

Overview of Demand-led employment and training programs

A demand-led program starts with an employer and works backwards to develop a pipeline of employer-led skills training. This means designing and delivering services for job seekers based on the hiring requirements of employers. It is founded on the premise that the better that training meets the employer's needs, the more likely it is that the individual will get and keep the job.

Demand-led does not diminish the importance of effective strategies for disadvantaged job seekers (the supply side). A dual customer approach is crucial and job preparation and training must be delivered in a way that disadvantaged job seekers can engage and succeed in. We need smarter ways to engage, educate and employ people who have not succeeded in traditional school or training environments. In addition to work experience and on the job training, this may mean 'hands on' experiential learning; individual paced learning; integrating English language or literacy and numeracy upskilling with vocational training and work experience ;and individual case management and support to overcome other barriers to work. Involving employers in each stage of the job preparation and training phase underlines the fact that there is a real job at the end. The promise of a real job presented by a local employer is a powerful motivator for many job seekers.

The success of a demand-led program depends on having a detailed understanding of the employer, developing a business case and engaging employers in the design of pre-employment and skills provision. Once engaged, employment and training providers and employers can work together to develop a deal or agreement where job ready candidates are offered in return for vacancies and changes to HR practices.

Examples of successful demand-led projects:

OCTEC a non-profit based in Orange NSW, has worked closely with UnitingCare NSW for more than 20 years developing and delivering training in aged care and community services. OCTEC estimates it has trained more than 10,000 job seekers and existing workers over this time and the employer links now extend to more than 56 aged care facilities and eight employers across NSW.¹

Trainers are current or recent aged care industry employees and training is either in the aged care facility or closely simulates the workplace. OCTEC has also had success adapting training to meet the needs of Indigenous clients and women from multicultural backgrounds. OCTEC consistently reports course completion rates of 90-100 per cent and employment rates of 80-90 per cent.

Deanne Phillips OCTEC's Training Manager says,

"The partnership has been based on a high degree of trust. We involve staff from the nursing home facility on the selection panels. They need to be involved in the process if they are to allow us to bring students into their facilities and to work with their residents. Their close involvement also brings a high level of involvement and ownership."

¹ OCTEC case study originally published in *More Forces at Work*. This data was correct at the time of publication (October 2010) and is currently being updated.

Employer Coalition project: London Employer Coalition and the Metropolitan Police

In 2000, the Chair of the London Employer Coalition met with the Commissioner of Police to discuss how they could open up more job opportunities to disadvantaged residents and how the police force could increase the proportion of recruits from ethnic minority groups, which were severely under-represented among policing staff. Working with Met's HR Director and Jobcentre Plus staff, the Coalition developed a customised recruitment strategy which covered every element in the hiring process. Over four and a half years between 2001 and 2005, the partnership recruited 1,355 local residents, 46 per cent of whom were ethnic minorities and 44 per cent of whom were female. An independent evaluation² found that the strategy started small and then grew, with 47 per cent of the 1,355 recruits over the first three years and 53 per cent in the fourth year. The majority of jobs were for Transport Police Community Support Officers, Communication officers, Admin Assistants, Forensic and Fingerprint Technicians. The success factors identified by the independent evaluation were:

- ✓ All partners supported the project at the highest level.
- ✓ All partners were willing to change their practices.
- ✓ Sufficient volume and knowledge of ongoing recruitment needs.
- ✓ Good flow of information to Jobcentre Plus staff (the supplier of candidates) about the rationale, nature of jobs and eligibility criteria (from detailed research with the Met Police).
- ✓ Good tracking data back to both partners.
- ✓ Pre-employment training designed in partnership with the Met.
- ✓ A dedicated Project Manager seconded to the employer to look at demand and supply side factors.
- ✓ The support and involvement of the LEC (who were able to get the buy-in at the most senior level, provide funding for the dedicated Project Manager at the Met and ongoing support throughout the project).

About Toni Wren

Toni is a Sydney-based employment and social policy consultant, who has advised governments, employers and non-profit organisations in Australia, Britain, the United States and Japan. She is the author of the book *More Forces at Work, how 10 nonprofits tackled unemployment and more in their communities*, published by Jobs Australia in October 2010. Demand-led approaches to welfare to work have been operating across the US and UK for some time. Toni worked in these countries from 1998 to 2005, including with Wildcat Services Corporation and Public/Private Ventures in the US. Toni was Research Director for the UK's National Employment Panel, an employer-led organisation appointed by the then Chancellor, Gordon Brown, to advise UK Ministers on labour market policies and performance. She was responsible for the successful research and implementation of the Ambition programme, a ground-breaking initiative focusing on engaging employers in the design and delivery of training for nearly 5,000 disadvantaged jobseekers in well-paid occupations with skill shortages, particularly in the energy, IT and construction sectors across the UK. Further details of Toni's experience and current projects can be found at www.toniwren.com

² *Assessing the impacts, value and potential of the partnership between Jobcentre Plus and the Metropolitan Police Service*, Bell Pottinger Communications, January 2005.