**A guide to creating a supported returner program**

**The map below provides a high-level overview of the stages of developing the returner program. The tools to support you during each phase can be found following this page.**

If you are introducing a program, consider your

guiding coalition

–

individuals who will provide advice

and input as you develop and implement the program.

Managers in particular will be critical enablers,

supporting you to identify gaps in your business. This

will help you plan for the size of your returner cohort,

the skills which they bring, and

identify training requirements.

**STRATEGIC DRIVERS**

Supported returner programs offer clear benefits for both

the business and the returner. Before designing your

program, it is important to have a clear vision of the

program you would like to develop, what you would like to

achieve and the benefits for both the business and

individual. Your guiding coalition can help you understand

where opportunities lie, test the appetite for the program

within the company, and engage critical stakeholders in

the business case and vision setting.

**RETURNER READINESS**

**ASSESSMENT**

Before you delve into the design and detail of your

supported returner program, it is useful to consider

whether your business is really ‘Returner Ready’. Are

your organisational levers (leaders, culture, policies

and supporting infrastructure) aligned to facilitate a

program or are your efforts best served building

maturity or health in other business areas?

**YOUR GUIDING**

**COALITION**

The supported returner program framework

will start to emerge in parallel to these

activities, with each stage helping you to frame

up structural elements of the program.

**DEVELOPING A**

**SUPPORTED RETURNER**

**PROGRAM**

Securing buy

-

in from other parts of the business will be

crucial to the success of the program. Help people across

your business understand the rationale and benefits of a

supported returner program. Engage them in solving the

problem, expose them to returner stories, and encourage

social accountability for change. Advocates and allies in

your business will be critical in supporting you to mobilise

teams and create energy for the program.

**COMMUNICATION**

**AND INTERNAL**

**POSITIONING**

A returner is not a typical job seeker and may require

tailored recruitment approaches. Look to advertise roles in

traditional and non

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traditional domains, including networks

of returners, parent

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focused online forums, and social

media. This may also involve adapted recruitment

messages, including the use of personalised messaging and

an increased focus on personal attributes and genuinely

essential criteria.

**ATTRACTING**

**RETURNERS**

1. **RETURNER READINESS ASSESSMENT**

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1. **YOUR GUIDING COALITION**

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identify training requirements.

1. **DEVELOPING A SUPPORTED RETURNER PROGRAM**

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1. **ATTRACTING RETURNERS**

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1. **INTERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT**

The assessment process must be relevant and comfortable for the candidate while also enabling the business to determine fit. The focus of the interview should be on creating a relaxed and friendly environment for individuals whose confidence may be low. Interviewers should consider the values and behaviours of candidates, as well as determining technical knowledge and experience. The goal should be to unearth the transferable skills and experiences from both the working and personal lives of the candidate. A successful process will ensure that the candidate thoroughly understands the shape of the program on offer so they can make an informed decision.

1. **THE RETURNER JOURNEY**

While induction programs often begin the day the employee commences at a business, best practice suggests that this process begin as soon as the returner is offered and accepts the job. Consider the supports that may be required before the first date of employment and identify the training needs ahead of time, to help returners deliver in their new roles as quickly as possible.

1. **SUPPORTIVE ECOSYSTEMS**

Aiding a sense of belonging is a critical success factor for individuals returning to work. Providing a robust support framework that assists returners to form relationships and build networks will likely help maximise returner satisfaction and lead to a more successful and permanent hire.

1. **EVALUATE AND ADJUST**

It is useful to consider the supported returner program as a process that is always evolving. With that mindset, program managers should regularly collect qualitative and quantitative feedback from both returners, their managers, and other team members about their experiences of the program and improvement opportunities. Feedback should aid adaptation and further development of the program.

1. **EMBED**

Once you have successfully implemented a returner program, you will be well placed to build your learnings into your ongoing talent strategy. Many of the learnings from running a returner program can be disseminated more broadly across your business to foster an inclusive culture and support the attraction and retention of a more diverse workforce.