

## SECTION THREE RECRUITMENT

### GETTING READY TO RECRUIT

There are four areas that we have covered in planning for an Indigenous workforce so far:

- ▶ What are the benefits?
- ▶ Community Relations.
- ▶ Building Capacity.
- ▶ Building Support for your Program.

So, by this stage:

- ▶ You have identified the benefits to your business.
- ▶ You have engaged your team in the process.
- ▶ You have identified the various positions and set targets.
- ▶ You have built support within your local community.
- ▶ You have an understanding of the supports available to your business and have built relationships with service providers and relevant Government Departments.
- ▶ You have developed a culturally inclusive workplace through undertaking cross cultural training and including this in your induction processes for all staff.

And remember, you don't have to do this in isolation! There are programs and panels who can work you through this process – either individually or as a sector.

Right, you're ready to think about recruitment! A few more points to consider.....

### Your HR Practices

Do your HR practices support the issues that may arise for Indigenous people? Is there a willingness to adjust human resource practices to make them culturally appropriate?

In developing an Indigenous Employment Program it is advisable to review your current practices on an ongoing basis as new knowledge and understanding is gained within your business.

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### HR Practices Case Study

Gagudju Dreaming is currently running an Indigenous Employment Program at their Jabiru and Cooinda properties. They have 15 trainees across the business and are very committed to the success of the program.

They have a full-time coordinator for the program and recognise that building trust is essential for communication within the program. An issue arose as a result of their uniform policy, which requires staff in the restaurant to wear black pants and their uniform shirts/blouses.

After a short time, a traditional woman on the program discussed with the coordinator that she did not feel comfortable wearing pants and that she was embarrassed in front of family members. The issue was taken seriously and immediately addressed and the woman was issued with a long black apron to tie around the pants as a short term measure. The uniform policy has since been reviewed and a long skirt is now acceptable for women.

This is an example of how developing trust will facilitate communication and by addressing the issue immediately while a policy was reviewed, a staff member was retained. If the staff member did not feel comfortable in communicating this issue, she may have never returned and the management would not have known why. With greater understanding and a willingness to adapt, success can be achieved.

### Transport vs Shift requirements

Many Indigenous people do not have their own transport.

Do the hours that you need your employees to be at work allow access to public transport? If you answered no, then can you consider arranging shifts to ensure that this is not a barrier to someone getting to work?

This may not need to be a long term arrangement but without considering this you will more than likely find that your new employee will continually be late or not show at all.

If the staff member has been referred through Job Services Australia or another funded program, they may be able to assist by looking at options to assist the individual in getting to work in the early stages of employment. Ask the question and see what solutions can be provided.

### Personal Presentation

This will be different for each individual but again don't assume. Living conditions in the local community may be very different to what we are used to. Being used to wearing shoes, being able to wash clothes regularly and maintain a uniform in good condition or having access to showers may be an issue.

Your new employee may find themselves living in an overcrowded or chaotic house, where the other residents do not keep normal hours or value work. If this becomes an issue look at what you can do to support the individual.

But most importantly you may need to consider how you can assist in your workplace for a period of time until the new employee can personally meet your expectations, e.g. keeping their uniform at work and laundering it with the work laundry; maintaining them on a shift that allows them to get rest at home, such as an afternoon/evening shift, taking into account the transport issue.

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Is staff accommodation available that they can use until they establish themselves? While it is not “good practice” to decrease an employee’s responsibility for their own behaviour it may be necessary to provide a greater level of support for an Indigenous employee to help them transition into work.

### **Communicating Effectively and Reading the Body Language**

Indigenous people have a preference for non-verbal communication. They tend to be looking for body cues and gestures to interpret what is actually being communicated. When pressured to respond to a question they are unsure of, feel stressed by the way it is asked or the setting in which it is being asked, they will tend to respond by agreeing with whatever it is the speaker is asking.

But does yes mean yes? Not necessarily. As with many other cultures Indigenous people, particularly those from Traditional backgrounds, at times have difficulties with direct questioning and strong debate and open disagreement. In their culture people will often just agree to get out of a stressful situation and then feel no obligation to do what they apparently agreed to.

It is really important when communicating cross culturally to observe the person’s behaviour, facial expressions, and their body language before assuming that they have understood and agreed with what you have just said.


### **Work Ready programs**

With the growing recognition that a higher degree of preparation is required if Indigenous people are to be encouraged to enter and remain in the workforce most Job Services Australia (JSA) and CDEP providers now conduct pre-employment programs to better prepare people for work.

These programs generally run for 1 -2 weeks and provide participants with an increased awareness and understanding of workplace needs. Some programs also incorporate a work experience placement.

Discuss your needs with these providers and see what options may be available for you to access referrals. If you develop a clear statement of the type of person you are looking for and the level of basic skill they will need to be considered for employment the JSA member can factor this into their Work Ready program.

Providing a work experience placement can also help you identify potential employees and also helps them consider you as a potential employer.



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### Lack of Work Experience – Skills Development

Many employers are looking for staff with experience in the Hospitality industry. Unfortunately, many Indigenous people will not have this experience. Where there is a lack of experience employers generally look for transferable skills and attitudes towards work and then work with the employee on the skills development.

Some options that you might consider would be to access people who are undertaking formal training.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) fund various Registered Training Organisations to deliver training. Discuss with DET who these providers are and make direct approaches to these providers in relation to referrals to your business.

If there is sufficient need, DEEWR can assist with identifying a provider that can deliver industry specific skills training. Contact your local DEEWR office to discuss your needs.

Indigenous Youth Mobility Program (IYMP) supports young people from remote communities to access formal training in both Darwin and Alice Springs. Some of these students may be studying Hospitality or may be interested in casual or part-time work while studying.

### WANT TO KNOW MORE?



Ph: (08) 8941 1956 Fax: (08) 8941 1982  
PO Box 359 Darwin NT 0801  
Email: [info@charttes.com.au](mailto:info@charttes.com.au)  
[www.charttes.com.au](http://www.charttes.com.au)



Ph: (08) 8941 5293 Fax: (08) 8941 5283  
PO Box 1766 Darwin NT 0801  
Email: [info@cccnt.com.au](mailto:info@cccnt.com.au)  
[www.cccnt.com.au](http://www.cccnt.com.au)