

MYS Pathway to Employment Framework





INTRODUCTION

The **Employment Pathways Framework** outlines a best practice pathway to employment for migrant and refugee clients through better engagement, cooperation and coordination of stakeholder services. The Framework recognises that better employment outcomes result from improved cross-sectional coordination rather than from isolated and duplicated interventions of multiple organisations. This integrated service delivery model places the client at the centre of the service to give a 'whole-of-person' approach.

The **Employment Pathways Framework** was designed based on:

- Multicultural Youth Services (MYS) experience with clients and the need to address emerging issues such as migrant unemployment, cultural insensitivity and discrimination in the workplace,
- consultation and collaboration with clients from across the ACT and NSW,
- placing clients at the centre of the Framework to ensure their voices are heard, and not diminished by what stakeholders believe they need, and
- exploring shared intelligence and analysis of best practice.
See [Employment Services - Building on Success \(MYAN 2013\)](#) and [Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People \(CMY 2014\)*](#).*

THE CHALLENGE

A key challenge is to achieve better collaboration between employers, community services, educators and migrant services. The Framework seeks to link migrant and refugee communities and migrant support services with government, employers, educators and employment services to better address the needs of migrants and refugees seeking employment.

The MYS experience shows that many employers are reluctant to recruit migrants and refugees as evidenced by the number of clients who fail to reach job interview stage, despite being more than suitable for a position. Also of concern is the number of young clients with relevant and recently gained tertiary qualifications who are rejected.

Using the Employment Pathways Framework, MYS has built relationships with employers by providing on-site cultural briefings and initiating work experience programs resulting in higher rates of client employment. Recent interest shown by government, business associations and community services acknowledges the potential of the Framework to improve collaboration and achieve better outcomes for both employers and clients.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

To date there has been tension between the business model of the employment services - formerly Job Service Australia (JSA), now Job Active (JA) - and the needs of migrant and refugee job seekers. The present approach of one-size-fits-all does not acknowledge the diversity, experience and potential of these job seekers nor the complexity of the issues they face. Financial incentives for employment services to engage migrants and refugees can be significant for certain 'streams', however we observe that employment services generally provide limited support/resources to these applicants. The employment services (Job Active) business model tends to neglect 'unprofitable' clients who are perceived as 'challenging'. In other words, the rewards are not enough in terms of the level of investment required to successfully place an migrant or refugee job seeker.

Employment services provide job seekers access to tailored help based on their assessed needs. This could include:

- Help with looking for work, writing a resume and preparing for interviews.
- Referrals to jobs in the local area.
- Training that is suited to the skills that local employers need.
- Case management so they are ready to take up and keep a job.
- Coordination of Work for the Dole or other eligible activities to provide clients with work-like experiences, to help them learn new skills and improve their chances of finding a job.
- Assistance with suitable work attire, White Cards and driving license.

Currently, when MYS places a client in employment, the employer can access up to 60% wage subsidy for certain Job Active job seeker streams. And the government placement fee goes to the employment service, not MYS.

The MYS client experience of Job Active agencies is inconsistent. Many migrant and refugee job seekers are 'parked' in the too hard basket and are often not advised of entitlements to support their job seeking efforts. For example, access to job seeker training funds and allowances are not always made known to potential employers. From our encounters, the migrant or refugee job seeker often leaves the employment service experience with a broken spirit. Once highly motivated to find a job, the barriers appear insurmountable.

Given this scenario, it falls to community service providers to work outside their funding contracts to fill the service gap. Several migrant and refugee services provide clients with employment service help such as writing resumes and job applications, online job searches; coaching for interviews and ad-hoc job placement via word of mouth.

JOB READINESS

Another challenge is to improve the employability of job seekers especially first generation migrants and refugees. While English language skills are important to employability, being understood at the job interview and in the workplace is critical. This is not about having more grammar and vocabulary but about speaking clearly (phonetics) and knowing

workplace terminology (jargon); much of which can be picked up in an orientation to the workplace or work experience. There is also a need for more understanding of the workplace environment and how to effectively interact with work teams (workplace culture).

MYS has identified the following employment barriers and success factors when working with clients and stakeholders.

Barriers to successful migrant and refugee employment

- The complexity and unresponsiveness of the job seeking system - clients tend to be 'parked' by Job Active agencies, some for years.
- English language skills proficiency and understanding.
- Many employers reluctant to employ migrants and refugees.
- Problems with recognition of overseas skills, qualifications and experience.
- Lack of qualifications or perceived lack of Australian work experience.
- Growing casualisation and reduction in blue collar manufacturing jobs – refugees and less skilled migrants tend to be the first to be laid off in times of economic downturn.
- Downward mobility and pressure to accept insecure employment despite qualifications.
- Lack of knowledge of the Australian workplace culture and employment conditions
- Discrimination and exploitation in employment.
- Pressure to juggle employment and domestic responsibilities.
- Limited access to affordable housing close to workplaces, and to transport.

Factors that contribute to labour market success

- Engaging employers who value and encourage diversity in the workplace and recognise cultural differences as a positive.
- Nurturing other businesses through cultural awareness and communication while providing information on discrimination in employment.
- Targeting employment support for migrant and refugee job-seekers including individual pathway planning, case management, referral, training, workplace language/phonetics training, work experience and mentoring.
- Engaging business and industry associations - Chambers of Commerce and Business Chambers.
- Linking vocational education and training to English language skills and a realistic career path.
- Recognising overseas skills and qualification.
- Accessing work requirements such as White Cards, work attire, and transport assistance.

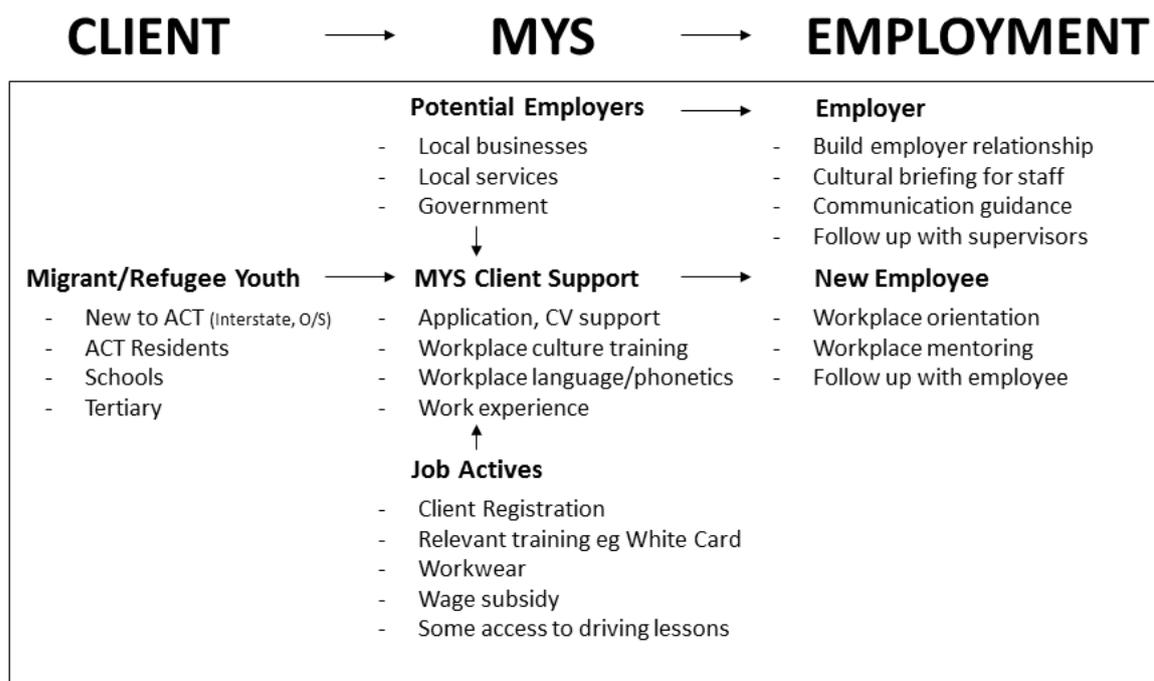
Engaging with employers and finding suitable employees has led to repeated requests for more migrant and refugee recruits resulting in more long-term employment outcomes.

MYS EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS FRAMEWORK

The aim of the Framework is to streamline the migrant and refugee (the clients) education, training and employment experience by:

- Building and enhancing community networks and partnerships with government, business associations, employers, service providers, Job Active agencies, unions and the multicultural communities to address specific needs of clients
- Engaging directly with employers, employment services, recruitment agencies business associations, and unions to identify and target employment opportunities.
- Providing briefings and guidance to employers recruiting and employing clients.
- Improving service delivery to clients by identifying the jobs, skills and qualifications, and personal qualities employers are seeking.
- Better targeting of vocational training and career planning.
- Linking clients to opportunities for training, apprenticeships and workplace experience.
- Building capacity in migrant and refugee communities for mutual support in developing an understanding of the job seeking process and workplace cultural in Australia.
- Helping clients to find sustainable employment and develop career pathways.
- Facilitating shared data and intelligence between stakeholders to gain a greater appreciation of the issues and challenges facing migrants and refugees job seekers and employers.

The following diagram shows how MYS is currently working around the barriers to employment. MYS has engaged the services of an employment consultant to build partnerships with employers and broker jobs for MYS clients.



MYS OUTCOMES

Applying the Employment Pathways Framework, MYS achieved the following results in 2014-15:

- 184 MYS clients actively seeking employment - new clients are added each month.
- 134 local businesses and services approached for employment opportunities. Industry sectors contacted included aged care, security, cleaning services, construction, hospitality, and retail.
- 105 people recommended to employers.
- 85 people placed in employment including full-time, part-time and casual employment.
- 50 people placed in MYS initiated work experience programs including workplace culture and language/phonetics coaching
- 60 people placed in volunteer work with high potential for casual and long-term placement.
- 15 people gained a Certificate III during work experience at an aged care service (part of the ACT Government Better Linkages program).

While placing clients in unskilled or semi-skilled positions is often a first step in a career path, these results demonstrate the benefit of a specialised job services approach. MYS uses the following a case management practices to guide clients through the job seeking process.

- Job brokerage and relationship building with employers
- Placement, coaching and briefing of employer/staff
- MYS initiated work experience and training
- Workplace culture and workplace language/phonetics training
- Client mentoring and follow up with direct supervisors
- Career planning and goal setting
- Job search skills training - online and local labour market searches
- Resume and application preparation supported by volunteers
- Coaching in interview skills and presentation
- Family and personal lifestyle management.

Given limited resources, MYS relies on its employment consultant, case managers and volunteers to provide these services. Some elements of the service are referred to expert agencies.

The success of the MYS Employment Pathways Framework depends to a significant extent on the availability, cooperation and support of other services, agencies and volunteers. The Framework highlights the benefits of an integrated and coordinated approach, drawing on employers, employment related services, educators and training services.

EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS SERVICE

MYS recommends the establishment of an Employment Pathways Service to coordinate migrant and refugee access to employment opportunities. A key feature of the proposed service is working in partnership with employers, employment and education stakeholders and connecting them with existing migrant and refugee services.

The role of the Employment Pathway Service would be to:

- Identify labour market needs and coordinate partnership and contractual employment agreements.
- Identify and engage employers who are willing to give migrants and refugees a chance either through work experience or employment.
- Design in consultation with employers and educators/RTOs, workplace culture and language/phonetics courses related to vocational pathways and local labour market needs.
- Provide comprehensive induction and orientation for new employees.
- Provide a supportive work environment by training staff and supervisors in communicating cross-culturally and understanding the migrant/refugee experience.
- Provide career advice and develop individual plans of action to achieve personal outcomes.
- Provide recognition of prior learning and experience.
- Identify opportunities to combine work related training/qualifications with employment.

A key component of the Employment Pathway Service is that job seekers can learn through work placements and work experience opportunities. This results in greater benefits and less disruption than traditional classroom-based training. Programs such as Better Linkages and Work Experience and Support Program (WESP) have been effective in pursuing employment and skills enhancement goals simultaneously. The Employment Pathways Service builds on the success of these on-the-job programs.

This integrated service delivery model places the client at the centre of the service by providing a 'whole-of-person' approach to employment. The Employment Pathways Service aims to access the untapped potential of migrants and refugees so they can achieve social and economic integration through sustainable employment.

Multicultural Youth Services ACT
September 2015

* **Employment Services - Building on Success.** Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia (MYAN) March 2013. Available from Centre for Multicultural Youth, 304 Drummond St Carlton VIC 3053 www.myan.org.au

* **Facilitating the Transition to Employment for Refugee Young People.** Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) February 2014. Available from Centre for Multicultural Youth, 304 Drummond St Carlton VIC 3053 www.cmy.net.au