advantaged Thinking approach (see Section 3) and the model being used in TtW CoP sites around Australia. First developed by Colin Falconer of the UK Foyer Federation, the Advantaged Thinking approach was adapted by the BSL and Launch Housing for use in their Education First Youth Foyers.<sup>1</sup>

Designed for practitioners, educators, employers and others working in this field, including government and non-government agencies, this Guide is intended as an implementation tool for TtW CoP services. The work of the TtW CoP is supported by a website ([www.ttwcommunity.com.au](http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au)), on which an electronic version of this Guide, along with supporting tools and resources, can be found.

## Origins of the Model

For several years now, the BSL has been developing and testing a different approach to working with young people experiencing disadvantage across a number of settings including employment, education and housing. In particular the TtW CoP Model has drawn on the approach taken by the Youth Transitions Program (YTP)<sup>2</sup> and the EFY Foyers.

The YTP was initially developed by the BSL in 2010 and delivered across three sites in western Melbourne with the aim of building the work aspirations and capabilities of young people experiencing disadvantage to engage in further learning and/or work. It provided a structured training component as well as connections to real world opportunities, engagement with the local community and referral to health and wellbeing services.

In 2014, the BSL and Launch Housing (formerly Hanover Welfare Services) developed the EFY Foyer model with three Victorian Foyers currently operating at co-located Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sites across Victoria – two in Melbourne at Holmesglen TAFE in Glen Waverly and Bendigo Kangan TAFE in Broadmeadows, and one at Shepparton's GO TAFE in regional Victoria. EFY Foyers provide integrated learning and student accommodation in mainstream

educational settings for young people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness, and prepares them to build the foundations for a sustainable livelihood. The model embeds an Advantaged Thinking approach in all its practices, processes and tools, which are designed to promote and build young people's aspirations, skills and capacities. By prioritising engagement with education, the model builds young people's connections to mainstream education, services and opportunities.

Coupled with the research and evaluative work conducted by the BSL's Research and Policy Centre, the learnings from these programs have informed the development of a set of core principles and features of a model. Through the TtW Community of Practice, this model is being tested and refined using the extensive expertise of the TtW CoP members, and adapted to suit local community contexts.

## The Transition to Work Service

In 2014, a combination of political, policy and economic factors prompted the BSL – in collaboration with other community organisations and the business sector – to launch a multi-pronged effort calling attention to youth unemployment nationally, and to highlight to government and policy-makers more broadly the policy and program gaps in the youth transitions space. These factors included:

- the fragmented education and employment support service system, and disproportionately high rates of unemployment among young Australians (peaking at 15% in 2014)
- the discontinuation of the Youth Connections program, which had aimed to reconnect young people to education, in the 2014/15 federal Budget
- poor outcomes for young jobseekers in the mainstream employment services system. At the time, less than a third of disadvantaged jobseekers (Streams 3 & 4) found employment, and nearly a third of those who did gain work returned to the system within six months.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Mallett, S. James, N. McTiernan & J. Buick 2014, *Education First Youth Foyer Practice Framework*, Hanover Welfare Services and Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL), Melbourne.

Note: The EFY Foyer Model uses the Advantaged Thinking approach as well as the concept of Open Talent, which was developed to operationalise the approach for the EFY Foyer context. In the TtW CoP Model context, it was decided that Advantaged Thinking is the more accessible and applicable concept.

<sup>2</sup> E. Bodsworth 2012, *Pathways that Work: Lessons from the Youth Employment Project in Caroline Springs*, BSL, Melbourne.

<sup>3</sup> S. Mallett & G. Myconos 2015, 'A mixed record: A recent history of youth policy', in *Under the Pump! The Pressures of Young Australia*, John Cain Foundation, Melbourne, pp. 31–45.

In response to the issue of youth unemployment, the Australian Government announced a Youth Employment Strategy as part of the 2015/2016 Budget. As part of the Strategy, \$212 million over four years was allocated to establishing a national Transition to Work service for young unemployed people between the ages of 15 and 21 struggling to make the transition to sustainable employment or education. By providing unemployed young people with intensive pre-employment services, TtW aims to increase their work readiness and move them into employment.

The TtW service targets three distinct groups of participants considered by the Department to be at risk of long-term unemployment:

- **Group 1:** young people who have not completed Year 12 (or equivalent), who are receiving Youth Allowance (other) and assessed as having a medium to high risk of long-term unemployment (through the Job Seeker Classification Instrument).
- **Group 2:** 'disengaged young people' – early school leavers who have disengaged from education, employment or training, and who are not already participating in employment services and are at risk of becoming long-term unemployed. This group includes young people who are not receiving income support or who are receiving non-activity tested income support such as Parenting Payment.
- **Group 3:** jobactive referrals – young people in Stream C in jobactive who have not completed Year 12 (or equivalent) and who are identified by their jobactive providers as having a capacity to benefit from Transition to Work services.

## The Transition to Work Community of Practice

In recognition of the opportunity presented by TtW, the BSL began to explore the potential for a collaborative effort in this area during the first half of 2015. The BSL's previous work with the National Youth Connections Network enabled it to build on the established relationships it had with other community organisations, all of which were based on a high degree of value alignment, mutual trust and credibility in delivering programs for young people experiencing disadvantage.

The concept of a collaborative network of organisations working together towards a shared mission through the TtW service emerged largely as a response to a growing recognition among community organisations of the unintended consequences of a marketised employment services system. These issues included:

- The erosion of trust between providers caused by competition, which had resulted in diminished collaboration and information sharing (associated with innovation, cost saving and streamlining).
- The loss of institutional knowledge as a result of smaller community organisations being absorbed into larger ones. This included a reduction in capacity for service development and innovation, evaluation and data collection among community organisations.
- The impact on communities from multiple, competing providers operating in a heavily compliance-based system. These include the added costs for smaller employers to engage with several providers (rather than having a single point of contact) and eroded community trust in short-lived service providers (owing largely to the unpredictability of government funding).

The BSL proposed the formation of a Community of Practice premised on the recognition that local agencies know their communities best. As such, they are uniquely placed to harness their communities' resources and pathways for moving young people into work. The BSL also believes that providing an evidence-based service model is critical to influencing change. The proposed service model<sup>4</sup> for delivering TtW, therefore, needed to be one that could balance consistency and fidelity to a set of essential features, with the flexibility to be adapted for local social and economic conditions. There are a number of key components that inform this model, although each provider brings its own expertise and local knowledge to the delivery of the program in its area.

### Scope and ambition of the Community of Practice

Happily, there was an appetite for this approach and the TtW Community of Practice was formed. The TtW CoP brings together 11 TtW providers and their partners in 13 regions around the country in the pursuit of a shared ambition: to develop and demonstrate an alternative response to addressing youth unemployment, one that is premised upon collaborative, multi-sectoral effort rather than competition.

<sup>4</sup> The use of the term 'service model' in this context refers to the specifically developed Model and practice approach used by the TtW CoP. This Model incorporates and builds upon the set of services required by the Commonwealth's Department of Employment to be delivered under the TtW Deed, the key features of which were informed by the BSL's previously delivered and self-funded Youth Transitions Program.

The TtW CoP will achieve this ambition by:

- Sharing complementary expertise and experience to trial and refine an effective, evidence-based service model for moving young people into sustainable employment
- Participating in an action research evaluation and ‘cross-pollination’ of ideas to ensure that learnings inform ongoing adaptation and improvement
- Leveraging business and community expertise and effort through Community Investment Committees to drive economic development for young people at a local and national level.

As the convener of the CoP the BSL aims to ‘enable’ member organisations to contribute and develop their complementary expertise, as well as providing service development, practice and evaluation experience.

The current providers within the TtW CoP are represented on the map below.

### TtW CoP evaluation

This ongoing work will be informed by a program evaluation, undertaken by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the University of Melbourne, which will assist the TtW CoP to document ‘what works’ in assisting young people into work.

Despite considerable effort and activity to understand what helps or hinders young people’s move into work, the evidence remains patchy. There is general agreement in the literature that youth services and policies tend to be short-term and fragmented, with much effort and wisdom lost when programs lose funding, especially when they have not been evaluated. In Australia, there have been repeated cycles of initiation and cancellation of youth transitions programs in response to political and economic changes, which has been compounded by fragmentation of efforts across State and federal jurisdictions. These factors have tended to inhibit, rather than encourage, effective evaluation and systematic change.

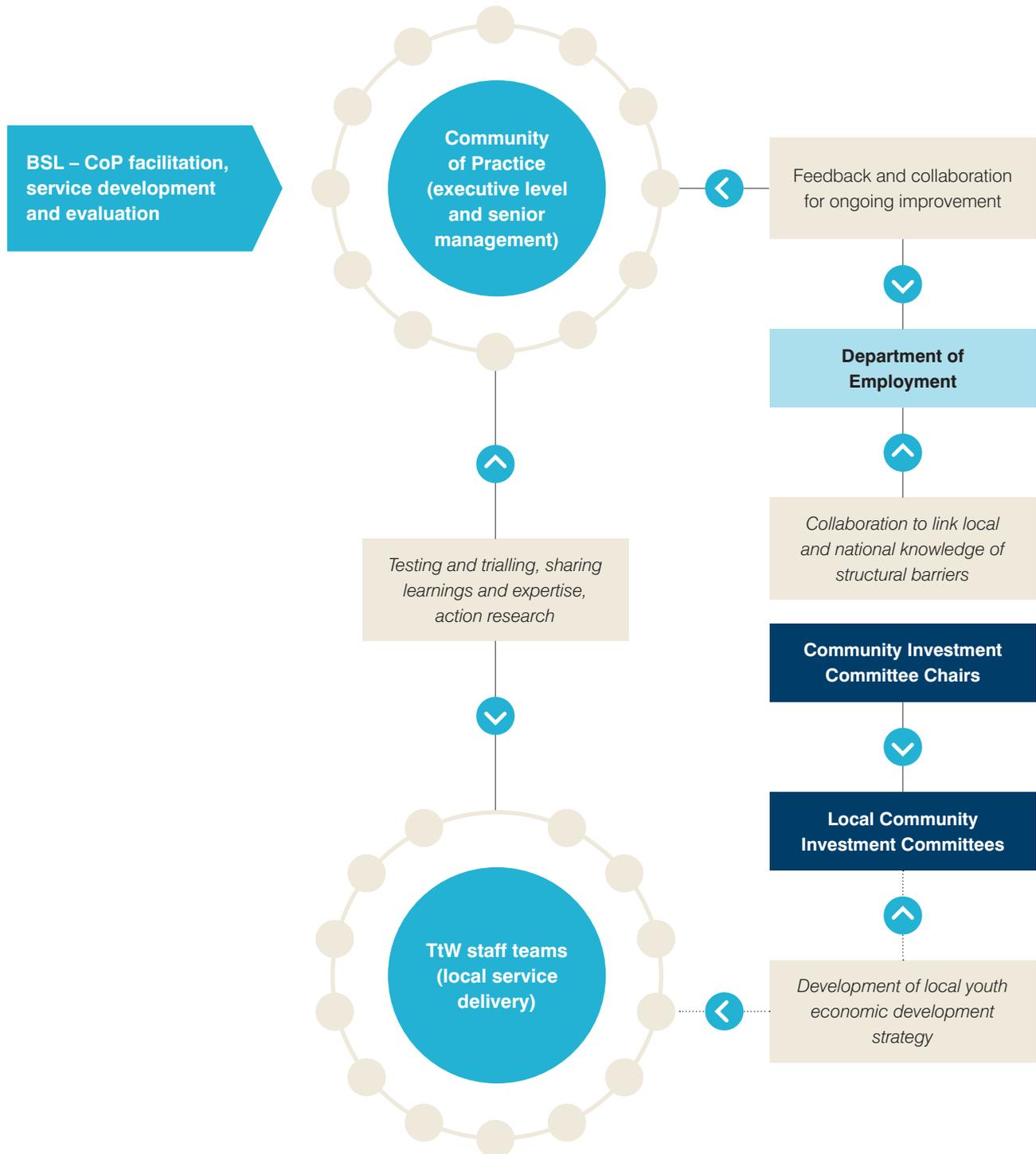
Rigorous evaluation is critical to achieving the ambitions of the TtW CoP, both in regard to an effective service model for moving young people into work, and in achieving systemic change in the way we work with young people experiencing disadvantage.

**Figure 1: Locations of the Transition to Work Community of Practice sites**



<b>VIC</b>	Brophy Family and Youth Services Brotherhood of St Laurence Workways with Berry Street
<b>TAS</b>	Colony 47
<b>NSW</b>	Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO) Schools Industry Partnership
<b>QLD</b>	Gen-Z Employment (Ohana for Youth) Vocational Partnerships Group Inc. Workways
<b>NT</b>	YouthWorx NT
<b>WA</b>	Joblink Midwest
<b>SA</b>	Anglicare South Australia

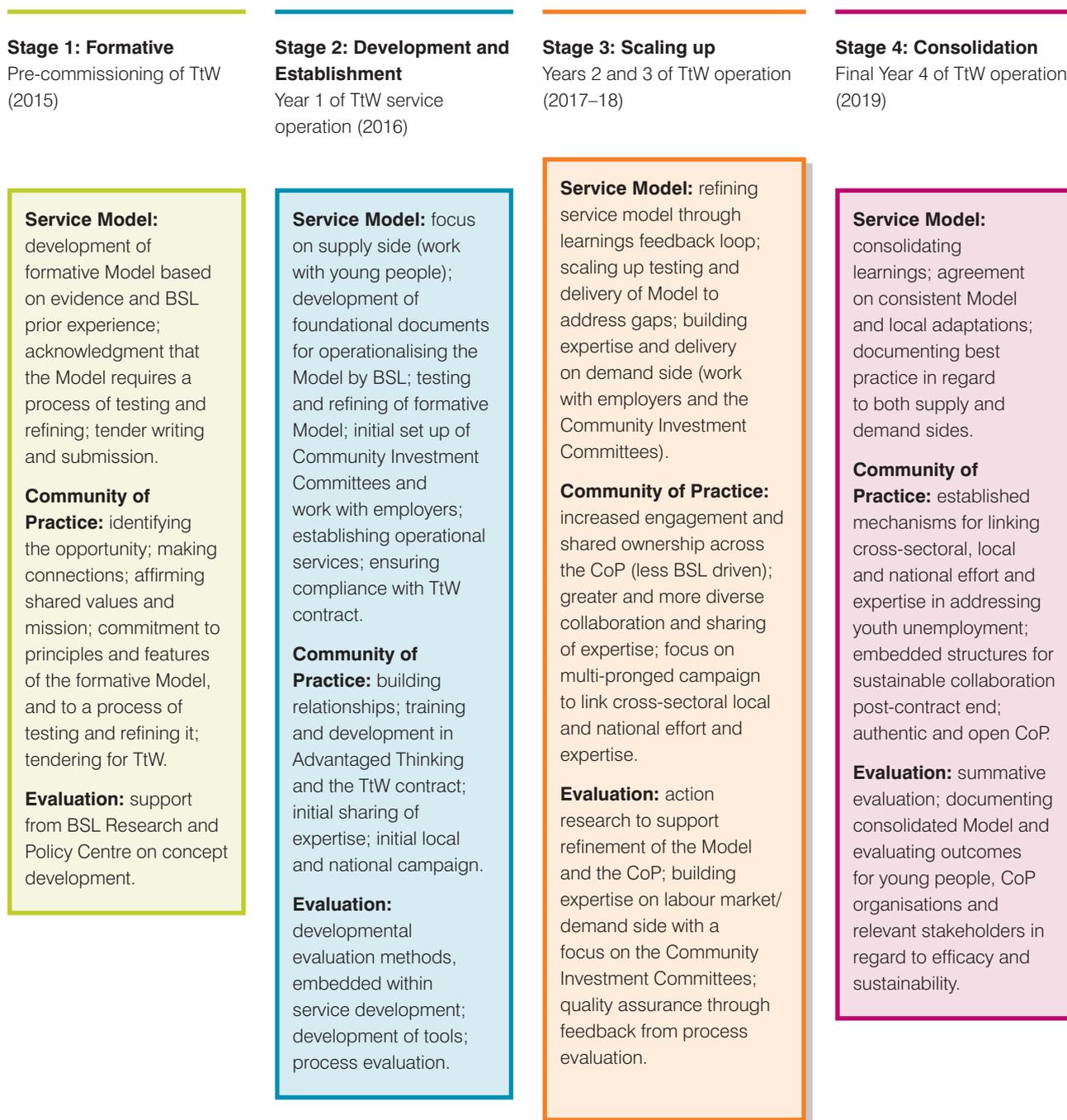
**Figure 2:** Governance structure of the Transition to Work Community of Practice



## Stages of the TtW CoP project

The Transition to Work Community of Practice, service model and evaluation are being implemented across the four stages outlined below. This iteration of the TtW CoP Practice Guide has been developed for use in **Stage 3 – Scaling up** of the project.

**Figure 3: Stages of the Transition to Work Community of Practice**



# Policy Context

Young people in Australia generally want to work. For some this is about earning an income so that they can live independently. For others it is about supporting themselves while they study or figure out what it is that they want to do.

*A lot of people think that there are a bunch of dole bludgers out there, but it's really not true, because no-one wants to be stuck at home all day doing nothing... People want to have savings, people want to go to other countries, people want to explore, people want to do things. If you don't have a full-time job you can't do that. I just want to get out there and work. I just need a job so I can move ahead in life.<sup>5</sup>*

For most young people, what they 'want to do' is to work in areas in which they have an interest or passion. They want to be listened to and given advice based on their goals. They also want to be given the time and opportunity to pursue work that is meaningful to them. This includes jobs that require university or TAFE education as well as entry-level employment.

Young people know that experience is crucial to their employment chances, but many consider gaining this experience impossibly difficult as they become trapped in a cycle of unemployment:

*Everyday the first thing I do is look for work. I'll print out resumés, hand them in, speak to managers, go on job-seeking websites, but still no success because I'm simply not given the chance because I'm young and lack experience. And because you need a job to get experience and because you need experience to get a job, with that constant loop, you can't really get into anything without having already known someone. And it can be frustrating.<sup>6</sup>*

Young people want more opportunities to gain experience: to have access to on-the-job training and entry level positions; to have opportunities to combine work and study; and to undertake courses with practical experience that is connected to their learning.

The TiW CoP values the aspirations of young people, and recognises the contribution they all can make to our national community, and to our economy. Our practice framework not only presents a new way of working with young people experiencing disadvantage, but also of working with employers and the broader service system to alleviate structural and individual barriers to accessing employment. It presents young people with new opportunities, and supports and coaches them to define and achieve their goals through building the foundations for a sustainable livelihood.

## Youth employment and labour market change

The composition and conditions of modern labour markets have significantly changed as a result of the effects of globalisation, the rise of new technologies, demographic ageing, the impact of climate change and migration flows. In Australia, as in other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations, we are experiencing a decline in manufacturing and a shift to service and knowledge-based industries.<sup>7</sup>

Young people – particularly those experiencing disadvantage – are disproportionately affected by these structural changes, despite the comparatively positive performance, by international standards, of Australia's youth labour market.<sup>8</sup> Research shows that young people in Australia experienced significantly higher levels of full-time job decline (including apprenticeships) and higher increases in unemployment levels as a result of the Global Financial Crisis than other adults.<sup>9</sup> Many are finding it difficult, if not impossible, to enter the labour market, and for those who do it is often in highly insecure, low skilled and low paid work.<sup>10</sup> A decline in entry-level positions,

<sup>5</sup> BSL 2014, 'Youth employment, my chance, our future: Kevin'. Available at <https://www.bsl.org.au/advocacy/youth-employment/video-gallery/>.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> R. Wilkins & M. Wooden 2014, 'Two decades of change: The Australian labour market, 1993–2013', *The Australian Economic Review*, 47(4):417–31.

<sup>8</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2016, *Investing in Youth: Australia*, OECD Publishing, Paris. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264257498-en>.

<sup>9</sup> A. Anlezark 2011, *Young People in an Economic Downturn, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, Briefing Paper 23*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide.

<sup>10</sup> D. Bowman, J. Borlagdan & S. Bond 2015, *Making Sense of Youth Transitions from Education to Work*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne, pp. 3–4.

and increasing casual, part-time and insecure work, has resulted in high rates of youth underemployment – defined as having some work but wanting more hours – as well as unemployment. The youth underutilisation rate (combined unemployment and underemployment figures) was 31.5 per cent in February 2017, the highest it has been in almost 40 years, even exceeding the level of the early 1990s recession. This equates to more than 650,000 young people looking for work.<sup>11</sup>

The lack of availability of suitable, entry-level jobs presents real barriers for young people in entering the labour market, a situation compounded by the current expectations of government, industry and business that jobseekers and new employees have educational credentials and suitable work experience.<sup>12</sup> Since the 1990s, the problem of youth unemployment has largely been explained in terms of the ‘human capital agenda’.<sup>13</sup> In short, it is claimed that young people experience unemployment because they lack suitable skills and the experience to participate in the labour market. This explanation has also underpinned policy and program solutions to youth unemployment, which have focused on investing in the human capital of young people, emphasising secondary education completion rates, and promoting access to and attainment of formal post-secondary qualifications.<sup>14</sup>

### The lived experience of young jobseekers

All young people experience the increased challenges and risks associated with transitioning from education to work in the changed modern economy. Many are able to navigate this transition successfully – usually with the financial and emotional support and guidance of their family – but some are particularly vulnerable to being left behind. Young people experiencing disadvantage – including those from low socio-economic backgrounds, those without family support or experiencing homelessness, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and those from newly arrived communities, young people with disability and those living on the urban fringes or in regional or remote locations – are over-represented

in youth unemployment and underemployment figures. They face multidimensional challenges to participation in mainstream social and economic life and often lack the necessary social capital – resources, networks that facilitate getting a job, and access to opportunities and support – to mitigate the increased risks associated with the changed labour market.<sup>15</sup> For early school leavers, in particular, low literacy and numeracy and limited career guidance and opportunities for work experience further complicate the pathway to sustainable employment.

National and international research consistently highlights the importance of young people’s school-to-work transition for their future life chances. A range of adverse impacts has been identified for those young people who disengage from school or work. These include lower earnings and higher job insecurity, as well as a ‘scarring’ effect from long-term unemployment early in life, with associated negative impacts on future health and wellbeing.<sup>16</sup> Those who leave school early are further disadvantaged. School leavers who do not complete Year 12 are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as those who have (19% and 8% respectively), and nearly nine times more likely not to be in the labour force (18% and 2% respectively). Early school leavers also experience social exclusion at three times the rate of those who have completed Year 12.<sup>17</sup>

The impact of youth unemployment is not confined to individuals and their families; it also has significant costs to the economy and the community through increased welfare payments and employment support programs and reduced tax income. It is estimated that the cost to the community of having a person on welfare payments from the age of 16 to retirement is approximately \$825,000 (in 2011 dollar terms). By comparison, someone working and earning an average wage from the age of 16 onwards contributes approximately \$390,000 in income tax, a difference of \$1.2 million for one individual.<sup>18</sup> For the community, the cost lies not only in increased reliance on the welfare, health and justice systems but also in the loss of potential that these young people represent.

11 BSL 2017, ‘Young, underemployed and living precariously in Australia’, *Youth Unemployment Monitor*, March 2017, BSL, Melbourne.

12 H. Cuervo & J. Wyn 2011, *Rethinking Youth Transitions in Australia: A Historical and Multidimensional Approach*, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne.

13 Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, op. cit., p. 15.

14 Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency (AWPA) 2012, *Future Focus: Australia’s Skills and Workforce Development Needs*, AWPA, Canberra; Cuervo & Wyn, op. cit.

15 OECD 2016, op. cit.; Cuervo & Wyn, op. cit.

16 N. Hoffman & R. Schwartz 2014, ‘Preface’, in A. Mann, J. Stanley & L. Archer (eds) 2014, *Understanding Employer Engagement in Education*, Routledge, London.

17 F. Azpitarte 2013, *Social Exclusion Monitor*, Brotherhood of St Laurence and Melbourne Institute, Melbourne.

18 Hanover Welfare Services & Brotherhood of St Laurence 2011, *Foyer Statewide Framework for the Education First Youth Foyer Model Development*, unpub. ms, prepared for Employment and Youth Support Initiatives Development Interagency Steering Committee.

## Critique of the current system

### The mainstream employment services system – A marketised approach

Active labour market programs have been a key feature of Australia's response to unemployment for several decades. In more recent years, the employment services system (as these programs are known) has been at the forefront of a broader national and international shift towards externalisation and marketisation of social services, through contract-based commissioning.<sup>19</sup>

Since 1998, when Job Network replaced the Commonwealth's public employment and training services, Australia's employment services system has been almost entirely marketised and delivered by a range of not-for-profit and for-profit providers. The shift to an externalised and marketised system was premised on the assumption that competition between non-government providers would result in increased efficiency, effectiveness and innovation in employment service delivery.

Reforms to the system have not been confined to marketisation; the system has been underpinned by increasing welfare conditionality with tighter eligibility criteria for services and stronger mutual obligation requirements (including non-compliance penalties) for jobseekers.<sup>20</sup> These shifts reflect neoliberal assumptions that individuals are partially, if not wholly, responsible for their unemployment. Without robust activation measures, including mutual obligation incentives, the assumption is that jobseekers would take advantage of the welfare system by remaining on income support rather than making a concerted effort to move into the labour force.

## Outcomes of the current system

Market-based systems may work where services are transactional, meaning they are clearly defined, easily substituted, discretionary and come with minimal costs and consequences to the citizen changing providers. For jobseekers with relatively few barriers to entering or re-entering the workforce, this approach delivers value for money for government. However, where services cater to disadvantaged people with multiple and complex needs, competition between providers contributes to system fragmentation and creates perverse disincentives for agencies to work together to achieve better outcomes.<sup>21</sup>

Success in the employment service system is measured in terms of employment numbers and, to a lesser degree, education and training outcomes – in other words, moving people off income support. By these measures, there is evidence that successive employment services systems have achieved relatively positive outcomes for those jobseekers who face no, or limited, barriers to entering the workforce (Streams 1 & 2).<sup>22</sup>

However, the evidence equally shows that the system is not effective for jobseekers who face more complex barriers to work, including young people.<sup>23</sup> Commonwealth Department of Employment (DoE) data from 2013 showed that less than a third of disadvantaged young jobseekers (Streams 3 & 4) found employment. Of the small number who found permanent roles, nearly a third became unemployed again within six months.<sup>24</sup> Looking at the most recent data for Job Services Australia, approximately one in five Stream 4 jobseekers obtained paid work in the 12 months to September 2015 and less than one-quarter of these had a permanent position.<sup>25</sup> This affirms OECD analyses that have pointed to relatively poor results for young jobseekers across the Australian employment services system.<sup>26</sup>

19 M. Considine, J. M. Lewis & S. O'Sullivan 2011, 'Quasi-markets and service delivery flexibility following a decade of employment assistance reform in Australia', *Journal of Social Policy*, 40(4):811–33.

20 *ibid.*; M. Horn 2013, 'Inclusive growth: The role of active labour market interventions', in P. Smyth & J. Buchanan (eds), *Inclusive Growth in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, pp. 222–41.

21 BSL 2016a, *Human Services: Identifying Sectors for Reform, A Response to the Productivity Commission Issues Paper*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne.

22 Department of Employment (DoE) 2016, *Labour Market Assistance Outcomes, September 2015*, DoE, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 4. Available at: [https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/labour\\_market\\_assistance\\_outcomes\\_report\\_september\\_2015\\_-\\_job\\_services\\_australia\\_0.pdf](https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/labour_market_assistance_outcomes_report_september_2015_-_job_services_australia_0.pdf).

23 J. Borland, M. Considine, G. Kalb & D. Ribar 2016, 'What are best-practice programs for jobseekers facing high barriers to employment?', *Melbourne Institute Policy Briefs Series: No. 4/16*, Melbourne Institute, Melbourne; S. J. Olney 2016, 'False Economy: New public management and the welfare-to-work market in Australia', PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne, Melbourne; Mallett & Myconos, *op. cit.*; Horn, *op. cit.*; Considine, Lewis & O'Sullivan, *op. cit.*; E. Flentje, E. Cull & G. Giuliani 2010, *Achieving Sustainable Job Outcomes for Disadvantaged Jobseekers: Challenges for Specialist Providers under the Current Job Services Australia Contract*, Hanover Welfare Services, Melbourne City Mission and Jobs Australia, Melbourne.

24 Mallett & Myconos, *op. cit.*

25 DoE 2016, *op. cit.*, pp. 4–5.

26 OECD 2012a, *Activating Job Seekers: How Australia Does It*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Research has shown that for young people experiencing disadvantage, it is the relative lack of flexibility in, and the limited scope of, employment service delivery that has had the greatest impact on employment outcomes. Unduly high staff client ratios that limit the quality of services to young people – e.g. inadequate provision of career advice and failure to address the real skill gaps – and poor links with community services providing personal support also contribute to the poor outcomes for young jobseekers seen in the current system.<sup>27</sup>

Competition between providers has also resulted in the erosion of trust and partnerships within the sector. In an environment where organisations must compete for funding in a highly marketised system, there is a perverse incentive to withhold best practice from other providers, rather than sharing learnings that could deliver improved services for jobseekers.<sup>28</sup> At a local level, competition and inflexible contract management has resulted in a lack of integrated effort, including numerous providers competing for contact with local employers at the cost of overall system effectiveness.<sup>29</sup> Lastly, the limited focus on the provider and individual jobseeker from a contract management perspective has failed to take into account the role of local labour markets (both challenges and opportunities) in achieving outcomes for jobseekers.

## The need for a new approach

A different model for youth employment services is needed, one that is designed to deliver the skills, opportunities and networks that create effective pathways into the labour market for young jobseekers. This model must be underpinned by a new approach to investing in young people and the communities they inhabit. The welfare sector has typically focused on identifying the problems faced by young people experiencing disadvantage. In response, governments and service providers have developed policies and practices to manage these problems. However, momentum is growing for a paradigm shift in the way we think about and respond to young people experiencing disadvantage and exclusion.

How we view and value young people influences the way we work with them, which then influences their ability to access opportunities and resources. If we believe all young people have talents that can be developed – and we use language that embeds this and implement structures that encourage their talents – we could reasonably expect this will lead to service offers that assist them to reach their potential. If we consider engagement in education, employment and independent housing as critical achievements for transitioning young people, then service offers designed to realise these outcomes are crucial. Changes to public perceptions about young people will follow. Conversely, if we define young people as at risk, and provide crisis management and interventions, we are giving the wider society a very different view of them.

Positive change is needed in our whole approach to working with young people, including a transformation of the language we use and the objectives that services seek to implement. Evidence from the UK and elsewhere has made a compelling case for the development of new forms of positive intervention, to equip more young people with the capabilities required for them to contribute to, and benefit from, the wider society.<sup>30</sup>

### What young people need to move into work

Clearly, there is no easy solution to high youth unemployment and it cannot be simply explained away by where we are in the economic cycle. Rather, it needs sustained and well-targeted attention in schools, vocational training and universities, as well as through welfare assistance and labour market programs. Concerted effort on both the supply and demand side of the equation is needed to support young jobseekers into the labour market, and to avoid the economic and social costs outlined here.

On the demand side, policies that increase the overall level of economic activity are critical, coupled with measures to reduce structural barriers to entry-level jobs for young people. On the supply side, we must equip young people with the capacity and skills needed to access the jobs of the future – not just the jobs of right now – by providing them with the right kind of support, opportunities, resources and networks.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Flentje, Cull & Giuliani, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> M. Considine, S. O'Sullivan & P. Nguyen 2014, 'Mission drift? The third sector and the pressure to be businesslike: Evidence from Job Services Australia', *Third Sector Review*, 20(1):87–107.

<sup>29</sup> Considine, Lewis & O'Sullivan, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> C. Falconer 2009, 'Open Talent: Investing in a transformational future for Britain's young adults', unpub. ms, pp. 6–7.

<sup>31</sup> Borland et al., op. cit.

Research identifying some key features of effective employment programs for young jobseekers is summarised here:<sup>32</sup>

- Vocational guidance that recognises their strengths and skills, and is grounded in local labour market conditions.
- Support to identify their aspirations and develop achievable goals, and to link up this guidance and goal setting in a plan that provides a clear line of sight to a career path.
- Skill-building activities that develop their expertise and capabilities in a range of key ways: transferable employability skills (e.g. planning and organising, communication and initiative); language, literacy and numeracy skills (through accredited foundation courses); job search skills (e.g. resumé writing, interview prep etc.); and support to access industry-specific skills and qualifications as needed.
- Exposure to the real world of work – including connections to employers and industry mentors – and access to work experience opportunities. This is essential to build both their knowledge of the workplace and expectations, increase their experience and skills in a real world setting, and access networks and connections to employers and the community.
- Support to access specialised services to address non-vocational barriers as needed.
- Ongoing post-placement support and monitoring.

Elements of good practice at a local, State and national systems or governance level include:

- Mechanisms to tackle system and service fragmentation and duplication.
- Improved service system collaboration through longer term funding, quality assurance systems and less local competition.
- Developing the right incentives and success measurement structures, e.g. removing perverse incentives for organisations to focus on young people most likely to succeed within an outcomes-based incentives structure by rewarding progress points rather than outcomes.

- Promoting employer ownership and ensuring that firms invest in their future workforces.
- Supporting cross-sectoral approaches to bring together educational institutions, industry organisations, employment agencies and other government departments to develop career pathways, articulate skills requirements and connect youth to the local economy.
- Improving data availability and understanding the nature of local skills supply and demand mismatch as a starting point of the local youth employment strategy process.
- Monitoring the programs and evaluating successes.<sup>33</sup>

### A new approach to working with employers

A different approach is also needed in the way that organisations and services seeking to address youth unemployment work with employers. Employment services often struggle to engage adequately with, or understand, employers' needs. This has meant that many young people do not have the right skills to meet workforce needs, or the opportunities to practise and develop these skills within the workplace. Research suggests that rapid job placement, and quality and performance ratings based on short-term outcomes, have taken precedence over building sustainable relationships with employers or finding appropriate matches between employers and jobseekers.<sup>34</sup>

Another report found that national employers interested in improving meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for disadvantaged jobseekers often found it difficult to engage with employment services because they were highly localised and prescriptive.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the OECD has previously suggested that local collaboration between Australian employment services and training providers, business and welfare organisations is often unstructured, ad hoc and targeted at providing opportunities for individual or small groups of jobseekers rather than more structural solutions.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*; Bowman, Borlagden & Bond, op. cit.; D. Card, J. Kluge & A. Weber 2015, *What Works? A Meta Analysis of Recent Active Labor Market Program Evaluations*, Working Paper No. 21431, Working Paper No. 21431, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge MA; OECD 2015, 'Activation policies for more inclusive labour markets', Chapter 3 in *OECD Employment Outlook*, OECD Publishing, Paris; R. Sweet 2012, *Unemployed and Inactive Youth: What Works?*, Sweet Group, Sydney.

<sup>33</sup> J. Skattebol, T. Hill, A. Griffiths & M. Wong 2015, *Unpacking Youth Unemployment*, Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Australia, Sydney; OECD 2013, *Local Strategies for Youth Employment: Learning from Practice*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

<sup>34</sup> National Employment Services Association (NESA) 2011, *Response to Employment Services 2012 Consultation*, NESA, Melbourne. Available at: <https://www.nesa.com.au/policy-development/response-papers.aspx>.

<sup>35</sup> Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) & Business Council of Australia (BCA) 2012, *Opportunity for All: Joint Statement on ACOSS, ACTU and BCA Co-operation*. Available at: <http://www.bca.com.au/publications/opportunity-for-all-joint-statement-on-acoss-actu-and-bca-cooperation>.

<sup>36</sup> OECD 2014, *OECD Reviews on Local Job Creation: Employment and Skills Strategies in Australia*, OECD Publishing, Paris, p. 70.



Employer attitudes, processes and practices can also pose significant impediments to young people's entry to, and retention in, the labour market.<sup>37</sup> Providing work-ready employees requires a focus not only on young people addressing their skill deficits, but also on helping employers to understand the benefits, including the economic and productivity gains, of changing or redesigning their recruitment, selection, training, development and support policies, practices and processes to better realise their needs.

Deeper and more effective community and employer partnerships are crucial to developing mutually beneficial employment solutions that match both business needs and the support needs of disadvantaged jobseekers.<sup>38</sup> Employment services need to work with employers to develop strategic partnerships so as to understand their specific skill requirements, and to design and deliver training programs, work placement opportunities and on-the-job support to meet these requirements. In addition to benefiting disadvantaged jobseekers, employers who broaden their recruitment strategies to train and recruit from among those currently excluded from the labour market can benefit both from an increased capacity to meet their workforce requirements and from improved retention rates and productivity.<sup>39</sup> Partnerships that can assist employers with recruitment, and/or customise

work preparation and pre-employment training programs for potential recruits, can provide employers with cost and administrative incentives and jobseekers with streamlined access to training and employment.<sup>40</sup>

This strategic engagement must be underpinned by coordinated local economic development initiatives to address demand side issues. The Workforce Investment Boards in the United States are cited as an example of a business-led initiative (they are chaired by business) that has had success in creating more integrated strategies to address employment and skills mismatch.<sup>41</sup> However, local communities cannot address structural labour market and institutional issues alone. Cook et al. argue that for such initiatives to be successful they must integrate regional and national policies, and develop effective strategic plans involving all relevant parties (including government, business and community) combined with effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.<sup>42</sup>

The TtW CoP Model has been developed to incorporate this evidence on best practice and key features of effective services, and uses a capabilities approach to ensure that the right kind of investment in young jobseekers is delivered. The capabilities approach, and other key underpinning theories to the TtW CoP Model, are outlined in Section 2.

<sup>37</sup> OECD 2012b, *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives – A Strategic Approach to Skills Policies*, OECD Publishing, Paris; Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) & BSL 2010, *Barriers to Hiring Disadvantaged or Vulnerable Workers: Victorian Employers Attitudes Survey*, VECCI and BSL, Melbourne.

<sup>38</sup> ACOSS, ACTU & BCA, op. cit.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> BSL 2013, *Pathways to Social and Economic Inclusion: Submission to the Australian Government on Employment Services from 2015*, BSL, Melbourne.

<sup>41</sup> OECD 2014, p. 72.

<sup>42</sup> B. Cook, W. Mitchell, V. Quirk & M. Watts 2008, *Creating Effective Local Labour Markets: A New framework for Regional Employment Policy*, Centre of Full Employment and Equity, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, NSW.

# Theoretical Framework

## The capabilities approach

Policy and programmatic sectors are increasingly looking to the capabilities approach as a way of providing more productive and effective responses to address complex social issues.<sup>43</sup> Developed almost 20 years ago by Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2000), the approach identifies and 'valorises' people's fundamental capabilities; put simply, it is an approach that focuses on what people can be, rather than on their limitations or problems.

Sen's capabilities framework was based on the understanding that the freedom to achieve wellbeing is a moral right and is understood in terms of people's opportunities for doing and being what they have reason to value. In Sen's words, capabilities are 'the substantive freedoms [a person] enjoys to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value'.<sup>44</sup>

Nussbaum subsequently critiqued and modified Sen's approach, emphasising that people's actual capacity to express, show or realise these capabilities is affected by their life circumstances or context. For Nussbaum then, it is not good enough to focus on what people can be, on their potential. We must also focus on what people can do, on the quality of life that they are actually able to achieve: 'When comparing societies and assessing them for their basic decency or justice what is important is what each person is able to do, and to be'.<sup>45</sup>

Nussbaum analyses this quality of life in terms of functionings and capabilities. Functionings are states of being and doing (e.g. cycling as distinct from possessing a bicycle), while capabilities are a set of valuable functionings that a person has **effective access to** (cycling, with access to a bicycle). A person's capability represents the **effective freedom of an individual to choose** between different functioning combinations – the effective freedom to choose between different ways of living.

Nussbaum argues then that the aim of public policy should be the promotion of capabilities and that this requires two kinds of efforts:

- 1 the promotion of internal capabilities (say, by education or training)
- 2 the making available of external institutional and material conditions.<sup>46</sup>

In regard to youth employment programs, this underlines the importance of context in building or consolidating capability; without effective access to opportunities and resources these young jobseekers are effectively denied the freedom to develop their capabilities for economic and social participation.

Implicit in the capabilities approach is the recognition that diverse effort across multiple sectors – not simply service providers and government – is critical to delivering on the necessary conditions and opportunities outlined above. Access to quality training and education, real work experience opportunities, and specialised support necessitates contributions from education providers, employers and health providers respectively.

In the application of this to service delivery, the BSL has also underlined the importance of the concept of place, arguing that it too must be at the centre of any effective service response because, like other social and economic issues, youth unemployment has a strong geographical dimension.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the opportunities and networks that young people are provided with must be grounded in their local community context in order for them to be able to access them effectively. The necessity for local service implementation through partnerships at the community level, and the value of community embedded organisations in leveraging the trust and resources of a local area, is similarly underlined by research.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> I. Robeyns 2005, 'The capability approach: A theoretical survey', *Journal of Human Development*, 6:93–117. L. Wheelahan 2016, 'Patching bits won't fix vocational education in Australia – A new model is needed', *International Journal of Training Research*, 14(3):1–15.

<sup>44</sup> A. Sen 1999, *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 87 as cited in S. Deneulin & L. Shahani (eds) 2009, *An Introduction to the Human Development and Capability Approach*, Earthscan, IDRC, Ottawa.

<sup>45</sup> M. Nussbaum 2011, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*, Belknap Press, Cambridge MA.

<sup>46</sup> H. Kimberley, R. Gruhn & S. Huggins 2012, *Valuing Capabilities in Later Life: The Capability Approach and the Brotherhood of St Laurence Aged Services – Research Summary*.

<sup>47</sup> BSL 2016b, 'Australia's youth unemployment hotspots snapshot', *Youth Employment Monitor*, March, BSL, Melbourne.

<sup>48</sup> Borland et al., op. cit.; Bowman, Borlagden & Bond, op. cit.

## Inclusive growth

This emphasis on recognition and investment in the development of people's capabilities outlined in the work of Sen and Nussbaum is reinforced by the theory of inclusive growth. In recent years, some economists and social policy experts have challenged the view that investment in socially excluded populations is socially desirable but not economically productive.

Proponents of an 'inclusive growth' approach argue that social inequality not only creates individual and social costs – thereby 'breeding social resentment and political instability by stifling [some people's economic] mobility' – but, importantly, that inequality 'also [has] negative impacts on economic performance'.<sup>49</sup> In short, they argue that economic growth, social development and inclusion should go hand in hand, as strong social foundations underpin a robust economy and promote individual wellbeing and economic growth. This, in turn, supports the social foundations of a society.

Addressing inequality through policies, institutions and effective governance systems can result in a more efficient economy and pave the way for a society and its individual members truly to thrive.<sup>50</sup> Engagement of people in productive employment

is one of the key ways that the inclusive growth approach promotes both social equality and economic development. This contrasts with economic approaches that promote growth through income redistribution. The inclusive growth approach seeks to mobilise and engage a large part of a country's labour force, providing equal opportunity for people to access markets and resources.<sup>51</sup>

When applied to young people in TtW, an inclusive growth approach to economic development prioritises investment in building their capacity for social and economic participation. For these young people – who may face varying barriers to participation – investment in targeted education, health and job creation infrastructure and programs is critical. An inclusive growth approach holds that engaging them in meaningful employment will not only promote economic productivity but will also benefit the young people themselves, as well as businesses needing job-ready labour.<sup>52</sup>

The diverse literature on social capital provides some insight into those opportunities and resources that are critical to enabling young people to develop their capabilities.

Access to quality training and education, real work experience opportunities, and specialised support necessitates contributions from education providers, employers and health providers respectively.

<sup>49</sup> P. Smyth 2012, 'From social inclusion to inclusive growth', *Brotherhood Comment: April 2012*, BSL, Melbourne.

<sup>50</sup> P. Smyth 2011, 'Inclusive growth: The new action imperative', *Brotherhood Comment: April 2011*, BSL, Melbourne.

<sup>51</sup> E. Ianchovichina, S. Lundstrom & L. Garrido 2009, *What Is Inclusive Growth?*. Available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDEBTDEPT/Resources/468980-1218567884549/WhatsInclusiveGrowth20081230.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> M. Horn 2011, 'Strategies for inclusive growth: Strengthening the critical role of active labour market interventions', presentation at Inclusive Growth in Australia Roundtable, 21 October 2011. Available at: [http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/Horn\\_Strategies\\_for\\_inclusive\\_growth\\_presentation\\_final\\_Oct2011.pdf](http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/Horn_Strategies_for_inclusive_growth_presentation_final_Oct2011.pdf).

## Social capital

To build sustainable livelihoods young people need access to, or the opportunities to develop, social capital. Social capital is a concept with many definitions, although its fundamental tenet is that social networks have value. Colin Falconer defines social capital simply as the resources provided to an individual through the social networks they hold. He notes that: 'Social capital is widely perceived as a means to understand how we engage as citizens (Putnam 2000), how we secure economic gains (Sobel 2002), and how communities develop (Gittell & Vidal 1998)'.<sup>53</sup>

Three dimensions of social capital are commonly distinguished – bonding, bridging and linking. Bonding social capital involves trust and reciprocity in social networks within a community of people who are 'similar'; bridging social capital refers to networks that are established across diverse communities; and linking social capital refers to connections between individuals and institutions of authority. All three are important for the construction of a civil society and individual health and wellbeing: bonding social capital for social support and solidarity, and bridging and linking for providing resources, opportunities and links to institutions and systems that assist people in 'getting ahead'.<sup>54</sup>

Putnam<sup>55</sup> defined social capital in regard to community connectedness, as 'social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them'. From this community perspective, he determined through his research that 'where he identified high levels of social capital, he also found strong, resilient social connections and economic strength'.<sup>56</sup>

Conversely, Bourdieu explored social capital from an individual perspective, explicitly linking it to economic, political and power structures. This conceptualisation frames social capital as an individual resource rather than a community one, highlighting 'the importance of class and how it impacted on an individual's ability to pursue political or economic goal'.<sup>57</sup> From this perspective, social capital refers to the 'advantages and opportunities accruing to people through membership in communities'. As such, those from more advantaged areas and backgrounds are 'more easily able to draw on their social capital embedded in their social worlds, and to increase their economic capital'.<sup>58</sup>

Young people experiencing disadvantage often lack social capital, which can reinforce structural and systemic inequalities because individuals may not have the income and connections to participate fully in social and economic life.<sup>59</sup> For the young people in TtW, access to opportunities to develop all three forms of social capital is essential to achieving sustainable outcomes.

The TtW CoP Model expresses in practice these two sides to the capabilities approach namely, building capabilities through investing in skills and talent; and leveraging local, cross-sectoral effort via a place-based response to provide opportunities, resources and networks. It does this via Advantaged Thinking and by harnessing community effort, approaches that are outlined in detail in the next Section.

<sup>53</sup> Falconer 2009, op. cit. draws on R. D. Putnam 2000, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon & Schuster, New York; R. S. Sobel 2007, *Unleashing Capitalism: Why Prosperity Stops at the West Virginia Border and How to Fix It*, Center for Economic Growth, The Public Policy Foundation of West Virginia, Morgantown WV; R. Gittell & A. Vidal 1998, *Community Organizing: Building Social Capital as a Development Strategy*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

<sup>54</sup> R. Putnam 1998, 'Foreword', *Housing Policy Debate*, 9(1):v-viii. Available at: [http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rhpd20/9/1#\\_UmXFK3CnrgU](http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rhpd20/9/1#_UmXFK3CnrgU). See also, W. Stone 2003, 'Bonding, bridging and linking with social capital', *Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin*, 4(Spring/Summer):13–16. Available at: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/sf/pubs/bull4/ws.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Putnam 2000, op. cit., p. 19, quoted in S. Hodgkin 2011, 'Participating in social, civic, and community life: Are we all equal?', *Australian Social Work*, 64(3):246.

<sup>56</sup> Hodgkin, op. cit.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, p. 248.

# Section 2

## The Model

This section outlines:

- The scope of the TtW service with regard to the key domains of a young person's life
- Advantaged Thinking as a practice approach
- The Five Key Practice Areas – Place, People, Opportunities, the Deal and the Campaign
- Harnessing Community Effort

The Section also outlines the core components of the Model:

- The Four Services Offers – Vocational Guidance, Co-designed Planning, Skills and Capabilities Building, and Real World Opportunities
- The Four Phases – Guidance and Exploration, Work Preparation, Workplace Opportunities, and Post-placement Support



# The Model

## Putting young people at the centre of the approach

Young people take diverse pathways into adulthood, and do not necessarily follow a linear or prescriptive path meeting definitive milestones along the way. To assist a young person to navigate through this transition, the TtW CoP Model starts with where individuals are at and strives to enable each young person to identify who they are now, who they want to be in the future and what they want to do. It does this by:

- assisting them to recognise, value and develop their capabilities and talents – in short, to establish their talent to thrive
- empowering them to build the foundations for a sustainable livelihood
- engaging in campaigns and influencing agendas to transform the institutional settings that prevent young people from realising their potential.

As a youth employment service, the primary scope of Transition to Work is to enable young unemployed people to achieve education and/or employment outcomes. While engagement in secure, fulfilling and sustainable employment is critical to young people becoming independent adults, we know that their capacity to engage with education and/or work is predicated on a number of other domains in their life, namely:

- **Health and wellbeing** – encompassing not just physical health, but also emotional, mental and social wellbeing. People with mental illness have 'low levels of high school completion, low levels of labour force participation and high rates of unemployment levels', in spite of their desire to complete their education and enter the workforce.<sup>60</sup> In order for young people to achieve their goals in employment and/or education, they need the skills, capabilities and resources to address their health and wellbeing challenges.
- **Housing and material resources** – stable housing is crucial for health and wellbeing, as well as for engagement in education and employment. This is evidenced by research that examines the negative health impacts that precarious housing can have on both physical and mental health.<sup>61</sup> Developing the skills to access and sustain adequate housing, as well as maximising the education and training opportunities that have the potential to increase earnings, will limit the ill-effects of precarious housing.

- **Social and community connections** – relationships with people who value and support you are known to have a positive effect on wellbeing. These relationships build self-esteem and motivation to engage with others and the broader community. Young people experiencing disadvantage often feel disconnected from their community, and require opportunities to build networks, including those that enhance their social capital and enable them to connect to the community and access employment and other opportunities.

Referral to specialist services to address non-vocational challenges is a critical aspect of supporting young people to thrive in the domains outlined above. However, the Advantaged Thinking practice approach used in the CoP Model, outlined in this section, is also a key vehicle for supporting young people to address challenges. Once young people are able to recognise their own capabilities, they often gain confidence and motivation to develop these interests further or the inspiration to pursue other interests and passions. This does not mean that their needs or problems are overlooked, rather that they do not become the focus or the motivating force for their engagement with the service.

**Figure 4: Five domains of a young person's life**



<sup>60</sup> Orygen Youth Health 2014, *Tell Them They're Dreaming. Work, Education and Young People with Mental Illness in Australia*, Orygen Youth Health Research Centre, Melbourne, p. 10.

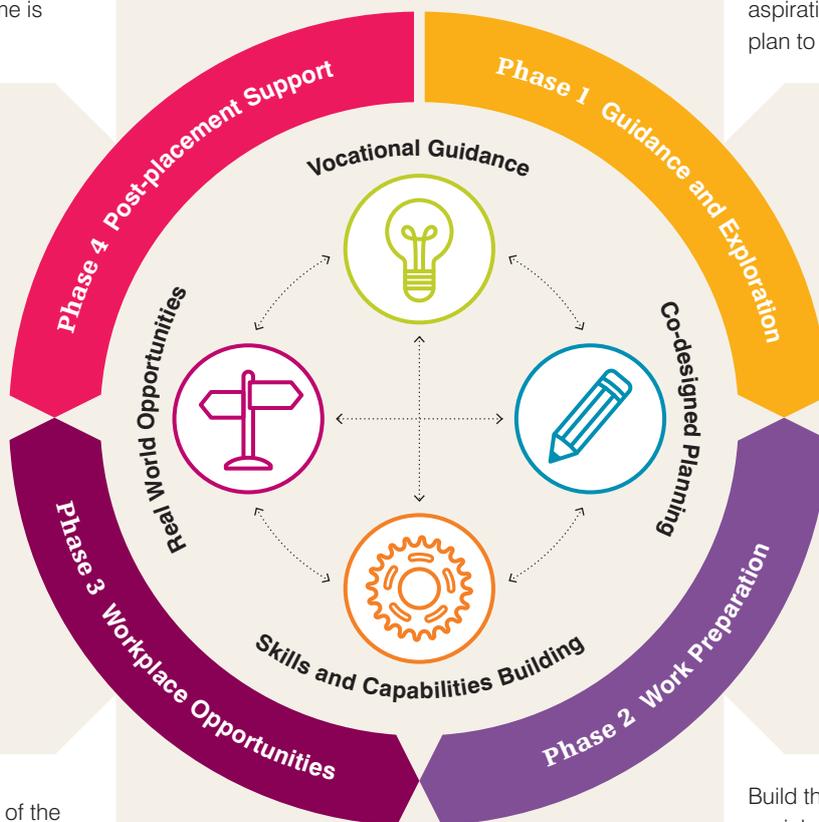
<sup>61</sup> G. Foster, H. Gronda, S. Mallett & R. Bentley 2011, *Precarious Housing and Health: Research Synthesis*, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Hanover Welfare Services, The University of Melbourne, University of Adelaide and Melbourne City Mission, Melbourne; S. Mallett, R. Bentley, E. Baker, K. Mason, D. Keys, V. Kolar & L. Krnjacki 2011, *Precarious Housing and Health Inequalities: What Are the Links?*, Hanover Welfare Services, The University of Melbourne, University of Adelaide and Melbourne Citymission, Melbourne.

**Figure 5: Transition to Work Community of Practice Model**



Gain employment or enrol in education, and receive ongoing support to ensure outcome is sustained.

Identify strengths and talents, explore career paths, develop goals and aspirations and make a plan to achieve them.



Build experience of the world of work through opportunities that are matched to aspirations.

Build the personal, social and practical employability skills necessary to achieve goals and aspirations.

## Advantaged Thinking

While building the skills and talents of individuals is important, it is equally critical to invest in sourcing the opportunities, networks and resources that young people need in order to use their skills and talents effectively. In the TtW Model, we use the concept of Advantaged Thinking to direct the way we work with young people (also referred to as Participants in this Guide).

Developed by Colin Falconer<sup>62</sup> for the UK Foyer movement, Advantaged Thinking represents a paradigm shift in the way we think about and respond to young people experiencing disadvantage. It is a shift away from deficit, disadvantaged or problem-saturated thinking, towards positive thinking and acting. It is focused on identifying, developing and, most importantly, investing in the skills, capabilities and assets of these young people so that they can establish sustainable lives. While disadvantaged thinking defines people by their problems and subsequently builds services based on managing them, Advantaged Thinking takes a different focus by acknowledging barriers but focusing on the young person's innate skills and talents and investing in these talents appropriately.

An Advantaged Thinking approach recognises that all young people have a vital contribution to make to the social and economic life of our communities and society, and that to do so all young people should have access to the opportunities and social networks that facilitate this social and economic participation. Rather than investing in these young people's problems the community needs to re-direct investment into building their abilities – harnessing them for personal as well as social good. By making a positive investment in young people, the approach focuses on developing their assets, and on co-creating solutions – real jobs, real education and real community connections – to enable them to achieve independent adulthood.

Advantaged Thinking is not simply a strengths-based approach. Where strengths-based approaches usually focus solely on the individual, Advantaged Thinking combines individual with structural approaches to change. How we view and value young people in wider society influences the way we work with them, which in turn influences their ability to access opportunities and resources. An Advantaged Thinking approach sets as a primary goal, a shift in both how the government and community sectors invest in young people, and how employers and the community see young people and their capacity to contribute.

Fundamentally then, the Advantaged Thinking approach challenges us to re-think:

- the way we see young people
- the activities and approaches to working with them
- the way we develop those diverse groups of people who are or will be engaged in promoting and enabling young people to reach their potential
- how we speak about young people, and the use of positive language rather than the language of disadvantage.

### The scope of Advantaged Thinking

- Advantaged Thinking is not a model; it is a way of thinking that guides practice.
- Advantaged Thinking is a flexible approach; it can and should be implemented in different ways and in different contexts.
- Advantaged Thinking is not simply a strengths-based approach; it combines individual with structural approaches to change.
- Advantaged Thinking is not only designed for young people in employment services; it has the potential to be used for all age groups.
- Advantaged Thinking is not just relevant to the service delivery area of an organisation; it relies on a whole-of-organisation approach to the delivery of services, including staff skills and training, finance and information technology processes, research and policy, marketing and fundraising.

<sup>62</sup> More information is available at: <http://www.inspirechilli.com/> and <http://foyer.net/>.

## Five Key Practice Areas

Advantaged Thinking is put into practice through embedding it into Five Key Practice Areas – Place, People, Opportunities, The Deal and The Campaign, which permeate all aspects of service delivery.

### Place

The places and spaces in which we live, learn and move through can affect the way we feel about ourselves, the people around us and the world in general. An Advantaged Thinking approach focuses on creating places and environments that inspire and challenge young people. The TtW service delivery site should ensure that the program is embedded in the community, and that TtW Participants have access to mainstream opportunities through co-location with key community partners (local government, TAFEs and other community organisations) and/or a centralised location near to key institutions and businesses. Close proximity to other services, groups and leisure facilities is central to the development of partnerships and networks, and provides Participants with easy access to mainstream services, employers, education and courses. It also embeds both the program and the Participants within the community.

### People

To achieve their potential, TtW Participants need to be surrounded by people – community members, employers and staff – who believe that all young people are talented and valuable assets for the community capable of achieving on their own and on behalf of others. Importantly, we must connect young people with networks that reach beyond the usual welfare relationships (e.g. counsellors, caseworkers and support workers) often accumulated by those experiencing disadvantage. While these connections are important, to be able to sustain career paths young people also need their own 'Address Book' of professional networks that includes employers, educators and significant community figures.

### Opportunities

For young people to hold high aspirations and achieve their goals, they need to know of, and have access to, diverse opportunities. Focusing on a young person's personal strengths or challenges alone, while important, ignores the structural aspect of disadvantage. We all need access to resources and opportunities to promote and develop our skills and sense of self if we are to achieve success. A critical part of the Advantaged Thinking approach is brokering opportunities – such as work tasters or placements, access to quality mainstream education, interacting with inspirational people, and participating in peer education and social campaigns – that are matched to young people's aspirations.

### The Deal

The Deal is a critical aspect of the ethos underpinning the TtW CoP Model. It is designed to prepare young people for the real world and the expectations associated with sustaining an independent livelihood. It does this by upholding both the rights and responsibilities of Participants and staff. In turn, both are accountable for their actions and a culture of reciprocity is fostered, expressing shared ownership of the TtW service. In the context of TtW, the Deal is particularly important in reframing mutual obligation into mutual accountability. It is non-punitive, and ultimately expresses value by holding high expectations for young people to instil in them a sense that they are valued members of society with something to contribute.

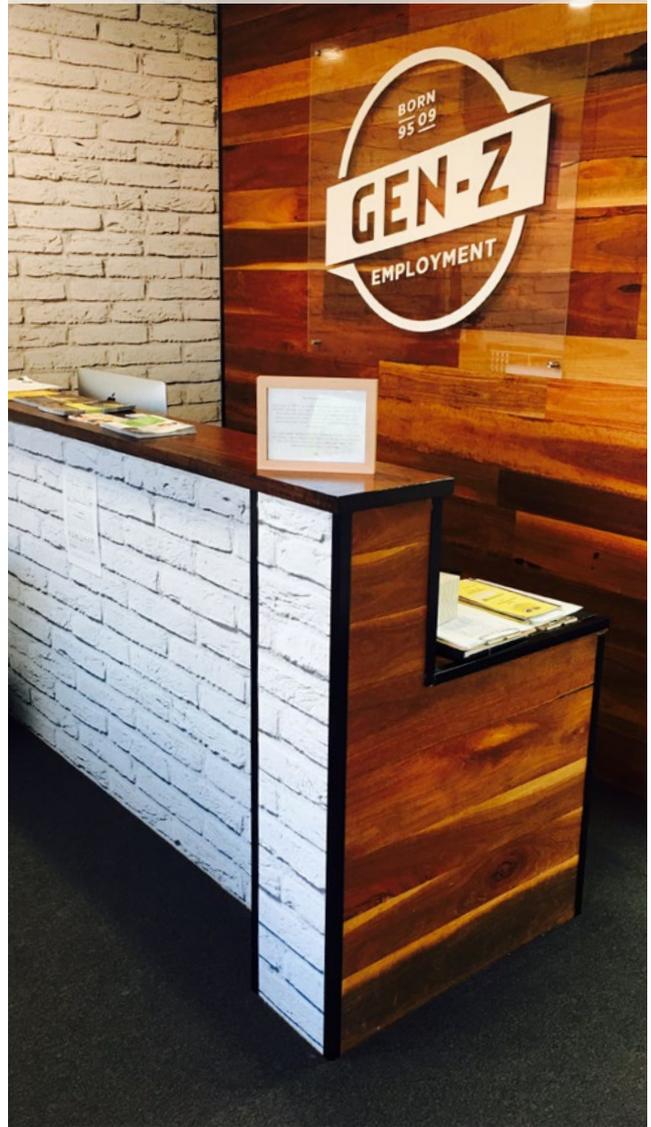
### The Campaign

The Campaign seeks to provide opportunities for Participants to present themselves, and be seen as, valuable citizens of the future, thereby challenging needs-based, deficit models. It focuses on: changing community perceptions; demonstrating that all people have abilities that can be nurtured; promoting young people's talents; and providing them with an opportunity to have a voice and influence. The Campaign ultimately aims to create structural pathways that enable young people to participate in mainstream business, education and community institutions. The means of developing and delivering on a Campaign include mentoring young people to become advocates for change.

BSL Broadmeadows office



Gen Z office



VPG office



## Harnessing community effort

Harnessing community effort represents a way of working in partnership with government, business, community organisations, philanthropy and education providers to deliver the opportunities, networks and resources that are identified in the Five Key Practice Areas of Advantaged Thinking outlined above. From the capabilities perspective, it means ensuring that the 'external institutional and material conditions' young people need to use their skills and talents effectively are in place. This collaboration occurs at both the national and local level, in recognition of the necessity of combined macro and localised efforts to address youth unemployment successfully.

For TtW providers, harnessing community effort provides a mechanism for valuing the expertise, knowledge and existing work of the community, and to build on, rather than duplicate, community assets. By working in this way the TtW CoP aims to:

- foster a sense of community ownership over the issue of local youth employment, and develop community agency and accountability in how the issue is addressed
- promote a shift in the way the community values Participants, from passive service recipients to valuable, contributing members of the community
- build sustainable employment pathways by mobilising community resources and contributions to provide young people with opportunities, networks and local support.

This community-led approach is not new, and many agencies working with young people or vulnerable groups are already engaging effectively with their community. However, through the Advantaged Thinking approach, the TtW Model presents a purpose-built framework that harnesses the expertise and resources of the community to deliver the integrated and inclusive support that can assist young people to build the foundations for achieving sustainable employment. In doing so, it explicitly identifies, mobilises and values the essential contributions from community partners and their role within the program to ensure that TtW is delivered *with* rather than *to* the community.

The delivery of the TtW Model is dependent on the development of key partnerships with:

- Local government
- Local employers and employer bodies (e.g. the Business Chamber)
- Education providers (e.g. TAFEs, schools and other VET providers)
- Service and sporting clubs
- Community organisations (e.g. Headspace).

The contributions made by each of these 'community partners' across the Five Key Practice Areas is outlined in the table overleaf.

## Community Investment Committee

The Community Investment Committee (CIC) is a critical mechanism for both leveraging opportunities, networks and resources across the Five Key Practice Areas, and for driving more systemic change at the local and ultimately, national, level. This change is essential to create the economic and social conditions young people need to develop and exercise their capabilities in the context of gaining sustainable and fulfilling employment. The CIC does this by bringing together business, education providers, local council, the TtW provider and other community organisations to develop and implement an economic development strategy for young people within the community. It is also the ambition of the CoP that the committees play an integral role in bringing business to the table around the broader collaborative effort with government to co-create solutions to structural barriers to youth employment, and link the local with regional and national action for change.

It is essential that the form of each CIC is right for the community it represents; as such, the committees may look quite different across the CoP. However, each CIC must adhere to the following core features:

- Employer led – the CIC is not an education or youth network. In order to drive economic development for young people in the local community, it must be led by key local employers and industry, including having an employer as the Chair.
- Community representation – the key actors within the community must be represented around the table. This includes local council and major public and/or private education and training providers, as well as any relevant community organisations or individual citizens.
- Action focused – the CIC must set, and achieve, key outcomes and strategic tasks.

The operation of the CIC is discussed in detail in Section 4.

**Figure 6: How Harnessing Community Effort delivers on the Five Key Practice Areas**



Five Key Practice Areas					
<b>Place</b>	Workplace experiences Community infrastructure and co-located spaces	Workplace experiences	Mainstream education settings	Workplace experiences Community spaces	Supportive places Culturally appropriate places
<b>People</b>	Professional networks Community networks Guest speakers	Industry mentors Professional networks Guest speakers	Industry and education mentors Trainers and teachers Community networks	Volunteers Industry and personal mentors Professional networks Community networks	Specialist support professionals Support networks
<b>Opportunities</b>	Work experience Internships Site tours Job opportunities Youth economic development strategy	Work experience Work tasters Internships Volunteering Site tours Apprenticeships/traineeships Job opportunities	Access to education and training Learning support Trade tasters Site tours Co-delivery of workshops	Work experience Work tasters Site tours Volunteering Co-delivery of workshops Job opportunities Memberships (e.g. sports club)	Access to specialist services Co-delivery of workshops
<b>The Deal</b>	Investment in TtW for socially and economically engaged community Coordinating youth economic development strategy	Access to entry-level positions Investment in TtW for a skilled local workforce Co-design of skill building to ensure work readiness	Access to mainstream education Co-design of skill building to ensure meeting industry needs	Memberships Opening up networks of volunteers and mentors	Access to specialised support for improved health and wellbeing Referral pathways to and from TtW
<b>The Campaign</b>	Representation on Community Investment Committee Advocating for whole-of-community approach to youth unemployment Expertise in labour market barriers	Chair the Community Investment Committee Advocating for local young people to be viewed as assets for business Expertise in labour market barriers	Representation on Community Investment Committee Advocating for change in how we work with young people Expertise on educational barriers	Representation on Community Investment Committee Support for youth-led campaigns Volunteering opportunities	Representation on Community Investment Committee Advocating for change in how we value young people

## Four Service Offers

The Four Service Offers are Vocational Guidance, Co-designed Planning, Skills and Capabilities Building and Real World Opportunities. Together, they constitute a suite of activities and opportunities that are delivered across the Four Phases of the TtW service. These Offers collectively equip young people with the skills, experiences, networks and support necessary to gain sustainable employment. They are delivered using the Advantaged Thinking approach, and by leveraging the contributions and existing effort of local communities.

The Offers are based on features considered essential for effective youth education, employment and re-engagement programs – as consistently highlighted in the literature and outlined previously in this Practice Guide – and on the service delivery experience of the BSL and other TtW CoP members.

### Service Offer 1: Vocational Guidance

The post-school environment is complex, and the changed nature of the labour market means that entry for young people is often highly problematic. Career and vocational guidance are essential for all young people, particularly those experiencing disadvantage who lack family support or capacity and/or who are disconnected from the education system.

Providing exposure to, and information about, a wide range of industries and careers, as well as information about their education and training requirements enables young people to develop realistic career plans that match their interests, skills and abilities with areas of opportunity.<sup>63</sup> A key part of the TtW CoP Model is experiential learning opportunities, through which young people can explore a range of workplaces and meet employers and industry experts, coupled with locally informed guidance on navigating employment and education systems.

TtW Participants receive vocational guidance both from skilled practitioners (TtW staff, external providers such as a TAFE) as well as from informal sources such as employers, volunteers, mentors and other community members involved with the program (e.g. as a guest speaker). This guidance is ongoing and focuses on the young person's immediate employment goals as well as their long-term career aspirations.

### Service Offer 2: Co-designed Planning

Young people need to be supported to identify both their career goals, and the concrete actions and responsibilities they must meet to achieve these goals. Enabling young people to develop personal visions and goals provides them with agency and self-direction about their future career. This has been found to lead to a deeper and more sustained level of engagement in education, training and employment.<sup>64</sup>

Too often, however, young people experiencing disadvantage do not have agency over their pathway, or what it is they are doing. To counter this, we work with them to co-design a plan that recognises their capacity to choose their pathway, and coach them to develop realistic career plans that match their interests, skills and abilities with areas of opportunity.

The TtW Pathway Plan is co-designed by the Participant and TtW staff. Through the planning process, the young person identifies their talents and skills, their informal prior learning and areas that need further development. This facilitates the development of agency and self-confidence, as well as practical planning and goal-setting skills. The Pathway Plan is also an ongoing self-reflective tool, through which the young person and TtW staff regularly reassess their skill level and work readiness, reflect on lessons learned, celebrate achievements and focus on next steps.

Young people need to have support to achieve their goals. Where they do not have adequate family or other support and interest in their Pathway Plan, TtW will provide them with a mentor who can fulfil this role. The young person's family or mentor should also be involved in the celebratory stages of the program, where the young person reflects on and celebrates their progression through their Pathway Plan and achievements (large and small) throughout the program.

<sup>63</sup> R. A. Polvere & P. Lim 2015, *Career Development Supporting Young Australians: A Literature Review*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide and Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne.

<sup>64</sup> F. Aldridge & A. Tuckett 2011, *Tough Times for Adult Learners: The NIACE Survey on Adult Participation in Learning*, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Leicester, UK.

**Figure 7: Core activities in the Four Service Offers**

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### Vocational Guidance

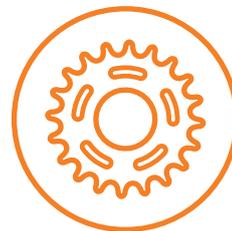
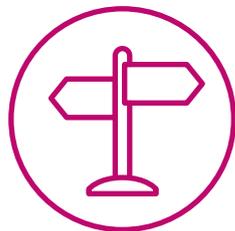
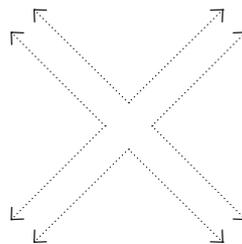
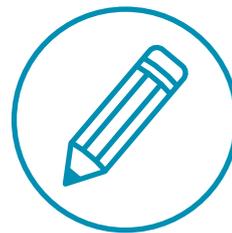
- Career development activities from skilled practitioners
- Guidance from employers, volunteers and mentors
- Ongoing coaching and guidance



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### Co-designed Planning

- Recognition of informal learning
- Support to identify aspirations
- Employment and education pathway planning
- Reflection and celebration of achievements
- Referral to specialised support services



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### Real World Opportunities

- Work tasters
- Work experience placements
- Industry guest speakers
- Trade tasters
- Address Book of professional contacts
- Volunteering
- Apprenticeship, traineeship and job opportunities
- Post-placement support

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### Skills and Capabilities Building

- Group employability workshops
- Career management and maintenance skill building
- Individual and self-paced learning activities
- Workplace and applied learning
- Mentoring
- Enrolment in pre-accredited and accredited training services

### Service Offer 3: Skills and Capabilities Building

In addition to opportunities, networks and resources, young people need key skills, assets, attributes and character capabilities to make the transition to adulthood and to flourish. These skills are necessary to take advantage of opportunities to participate in education, in work and in the broader community, particularly for young people who are disconnected from education and work.

Employability skills focus on the personal, social and transferable qualities that are relevant to all jobs, as opposed to specific technical skills or qualifications.<sup>65</sup> Employers continually rank these skills – along with foundational or functional expertise in language, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology – as equally, if not more, important to getting and keeping a job than technical skills and qualifications.<sup>66</sup>

Among the key characteristics that employers look for are:

- motivation and flexibility
- willingness to work and learn
- confidence
- appropriate clothing and grooming
- positive behaviour, gestures and mannerisms.

With the growth of precarious and rapidly changing conditions in the workplace, it is also imperative that young people are equipped to become better skilled at career management and maintenance, such as with job seeking, resumé and application writing, interviewing, goal setting, planning and decision making.

### Service Offer 4: Real World Opportunities

A critical aspect of moving young people into work is providing them with opportunities to increase their exposure to the world of work, and to gain experience in real workplaces. Through these opportunities young people are able to learn about workplaces and vocations, test their work-readiness capabilities in an area of employment relevant to their career goals, receive authentic feedback in a supportive environment, and critically reflect on their learning before they transition from the program to employment or further study.

Together with work tasters, work experience also assists young people to find out more about the day-to-day activities of particular jobs, broadens their knowledge about the types of activities, positions and career structures within a range of industries, and alerts them to any associated educational requirements.

These opportunities also enable young people to build their social capital through networks and connections with employers and their community, and to develop their own 'Address Book' – a resource of employer and community contacts made through the program upon which they can draw.

[They] never pushed me to do something I truly wasn't comfortable with, but they did push me to my limits and were there for me every step of the way... I love my job, I feel so proud of myself for achieving this position.

### TtW Participant, SIP, Western Sydney

<sup>65</sup> R. Blades, B. Fauth & J. Gibb 2012, *Measuring Employability Skills: A Rapid Review to Inform Development of Tools for Project Evaluation*, National Children's Bureau, London.

<sup>66</sup> K. Anderson, M. Brophy, B. McNeil & D. Potter 2010, *Opening the Doors to Apprenticeships: Reaching Young People who Are Disadvantaged and Disengaged from Apprenticeships*, The Young Foundation, London; S. Sodha & J. Margo 2010, *Ex Curricula*, Demos, London.

## Four Phases

The Four Phases of the TtW CoP Model are Guidance and Exploration, Work Preparation, Workplace Opportunities and Post-placement Support.

The Four Service Offers are operationalised across these Four Phases, which provide a structured pathway for Participants as they move through the service.

However, the Four Phases are also intended to be flexible as they are based around the needs of the young person. For some Participants, progression through a Phase may be non-linear and occur at different rates, depending on their goals and work readiness. The key activities and tools and resources used to deliver the Four Phases are stepped out in detail in Section 4.

**Figure 8: Four Phases of the Transition to Work Community of Practice Model**





## The Model in Practice

This section details how the core components of the Model are put into practice by:

- Outlining our approach to working with business, including the establishment of the Community Investment Committees
- Providing checklists of practice principles for the Five Key Practice Areas of Advantaged Thinking
- Summarising the key components of the CoP Model staffing structure
- Outlining the techniques used in the delivery of the CoP Model – including Coaching, Experiential Learning, Group Work and Personal Planning
- Demonstrating how the Four Phases are operationalised through key steps and activities, and supporting tools and resources
- Explaining the different ways in which the CoP Model can be implemented at the local level by using illustrative case studies and photos from across the Community of Practice

# Section 3



# The Model in Practice

## How we work with business

The Transition to Work Community of Practice approach to working with employers is being refined and co-designed with business partners and CoP members over the course of 2017. 'Co-design' refers to a collaborative development and design process that leverages the expertise of multiple actors to ensure that the proposed initiatives and outcomes are realistic and tangible.

Central to the Advantaged Thinking approach is the recognition that diverse effort across multiple sectors – not simply service providers and government – is critical to delivering on the necessary skills, networks and opportunities that young people need to move into work. The ways in which we work with business is, therefore, a critical component of the Model in practice.

While short-term, transactional relationships with employers are crucial to providing an adequate volume of opportunities for Participants, the role for employers in our work is larger than that. No one program, or top-down approach, is going to fix youth unemployment; communities – including business – need to be responsible for co-creating solutions

TtW works with individual employers to develop strategies and opportunities that are mutually beneficial in meeting both business needs and the goals and aspirations of TtW Participants. The strategies we use, therefore, are tailored around the needs of both the young person and the type of business with which we are working. By using an Advantaged Thinking approach to working with employers, we are viewing young people as assets. As such, it is not a charitable act when employers take them on, rather it is to their advantage because they have the potential and skills that could be used for the benefit of the business, and the broader community.

### Business and community working together: Community Investment Committee

As stated previously, the Community Investment Committee is the Model's key mechanism for driving changing and investment within the local community. It is about developing an employer-led economic development strategy for local young people that benefits the community, employers, young people and their families.

The makeup of the CIC will vary in form in different communities depending on existing networks or entities, as well as the social, economic and cultural context of the community.

The role of the CIC is to:

- Provide practical support and advice for the delivery of the TtW service and other youth employment initiatives by mobilising community resources and contributions to deliver concrete opportunities for Participants (e.g. employers willing to give work experience placements, work tasters; volunteers and mentors to work with the Participants).
- Contribute expert knowledge on local issues, such as youth unemployment and local labour market change, and to inform strategic decision making for the TtW service.
- Implement and participate in broader campaigns or activities to address factors influencing local youth unemployment, and promote a positive view about the potential of young jobseekers in the short and longer term (e.g. local employer pledge or youth employment campaigns, a regional youth employment strategy).
- Consider ways to improve local work and learning pathways for young people through collaboration with local services, educational providers and other relevant stakeholders, and advise on how delivery of the program can best complement other local services and programs.
- Formalise mutual accountability between the community and TtW by ensuring that the program is informed and supported by the community, and that the community is in turn investing in the program.
- Inform the advocacy work of the national TtW CoP through their knowledge about structural and systemic policy issues that impact on the local community and the capacity of TtW to achieve outcomes for young people.
- Contribute to the ongoing innovation and improvement of the TtW CoP Model by providing feedback on the outcomes achieved and the lessons learned, as well as the action research evaluation of the service.

To achieve the broader ambition of the TtW CoP in regard to systemic change, the chairs of the CICs from around the country will come together at least annually over the course of the TtW contract. This 'roundtable' will seek to identify the key policy changes required to address youth unemployment, and any systemic challenges and solutions from a local, regional and national perspective.

*Note: Tools and resources for the CIC can be found at: [www.ttwcommunity.com.au](http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au)*

## Gen Z Community Investment Committee, Gold Coast

*Our region has established networks and alliances for supporting young people into work. When we looked into developing a CIC, there was no point in duplicating the good work that was already happening in our region. It made more sense to harness the existing momentum to create a CIC in a form that would be most beneficial for our young people.*

— **Carmen Auer, General Manager Gen Z**

Community Investment Committees harness the efforts of local communities – including business, education providers, local council, the TtW provider and other organisations – to implement economic development strategies for young people within the community. Gen Z Gold Coast has played an integral role in the establishment of a CIC for its region.

Gen Z is active in the Gold Coast employment and training service sector, with membership in local and regional networks and working groups, including the Employability Working Group and the Gold Coast Jobs Council.

The Gold Coast Jobs Council includes members of the Queensland Department of Education and Training, the Federal Department of Employment, TtW providers, Jobactives (including Nortec, Tursa, Sarina Russo), and other employers such as Frizelles Car Group, GOLDDOC (Commonwealth Games) and the Australian Retail Association. It also engages with 30 Business Development Officers working across the South East Queensland region to connect with the labour market.

The Employability Working Group includes members from the City of Gold Coast, the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct, Study Gold Coast, Marriot Hotels, Gold Coast Airport, Icon Energy, Sunland Group and others.

The General Manager of Gen Z, who sits on the Gold Coast Jobs Council Board and acts as a conduit between it and the Employability Working Group, has identified that these two networks were versions of a CIC for her region. Recognising that harnessing community effort builds on, rather than duplicates existing services, she worked towards establishing a CIC in a form that was locally appropriate for the Gold Coast.

The General Manager then approached the CEO of Study Gold Coast (a key driver for educational and employability outcomes in the region) to take on the role of 'Chair' for the Gold Coast CoP CIC. Rather than establishing a third committee, the Gold Coast CoP CIC is structured in a way that it can leverage the knowledge and expertise of the two existing committees in the region, through the leadership of its Chair and network members. The Gold Coast CIC is working towards increasing employment outcomes for young people through the combined momentum of the Gold Coast Jobs Council and the Employability Working Group.

## Community Investment Leadership Group – Colony 47

Another example of how a Community Investment Committee has been successfully implemented within a local context is the Community Investment Leadership Group (CILG) established by Colony 47 to provide guidance on the implementation of TtW in Southern Tasmania.

Colony 47 identified the need for the CILG to have a broad-based industry engagement, with a particular focus on industries that were forecast to grow their employment numbers over the next three years.

The CILG includes senior representatives from the growth industries of tourism and hospitality, building and construction, agriculture and aquaculture, and community services, as well as the utilities and the manufacturing sectors. Members include: Hydro Tasmania – energy generation; Nyr Star; Building Group Apprenticeship Scheme; Federal Hotels; Huon Aquaculture; Houston Farms; Tassal; Colony 47; and DoE (funding agency).

Initial work on the CILG by Colony 47 sought to engage senior industry executives in understanding the scope of the youth unemployment issue in Southern Tasmania, and also to canvass initiatives to address employment barriers facing young people. The initial briefing scoped four key areas for further work, including the need to address the cost and hours of practice required for young people to complete their driving licences; finding young employed people in all sectors to act as mentors; the different sectors' requirements for hiring entry-level roles; and the lack of opportunities for young people in regional areas to engage in training and to develop work skills.

As a result of this initial work, a number of projects were developed in June 2017 for the CILG to consider, including:

- a sponsorship arrangement with Royal Automobile Club Tasmania and Myer Foundation to provide young people with access to free driving lessons so they can get their licence
- a series of mentors from, and information sessions about, growth industries for young people, such as tourism and hospitality and the automotive industry
- a process to develop the CoP Work Readiness Skills Tool to incorporate the employer perspective through pilot projects with Federal Hotels and National Disability Services
- an Empowering Youth project supported by the DoE in regional areas to engage young people in projects to develop work-related skills.

The CILG will meet regularly to oversee the implementation of these projects and to provide further advice and guidance on opportunities for young people to access employment.

## Identifying employer drivers

Employer partnerships with TtW should span strategic, long-term relationships as well as those that are opportunistic or seek to address the specific requirements of a young person. When engaging with employers it is critical to understand individual businesses drivers and motivations, as these will vary between kinds of employers and industries, particularly between small to medium employers (SMEs) and larger businesses.

### Small to medium employers

For small to medium employers (SMEs), engagement with TtW is most likely to be on the level of the individual jobseeker and employer. SMEs are often time poor, and just looking to get the right candidate for a position with as little time and effort wasted as possible. As such, it is critical to ensure the young person is properly prepared for that specific industry and job, and to have appropriate Post-placement Support (PPS) structures in place that suit the employer. The onus for ensuring this rests on the TtW service, which not only has to understand the individual business's challenges and needs but also has to match the young person to the specific role. In so doing, it will ensure a value match between the young person and the culture of the business.

When working with SMEs, an Advantaged Thinking approach applies at the level of the individual young person and business. Employment services often use 'reverse marketing' to gain opportunities for a jobseeker with an employer. However, under an Advantaged Thinking approach, a more apt way of describing the way in which TtW staff working with the young people engage with SMEs is 'advocating'. Rather than 'selling' a young person, staff advocate on behalf of talented, well-prepared young people for them to have the opportunity to shine and to succeed at the business.

### Large employers

Large employers and peak industries have more capacity to engage with TtW on a program level, rather than just in regard to an individual Participant. Big businesses hiring multiple staff across a range of different areas are often more willing and able to engage with, and to take on, groups of people at a time, including those with limited experience, as they have the resources to support them and provide them with further training. Large employers also have broader business challenges and objectives for which TtW – as an agile and innovative service – can co-create solutions.

## Peak industry bodies

Working with peak industry bodies can also provide benefit on multiple levels, both in regard to networks, coordination of their member businesses, and expertise as to their particular industry needs, including the requisite skills and capabilities for success in the industry. Peak bodies represent a diverse range and size of employers, and have a set of objectives based on the needs of their members. By identifying those objectives, TtW can propose ways in which it can help them to deliver benefit to their members. TtW can then use its reach with their members to access opportunities, and provide the peak bodies with the right support to coordinate with individual businesses. Unlike the approach with individual large employers, peak bodies take a more active role with individual businesses than the TtW service, as they hold the relationships. An example of this approach with peak bodies is outlined in Case Study 2 below.

Our approach to working with large employers and peak bodies is underpinned by two core principles:

- Mutual investment for mutual benefit – we seek investment from business in the program and in the Participants, but equally we invest in understanding their business and how TtW can contribute to their goals. Unlike a charitable model or even corporate social responsibility (although this can be an important driver), both parties benefit from this mutual investment with clearly defined goals and outcomes.
- Co-design and collaboration – critical to delivering mutual benefit to the employer and the program/young people is a process of collaborative co-design. TtW works closely with employers to tailor the program of engagement to their needs, to ensure that young people are well prepared for the specific opportunities the business can provide, and that all their specified outcomes are achieved.

*Note:*

*Tools and resources for working with business can be found at [www.ttwcommunity.com.au](http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au)*

**Figure 9:** Framework for the ‘mutual investment, mutual benefit’ approach with large employers



Group-based, hands-on learning in the workplace – provides young people with insight into entry-level positions through a ‘work taster’. Employer identifies young people who display the values and strengths they look for in employees and offers them a ‘golden ticket’ for work experience.

**Employer benefits**

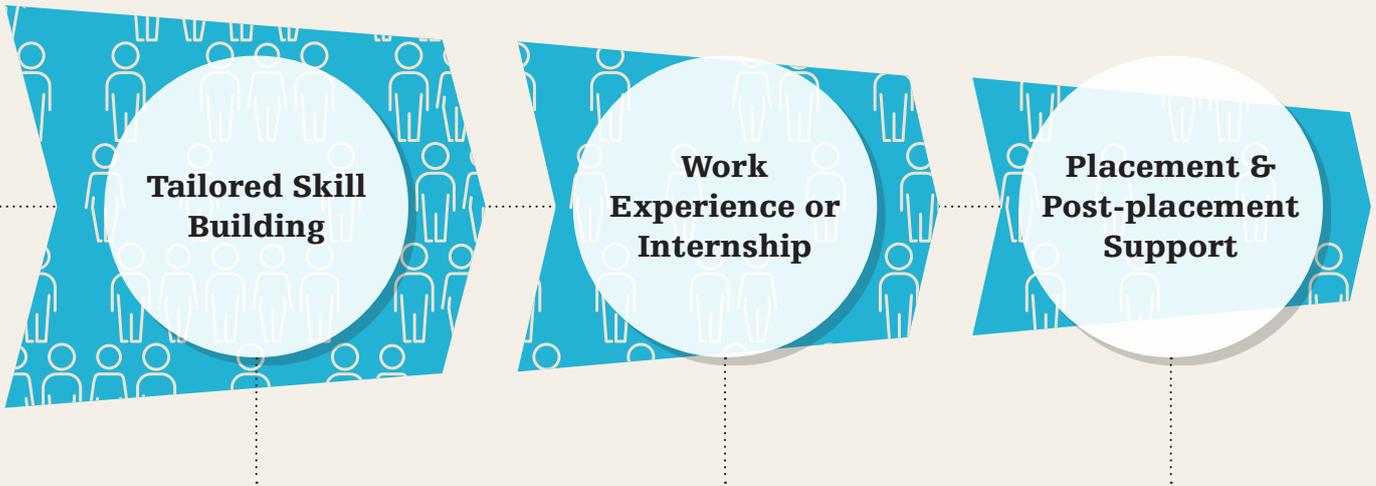
- Marketing/promotion opportunity
- Raising their community profile
- Opportunity to source employees
- Positively impact young people’s career pathways

**Benefits to young people**

- Exposure to the workplace
- Learn about vocations
- Connections to employers
- Increased confidence

Key aspects of successful employer partnerships include:

- **Take the employer on the journey** – it is important that the employer believes in the Advantaged Thinking approach and is willing to invest in the young person. Invite the employer to present at a workshop or host a site tour so they can get a sense of the breadth of the program and what it intends to do. This will ensure the employer has matching values and is wholly invested in the program.
- **Be honest and upfront about expectations** – Being honest about the young people being put forward, their experience, skills and capabilities, is crucial to ensuring the employer both trusts TtW staff and can prepare adequately. Things will go wrong occasionally so making sure the employer feels like they weren’t blindsided, and have been provided with follow-up support, is key to maintaining a strong relationship with them. This is also relevant when developing training programs with a training provider. Being upfront about budget, timeframes and resources is important so that training providers can put together a package that fits the need of the young people, the employers and the TtW provider.



Training for the chosen young people is designed with the employer to match their specific needs, as well as transferrable employability skills.

**Employer benefits**

- Opportunity to ensure employees are well prepared for work experience, and a good fit for company values
- Tailored training for potential employees

**Benefits to young people**

- Transferrable skills
- Industry-specific skills

Young people complete a range of tasks that let them demonstrate and refine their skills, acquire new skills, and gain experience and understanding of the workplace.

**Employer benefits**

- Chance to make sure the young person is the right fit for the organisation prior to ongoing commitment

**Benefits to young people**

- Work experience
- On-the-job skill development
- Connections to employers/referees
- Chance to make sure the industry/organisation is the right fit

Young people who excel are given a traineeship, apprenticeship or job. We work with the employer to support them and the young person.

**Employer benefits**

- Talented, motivated employee who has been specifically upskilled to meet their organisation's requirements
- Ongoing support from BSL to address any issues

**Benefits to young people**

- Ongoing paid employment
- Ongoing support from BSL

- **Give them a choice** – Creating a forum where Participants are able to meet the employers, hear about what they are offering and then decide if it is the right pathway for them is key to ensuring the young person is really invested and wants to take part. Events such as information sessions allow the employers an opportunity to meet the young people face-to-face without committing to anything, while also giving Participants an opportunity to hear about any offers. This allows both the young person and the employer agency in their decision to take part in the program.

- **Flexibility** – more than anything it is crucial to be flexible and adaptable. This is relevant to all scenarios and for all parties that may be engaged, i.e. employers, training providers and Participants. Often there will need to be some give and take when trying to develop a program that fits the needs of both the employers and the Participants. However, having the flexibility and being open to suggestions is key to a good working relationship with the employer, and one that is sustainable and meaningful for all parties.

### Nursery and Garden Industry Victoria

Through a connection with Invest Victoria, the BSL was referred to the CEO of Ball Horticulture both as a large employer in the Mornington Peninsula region and as the incoming President of the Nursery and Garden Industry Victoria (NGIV), the peak body for horticulture in Victoria. The BSL saw this connection as an opportunity to leverage a discussion about a possible partnership with the peak.

NGIV represents 43,000 jobs in the Victorian horticulture industry, with 30 per cent of these jobs in the Mornington Peninsula, ranging from supply chain to wholesale, innovation and retail. NGIV member businesses have experienced significant challenges promoting the industry as a dynamic career option for young people in the region, which has impacted on the quality and sustainability of recruitment.

The BSL and NGIV co-designed a pilot exposure program to promote real employment opportunities in the industry locally, and came to an agreement that the core principles would include:

- A five-week, one day per week pilot program showcasing dynamic and exciting employers in the industry, with a rotating weekly focus on supply chain, wholesale, innovation, retail and exhibition.
- Each week would include a tour, industry speakers, hands-on learning and micro-work experience opportunities.
- Businesses involved would earmark vacancies prior to the program, from casual work to part-time and full-time, internships and apprenticeships.
- A direct link would then be facilitated with a horticulture program at a TAFE or other registered training organisation.

Direct buy-in from the CEO, President and Board Members (themselves member businesses participating) ensured the program was prioritised and resourced accordingly.

The EEO met with NGIV to get a good sense of what would be appropriate for the various employers involved, so the program could be developed with that in mind. The key contact at NGIV then facilitated a 'warm lead' with specific businesses. Once the employers had been met, and the EEO had a good sense of their business needs, she developed a structure that was diverse enough to suit the Participants but would also fit within the needs of those employers.

During this process, the EEO ascertained from employers that the group training organisation Apprenticeship and Traineeship Employment Partners (ATEP) was the preferred provider for horticulture apprenticeships. She then contacted ATEP to request a training package for a pre-apprenticeship in Horticulture that was cost-neutral for both the Participants and the BSL. ATEP was able to meet the BSL requirements and has now designed a program for Participants once they have completed the NGIV program.

(After TtW)... I'm focused and have an idea on what type of career I want in the future. The Transition to Work program has given me more confidence in myself.

**TtW Participant, Brophy Family and Youth Services**

The interns have progressed so much; the business, the team leaders and the managers have noticed how good they are.

**Mia Quejada, SE Water**

### South East Water, Mornington Peninsula

South East Water (SEW) is one of the largest and newest employers in the Frankston area of south-east Melbourne. Having moved to the area and consolidated operations in mid-2015, the BSL made initial contact with SEW's Diversity Coordinator to understand the scope of the company's plans to integrate in the Frankston. The Diversity Coordinator in turn facilitated a meeting with the SEW's General Manager Customer.

In discussion, it was revealed that there are several key SEW organisational imperatives with which BSL could assist, including:

- establishing a strong local community profile as a good corporate citizen
- building a pool of local casual staff with connection to the local community
- engaging a younger generation in the work of SEW to foster innovation
- creating a pathway for existing talented entry-level SEW employees to gain leadership experience in a flat organisational structure.

The BSL and SEW workshopped a pilot internship program structure to address these priority areas, with an agreement that the core principles would include:

- Internal SEW mentors for interns to provide guidance and support throughout the program.
- Ongoing external support from the BSL to interns and SEW mentors, team leaders and program leads.
- Possibilities created for ongoing employment at SEW for interns who thrive in the business.
- A 'graduate program' structure, in which interns would cycle through arms of the SEW business to gain broad experience and test aptitude in a range of areas.
- That the pilot would inform a longer-term intern program to four times annually at SEW.
- Interns would be paid at a baseline rate for SEW employees.

Once the internship program was co-designed with South East Water, the BSL's Employment Engagement Officer (EEO) took the lead on preparing the process for interested Participants. This included designing mock interviews around the kind of questions SEW had indicated they were likely to ask, and working with the Participants on appropriate interview attire and transport.

The EEO concurrently worked with the identified SEW workplace mentors, and was able to provide guidance on engaging and working with young people, as well as any specific needs for the individual Participants. Once in the workplace, SEW mentors used the company's professional development and review templates with Participants to provide feedback. Further tools have since been developed, with input from the EEO and SEW mentors, to give interns tangible goals to work towards and achieve with the support of their mentor.

During the internship placement, the BSL's Youth Development Coordinators (YDCs) also supported the young person. Additionally, the EEO had fortnightly meetings with the interns at SEW to check in and get honest and open feedback. This was followed by a meeting with a SEW representative to ensure communication lines were always open, and feedback was being passed on immediately from both parties.

## Advantaged Thinking in practice

Advantaged Thinking is put into practice through Five Key Practice Areas – **Place, People, Opportunities, the Deal and the Campaign** – which were briefly outlined in Section 3. Below, we step out the main principles and practices that embed Advantaged Thinking in the TtW service through these Five Key Practice Areas, along with checklists on key steps.

Practice principles	Key practices that support these principles
<b>Creates a space where Participants can experience inspiration, a sense of belonging and motivation</b>	<p>Advantaged Thinking is evident in the design and decoration, and in the access to the various spaces.</p> <p>Participants can have a say about the look and feel of the communal spaces.</p> <p>Provision of inviting spaces where Participants can come together to learn, experience and share.</p>
<b>Prioritises engagement with employment, education and lifelong learning</b>	<p>Sites are located in areas that are accessible to Participants, business and the community.</p> <p>Spaces are welcoming and inspirational, and reflect the objectives of the program.</p> <p>A love of learning and development can be fostered through place.</p>
<b>Facilitates authentic, transparent relationships between staff and Participants</b>	<p>Design enables flow and transparency between staff and Participant spaces.</p> <p>Staff areas are not no-go spaces, although at times there may need to be some separation.</p>
<b>Illustrates and reflects that Participants are valued and respected</b>	<p>The TtW site is a dynamic environment, with visible activity and interaction between Participants, staff, community partners and volunteers.</p> <p>Space reinforces the partnership aspect and minimises the power imbalance between Participants and staff.</p>
<b>Facilitates access to a range of different places and spaces in the community</b>	<p>Participants are taken to places that broaden their horizons and inspire them.</p>
<b>Enables access to the mainstream</b>	<p>Locations facilitate streamlined access to educational and employment opportunities.</p> <p>External partners are encouraged to visit the sites, and when they come there they feel inspired and connected through the way the space reflects our objectives.</p>
<b>Digital media facilitates greater reach for Participants</b>	<p>There is a TtW site-specific social media presence that is effectively managed by staff and accessible to Participants.</p> <p>Digital and online media are creatively used to engage with Participants.</p>

## Checklist

- Are walls being used to display and create art?
- Are the colour schemes bright and uplifting?
- Does the imagery inspire?
- Is there scope for Participants to get involved in designing the space?
- Does the building have spaces in which the Participants enjoy meeting?
- Is there streamlined access to employment, educational, mentoring and volunteering opportunities?
- Is the location close to transport, amenities, educational facilities and business opportunities?
- Is any promotional literature on display geared towards aspiration rather than managing risk?
- Is the activity timetable visible and reflective of the interests of Participants?
- Are there spaces in which Participants can learn, interact and share ideas peer to peer?
- Are shared spaces comfortable and inviting?
- Does the space create opportunities for both incidental and intentional conversation and interaction with Participants?
- Are all opportunities to share space between Participants and staff maximised?
- Are the team able and encouraged to share spaces, to have lunch and work alongside Participants?
- Does the design and decoration of the space reflect an attitude that Participants are trusted with the space, rather than one of risk management?
- Are high-level partnerships brokered at a level to facilitate streamlined access?
- Are targeted businesses and educational institutions encouraged to have a presence in TtW programs?
- Are Participants encouraged and supported to access mainstream opportunities?
- Can staff use social media to reach Participants?
- Are digital mediums used to engage and interact with Participants where possible and appropriate?

## Place

**Purpose:** To create and provide access to learning and working environments that inspire Participants, connect them to real world opportunities and enable their talents to thrive.

**Key question:** What inspires and makes the Participant feel like they belong?

**Place explained:** The places and spaces in which we learn and develop can affect the way we feel about ourselves. The levels of motivation and inspiration we derive from place should not be underestimated.

The design of the TtW space should enable flow and transparency between staff and Participant areas. Staff areas are not 'no-go' spaces, although at times there may need to be some separation. This reinforces the reciprocal aspect of the TtW CoP Model, and minimises the power imbalance between Participants and staff. TtW is not a transactional space, and shared workspaces and a collaborative environment facilitate a move away from the welfarised service/recipient relationship with which many young people often engage.

When we think about place in the context of TtW delivery, there are three main areas of focus.

- TtW site itself
- TtW and the community
- TtW online.

Practice principles	Key practices that support these principles
<b>Inspires and challenges Participants to achieve, and promotes aspirations</b>	Participants are engaged as the drivers of their own aspirations and coached to achieve these by the teams and external contacts with which they interact.
<b>Promotes Participant voice, integration and participation</b>	<p>Participants are asked and supported to lead initiatives within TtW.</p> <p>Participants are treated as equals and experts about their own lives and motivations.</p>
<b>Fosters authentic, transparent relationships between staff and Participants</b>	<p>Consideration is given to the meaning of staff/Participant boundaries.</p> <p>Foster getting Participants involved by having flexible staff providing real opportunities for them to have their say.</p> <p>Staff understand their own, as well as Participants', rights and responsibilities and clearly communicate all roles and accountabilities.</p>
<b>Enables Participants to make positive change in their lives</b>	<p>Staff are working with Participants in a way that encourages intrinsic motivation and brokers access to opportunities.</p> <p>Staff are recruited who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are committed to work in, and to communicate and develop, an Advantaged Thinking approach</li> <li>• are entrepreneurial and make things happen</li> <li>• see potential in Participants and find ways to nurture this through positive relationships and actions</li> <li>• are intuitive, responsive, empathetic and intelligent</li> <li>• already possess, or are committed to developing, skills in community development, advocacy, group work and networking with business and community members</li> <li>• are solution focused and outcome driven</li> <li>• can act as positive role models</li> <li>• have strong communication, relationship management, and networking and liaison skills</li> <li>• have knowledge and experience in relation to education and employment pathways</li> <li>• have a multitude of skills and aspire to more than the provision of a limited crisis response</li> <li>• want to learn and develop their own talents</li> </ul>
<b>Builds Participants' networks and Address Book of contacts</b>	<p>Networks from within the community are harnessed to enable Participants to build their Address Book of contacts.</p> <p>Community members and leaders are involved in TtW as mentors, supporters and connectors.</p>
<b>Inspires and challenges students to achieve, and promotes talent building</b>	Providing access to people and opportunities that inspire Participants to think differently, and to raise their expectations about possible careers and pathways.

## Checklist

- Are all tools and processes we use, geared toward empowering Participants to make decisions and reach self-determined goals?
- Are Participants engaged as leaders and experts in parts of the program?
- Are Participants asked to be guest speakers to communicate their own lived experience of the service and progression to employment/ education?
- Have TtW teams discussed what this means in their context and how they ensure that hierarchical relationships are limited?
- Are teams practised in slipping in and out of roles to suit the scenario?
- Is coaching practice used to create equal and non-judgmental relationships between staff and Participants?
- Are staff also engaging in coaching conversations that unpick limiting mindsets to enable change?
- Can staff describe and explain the Advantaged Thinking approach?
- Are all staff clear on their roles?
- Do staff use Advantaged Thinking language?
- Can staff clearly explain what they expect of young people and why?
- Are the diverse skills, life experience and expertise of staff being used to full advantage in TtW?
- Are staff trained in coaching?
- Are staff aware of when they should use coaching, personal planning and support and group work techniques to the best advantage of the student?
- Are Participants coached, upskilled and enabled to grow their contacts?
- When Participants attend a work taster, work experience or interview are they coached to optimise their opportunity to build this contact?
- Are teams matching people and opportunities to Participants to raise their expectations and increase choice?

## People

**Purpose:** TtW connects Participants to community members and networks to enable, coach and mentor them to participate in employment and education, to upskill and to help carve a pathway into a chosen career.

**Key question:** What people enable Participants to succeed?

**People explained:** To achieve their potential, Participants need to be surrounded by those who believe in them and empower them.

The successful delivery of the TtW Model is contingent on a mix of paid staff and volunteers, mentors and industry experts. When we think about people in the context of TtW delivery, there are three main areas of focus.

- Participants
- staff, mentors and coaches
- community connections.

To deliver on the TtW Model, the multi-disciplinary staff and volunteer team will have a range of talents, skills, training and life experiences. TtW staff will be entrepreneurial with the capacity to source opportunities, networks and resources from the community. Importantly, they will hold strong beliefs in the abilities and capacity of Participants to change their circumstances and to build sustainable lives.

## Opportunities

**Purpose:** To provide access to opportunities, resources and networks that can promote and develop Participants' talents.

**Key question:** What enables a Participant to identify and promote their talents?

**Opportunities explained:** For young people to dream and hold high aspirations they need to know of, and have access

to, opportunities. In relation to TtW there are three key areas under Opportunities:

- access – to educational, employment, personal and public bodies
- resources – physical, financial, social and cultural
- networks – mentors, community connections, peers and public services.

Practice principles	Key practices that support these principles	Checklist
<b>Inspires and challenges Participants to achieve and promotes talent building</b>	Participants' social capital – their contacts and networks (the Address Book), and personal and practical tools – will be developed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Are Participants building their Address Book of contacts?
<b>Prioritises engagement with employment, education and lifelong learning</b>	<p>Mentors will be sourced for Participants as needed.</p> <p>Inspirational people from business and educational backgrounds will lead TtW activities.</p> <p>Opportunities are matched to Participants' aspirations.</p> <p>Opportunities will be sourced for students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• get work experience or volunteering, tasters, casual or part-time work</li> <li>• source learning support to assist with literacy and numeracy issues</li> <li>• participate in peer education and social campaigns.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Are business, sporting institutions and community engaged to deliver activities in TtW? <input type="checkbox"/> Are mentoring opportunities brokered? <input type="checkbox"/> Are interactive ways of working on literacy resourced within TtW? <input type="checkbox"/> Are volunteering and civic participation opportunities sourced? <input type="checkbox"/> Are Participants encouraged and supported into these opportunities as a way of building their skills? <input type="checkbox"/> Are staff ensuring that they are linking Participants with opportunities that inspire them?

It's so easy for people like me to get swept under the rug and never find work or have the eligibility to gain employment anywhere. But you guys really showed me that it's possible... You guys have changed my life.

### TtW Participant, ACSO

## The Deal

**Purpose:** The Deal as an ethos is expressed throughout the TtW service delivery. It is designed to prepare Participants for the real world and the expectations associated with sustaining an independent livelihood.

**Key question:** What grows Participants' understanding and real stake in society?

**The Deal explained:** Within TtW, the ethos of the Deal is embodied in a number of ways. It works to give the young person more control by enabling them to understand:

- what they are committing to
- what is on offer to them
- how they can be involved in tailoring the approach
- how they can grow through the process to reach a more sustainable and positive adulthood
- how they can evidence their achievements.

The Deal Checklist outlines the specifics of the agreement between Participants and the TtW service. By signing this checklist, shared values, principles and expectations are communicated and agreed. Participants are primarily accountable for remaining engaged in education, training and employment, contributing to the wider community and for actively participating in program activities. TtW is responsible for promoting a safe and secure environment that gives Participants access to opportunities, resources and networks to enable them to use their talents and gain sustainable employment.

The Something for Something Proposal is one way that the concept or ethos of the Deal is expressed in practice, and provides an opportunity for Participants to work on proposals for accessing financial assistance from the TtW service (e.g. to put towards their training or work equipment). In exchange, TtW Participants are asked to contribute their skills and talents to community activities (e.g. volunteering, running a Movember fundraising campaign) or assisting other TtW Participants (e.g. running workshops for other Participants after completing their qualification or getting a job).

Practice principles	Key practices that support these principles	Checklist
<b>Recognises and promotes the rights and responsibilities of all who engage with the TtW service</b>	<p>While acknowledging that there are requirements of the Participants to engage with the program for 25 hours a week, activities and pathways are decided in a way that facilitates Participants' agency and helps them achieve their aspirations.</p> <p>Staff and Participants co-design their Pathway Plan, and set concrete actions for both to take to achieve the Participants' goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the Deal Checklist signed off on and revisited during the Participant's time in TtW?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are staff teams living the Deal by sourcing opportunities aligned to the talents and dreams of the Participants?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are Participants living their side of the Deal by engaging with the opportunities?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are Participants and staff signing off on agreements and tasks associated with their Pathway Plan?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the Deal lived through actions and use of language (e.g. ensuring that actions and agreements are shared)?</li> </ul>
<b>Empowers Participants and staff by embedding reciprocity</b>	<p>Moves away from a traditional welfare approach in which Participants are passive recipients.</p> <p>Participants are involved in the running of TtW and in arranging activities or opportunities within the wider community as part of the Deal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are Participants and teams living the Deal, by sharing responsibility and holding each other to account for agreements made?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are Participants supported to run some activities?</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitates authentic transparent relationships between staff and Participants</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are staff facilitating an environment to ensure that Participants have self-determination over their goals?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the Something for Something Proposal used for accessing financial support?</li> </ul>

## The Campaign

**Purpose:** The Campaign seeks to reform policy and to challenge needs-based deficit models.

**Key Question:** Who advocates for the young people to be recognised as individuals with talent?

**The Campaign explained:** The Campaign focuses on:

- changing community perceptions
- demonstrating that young people have talent that can be nurtured
- working with mainstream institutions to create structural change.

In the TtW CoP Model, the Campaign is also delivered through the work of the CIC as it develops and implements an economic development strategy for young people within the community. Ultimately, its role is also to co-create solutions with government to overcome structural barriers to youth employment, and link the local with regional and national action for change.

Practice principles	Key practices that support these principles	Checklist
<p><b>Empowers Participants to become advocates</b></p> <p><b>Values Participants as assets to society</b></p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Are Participants involved in designing aspects of the program (e.g. in training materials such as videos, as guest speakers) and as organisers of aspects of the service?</p>
<p><b>Recognises and promotes Participants talents, skills and capabilities</b></p>	<p>The Campaign calls for a move away from needs-based/deficit models towards an approach that focuses on young people's talents and on how we can nurture these to become capabilities.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Is there a campaign within TtW to challenge needs-based policy and provision and espouse the Advantaged Thinking approach?</p>
<p><b>Promotes the Participant voice</b></p>	<p>A clear media engagement strategy is developed to support the work of TtW.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Are Participants acting as peer leaders and having their experience of the service valued by their continued inclusion?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are Participants trained to respond to media?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are Participant voices promoted in media campaigns in a way that is in line with Advantaged Thinking –rather than using charitable/deficit-based approaches?</p>
<p><b>Recognises that access to education and employment is critical to change</b></p>	<p>Mainstream institutions will be adapted to ensure that Participants have access to these opportunities.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Are TtW teams working with TAFEs, employers and community-based institutions such as sporting clubs to facilitate access and pathways to mainstream opportunities therein?</p>
<p><b>Advocates for change in the way we work with Participants and provides a framework to do this</b></p>	<p>Strong structural partnerships with TAFEs, business and community are forged.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Do TtW providers have agreements that create structural buy-in from institutions to the TtW service (this may include joint practice models, co-location agreements, etc.)?</p>

## The Campaign in action – Youthworx NT's Transition to Work Leadership Academy

The Campaign seeks to provide opportunities for Participants to present themselves, and to be seen, as community assets with a valuable contribution to make to each other and the wider community. In practice, this can mean empowering young people to be advocates for change in their communities and more broadly. At Youthworx NT, young people are invited to acknowledge and grow their leadership skills through participation in the TtW Leadership Academy. Through this initiative, members engage in a range of opportunities aligned with the Four Phases that aim to build their confidence, enhance their social connectivity, and strengthen their advocacy and leadership capabilities.

Youthworx NT's TtW Leadership Academy is open to all active TtW Participants through a formal application process, which will further develop their work readiness and interview skills. The primary criteria for successful application is engagement in the service and active participation in activities aligned with their Job Plan. According to DoE guidelines, participation in Leadership Academy activities can also contribute towards the 25 hours per week TtW participation requirement.

Through the TtW Leadership Academy, members are invited to participate in the TtW Peer Coaching Program (see below), community projects (such as the Couch Surfing for Youth Homelessness Project), connection and team building activities, social activities, and representation of the TtW service in the local community (e.g. marketing activities and participating in information sessions for young people and their families).

Since its establishment in February 2017, the primary activity of the Youthworx NT Leadership Academy Members has been volunteering in the TtW Peer Coaching Program. As Peer Coaches, young people lead the 'Launchpad' activities that are organised for new participants in the service, including:

- Greeting young people as they come into the office
- Directing participants to relevant personnel
- Guiding participants through basic activities (e.g. accessing online job websites, creating a first draft resumé, accessing/completing career quizzes, finding relevant information about training/education providers, etc.)
- Assisting in the facilitation of workshops and experiential activities.

In the near future, Leadership Academy Members will be offered professional development opportunities through a calendar of quarterly activities. In the first instance, this training will include TtW Peer Coaching Training, comprised of the Coaching Young People for Success 'Peer Coaching' Module with additional (TtW-specific) elements included. Other options for professional development beyond the standard TtW experience will involve:

- Invitations to participate in/attend short courses, workshops or seminars presented by external parties (e.g. Registered Training Organisations, motivational/inspiring speakers)
- Invitations to attend employer/industry events that have the potential to extend their professional networks (e.g. Chamber of Commerce events etc.)
- Development of leadership skills through workshops or activities (e.g. representing the TtW service, team building activities, membership of TtW Leadership Academy Board, etc.)
- Basic governance training for those members interested in participating in the TtW Leadership Academy Board
- Other specialised training responsive to feedback from Leadership Academy members collected and communicated by TtW Leadership Academy Board.

YouthWorX NT's first TtW participants signed up in February and March 2016, and many have expressed a desire to remain connected with the service and each other. YouthWorx NT intends for the Leadership Academy to act as an 'alumni', retaining and leveraging the experience, knowledge and influence of past members, while building on the organisation's capacity to serve new participants.

With Harnessing Community Effort as a guiding principle, YouthWorx NT also plans to embed opportunities for business and other community representatives to connect with, and contribute to the Leadership Academy, thereby providing the capacity to grow the professional networks of its young members.

Youthworx NT is piloting the Leadership Academy before a wider roll out to the rest of the CoP. The 'big picture' vision for the Leadership Academy is that selected delegates from local TtW CoP services could participate in a National Community of Practice TtW Leadership Academy, representing their respective localities in a collective, youth-driven national voice to government and others.

*The potential of the Leadership Academy for young people is in the acknowledgement of their own capacity to be leaders. Most of the young people in our service were not known as leaders during their schooling years, and many have experienced periods of school disengagement and unemployment. As a result, often their self-confidence takes a battering. For those who struggle to view themselves as leaders, I like to remind them that no matter where they are in their journey, there will always be others one or two steps behind them who need inspiration or a shining light. Our Leadership Academy Members can be that light.*

— **Carina Frew, TtW Program Manager Youthworx NT**

## Staffing structure

Although staffing and management structures may vary between Community of Practice organisations, the following roles make up the suggested core staff needed for the TtW CoP Model:

- Transition to Work Manager or Coordinator
- Youth Development Coaches
- Employer Engagement Officers
- volunteers and mentors.

While TtW staff members have distinct roles – the YDC is focused on the Participants, and the EEO on employers – all TtW staff members play a role in engaging with the local community. The TtW Manager, YDCs and the EEO work closely together to facilitate the exchange of information about local labour market opportunities and individual Participant's aspirations, and to coordinate skill-building opportunities for all Participants.

The collective staff skill set should include:

- **Entrepreneurial skills:** to source opportunities and resources for Participants.
- **Networking skills:** to establish, facilitate and leverage community networks for Participants.
- **Employer engagement skills:** an employer-facing skill set – i.e. the ability to engage employers, understand their needs and work with them effectively and innovatively to open up pathways into the labour market for Participants.
- **Leadership skills:** to inspire Participants, other staff and external partners.
- **Coaching skills:** to deliver on the TtW distinctive approach, and enable non-welfarised, goal-oriented and skill-building relationships with Participants.
- **Teaching/training skills:** an educational background, skills and qualifications within the staff team is important to assess Participants and provide them with skilled practical and language, literacy and numeracy support.
- **Career development skills:** to provide Participants with quality, knowledgeable vocational guidance and support them to achieve their vocational goals.

## Mentoring and volunteering

Volunteers play an essential role in supporting the work of the TtW team. Access to a skilled volunteer base is crucial for the delivery of the TtW Model, and is enabled through the community partnerships that underpin the Model.

Mentoring is one of the key support roles for volunteers and is integral to the TtW model. Evidence suggests that much of the power of the mentor/mentee relationship comes from the voluntary nature of this position.<sup>67</sup> Mentees value the contribution of mentors, particularly because they are not employed to work with them, but engage in the relationship voluntarily. This can be particularly powerful for young people who have experienced disadvantage.

Mentoring is related to all aspects of a person's life and should focus on developing a relationship with the young person and supporting personal growth. Goals and objectives may take some time to evolve and may only become evident once a relationship is established.

The primary role of a mentor is to provide young people with support, encouragement and guidance. This may be guidance about pursuing a career or work aspiration or simply engaging in cultural or recreational activities with the mentee. Each of these activities can contribute to self-exploration and affirmation and/or awareness about and connection to community activities. These activities also have the potential to open up new possibilities for young people and can help them to develop and explore their personal and/or professional aspirations for the future.

Adopting an Advantaged Thinking approach to mentoring means that mentors will endeavour to:

- recognise young people's capacity to make positive changes in their lives
- provide access to resources opportunities and networks to facilitate young people's capacity to change
- promote and enable young people's agency – to think and act on their own behalf and to encourage participation
- recognise and promote the rights and responsibilities of young people: their rights as citizens and their responsibilities to themselves and their communities
- foster authentic, transparent relationships– openness, honesty, truthfulness
- recognise, promote and invest in talent and skill building
- inspire and challenge young people to achieve
- promote and enable engagement with education and life-long learning.

<sup>67</sup> C. J. C. Leach, S. Green & A. M. Grant 2011, 'Flourishing youth provision: The potential role of positive psychology and coaching in enhancing youth services', *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 9(1):44–58.

## Techniques we use

The way that TtW staff, volunteers and group facilitators work with Participants is central to ensuring the integrity of the TtW Model. Enabling young people to lead in the design and implementation of group work and other peer-led initiatives is also pivotal. Staff will work as coaches, personal planners and group facilitators and, as such, may employ a wide range of methods, including positive psychology, mindfulness techniques, narrative-based approaches, motivational interviewing, solutions-focused therapy, experiential learning and group work methodologies.

### Coaching

Youth Development Coaches are the key points of contact for Participants, providing assistance and support across all Four Phases of TtW. By using an Advantaged Thinking approach they work to build aspiration, confidence and motivation through tailoring activities and opportunities that meet the specific needs and goals of individuals. Coaching is one of a number of practice techniques utilised by staff, and is considered a vital component of the Model as it provides a mechanism through which the Advantaged Thinking approach can be operationalised.

Relational, solution focused and goal oriented in design, it aims to support young people to become independent yet connected adults. Such an approach provides TtW staff with a conceptual framework and a range of tools and techniques to use with young people at different points within the life-cycle of the coaching relationship – from setting up a weekly personal coaching session to identifying and working with limiting beliefs.

Coaching is different to counselling or mentoring. In a coaching relationship the young person is seen as capable, creative and whole, and also the expert of their own life. The young person determines their current situation and what their future goals are. The coaching conversation is predominately future focused and motivational, in order to assist the young person to set goals and determine a way forward to achieve these goals.

Within the TtW CoP, this Coaching Approach is supported by a Coaching Guide developed by BSL and coaching training.

Table 1 (see pp. 52–53) maps the Coaching Approach and how it fits in with complementary approaches.

### Experiential learning

The TtW CoP Model is grounded in an understanding of the pedagogies of experiential, or applied, learning. The 'real world' connections with employers and the wider community, which are at the heart of the Model, provide opportunities for Participants to apply the skills they are learning throughout the program to 'real world' settings. This applied learning enables Participants to explore, create and apply knowledge first hand within and across a range of authentic and meaningful contexts as they participate in various activities and group projects, and engage with the program's key partners and local community.

The term 'applied learning' is used to describe:

*learning activities and projects that endeavour to connect what students are learning with authentic applications beyond the classroom or lecture theatres... it is described as being 'hands-on' and 'real world' because students engage with workplaces and the wider community to solve problems that are highly relevant in these contexts.*<sup>68</sup>

Applied learning, although relevant and applicable to any subject and/or learning environment, maps particularly well to vocational and work-oriented curricular. As such, it is frequently adopted as an engagement strategy to 'hook' back into learning those young people who experience disadvantage and/or disengagement from formal education. In the TtW CoP Model, these pedagogies inform the way in which the activities and opportunities of the Four Service Offers are delivered across the Four Phases. Activities are non-classroom based where possible, and focus on inspiring young people and increasing their experiences, while simultaneously building their skills. While this approach is applied across all Four Phases, it is most clearly expressed in the 'inspiration and exploration' activities delivered in Phase 1, such as the Experiential Learning Program.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup> D. Blake & B. Bowling 2011, 'Youth literacy development through applied learning and the national curriculum', in B. Doecke, G. Parr & W. Sawyer 2011, *Creating an Australian Curriculum for English: National Agendas, Local Contexts*, Phoenix Education, Putney, NSW, pp. 139–54.

<sup>69</sup> The Experiential Learning Program refers to a program developed by BSL, which has been adapted and implemented in other CoP sites; additional CoP sites have similar activities and programs (e.g. Work Inspiration) which have been developed prior to TtW and incorporated into the delivery of the Model at their sites.

**Table 1:** Mapping the complementary practice approaches

Approach	Coaching (all staff)	Personal planning and support	Mentoring (externally recruited)
<b>Focus</b>	<p><b>Performance and development</b></p> <p>Goal-focused and performance-oriented towards personal development</p>	<p><b>Planning and support</b></p> <p>Creating innovative opportunities for development, change and interpersonal skill building</p> <p>Referral to external supports as required</p>	<p><b>Relational</b></p> <p>Building positive, pro-social relationships to inform personal growth and develop networks</p>
<b>Role</b>	<p><b>Skilled (targeted)</b></p> <p>One-on-one sessions personalised to the needs of the individual</p> <p>Goals are determined by the young person, with the coach providing skilled support and guidance</p>	<p><b>Skilled (ongoing)</b></p> <p>Ongoing, one-on-one and group sessions targeted at supporting young people with personal and planning needs</p>	<p><b>Volunteer (supportive)</b></p> <p>Support the mentee to discover own direction and goals</p> <p>May or may not be time limited</p> <p>Approach will depend on the mentoring context and relationship</p>
<b>Relationship</b>	<p><b>Solution focused</b></p> <p>The coaching relationship is solution focused and goal oriented</p> <p>Success depends on the coach and the young person, as both are responsible for developing and maintaining the relationship</p>	<p><b>Skilled professional</b></p> <p>Youth Transitions staff members are skilled professionals employed by the BSL. They model professional, healthy and pro-social behaviours and approaches, providing informed guidance and support</p>	<p><b>Reciprocal</b></p> <p>Mentors are volunteers, as are mentees, and both have active roles in initiating and maintaining the relationship</p> <p>There is learning and development for both the mentee and mentor</p>
<b>Source of influence</b>	<p><b>Skills and behavioural modelling</b></p> <p>Coaches have influence because of their skills as a facilitator, as well as the behaviour, approach and skills modelled in their Youth Transitions work</p>	<p><b>Skills and behavioural modelling</b></p> <p>Youth Transitions staff members have influence because of their skills as facilitators, as well as the behaviour, approach and skills modelled in their work</p>	<p><b>Perceived value</b></p> <p>Mentor's influence is proportionate to the perceived value they bring to the relationship based on mutual respect and value for both the mentor and mentee</p>
<b>Personal returns</b>	<p><b>Performance and development</b></p> <p>The return comes in the form of the young person's personal and skill development, including the achievement of specific goals and the development of the coaching relationship</p>	<p><b>Progression to independence</b></p> <p>Youth Transitions staff members support young people to develop the skills required for independence</p> <p>Progression in planning and managing one's own life are personal returns</p>	<p><b>Affirmation and learning</b></p> <p>The relationship is a vehicle to affirm the value and satisfaction from fulfilling a role as a helper and developer of others</p>

Tutoring	Teaching	External specialised supports
<p><b>Specific learning needs</b></p> <p>Tailored responses to specific learning needs so as to enable enhanced participation and achievement in education</p>	<p><b>Educational development</b></p> <p>Building cognitive and non-cognitive skills to enable participation and achievement in educational settings</p>	<p><b>Specialist intervention</b></p> <p>Addressing specific support needs including mental health, physical health and specialised care</p>
<p><b>Volunteer (targeted)</b></p> <p>One-on-one tutoring that is responsive to specific needs at a specific time, i.e., exam study, essay writing, mathematics</p>	<p><b>Skilled (educational)</b></p> <p>One-on-one and group guidance regarding educational and vocational pathways, personalised learning plans and options, opportunities and experiences</p>	<p><b>Skilled (external)</b></p> <p>One-on-one sessions targeting specific individual needs, e.g., substance dependency, counselling, occupational therapy</p>
<p><b>Goal oriented</b></p> <p>Both tutors and the young people are volunteers</p> <p>The relationship is informal, but structured around specific learning and development</p>	<p><b>Skilled professional</b></p> <p>Teaching staff are skilled mainstream professionals</p> <p>Teachers model professional, healthy and pro-social behaviours and approaches, providing informed guidance and support that is career and education focused</p>	<p><b>Skilled professional</b></p> <p>Referred supports are external specialists employed outside of TAFE</p> <p>The relationship is formal and external</p>
<p><b>Perceived value</b></p> <p>Tutor's influence is proportionate to the perceived value they bring to the relationship based on mutual respect and value for both the tutor and the young person</p>	<p><b>Skills and behavioral modelling</b></p> <p>Teachers have influence because of their skills as educators, as well as the behaviour, approach and skills modelled in their role</p>	<p><b>Specialist/Medical service</b></p> <p>A specialist has influence because of her/his specific skills and/or medical expertise</p> <p>Specialists may provide clinical supports and interventions</p>
<p><b>Affirmation and learning</b></p> <p>Tutors and young people have potential to learn from relationship</p> <p>Major return when young people find value in tutoring relationship</p>	<p><b>Educational achievement</b></p> <p>Return comes from a young person's growth, development and achievement in education, including academic, non-cognitive and pathways</p>	<p><b>Progression towards independence</b></p> <p>Return comes from a young person's progression towards self-management of the issues or concerns that led to external referral</p>

## Group work

The importance of group work as a key technique in working with young people is widely recognised. Group work sessions encourage discussion and free expression of opinion, so that Participants can express their ideas in their own language, and discover their own aptitudes, talents, weaknesses and strengths. Group work can help in the development of key transferrable skills that are important in the professional world, as well as developing knowledge and attitudes in various areas.

Group work is also essential in the TtW service to build momentum for Participants and to help them develop positive relationships with people outside their usual circles. This could mean they form friendships with other Participants, but also that they broaden their professional networks through group activities with employers, guest speakers and other community members. Inviting and supporting young people to lead peer-to-peer and group activities can be instrumental in building their confidence and sense of value. Benefits of helping others include the self-esteem that comes from learning they have something to offer, a sense of control that can be empowering and a feeling of social usefulness. This is consistent with the evidence that young people involved as peer 'helpers' have a greater increase in self-esteem than those young people helped by them, who also gain but to a lesser degree.<sup>70</sup>

Where appropriate, guest speakers and facilitators should be sourced from within the community to run or facilitate group sessions. Enlisting the help of local community members is a crucial way of harnessing community effort and supporting young people to broaden their networks within their community.

## Personal planning

Addressing non-vocational challenges is critical to Participants sustaining their engagement with TtW and achieving their goals. YDCs in TtW work with Participants to plan, facilitate and coordinate access to resources, opportunities, networks and personal support. Staff work with, rather than for, Participants and enable them to progress their goals and objectives by pointing them in the right direction and facilitating connections with key services.

Where non-vocational challenges are identified, YDCs refer Participants to external specialist support services (e.g. mental health) as appropriate. YDCs may play a coordinating and supporting role where necessary, but it is critical that appropriate external services are engaged to provide specialist expertise. The Participant should be included in the conversation throughout this process to allow them agency over the services they access, and so that both they and the YDC are clear on the actions that will be taken to support their needs.

Non-vocational challenges should be addressed concurrently with TtW activities wherever possible, as exploring aspirations and experiencing opportunities supports the progression of non-vocational challenges and maintains the Participant's engagement.

You guys have done so much better than any job agency I've ever been with. Young people need an agency that looks after them and gives them a fair crack.

## TtW Participant, ACSO

<sup>70</sup> F. W. Kohler & P. S. Strain 1990, 'Peer-assisted Interventions: Early promises, notable achievements and future aspirations', *Clinical Psychology Review*, 22.

SIP – Productivity bootcamp



Youthwork NT – Civil construction skillset course



SIP – TtW Penrith College visit



## Operationalising the Four Phases

The core intended outcomes of each of the Four Phases, and the key activities and tools to achieve these outcomes, are stepped out below. In this context, 'key' tools and activities are deemed such because they are integral to the delivery of the Model, as they set up an Advantaged Thinking way of working, support the achievement of core outcomes, and/or support the fidelity of the Model. Key tools and activities have been developed using the Advantaged Thinking approach, and designed to complement compliance requirements where appropriate, and support the delivery of the TtW CoP Model and its objectives.

However, these activities may be operationalised in a variety of ways, depending on the local community context. This is in recognition of the different social and economic characteristics, and different kinds of resources in local communities. Examples of ways in which activities have been adapted by CoP providers to the local context, a wide range of additional tools and resources sourced from the CoP, and detailed information on how to use and deliver the key tools and activities can be found on the TtW CoP website: [www.ttwcommunity.com.au](http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au).

*Note: the key tools and activities relate primarily to the TtW Model, as opposed to contract and compliance requirements. Staff should refer to the TtW Guidelines, and their own organisational processes and procedures for a detailed outline of compliance processes.*

## Phase 1: Guidance and Exploration

### Purpose of the Phase

Phase 1 lays the foundation for a Participant's journey through the next three Phases. Key activities and tools set up an Advantaged Thinking way of working with the young person, and build engagement and momentum by exposing Participants to 'real world' opportunities from the outset. As such, Phase 1 is an intensive period of activities for many Participants. Through non-classroom-based activities, Participants identify their strengths and talents; explore the career pathway that is right for them; develop their goals and aspirations; and make a plan to achieve them.

### Key outcomes for the young person

- Is inspired and motivated to work towards their goals through the next three Phases.
- Is able to articulate their talents and interests and how that could be translated into employment or education pathways.
- Has identified any challenges they have to achieving their goals, and has strategies in place to address them.
- Has set employment, education and personal goals and has a clear pathway to achieving them.

**Table 2: Key activities and steps to achieve the outcomes of Phase 1**

Purpose	Key Resources
<p><b>Readiness Conversation and The Deal</b></p> <p>The first coaching sessions with a Participant are critical to setting up an Advantaged Thinking way of working, particularly in light of compliance requirements that must be completed initially. The key activities for achieving this are the Readiness Conversation and the Deal Checklist.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the Readiness Form (text based) or the Readiness Conversation Guide and Mind Map (visual version) to start a conversation about the young person's strengths and talents as well as challenges, and to inform the first DoE Job Plan.</li> <li>Use the Deal Checklist to establish shared responsibility, and express value through high expectations. The Deal Checklist should be completed together, and the Deal Video can be used to better express the ethos of the Deal and engage the Participant.</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: These tools can be completed over a number of coaching sessions.</i></p>	<p>Go to <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a> for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readiness Form/Conversation Guide</li> <li>Readiness Mind Map</li> <li>The Deal Checklist</li> <li>The Deal Video</li> </ul>

Purpose	Key Resources
<b>Recognition of Informal Learning (RIL)</b>	
<p>Young people experiencing disadvantage often don't have their personal, non-formal experiences recognised, or have the skills that they acquire through this valued. This can make it difficult for them to name what they're good at, and to have their existing skills transferred to a more formal employment or education setting.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <p>The Recognition of Informal Learning or RIL has been designed to provide this recognition and to make the link between informal skills and attributes and those that are sought after by employers. If someone can't name what they're good at and the informal, transferrable skills they have acquired through personal experiences or their goals, the RIL tool is used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prior to experiential learning to establish a base from which to explore their talents and aspirations</li> <li>• to have a conversation with the Participant during a one-on-one during a coaching session</li> <li>• as the basis for a group workshop during experiential learning.</li> </ul>	<p>Go to <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a> for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RIL template</li> </ul>
<b>Inspiration and exploration activities</b>	
<p>In Phase 1, it is important that young people are given the opportunity to participate in activities that encourage them to step outside their comfort zone, and which provide the experiences and support to develop a sense of self and match this to an industry or occupation.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <p>These 'inspiration and exploration' activities should focus on three key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-exploration – where Participants reflect on their values, interests and talents and how that can inform their career choices.</li> <li>• Career-exploration – where Participants explore a range of different industries and fields through hands-on learning experiences, workplace visits and guest speakers.</li> <li>• Vocational guidance and pathway planning – where Participants connect what they've learned through self-exploration and career-exploration activities to identify their pathway and set goals to work towards with their YDC.</li> </ul> <p>Organise an experiential learning program with structured activities, during which a group of Participants undertakes the series of activities together over a set period of time. This assists engagement by facilitating peer-to-peer relationship building and rapport between Participants, and provides them with regular structure and attendance from an early stage. However, activities can be tailored to suit staff, resourcing and/or local conditions (e.g. by delivering more informal, ad-hoc or one-off type activities).</p> <p>A program of experiential learning should include activities that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-classroom based as much as possible.</li> <li>• Creative, fun, and exciting.</li> <li>• Conducted in places and spaces that inspire young people and take them out of their comfort zone.</li> <li>• Engaging with employers, interesting community members and other people as much as possible.</li> <li>• Linked back to what young people are learning – about themselves, what they value, and how that lines up to different career paths and jobs.</li> <li>• Focused on employment, activities based around confidence building, volunteering, or linking young people to other local community services.</li> </ul>	<p>Go to <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a> for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiential Learning Program – Overview</li> <li>• RIL template</li> <li>• S.M.A.R.T. Goal setting templates</li> </ul> <p>Tools and resources to support the delivery of these activities are being developed with the CoP, and will then be located at: <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a></p>

Purpose	Key Resources
<b>Work Readiness Skills Assessment 1</b>	
<p>The purpose of the Work Readiness Skills Tool (WRST) is to measure improvement in 10 key skills and capabilities that young people need for work. This is important for evaluation purposes and for ensuring that we are giving Participants the right opportunities and experience to progress towards their goals.</p> <p>The first assessment should be completed within the first four weeks of commencement so as to get a baseline of where the participant is at, and to identify skill areas on which the young person wants to work throughout the service.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <p>The WRST should be completed in conversation with the young person, but does not have to be completed in one sitting, e.g. you can do five skills in one session, five in another. Supporting tools include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Readiness Conversation Guide/Form and LLN assessment results (if available) can be used to get a picture of where a young person is at and to prompt the conversation.</li> <li>• The WRST Assessment Matrix describes the different skill levels using practical examples.</li> <li>• Recognition of Informal Learning questions can draw out examples and stories that demonstrate skill level (see WRST).</li> </ul> <p>The Work Readiness Tool is the way we assess and measure a Participant's readiness to work. It is important that the Participant is able to provide feedback and make their own judgment, as well as the YDC making an assessment based on their interactions with the Participant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LLN assessment</li> </ul> <p>Go to <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a> for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Readiness Skills Tool</li> <li>• Readiness Conversation Guide/Form</li> </ul>
<b>Co-designing a Plan</b>	
<p>Having agency over their pathway and making their own choices about the steps needed to achieve their goals is critical to a young person feeling ownership of, and commitment to, their pathway through TiW. The previous activities and steps undertaken in Phase 1 build towards the Participant co-designing a Plan to achieve their goals with the YDC. This Plan should acknowledge all areas towards which the Participant would like to work, and have actions in place to which the young person and YDC can refer.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on the work done through the Inspiration and Exploration activities to co-design a Plan with the Participant (using the preferred planning template) that outlines their aspirations and the key steps they will take to reach their goals.</li> <li>• Use the results of the WRST to target activities in the Plan that will develop the necessary skills and capabilities for their pathway.</li> <li>• Include any activities in which a young person is currently engaged (e.g. volunteering, playing sport, art, casual work, etc.) to reflect their level of engagement accurately.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DoE Job Plan</li> </ul> <p>Go to <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a> for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S.M.A.R.T. Action Plans</li> </ul> <p>Tools and resources to support the delivery of these activities are being developed with the CoP, and will then be located at: <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a></p>
<b>Ongoing coaching</b>	
<p>One-on-one coaching sessions are the key mechanism for coaching Participants towards their aspirations and goals. They are critical to reflecting on and celebrating a Participant's progress, as well as working through any non-vocational challenges.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <p>Schedule weekly/fortnightly coaching sessions that focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discussing any non-vocational barriers that are being or need to be addressed externally</li> <li>• reflecting on and celebrating achievements/progress to date</li> <li>• completing skill-building activities based on the Participant's needs (e.g. resumé writing, approaching employers, etc.)</li> <li>• reviewing and updating their Plan (including activity changes in the DoE Job Plan)</li> <li>• reminding the Participant of their upcoming activities and scheduling any further activities.</li> </ul>	<p>Go to <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a> for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching Guide</li> <li>• Something for Something Proposal</li> </ul>

## I:Connect and I:Life Programs – Gen Z Gold Coast

*The feedback we get from the participants we work with is fairly consistent. We listen to them, we are often the first people to ask them what they really want to do, and we try to work with them as individuals to achieve THEIR goals. Our programs just support that process and allow us to be creative and spontaneous depending on the needs of the group at that time.*

— **Katrina, TtW Program Manager Gen Z**

Phase 1: Guidance and Exploration aims to engage, inspire and connect Participants with their potential through self-exploration and ‘real world’ opportunities. During this Phase, young people are supported to participate both in group and one-on-one activities that focus on recognising their talents, aspirations and capabilities, and connecting personal interests to real world career opportunities.

I:Connect and I:Life are inspiration and motivation activities offered by Gen Z Gold Coast to young people in Phase 1: Guidance and Exploration.

I:Connect is a program designed for young people who may be outside of the labour market and at risk of social and economic exclusion. The program runs once a week, offering activities with an emphasis on building connections, having fun and developing new skills. Young people attending I:Connect are supported to engage in lifestyle activities like cooking, yoga, arts and crafts, as well as more focused activities such as budgeting workshops. This program is developed and run by mentors and placement students, allowing for individualised support as required.

I:Life is a more intensive program of weekly workshops, designed to guide young people in their explorations of career and employment options. The program is designed to ignite aspiration within Participants, so they have a clearer idea about where to focus their attention. Participants have the option of attending a group I:Life workshop, or one-on-one sessions with a qualified career counsellor at Gen Z. Participants are supported to engage in conversations about career pathways, work readiness, and their skills and capabilities, and to create a cover letter and resumé.

## Joblink Midwest

*We listen to [our participants], and work with them to find the best opportunities to suit their aspirations – they are not a number or statistic, they are people with real challenges, and real hopes and dreams.*

— **Tiffany, TtW Program Manager, Joblink Midwest**

Young people need to be supported to identify both their career goals, and the concrete actions they must take to achieve these goals. Enabling young people to develop personal visions and goals provides them with agency and self-direction about their future career.

At Joblink Midwest, the co-location of the Career Centre within the organisation’s office enables Participants to engage directly with qualified Career Development Officers who can assist them with career guidance. The Career Development Officers work with Participants to develop an employment profile based on their strengths and talents, using the Career Works Career Builder software or a new resource developed by a staff member called ‘Card Sorts’. With resources such as these, Joblink Midwest has been able to co-design career action plans with Participants that include milestones and actions to take. This has enabled them not only to build a sense of agency over their Plan, but also serves as a written record of what they need to do, and when, to achieve their goals.

## Phase 2: Work Preparation

### Purpose of the Phase

Phase 2 consists of a range of skill-building activities covering a number of employability topics, as well as complementary activities available both internally and externally. Participants should be able to opt into activities relevant to them and complete the same activity more than once if necessary. Activities should develop transferrable/soft skills (e.g. problem solving, confidence, team work, etc.) as well as skills specific to the industry in which the Participant is interested (e.g. completing a barista course to work in a café). In Phase 2, activities should leverage what is available in the local community to ensure that Participants are making connections with the broader community and learning from experts, and to avoid duplicating community effort.

### Key outcomes for the young person

- Has the necessary transferrable skills to gain and maintain employment.
- Has the necessary foundation skills.
- Has the appropriate industry-specific skills needed for their pathway.
- Is able to write their own resumé and application letter.
- Can recognise transferrable skills and knows how to use this in an interview.
- Can search and apply for jobs in various ways, including approaching employers directly and completing written applications.

**Table 3: Key activities and steps to achieve the outcomes of Phase 2**

Purpose	Key Resources
<b>Ongoing coaching</b>	
<p>One-on-one coaching sessions are the key mechanism for coaching Participants towards their aspirations and goals. They are critical to reflection, to celebrating a Participant's progress and to working through any non-vocational challenges.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <p>Schedule weekly/fortnightly coaching sessions that focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discussing any non-vocational barriers that are being, or need to be, addressed externally</li> <li>• reflecting on and celebrating achievements/progress to date</li> <li>• completing skill-building activities based on the Participant's needs (e.g. resumé writing, approaching employers etc.)</li> <li>• reviewing and updating their Plan (including activity changes in the DoE Job Plan)</li> <li>• reminding the Participant of their upcoming activities and scheduling any further activities.</li> </ul>	<p>Go to <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a> for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching Guide</li> <li>• Something for Something Proposal</li> </ul>
<b>Employability workshops</b>	
<p>Each site should have an ongoing calendar of workshops and group activities related to employment and employability skills that Participants can opt into, as they decide with the YDC. Workshops should ensure Participants are exposed to different settings, people and industry networks, and that the work of other organisations in the community isn't being duplicated.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <p>Workshops should be tailored to the organisation, local community context and the young people at each site, but should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employability workshops</li> <li>• Sessions with volunteers, mentors and industry experts</li> <li>• Optional workshops and complementary activities (e.g. wellbeing topics, finance and budgeting, presentations by external organisations)</li> </ul> <p>These activities can be delivered internally by TiW staff or externally by other organisations delivering either on or offsite, or a combination of both.</p>	<p>Go to <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a> for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment Readiness Workshop Overview</li> <li>• Work Readiness Skills Reflection Template</li> </ul> <p>Tools and resources to support the delivery of these activities are being developed with the CoP, and will then be located at: <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a></p>

Purpose	Key Resources
<b>Industry-specific and/or accredited learning</b>	
<p>Based on their chosen pathway, Participants might complete industry-specific skill-building activities.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <p>These activities could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training that has been co-designed by TtW with business to meet their needs</li> <li>• Pre-accredited or accredited courses (including foundation courses)</li> <li>• Pre-apprenticeships</li> <li>• Industry tickets</li> </ul>	
<b>Job seeking</b>	
<p>If the Participant is seeking an employment or hybrid pathway (rather than education only), they should be regularly looking (if not also applying) for jobs at this stage. Providing them with the support and skills to search for jobs themselves is critical to them successfully managing their career into the future.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <p>Internal workshops and one-on-one job searching support should focus on a variety of ways that employment can be found, including online and in person.</p>	

Before I joined transition to work, I was just floating... I had some ideas of where I wanted to go and who I wanted to be but I had absolutely no idea of how to get there, or where to start, or even where to find the support. But now I've got a path, a goal that I know I can reach, and a way to reach it.

**TtW Participant, Brophy Family and Youth Services**

### Phase 3: Workplace opportunities

#### Purpose of the Phase

The focus of Phase 3 is to provide Participants with opportunities to increase their experience of the workplace that are matched to the industry or occupation they want to pursue. Participants should be building their networks of professional contacts, and gaining confidence in their chosen area. Reflecting on and celebrating a Participant's progress so far is also a key part of Phase 3, with coaching sessions the vehicle for this.

Participants who are working towards an education outcome may complete a training taster and a work taster in the area in which they intend to study. This is to ensure that they

understand the career or industry to which their study path is leading, and to help them connect what they are studying or intending to study to prospective employment opportunities.

#### Key outcomes for the young person

- Is able to build their experience in relevant areas (i.e. jobs).
- Has developed contacts and networks in relevant industries.
- Has supported their personal growth by continually building on their transferrable skills.

**Table 4: Key activities and steps to achieve the outcomes of Phase 3**

Purpose	Key Resources
<b>Work experience</b>	
<p>Work experience is a key component of building a young person's resumé and of gaining experience in the industry in which they wish to work. Participants should be encouraged to complete short-term work experience and then report on how they found this placement. Occasionally, work experience can lead to a job offer, which should be highlighted to the young person but not relied upon. Volunteering is also a great option for Participants to gain some work experience and build on their skills. Depending on the industry in which the young person is interested in working, volunteering may or may not be a suitable option.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <p>The TtW team works with the Participant to organise opportunities in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• formal work experience</li> <li>• work tasters</li> <li>• volunteering</li> <li>• internships.</li> </ul>	<p>Tools and resources to support the delivery of these activities are being developed with the CoP, and will then be located at: <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a></p>
<b>Ongoing coaching</b>	
<p>The Participant should have weekly to fortnightly coaching sessions with their YDC. These sessions should always include reflection, affirmation and celebration of the Participant's achievements, as well as continuing to work on their pathway goals and action plan. By this stage the Participant should be in a position where they are work ready, with a clear goal in mind.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <p>Book in weekly/fortnightly coaching sessions that focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reflecting on and consolidating learnings from each experience and celebrating the Participant's achievements</li> <li>• determining whether the Participant should return to Phase 2 and 3 as skill gaps are identified</li> <li>• reflecting on and celebrating achievements/progress to date.</li> </ul>	<p>Go to <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a> for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching Guide</li> <li>• Something for Something Proposal</li> </ul>

Purpose	Key Resources
<b>Industry mentors</b>	
<p>Facilitating and encouraging mentor relationships and connections with professionals in the Participant’s chosen industry is a key part of the young person’s growth. An industry mentor will give the Participant support outside of TtW, as well as developing their professional networks and allowing them to gain insight into their chosen field from someone with first-hand experience.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <p>Use weekly/fortnightly coaching sessions to focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• setting up an opportunity for a Participant to meet with someone from their chosen industry to discuss what working in that industry entails</li> <li>• establishing a formal mentoring relationship between a Participant and a professional from their industry of interest</li> <li>• encouraging the Participant to build up their Address Book of contacts as they engage in experiential learning opportunities and broaden their networks.</li> </ul>	<p>Tools and resources to support the delivery of these activities are being developed with the CoP, and will then be located at: <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a></p>
<p><i>Note: The young person may have been connected with a mentor earlier in the service, to provide career or personal support and guidance. In Phase 3, industry mentors should be specifically related to their chosen career, and may be short term or task focused.</i></p>	
<b>Work readiness skills assessment 2</b>	
<p>The Work Readiness Skills Tool is complemented a second time to capture the progress the Participant has made during Phases 1–3, before they enter a job or education placement. This supports celebrating their progress and/or checking in about what challenges might be impeding progress.</p> <p>Although the Participant and TtW staff need to make the decision about whether the young person is ready to go into an opportunity, the WRST supports this process because different industries and workplaces require different levels of skills.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The second WRST can be completed in conversation with the Participant or by the YDC using supporting documentation for, and knowledge of, the Participant. It does not have to be completed in one sitting, e.g. you can do five skills in one session, five in another.</li> <li>• The Work Skills Reflection Template can provide examples from what Participants have done in Phases 1 and 2 to inform the WRST conversation.</li> </ul>	<p>Go to <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a> for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Readiness Skills Tool</li> <li>• Work Readiness Skills Reflection Template</li> </ul>

## Phase 4: Post-placement Support

### Purpose of the Phase

Once a young person gains employment or enrolls in a course equivalent to an education outcome (Year 12, Certificate III or higher), the YDC and EEO provide Post-placement Support (PPS) both to the Participant and to the employer respectively. This is to ensure that PPS is sustained and that the employer's needs are met. It is up to the YDC to determine with the Participant how the PPS should be carried out (face-to-face or over the telephone), and how intensive it should be. The following table is a guide only and may change to suit the individual Participant's needs.

### Key outcomes for the young person

- Has a sustainable outcome in the Participant's chosen area, which is both fulfilling and beneficial to them.

**Table 5: Key activities and steps to achieve the outcomes of Phase 4**

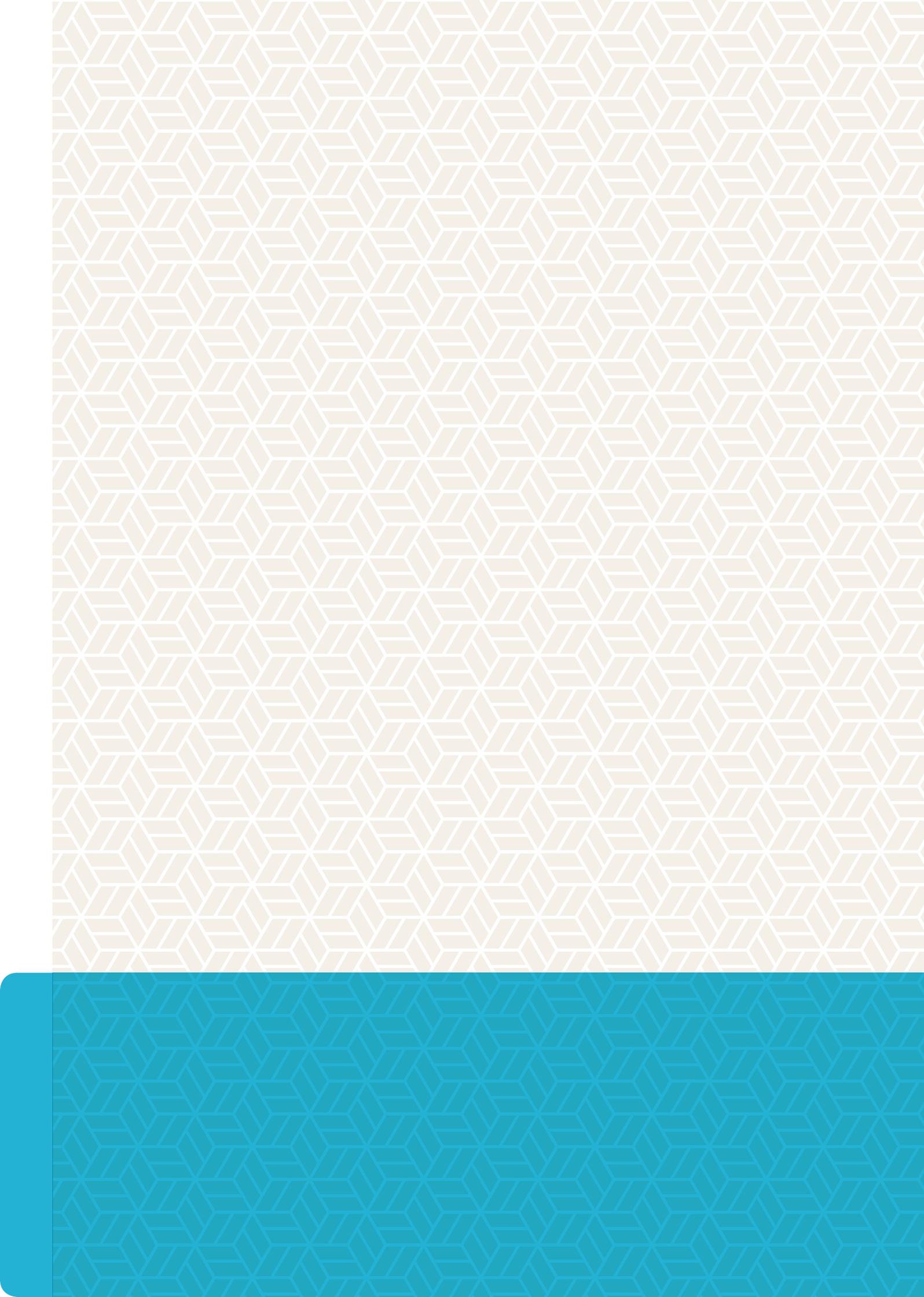
Purpose	Key Resources
<b>First 4 weeks</b>	
<p>Ensuring that the Participant is fully aware of the expectations of the professional world prior to commencing a placement is critical to its sustainability.</p> <p><b>How</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome to Work information packs should be provided to support the Participant in understanding their rights and responsibilities as an employee.</li> <li>• Resilience Workshops – including on balancing professional and personal life, managing stress, and having difficult conversations at work – should be organised to prepare a Participant for the realities of working life.</li> <li>• Weekly telephone or face-to-face contact with the Participant is crucial once placement has commenced. (The YDC is to offer assistance and advice where necessary, and encouragement if the young person is having doubts or concerns. The first four weeks are crucial to ensuring a sustainable outcome as most dropouts will occur in this period).</li> </ul>	<p>Tools and resources to support the delivery of these activities are being developed with the CoP, and will then be located at: <a href="http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au">www.ttwcommunity.com.au</a></p>
<b>Following 8 weeks</b>	
<p>If the Participant and the Youth Development Coach deem it appropriate, contact can be stretched out to fortnightly instead of weekly at this stage. Again, this can be done over the telephone or face-to-face depending on the Participant's needs. The YDC needs to remain aware of the young person's needs and be available to provide support where needed.</p>	
<b>Following 40 weeks (up to 52-week claim)</b>	
<p>Once the 12-week milestone has passed, the YDC and Participant may decide to maintain PPS contact once a month. Again this is dependent on the needs of the young person and what the YDC deems appropriate, and it may change over the course of the next 40 weeks. As long as the YDC is responsive to the young person's needs and is flexible as to how they provide support, contact does not need to be as regular. Contact should not be stretched to longer than once every four weeks.</p>	

## Research and Evaluation

This section outlines:

- The approach being taken by the BSL's Research and Policy Centre in its evaluation of the Community of Practice
- The key evaluation research questions

# Section 4



# Research and Evaluation

The Transition to Work Community of Practice Model has been developed by drawing on the theory and evidence base outlined in Sections 1 and 2 of this Guide, as well as the BSL's practice knowledge and experience in working with young people facing disadvantage. In particular, we have drawn upon our work in the Education First Youth Foyers, Developing Independence training and the Caroline Springs Youth Employment program.

However, despite much effort and activity across the sector, both nationally and internationally, it remains difficult to answer the question 'what works?'. Previous literature reviews argue there are two reasons for this:

- Evidence of what works remains patchy and there is little systematic analysis comparing outcomes with intent and practice.
- Youth transition programs tend to be funded on a short-term basis and lack rigorous evaluation. This reflects a policy focus on short-term solutions, which is compounded by electoral cycles.<sup>71</sup>

The lack of rigorous evidence underscores the importance of evaluating the TtW CoP Model, and of using appropriate methods across the four years of the TtW contract.

## Developmental evaluation

The key elements of the TtW CoP Model have not previously been combined in this way in the delivery of a youth employment program. Similarly, the elements relating to the Community Investment Committees and Community of Practice also represent new ways of approaching the delivery of youth employment and transition services.

Thus, the TtW CoP project is essentially a vision for program development and systems change in relation to youth unemployment. For this reason, the TtW CoP practice model can be considered to be an innovation project best suited to a developmental evaluation approach, at least in the initial stages.

The project has a range of features that correspond with a developmental approach to evaluation. These include:

- 1. A systems focus** – and explicit recognition of the ways in which interacting elements respond and adapt to each other, and to their environment.

- 2. Double loop learning** – the TtW CoP project seeks to embed an action learning approach that involves both identifying problems and making immediate changes to increase the attainment of desired outcomes (single loop), and looking at both the assumptions, policies, practices, values and system dynamics that led to the problem and at modifying the system to prevent the problem or embed the solution (double loop).

- 3. Building capacity of decision makers** – approaches such as developmental evaluation not only offer data, but also an interpretive framework for engaging in sense making. This approach recognises that the interpretive frameworks of senior managers and decision makers are as important as the data they receive, understanding that decision-makers must 'manage meaning as much as they must manage information'. Further, the approach recognises that the impact of improvements to data quality and accuracy is limited by the capacity of managers to think 'evaluatively' and critically, and to be able to interpret findings appropriately to reach reasonable and supportable conclusions.

- 4. Internal accountability to vision and values** – the TtW CoP project is essentially underpinned by a model that articulates a vision and set of values for youth employment services. This lends itself to questions of whether the project is being true to the vision, and how effectively it connects the dots between current reality and the future vision.<sup>72</sup>

Given the four-year timeframe for the delivery of the program and evaluation, the evaluation will begin with a developmental approach (particularly in the first 12 months). The key advocate of the developmental approach to evaluation, Michael Patton, argues:

*implementing a national model locally with high fidelity is fundamentally different from adapting a national model to local circumstances. Following a national recipe is fundamentally different from adapting principles identified by a national network of engaged reflective practitioners. Both methods have merit but they involve fundamentally different approaches to bringing about change. And they involve fundamentally different evaluation questions.<sup>73</sup>*

As discussed earlier, the latter approach reflects the current stage of the TtW project. It sets out a clear vision and principles for practice but allows for local adaptation and welcomes ongoing development, improvement and innovation.

<sup>71</sup> Bowman, Borlagden & Bond, op. cit.

<sup>72</sup> M. Patton 2011, *Developmental Evaluation Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*, Guilford Press, New York, NY.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p. 173.

Recognition of this stage of the project leads to questions informed by a developmental evaluation perspective, such as:

- How are the TtW Model's principles and practices being implemented?
- Which practices are being followed and which adapted? Why?
- What principles are being followed and which are not being followed?
- How were decisions about adaptations made?
- What works well?

It is, however, important to acknowledge that the innovation and co-production described above is taking place in the context of certain contractual requirements set out in the Deed agreement between each participating TtW provider and the Department of Employment. Each agency has compliance requirements and funding is linked to achieving particular outcomes in relation to the numbers of young people supported and the outcomes achieved. TtW providers are also required to collect data regarding client profile, numbers and employment, participation requirements and educational outcomes. By working with the DoE, the evaluation will be able to draw upon this data regarding Participant profile, participation and outcomes.

Over time, the evaluation will move towards a more 'summative' approach regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of the Model, with a focus on sustainability of outcomes and the extent to which it has been developed and adapted at a local level. The evaluation will also seek to draw some judgment regarding causal links between Model design and outcomes, as well as the extent to which broader systems change objectives have been realised.

### Action learning, action research and building capacity

The evaluation will involve facilitating action research and learning at each 'level' of the Model. Action research and learning essentially involves processes to enable awareness around decision making, and the consequences of those decisions in relation to program development and delivery.<sup>74</sup> It typically involves practitioners, managers and stakeholders in a continuous cycle of observing outcomes, reflecting upon those outcomes, planning and then taking action over the life of a program.

In the context of the TtW CoP Model, it is proposed that the evaluation team and CoP support team will facilitate the action learning and research component. This will ensure that evaluation findings are regularly fed back to the Community of Practice and then to individual agencies.

## Evaluation research questions

- How has the overarching TtW project impacted:
  - The ways in which the partner organisations deliver services to young jobseekers.
  - The ways in which local communities provide opportunities for young jobseekers.
  - The ways in which community organisations work together?
  - The commissioning relationship between government and community service organisations in the delivery of the TtW service.
  - Aspects of the broader system to enable young people's transitions to work and education.
- What have been any unintended consequences?
- How has the TtW service delivery model impacted on Participants':
  - (a) employability and core skills development (progressive outcomes); and
  - (b) employment and education outcomes ('hard' outcomes)?
- How has the Model been implemented by partner agencies and what are the factors affecting its effectiveness? In what ways has the Model been adapted and why?
- What are the most significant local and collective changes resulting from the TtW project and what can be learned from them?

<sup>74</sup> P. Reason 2006, 'Choice and quality in action research practice', *Journal of Management Inquiry*, June, 15(2):187–203.



ACROMAT

THE HARDER YOU FALL THE HIGHER YOU BOUNCE

No hanging off the hoop

WARNING: DO NOT HANG OFF THE HOOP  
DO NOT CLIMB ON THE HOOP  
DO NOT CLIMB ON THE MAT

SEVENTY FOUR



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# Appendix 2: List of Key Tools and Resources

These tools and resources can be found at: [www.ttwcommunity.com.au](http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au).

Tools to guide practice **with Participants** throughout the Four Phases:

- The Deal Checklist
- The Deal Video
- Readiness Form/Conversation Guide (there are two versions of this tool – a text based form, and a ‘conversation guide’ which can be used alongside the Mind Map as a more visual version)
- Readiness Mind Map
- Recognition of Informal Learning (RIL) template
- Work Readiness Skills Tool (WRST)
- Work Readiness Skills Reflection Template
- S.M.A.R.T. Goal setting templates
- S.M.A.R.T. Action Plans
- Something for Something Proposal

Resources for **activity development**:

- Experiential Learning Program – Overview
- Employment Readiness Workshop Overview

Tools and resources to support **staff development and reflective practice**:

- Coaching Guide
- Coaching videos
- Staff supervision template – individual
- Staff supervision template – group
- 7 Tests of Advantaged Thinking – cards
- 7 Tests of Advantaged Thinking – poster

# Appendix 3: 7 Tests of Advantaged Thinking

## 7 TESTS OF *Advantaged Thinking*

1

I WILL **TALK**  
**ABOUT PEOPLE**

*without stereotyping them*

2

I WILL

**UNDERSTAND  
PEOPLE**

by what they can do and aspire to be

3

I WILL

*work with people*

by coaching growth and  
positive risks

4

I WILL

*Invest in people*

*to promote their potential  
to thrive*

5

I WILL **BELIEVE**  
**IN PEOPLE**

6

I WILL

**INVOLVE PEOPLE**

so experiences can shape solutions

7

I WILL

**CHALLENGE**  
*myself & others*

to promote

**ADVANTAGED THINKING**







**Brotherhood of St Laurence**  
67 Brunswick Street  
Fitzroy VIC 3065  
**t** +61 3 9483 1183  
**f** +61 3 9417 2691  
**w** [www.ttwcommunity.com.au](http://www.ttwcommunity.com.au)