Australian Government

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Place-based approaches: Understanding the elements for success to help inform future policy design

Local Jobs Program - Consultation workshops

Contents

Introduction

Thank you for attending the Place-based approaches: Understanding the elements for success workshop. The findings from this workshop series will help build our understanding and inform future policy design.

Below is some introductory information which sets out the aim of the workshops and the issues we are looking to explore. We are excited and interested in your views on place-based approaches.

Workshop objective

The Australian Government is keen to ensure that employment services/labour market programs work for local communities and local labour markets.

The overarching aim of the workshops is to identify successful elements of existing place-based services. A secondary aim is to start to understand the different ways in which these elements can be delivered. This will help build our understanding and be used as we look at future policy design, specifically for the Local Jobs Program.

We are keen to consult with a diverse range of stakeholders, particularly community organisations and those on the ground working within place. This helps build insights into the key elements that could improve labour market programs such as the Local Jobs Program that operate in and/or are focused on local labour markets.

Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities (the Employment White Paper)

The recently released Employment White Paper sets out the Australian Government's roadmap for a dynamic and inclusive labour market, including recognition that place-based approaches that engage local communities support better employment outcomes in local labour markets.

In the paper, the Government has noted eight key principles that will guide reforms of Employment Services including Workforce Australia, Disability Employment Services, and the Community Development Program. These principles outline how the Government will support people seeking jobs, and businesses finding workers.

Eight principles for reform

1. Services are viewed as an investment that unlock individual potential, address employer needs and work with industry to bolster growth.
   a) the system builds human capital and ensures job placements are appropriate
   b) services help businesses and communities to grow by connecting people to jobs.

2. There is strong Australian Public Service stewardship in the system and the outcomes it delivers to ensure that individuals are not left behind.

3. Services protect the dignity and respect rights of individuals.
   a) services help individuals meet their employment and personal development goals
   b) services are designed and delivered in a culturally responsive and inclusive way that meets communities' needs.

4. Services provide a pathway towards decent jobs that provide the flexibility and security that individuals need.
   a) the Government may need to promote the creation of jobs to alleviate entrenched community disadvantage where labour markets are very thin and where individuals face very high barriers to work.

5. Employers use employment services to help meet their workforce needs, and can access guidance on innovative job design, recruitment practices and inclusive approaches to workforce development.

6. Employment services are designed through collaboration with individuals, employers and the community.
   a) The participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations, and community-based organisations, is boosted in the delivery of employment services.

7. Services help people at the earliest opportunity, informed by fit-for-purpose assessment processes.

8. Reforms are grounded in evidence, high quality evaluation and continuous learning and improvement.

The Employment White Paper notes that employment services need to work for local communities and local labour markets. Engaging at the local level can support the effectiveness and coordination of programs. As those on the ground, communities themselves are often best placed to identify and develop targeted solutions based on their specific needs. Recognising this, it is important that communities and existing program stakeholders are consulted in the early thinking and design of policies and programs.

Local Jobs Program

The current Local Jobs Program will cease in June 2025. At this stage, there is not a preferred model that would be used for any subsequent program. This consultation process will help develop ideas and possible models to deliver a place-based labour market program and guide future government considerations.

The Local Jobs Program is a collaborative place-based initiative that brings together expertise and resources to develop and improve the productivity and inclusiveness of local labour markets. It helps bring a local focus to employment services. It works through the bringing together of local expertise and resources, and currently operates in 51 Employment Regions.

The Program works to ensure local labour markets work well for all Australians, in partnership with business and communities. This reflects effort into both the supply and demand side of employment within a locally relevant context.

Locally based Employment Facilitators work with Jobs and Skills Taskforces – composed of local skills and employment services, employers and community organisations – to identify key priorities for action and drive collaborative solutions that are designed to meet local needs. The elements of the program are listed below.

Local Jobs Program – 'the Who'	
Employment Facilitators and support officers	- The 'face' of the Program in the local area - Develop Local Jobs Plans in consultation with stakeholders - Identify, develop and drive activities, including leveraging existing services, programs and funding, where available - Enhance coordination between existing initiatives - Use data and local intelligence to inform stakeholders and the Local Jobs Plan
Local Jobs and Skills Taskforces	- Chaired by the Employment Facilitator - Brings together stakeholders to identify employment and training opportunities - Up to 10 members representing a range or stakeholders (employment services, training, state government, regional development etc) - Use data and local intelligence to inform the Local Jobs Plan (including a range of services and other programs to inform local solutions) - Develop local solutions to deliver outcomes against Local Jobs Plan priorities

Local Jobs Program – 'the How'	
Local Jobs Plan	- Identifies local employment and training priorities - These priorities direct the activities of the Facilitators and Taskforces
Local Recovery Fund	- Funds activities that support the priorities in the Local Jobs Plan - Fill 'gaps' in other funding sources - Activities can receive funding between $10,000 and $200,000 (GST incl) - Requires a partnering employment services provider - Competitive tender process

| National priority Fund | • Funding of $50 million over four years |
| | • Helps address structural barriers, and skills and labour mismatches |

The program is successfully identifying and proactively supporting regions and industries to respond to local challenges in the economy.

Attachment A provides further information on the current two-stage reform of the program. This includes exploring future design options for the program.

Areas of interest for future iterations of the Local Jobs Program

- Submissions to the Employment White Paper and other forums have suggested greater consideration and application of governance structures that support community involvement and autonomy to maximise place-based impacts.
- Consideration of governance and what a 'backbone' organisation is able to deliver and how this functionality can aid a program. This would possibly involve higher-level governance structures which harness existing knowledge and expertise.
- Reflecting on decision-making capability and roles with regards to service design, funding and delivery functions.
- Options to better integrate and /or expand program scope to acknowledge and work with other stakeholders on social issues, health services etc.

Place-based approaches

We are interested in how your organisation works in 'place'. What have you done in the past that hasn't worked, what has worked and why.

The Department acknowledges a lot of work and research has gone into this space and we would like to understand and build on this to help ensure future ideas and policies factor these in.

Different ways of working in place

There are a range of definitions that are used to describe and differentiate between different ways of working in place. This consultation is open to hearing and learning from experiences that involve place, be it in a place-based or a place-focused manner.

The Victorian Government's 2020 whole of government framework for understanding place-based approaches provides a common language for different ways of working in place and clarifies the distinction between place-focused approaches and place-based approaches.

'Place-focused approaches' plan and adapt government services and infrastructure to ensure they are meeting local needs. Government listens to community to adapt how we do our business, but ultimately, has control over the objectives, scope and implementation.

'Place-based approaches' target the specific circumstances of a place and engage local people as active participants in development and implementation, requiring government to share decision-making. Place-based approaches can complement the bigger picture of services and infrastructure. They engage with issues and opportunities that are driven by complex, intersecting local factors and require a cross-sectoral or long-term response.

Both these approaches have value, and we are happy to hear and learn from both.

Governance structures to deliver place-based measures

We are particularly interested in the governance structures that are used. Governance can be a complex idea and mean different things in different situations.

In this context, we understand governance as being the structures, processes and relationships that determine how a group of people organises itself and makes decisions. Issues of group membership, authority, decision-making, and relationships within and outside the group are all relevant. It can include how representation of local views are integrated into work or setting out the process of engaging with certain stakeholders in decision making. It can also include the process through which funding is managed and the accountability and compliance mechanism that surround the expenditure. d

Backbone organisations are often referenced in current programs. They can serve as the coordinating and organisational hub of a place-based initiative. They engage in activities, including but not limited to, guiding vision and strategy, supporting the alignment of local activity and investment, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilising funding.

Not all place-based programs identify a backbone organisation and may instead have governance structures that reflect their particular local operations.

In addition to the mechanics of governance, the capabilities needed to have the governance operating as intended will also be of interest. Understanding the governance structures that currently operate, and the capability requirements will allow us to learn and ensure any future program has appropriate governance structures developed as part of the establishment.

Workshop

We have invited a range of people to attend each workshop. We are seeking a variety of views and experiences. There will be a range of people including people who deliver place-based programs, people who help develop communities and their capability, people who work for local, state of commonwealth government, people who operate businesses in place, people who are researcher and people who have lived experience of using services.

We will be looking to work through the questions in Box 3 in the workshop.

Box 3: Workshop questions – understanding key aspects of place-based approaches

Part 1 of workshop (i.e., What is currently working?)

1. Place-based approaches can be more effective than standard programs. What are the elements and/or conditions which help place based programs be effective?

2. Not all place-based programs work, and some may struggle to get established and work. What have you found to be the elements of place-based approaches that contribute to successful establishment, consolidation, longevity and eventual outcomes?

3. While every program is different, we anticipate the structures for governance and funding are two important elements. What do these look like for you?
   a. How has your governance and funding mechanisms evolved over time and how has this impacted the delivery of your program?

4. Working with place involves an ability to engage and leverage efforts with multiple stakeholders. This could include local business, social enterprises or not for profits and the different levels of government.
   a. What systems and processes do you find useful in gaining traction and buy-in from different stakeholders?
   b. How do you engage the community?

Part 2 of workshop (i.e. What is needed to support more being done?)
5. For each element contributing to a program's success, there are different ways to deliver and support it.
   a. What key functions or roles for government are needed to support and enable place-based approaches?
   b. How do we support communities to engage and be active participants?

6. What are the most significant barriers to achieving success in your place-based approaches?
   a. How have you avoided these or addressed if unavoidable?

7. As the government looks to be more involved in programs, what capabilities are needed in order to engage with and potentially deliver place-based programs?
   a. At times the government may work as a partner in a place-based program, what capabilities would be required in this instance?

8. Are there particular metrics or indicators that clearly signal when a program has been a success?
   a. What indicators and metrics have you experienced in how outcomes and system level changes are managed/measured?
   b. How does your communities identify success and is this different?

Attachment A

<u>Reform of the Local Jobs Program</u>

As part of the Employment White Paper, the Government is undertaking a two-stage reform process of the Local Jobs Program to better focus its policy intent and embed best practice place-based policy design principles – supporting better employment outcomes for people seeking work in local labour markets.

Initial changes to the Local Jobs Program will include:
- broadening eligibility for projects funded through the Local Recovery Fund to include more people, including those who are not receiving income support but need help connecting with work
- strengthening governance structures to enhance community representation
- strengthening APS support in Employment Facilitator services in several micro employment regions with thin labour markets, and
- enhancing local and regional data and information to inform decision-making processes.

The Government is also exploring options for the future design of the Local Jobs Program.

This is where our current consultation process comes in. The Government's reform direction will explicitly consider the scope and priorities for investment to support the smooth functioning of the labour market. It will also consider the optimal geographic spread to address business capability, industry transitions and the adaptive capacity of local labour markets. Evaluation will play an important role in the program's design over time.

More broadly, employment services need to operate in collaboration with local communities (Principle Six of the Employment White Paper). They should contribute to the local service infrastructure and community fabric to deliver the best possible outcomes particularly for people facing complex socio-economic disadvantage in collaboration with other services. This focus will be threaded through all programs to create opportunities that work for individuals and communities.