



Australian Government

Servicing Indigenous Clients: 7 Top Tips



Job Network

AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE



Jobs Careers Future



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INTRODUCTION

The Australian Government is committed to providing services which will lead to real and sustainable jobs for Indigenous people. Job Network is an important part of this. Job Network members have taken up the opportunities created by strong labour market conditions and are working with Indigenous communities to place record numbers of Indigenous job seekers in jobs and training.

As a result of recent reforms to the support available for Indigenous job seekers, Job Network members will be working with Indigenous Australians on a much more frequent basis. This provides Job Network members with an opportunity to develop stronger links with Indigenous communities and other Indigenous employment programmes such as the Structured Training and Employment Projects, commonly known as STEP.

The Indigenous population has a younger demographic profile than the overall Australian population. Therefore it is also important to look at the opportunities to make positive differences for Indigenous youth; for example, by working with Indigenous Youth Employment Consultants to help identify employment, education and training options across Job Network.

This best practice guide presents practical strategies used by Job Network members to find jobs for Indigenous people. It is a reminder that Indigenous job seekers, like all others, benefit most from services tailored to their circumstances and which respect their personal and cultural background.

Many Job Network members are achieving great results for their Indigenous clients. This booklet outlines some top tips drawn from their experience.

TIP 1



Make connections

- > Seek advice on community protocols and plan visits appropriately.
- > Get out and meet with the Indigenous community. Make contact with Indigenous community groups in your area, and explore whether contacting a local Community Council or Land Council would also be helpful in establishing productive relationships. Tell them about your organisation and encourage arrangements for the referral and assistance of clients.

Recommendation and support from these organisations can be invaluable.

- > Seek out opportunities locally. Find employers who have hired and retained Indigenous employees in the past. Consider organisations which are Corporate Leaders, or who have STEP projects. Talk to prospective employers about the resources you can use and how you can help them with suitable Indigenous candidates.
- > Keep up to date with the Small Area Labour Market statistics for your area. This information can be found by going to: www.workplace.gov.au/salm

Example: A Job Network member holds a regular monthly meeting and barbecue. Other local employment service providers, local businesses and job seekers are invited to this event. This provides a regular opportunity to get to know the local Indigenous community and for them to get to know their employment service providers and local businesses.

TIP 2



Raise your awareness

- > Attend Indigenous cultural awareness training as a team so you and your staff can understand the issues and barriers facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- > Set out your best practice servicing standards for Indigenous clients. Establish excellent servicing of Indigenous clients as a priority. This will lead to higher referrals and strengthen the trust and support from the Indigenous community.
- > Aim for strong results for your Indigenous clients. Good results can greatly improve your Star Ratings.
- > Use the information provided in the Indigenous Toolbox. This can be found at www.toolboxes.dewr.gov.au. There are also other toolboxes that provide information for youth and mature age clients.

Example: Through links with their local community, some Job Network members have been able to source cultural awareness training specific to the local area, using local knowledge. In some cases, Indigenous staff members have provided informal cultural awareness sessions.

TIP 3



Create a friendly office environment

- > Employ Indigenous staff in your office. They are often well placed to understand and deal with the issues, needs and barriers faced by your Indigenous clients. They can also be a good initial point of contact and provide an effective link to the Indigenous community.
- > Greet clients warmly, enthusiastically and encouragingly. Show that you care. No need to make a big fuss, but let them know that you are on their side and there to help them with their search for work.
- > Create a welcoming office environment. Show that you are interested in Indigenous issues.
- > Consider displaying some Indigenous images including artwork, artifacts or posters throughout the office. Tap into the local Indigenous community, as they can help you decide on suitable images.
- > Encourage your new clients to bring someone with them to their first meeting. Your new client may be too 'shame' to attend their first meeting. Make sure that you have sufficient space for extra family members of your client in meeting and interview facilities.
- > Your Indigenous clients should have appropriate privacy to discuss their issues.



TIP 4



Treat each client as an individual

- > Get as much information from your client as possible. Encourage clients to tell you about themselves, their goals and what they want to do. Knowing their background will enable you to assist them better. As their stories may not come out straight away, be patient, understanding and supportive over a period of time.
- > If a client is shy about talking about their history, interests or special needs, present them with some options that may help them decide which path to follow. Many people are more forthcoming with their own views when presented with options.
- > Make sure they understand all the options available to them. You want them to be genuine participants in the whole process.
- > Avoid a 'one size fits all' approach. While remembering that you must work within the realities of your local labour market, try to match the job to the client. Remember that the client will need to like the job to stay with it long term. Try to find a balance between their dreams and labour market realities.
- > If it is difficult for clients to get to your office or there are other issues that mean another organisation may be better suited to their needs, it may be appropriate to advise them of their options. Help them if they decide to change.



TIP 5



Communicate clearly with Indigenous clients

- > Ensure your clients clearly understand their responsibilities and the tasks they must carry out. Make sure they have the support to do so. Individual mentoring can help.
- > Ensure your clients understand the purpose of every appointment, training course and meeting. When referring clients for additional support, it may be helpful to accompany them.
- > Explain what they can do if they are dissatisfied. Provide your clients with a copy of the Job Network Service Guarantee, and clearly explain the steps that can be taken to help them.
- > Maintain regular contact with your Indigenous clients, to let them know what's happening.



Example: One Job Network member holds regular pre-employment sessions to explain employers' expectations, such as that workers will arrive on time, and that if they are unable to attend work for any reason they should contact the employer.

Another Job Network member accompanies Indigenous job seekers to interviews and supports them in resolving issues that may affect their ability to work, such as finding more suitable accommodation.

TIP 6



Champion your Indigenous clients to employers

- Actively promote your clients' skills and potential to employers.
- Give your Indigenous clients a boost. When they see you pushing their cause and promoting their abilities and prospects to employers, your clients will gain confidence in themselves.
- Mentoring may often be helpful. Your local Indigenous community may be able to suggest suitable mentors.
- Make yourself aware of the complementary programmes that can help you to assist Indigenous clients and use them to your clients' advantage. A full list of programmes and explanations can be found at: <https://ecsn.gov.au/JNMWeb/ComplementaryProgrammes/>
- When clients have been placed, follow up and see how they are going.




TIP 7

Take advantage of STEP

- > Make links with STEP Employment Related Services (ERS) providers and STEP employers in your area.
- > STEP ERS providers can assist Job Network members to place Indigenous job seekers into employment or into pre-employment training.
- > Placing Indigenous clients into a STEP project (either through a provider or directly with a STEP employer) is a win-win proposition—the probability of a successful job placement and outcome payment increases for Job Network, and Indigenous job seekers are more likely to find and retain work.
- > You can find out about new STEP ERS provider projects by looking on the ECSN secure site. DEWR will add details of new STEP ERS provider projects when contracts are signed.





These tips are intended to help Job Network members to improve service delivery for their Indigenous clients, including working more effectively with local Indigenous communities.

We hope that you find the information useful and regularly use it to help you achieve more effective outcomes for your Indigenous clients and your organisation.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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