



# Indigenous Employment Program RFT Q&As

## Why are there reforms to the Indigenous Employment Program?

The Australian Government wants to halve the gap in employment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

To help more Indigenous Australians in remote, regional and urban communities into work the Government needs to ensure that its employment programs work more effectively. This means easier access, better coordination, less duplication and more integration.

Consequently, the Government consulted widely with Indigenous Australians and their communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses, and with service providers. These consultations showed room for improvement with the current Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) and raised concerns about having to fit project ideas to 10 sets of program guidelines and entering into a number of contracts to deliver a particular project.

Government will work with Indigenous Australians and their communities, industries and employers on an ongoing basis to ensure the program remains accessible and relevant to their needs.

## What are the changes to the reformed Indigenous Employment Program?

The IEP is being changed to be more flexible and responsive to the needs of employers, Indigenous Australians and their communities.

The reformed IEP will be easier to access and Government will work with Indigenous Australians and their communities, industries and employers on an ongoing basis to ensure the program remains accessible and relevant to their needs.

The reformed IEP will:

- meet the needs of more employers including small and medium size businesses
- support more communities in developing their own economic direction
- help more Indigenous people get jobs and start businesses.

It will do this by:

- increasing the level of funding and support available
- encouraging, recognising and promoting achievements in Indigenous employment
- building aspirations
- providing mentoring to individuals and businesses
- communities, industries and employers will be able to access packages of assistance to suit their needs.

## How will the reformed Indigenous Employment Program be different from the current STEP/STEP ERS? (Structured Training and Employment Projects/ Structured Training and Employment Projects Employment and Related Services)

The Government has consulted widely with Indigenous Australians and their communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses, and with service providers. These consultations showed room for improvement in the current IEP and raised concerns about having to fit project ideas to 10 sets of program guidelines, and entering into a number of contracts to deliver a particular project.

The new IEP will enable the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to work with people to deliver a broad range of projects suited to their own local circumstances, focusing on how to achieve the best employment outcomes.

## What is the aim of the reformed Indigenous Employment Program?

The objective of the IEP is to increase Indigenous Australians' employment outcomes and participation in economic activities, contributing to the Government's commitment to halve the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment outcomes within a decade.

This will be done by:

- equipping employers with the skills, knowledge and expertise necessary to provide sustainable employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians in their organisations
- preparing Indigenous Australians to take up training and employment opportunities, stay in jobs and enhance their future employment prospects
- providing support for Indigenous Australians to become self-employed and develop businesses in urban, regional and remote areas.

## How will the reformed Indigenous Employment Program benefit Indigenous Australians?

The IEP is being changed to be more flexible and responsive to the needs of employers, Indigenous Australians and their communities.

The new IEP will be easier to access and the Government will work with Indigenous Australians and their communities, industries and employers on an ongoing basis to ensure the program remains accessible and relevant to their needs.

## What sort of assistance is available under the reformed Indigenous Employment Program to Indigenous communities?

This tender will establish two panels of providers which will be able to provide services focused on two key areas:

- Employment
- Economic Development and Business Support.

Communities, individuals, employers and industry bodies will be able to access funding and services to support their needs. Some examples of the services are:

- helping communities, industries and groups of local employers develop recruitment, retention and succession strategies in their communities and workplaces
- pre-employment and employment training
- placing Indigenous Australians into employment
- pre and post-placement mentoring support for job seekers, employees and employers
- cross-cultural awareness training for employers and their workplaces
- working with industries that are experiencing or forecasting skills shortages
- support for Indigenous business development: remote, urban and regional; individual, family and community
- support from economic development officers or other professional services that assist business and economic support
- encouraging, recognising and promoting achievements by the corporate and philanthropic sectors working in partnership with Indigenous individuals, communities and businesses
- developing activities and products for community events that inspire and support participation in education and employment
- expanding career guidance and aspiration building programs
- voluntary mobility assistance for adult Indigenous job seekers and their families wishing to relocate for better job related or training opportunities.

## When does the reformed Indigenous Employment Program start?

The reformed IEP commences on 1 July 2009. The IEP RFT was released on AusTender on 16 March 2009 and closes at 7.00 pm (Canberra time) on Friday 24 April 2009.

## Has any consultation on the reformed Indigenous Employment Program occurred since the December 2008 announcement?

Yes. During February and March 2009, IEP reform consultation sessions were held with a wide range of peak bodies and organisations related to Indigenous employment and business and economic development. There were six consultation sessions across Australia with over 60 organisations represented.

## How will the Government ensure that the Indigenous Employment Program continues in the right direction?

The Government will establish an Independent Reference Group to advise it on the continuous improvement of the IEP and how to make the IEP more accessible and effective now and in the future.

Further details about the Independent Reference Group will be announced before 1 July 2009.

## Who can tender for the Indigenous Employment Program Tender?

Any people or organisations wanting to help more Indigenous Australians obtain employment or establish businesses are encouraged to tender for the new panels.

It will not matter whether the organisation is small or large.

It will not matter whether the person or organisation can provide services across Australia, or to just one part of it.

The only requirement is that an organisation tendering has an ABN number.

## Where is the Indigenous Employment Program Tender information located?

Everyone who wants to tender must register on the AusTender website at [tenders.gov.au](http://tenders.gov.au).

Information about the IEP Tender is on the AusTender website.

## Who is eligible for assistance from the IEP Providers?

Assistance can be available for:

- Indigenous Australians, unemployed and employed
- Indigenous businesses, individuals and organisations seeking to attain further skills and expertise to build economic and business viability
- employers of Indigenous Australians or employers preparing to employ or provide work experience or other related assistance to Indigenous Australians.

## Does CDEP come under the reformed Indigenous Employment Program?

IEP and CDEP are two separate, distinct programs.

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs is now responsible for CDEP. CDEP information is available at [indigenous.gov.au/cdep\\_reforms.htm](http://indigenous.gov.au/cdep_reforms.htm).

## How do the Indigenous Employment Program, the new employment services and CDEP relate to each other?

The IEP, new employment services and CDEP all have critical roles to play in supporting Indigenous Australian job seekers to develop their capacity and skills, and take up and progress in jobs:

- Employment services providers are the largest providers of employment services for Indigenous job seekers. They will provide the right mix of training, work experience and other interventions to help job seekers obtain suitable employment.
- The IEP will continue to operate across Australia, and will focus on assisting employers and providing support for Indigenous Australians to become self-employed and develop businesses.
- CDEP will operate in remote areas and provide work-readiness training and work experience. It will also support community development projects and build the capacity of Indigenous organisations and communities.

Providers of IEP and other Indigenous-specific services and new employment services will need to work in partnership to maximise outcomes for Indigenous Australians.