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Improving Health Equity for Young People? The Role of Social Enterprise

WorkVentures Case Study

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About this Report

This is one of four case study reports prepared as part of the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage project: *Improving Health Equity for Young People? The Role of Social Enterprise (LP160101793)*. WorkVentures is a social enterprise based in Mascot, New South Wales (NSW) and is a participating case organisation in the wider research. This report draws on data collected between November 2018 and October 2019, and therefore should be understood as providing a 'snapshot' in time.

Research Team

The research project is being delivered by the Centre for Social Impact Swinburne and the Centre for Social Impact UNSW under the leadership of Professor Jo Barraket. Data collection for this case study and authorship of this report was led by Dr Perri Campbell. The full research team also includes Professor Jane Farmer, Associate Professor Gemma Carey, Dr Andrew Joyce, Associate Professor Chris Mason, Dr Roksolana Suchowerska, Dr Joanne McNeill, and Ms Batool Moussa.

Acknowledgements

This case study is one output generated through a three-year research project funded by the Australian Research Council through its Linkage Scheme (**LP160101793**). The research team also acknowledges its industry partners—VicHealth, Social Traders and Foundation for Young Australians—for funding support and expert input into the study.

The research team acknowledges the invaluable contribution of WorkVentures—its staff, participants and external stakeholders—who contributed to this case study report.

The research project involves four social enterprises: two in NSW and two in Victoria. The team gratefully acknowledges the involvement of participants from all four case studies. Together, the four case studies will inform a cross-case analysis that will present the broader, thematic findings of the study as a whole.

Executive Summary

This case study report examines the role of WorkVentures in producing health equity and wellbeing outcomes for young people and their communities. Forming part of a wider comparative case study, the research focuses on the organisational context and features of WorkVentures that produce these outcomes, with a particular emphasis on whether and how WorkVentures fosters the social conditions—referred to as the social determinants of health—through which health equities are realised. The case study involved interviews with key informants, participant observation at WorkVentures, and secondary analysis of organisational and media materials.

The research finds that WorkVentures fosters health equity by: supporting young people's engagement in learning, education and hands on training; facilitating personal development and relationship building with peer and professional networks; and providing supported employment and apprenticeships for young people.

WorkVentures' two-tiered youth engagement and employment approach (see **Figure 1**) has been professionally crafted and has evolved over time.

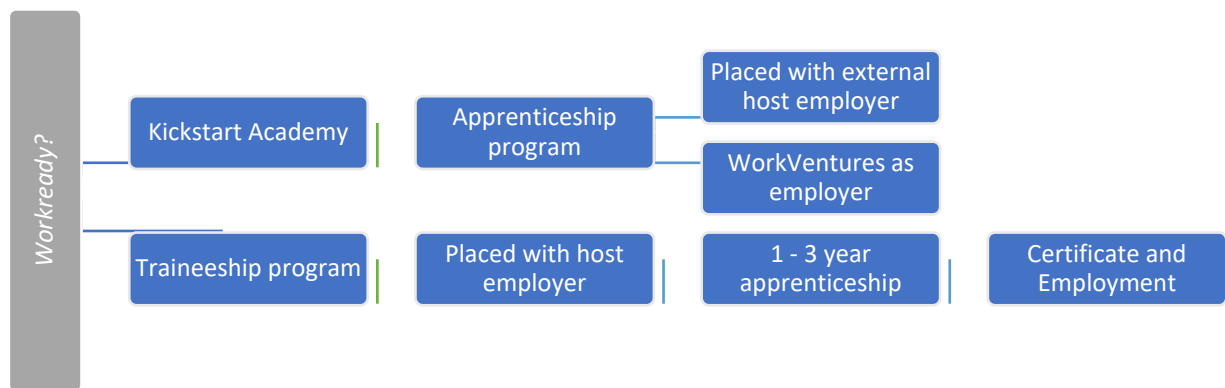


Figure 1 WorkVentures Youth Programs

The two programs work in tandem to support young people into education and employment:

- *KickStart enables* young people to develop work ready skills, experience different types of work, and understand what they are skilled in and enjoy doing.
- *The Traineeship program enables* young people to gain an educational qualification while earning a wage in a supported environment.

As a result, commercial business elements are aligned with a stepped engagement in education and training. This approach enables participating young people to have smooth transitions into work environments. The KickStart program responds to local demand for work experience in Sydney, and therefore confronts access and health equity barriers. The findings suggest that the relationships that WorkVentures has with stakeholders and employers are rewarding, meaningful, and crucial to program success. External stakeholders experience a sense of shared purpose and emotional investment in the well-being of young people.

Contextually, WorkVentures' industry focus on electronics and information technology (IT), and its engagement with local businesses and entry level labour market requirements, help produce health equity outcomes for young people. *Structurally*, WorkVentures' in-house multi-site training, diversity of staff, strong Youth Program team and stepped employment program, inform organisational outcomes and impacts.

WorkVentures builds its organisational *culture with* its beneficiaries and partners to offer a supportive and empowering environment where learning and education happen alongside excitement, friendship and meaningful work. Learning is combined with practical and enjoyable activities to engage and retain young people. Youth Programs encourage: self-belief and recovery from adversity, unity, and pride in developing skills in IT, electronics and business, and pathways in to employment. Specific challenges for WorkVentures are identified in this study, particularly the evolving nature of the information technology and electronics industry.

1.0 Background

1.1 About the study

The wellbeing of young people is critical to Australia's productivity and success. The social determinants of health (SDoH) are the structural conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life (WHO, n.d.). The SDoH include education, employment, income, housing and social networks. Health inequities stem from imbalances in the availability and accessibility of these determinants and are known to affect wellbeing.

Many social enterprises are established to support the social and economic participation of young people (in this study, aged 16-25) around Australia, but to date there is limited evidence that shows *how* they create wellbeing outcomes. Social enterprises are organisations that are led by an economic, social, cultural, and/or environmental mission consistent with a public or community benefit; derive some substantial portion of their income from trade; and reinvest the majority of their profit/surplus in the fulfilment of their mission (Barraket et al. 2010).

In its 'Fair Foundations' document (Figure 2), VicHealth identifies seven strategies through which the fairness of social conditions can be improved. Amongst these, social innovation and initiatives designed around specific 'healthy settings' contexts are identified as central to promoting health equity. Social enterprises often employ both these strategies in day-to-day operations. They engage in social innovation by developing new programs, new types of workplaces, and designing other bespoke initiatives with the aim of formulating novel solutions to address persistent social problems. Social enterprises create healthy settings by targeting specific geographic or organisational factors with the aim of making them fairer and more equal.

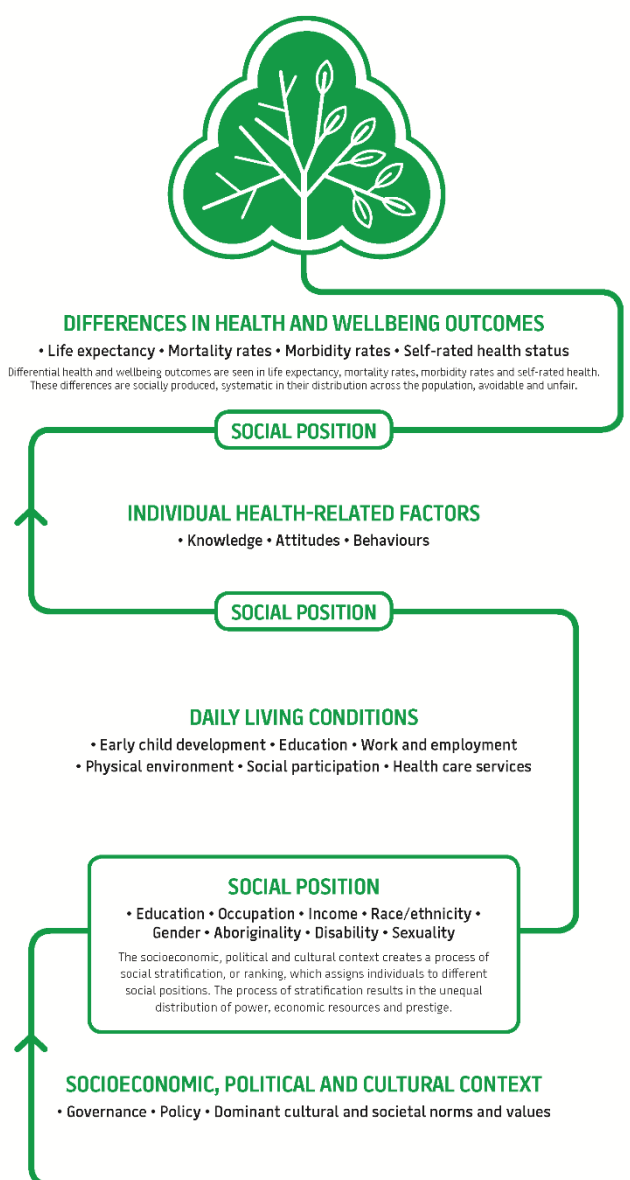


Figure 2 Fair Foundations: The VicHealth framework for health equity

1.2 About the Research Design

Although social enterprises are increasingly being established to help young people around Australia, there isn't much evidence that shows *how* they operate to create wellbeing outcomes (Agafonow 2018). This study worked with four social enterprises in Victoria and New South Wales to address the following research questions:

1. Do social enterprises affect the outcomes of social determinants of health for young people? If yes, how?
2. How do organisational features, such as industry orientation and governance structure, affect the impacts of social enterprise on social determinants of health for young people?
3. How do institutional factors, such as industry structures and public policy frameworks inform the effectiveness of social enterprises concerned with improving social and economic participation of disadvantaged young people?

The research questions recognise social enterprises as complex organisations with diverse stakeholder relationships. As a result, they acknowledge the role of and seek to explore the effect of various organisational features. Some of these organisational features—such as the geographic location, market positioning, and origins—position the organisation within particular communities. Other organisational features—such as culture, structure, and the policies, processes, and practices—characterise the 'personality' of the organisation. These two sets of organisational features strongly influence the design of specific programs. **Figure 3** shows the nested relationship between these features.

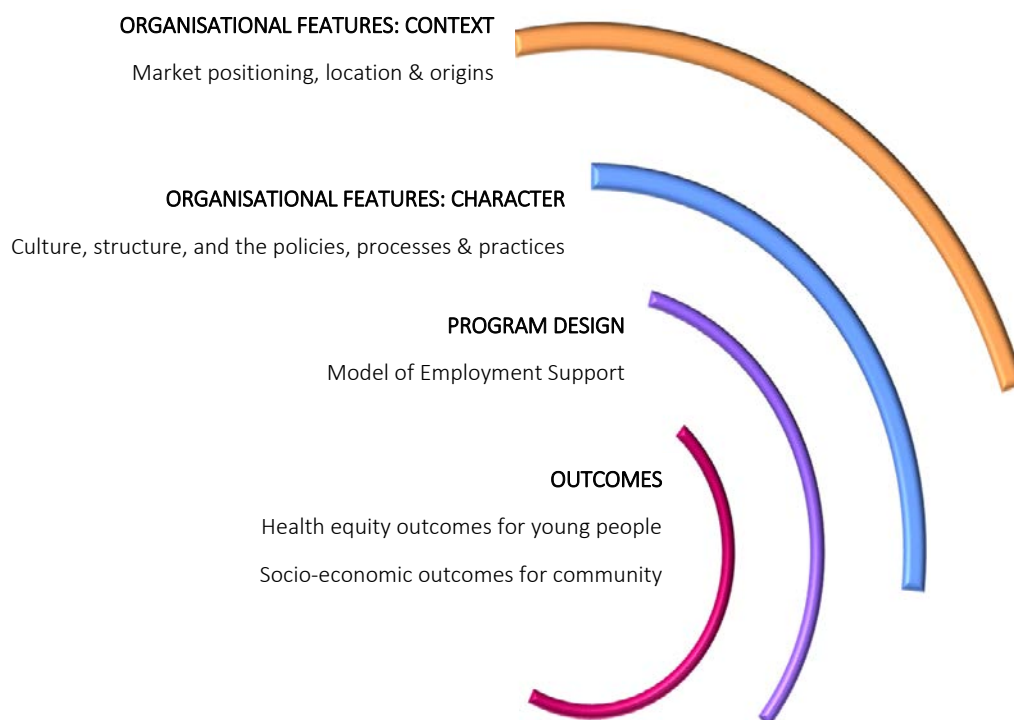


Figure 3 Nested relationships between organisational features and outcomes

Taken together and considering their inter-relationships, these organisational features provide a framework for examining whether and how social enterprises are helping to improve the health equity outcomes of young people. As with any social enterprise, each element is constantly shifting and program and business improvements are often made on an ongoing basis. This report should therefore be read as a snapshot at a point-in-time. The case study reports developed at this stage of the project respond to **Research Questions one and two**. The **third Research Question** is being investigated through a cross-case analysis, to be completed in the next stage of the study. This will add another layer to the findings, generating insights from across the four enterprises—and aiming to assist policy makers interested in providing targeted support, and social enterprises to improve their strategic positioning.

1.2.1 Data Collection

This case study has been developed via ethnographic data collection methods, including two focus groups, two weeks of participant observation, 22 interviews and analysis of documents. Data were collected between November 2018 and October 2019. In line with a participatory approach, the study included WorkVentures, its stakeholders and other practitioners of health promotion and social enterprise in the analytic processes of meaning making and knowledge creation. More information about the research design is provided in Appendix A.

1.3 About WorkVentures

Founded in 1979, WorkVentures is a multi-site, IT social enterprise located in Mascot, Sydney and in Victoria. Through their commercial businesses WorkVentures confront interconnected issues of social and environmental sustainability and young people's employment pathways.

The KickStart Academy is WorkVentures' cornerstone youth engagement program and is the focus of this study. KickStart runs for 4 weeks and focuses on information technology and electronics. KickStart was founded in 2015 to provide *excluded communities and individuals with training and networks that lead to employment* and is itself a pathway into WorkVentures' Traineeship program. The Traineeship program offers a Certificate III in Business, Business Sales or Certificate III in Information Technology in partnership with their Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Although the Traineeship program is not central to our study, it is included in our account of young people's transitions into employment.

WorkVentures works with a range of stakeholders in the community, including corporate and industry partners, and service providers to tackle the barriers to education, work and social participation encountered by disadvantaged young people.

2.0 WorkVentures' impacts on health equity outcomes for young people

In 2018, WorkVentures supported 256 young people through training and work via their three main engagement programs: KickStart, Supported Employment and Work Experience (WorkVentures, 2018: 3). The significance of the intervention WorkVentures offers is captured in this quote from one young program participant:

"Before I came to this course I was like pretty depressed... Because I just kept getting knocked back, I was sort of like giving up. I definitely feel like healthier mentally just coming here every day and being punctual." (Program Participant)

From a social determinants of health equity perspective, the wellbeing of young people is shaped by: improved education and employment opportunities; improved access to financial resources and improved social participation (particularly, in the case of Workventures, in the workplace). Personal development and relationship building enabled young people to engage with the new social and economic opportunities. The flow of this intervention is depicted in the Youth Program Overview (Figure 4) below:

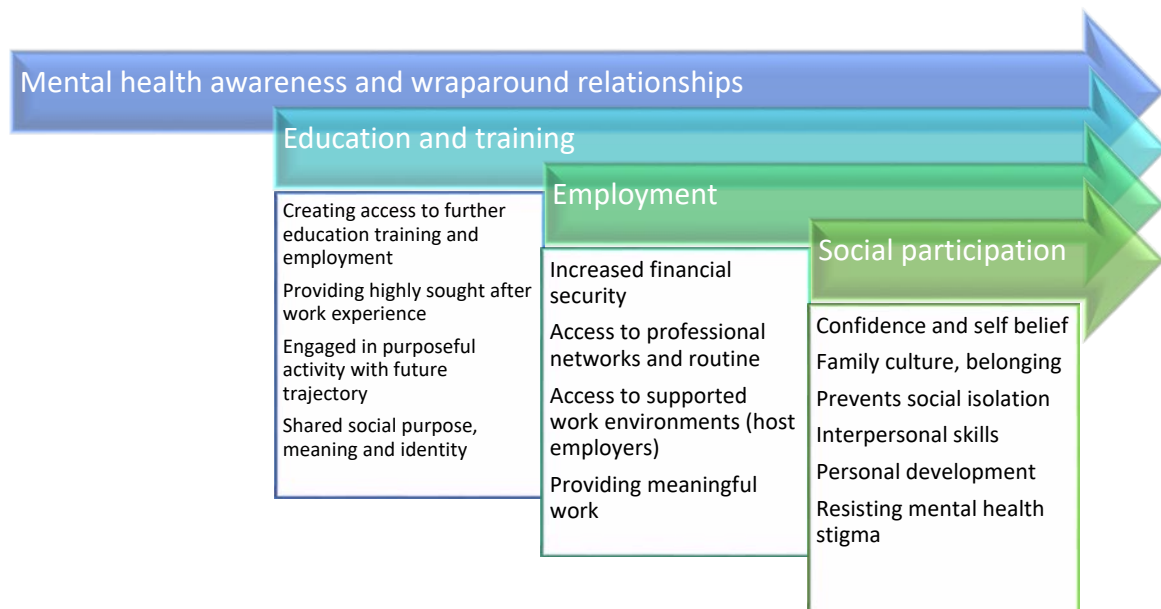


Figure 4 WorkVentures Youth Program Overview

2.1 Providing access to education and training

WorkVentures provides access to education and training for young people with different learning styles. The Kickstart program offers avenues for training and employment to young people who have exited school (or are considering exiting school). The program is 'entry level' and is run intermittently. The key goals of the program are to:

- ✓ provide education and training to young people;
- ✓ enable young people to experience work in different areas of the social enterprise, including the Warehouse, ReUse, Call Centre, Front Desk/Reception and Electronics ('the bench'); and
- ✓ prepare young people for work through personal development and learning new skills.



The first two weeks of the Kickstart program take place in the WorkVentures Training/Class Room and ReUse area. ReUse is an intimate space, sectioned off into smaller areas within a large warehouse. One of the key products to come out of this space is the reserviced computer which is sold at a discounted price. The social goal is to support the IT skills of customers who might be marginalised young people, school-aged young people, and other age groups. The product is serviced by young people from The Kickstart program, as well as WorkVentures staff. The structure of ReUse follows a triple bottom line operation model, which aims to be financially self-sustaining, and have a positive social and environmental impact.

Young people are taught to complete tasks individually and as a group at ReUse, for instance, sorting and categorising IT equipment, servicing and rebooting laptops, and disassembling and cleaning personal computers.

KickStart is active and 'hands on', providing an alternative to formal learning experiences in schools. Young people involved in KickStart describe it as different to school:

"At school it's just - it's waking up every day, and because I have anxiety and all that it's, like, it's too much of a hassle..."

"I'd rather physical and hands on labour, so I work in a warehouse, that's why I do that, but if you're into, like, programming or repair and all that, then, yeah, you can do it here. But it's something that you can do to test what you like and to see what you like. If you don't like it, you don't like it." (Program Participant)

This alternative educational experience takes place in different areas of the organisation; for instance, the Warehouse or the Repairs Shop. Multi-site education provides different kinds of professional experiences and encounters that engage and stimulate young people. As one participant says:

"I like ReUse or repair because I like to actually get my mind stuck into - I don't know, just mess around with old faulty boards... I was just watching him tear it down and go through the stuff with the fault finders and that."

The hands-on learning approach, coupled with the guidance of experienced educators, provides a unique and personalised culture. The course trainers use storytelling and personal experience to create excitement and interest, which engages young people in education and training. Participating young people experience trainers as approachable, funny, honest and understanding. Some young people found the training environment very different to past work experience and more conducive to their own physical strengths:

"Well, first off it's indoors, so I'm not out sweating. It's less labour intensive. Everyone is nice and social. I've just always liked the idea of working in an office." (Program Participant)

"Like I said I don't mind the environment... The last job I was doing, my second job that I had in my life which was gardening and landscaping – a strata gardening and landscaping, I hated that so much..."

It was just – it was – I just hate gardening, I hate weeds, I hate dirt and then I became a cleaner and I hate cleaning, it's really hard to vacuum like carry a heavy vacuum cleaner up

four flights of stairs, vacuum them all going down, wipe handrails. So I definitely don't want to be a gardener again. I prefer to do this." (Program Participant)



Following the initial two weeks, young people are able to specialise in an area of WorkVentures for another two weeks. They can choose to work in Reception, Call Centre, Warehouse, or on the Bench (electronics repairs).

Participants did not receive Certification for participating in KickStart. However, the program is considered a pathway, and for some, an entry point to the Traineeship program, which offers young people vocational training in Business and Information Technology, in partnership with external stakeholders.

While some young people enrolled in KickStart were keen to follow this pathway into supported education and employment, others were awaiting offers from Higher and continuing Education Institutions. The goals of the young people therefore differed. Those planning on Higher/Continuing Education saw WorkVentures as offering work experience, networks, and social engagement opportunities. Young people who were interested in the Traineeship pathway viewed WorkVentures as a window to decent working conditions through education and training.

2.2 Inviting social participation and personal development



KickStart supports social participation by providing young people with opportunities for social interaction with staff members and peers in their age group. Young people are encouraged to work in groups to problem solve and achieve goals within timeframes. The research found that many of the young people interviewed expected to maintain some of these relationships beyond the life of the program. However, due to both their interests and challenges of proximity across Greater Sydney, they typically described ongoing connections as likely to occur online through social media and online gaming.

Although it is not explicitly part of the KickStart model, there is a strong culture of mental health awareness and support. Through a strengths-based approach, WorkVentures staff challenge the stigma around mental health that many young people encounter. This creates a safe environment in which young people can feel supported to participate in group settings where different learning styles and ways of being are normalised. One Program Participant explains the positive effect of participating in KickStart on his own mental health. For him the benefit was in:

"Having a routine, stuff like that.... rather than just waking up and playing games every day. ... every single day I think about not coming in because I'm too tired, I'd rather sleep, but like just this thing in the back of my head just like kicks me out of bed and says like get up, you've got to go, like your life depends on it kind of thing."

Another participant describes how WorkVentures training suits him:

"I've always had it really. I think it's a family thing, always had the anxiety... It's just something you deal with.

... I'd rather spend six hours in a day making money than six hours of my day sitting behind a desk [at school] not doing anything."

This participant decided to leave school and wants to start work. He has a complex background and says that WorkVentures helps in this transition period by providing access to physical work that suits him.

Program staff and routine play a central role in motivating young people to commit to the program by building relationships and skills in which they are personally invested. Autonomy and empowerment are fostered through graduated task allocation and the clear communication of rights, responsibilities and expectations (e.g. expectations for personal presentation and communication).

2.3 Creating pathways into employment

As noted above, not all young people participating in KickStart are seeking an immediate transition to work. The KickStart program supports work readiness, while the Traineeship program, into which some KickStart participants transition, places young people into supported employment positions. This provides young people with a bespoke entry point into the labour market. As one young person says:

"Over the last few weeks before I was here while I was searching for a job, like I had no luck. I was going to interviews and getting knocked back over and over again...

But this gives me entry level, the opportunity to prove myself. Whatever I write on paper in my resume, like they don't care about that, they're actually going to see me do the work, be punctual every single day. It's a good demonstration and I guess they'll vouch for me to get a job hopefully!"

After KickStart, young people are matched with Host Employers in, for instance, the Community Service sector or the legal profession. The transition is managed carefully by matching young peoples' skills and personality with the host employer. WorkVentures check in and evaluate educational progress and relationship development in the workplace to ensure that the young person feels supported as they settle in to a new environment.

The Traineeship program not only provides employment but also a pathway into a possible career and longterm working relationships that impact upon young people's life chances and choices. It is here that we see an intervention that supports the social determinants of health via education and employment. One young person in the program describes feeling valued at work and hopeful for the future:

"I worked in one place for a year and a half and that was pretty horrible. I didn't like it there, even though I stayed there.

I just needed to step out of my comfort zone, can't be in [that Industry] for the next six or seven years is what it's going to feel like. So I kind of just bit the bullet.

"I was doing interviews with other places but I didn't feel comfortable... They're more laid-back here, like relaxed. The other places were very corporate and I just didn't like it. This was a better work environment I feel like for myself."

3.0 How do organisational features affect the impacts of social enterprise on SDOH for young people?

3.1 Organisational features that position WorkVentures in context

3.1.1 Origins

WorkVentures has a long history of providing youth services, dating back to its origins as Peninsula Community Services (founded in 1979). The WorkVentures employment focus first emerged in 1984 through the Compuskill computer training facility. Key activities have remained consistent since 1986 with a focus on “job creation through labour market training in computing, electronics, and employment placement” (WorkVentures, 2019). Particular events in the WorkVentures timeline have led to current programs and forms of youth engagement, such as the launch of KickStart in 2015. Many WorkVentures staff have been with the organisation since its inception and have a background in electronics training:

“We all started at Garden Island Dock Yards in Sydney where we were public servants but we were trained in navy systems electronics for the Department of Defence.” (Staff Member)

This background taught staff to be all-rounders, to know what they were repairing and why, right down to the component level. This all-rounder approach is embedded in the culture of the organisation, as young people are taught foundational electronics and computer skills while developing personal and professional attributes.

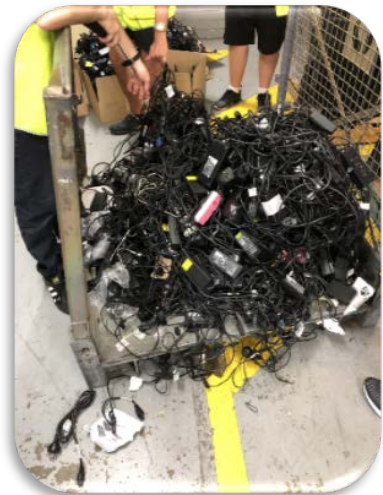
3.1.2 Industry orientation

WorkVentures positions itself in the Information Technology and Electronics Industry. WorkVentures has a strong financial and cultural foundation from which it is able to adapt and evolve as the IT industry changes. It has different commercial streams, from supplying IT equipment to groups with different access needs, to repairing equipment for corporate partners. WorkVentures provides a high quality commercial service which enables it to compete in the sector. As one Staff Member explains:

“This benchmark survey, it looks at other organisations in the sector. So we’ve benchmarked our responses from our staff to manufacturing sector as well as to the not for profit sector ... the good things that we do well here are better than the industry standard by far.”

This high standard impacts upon the learning of young people in the KickStart program, who are able to experience skilled workers and a work ethic centred around attention to detail and customer satisfaction. One young person describes his uplifting encounter with a staff member:

“Yeah, he was a funny bloke. You could talk to him and [a young person] were talking about quantum computing once and I just blown in like what quantum computer, what’s going on with that?! Why don’t we have quantum computers yet and he started explaining it. So yeah I liked that about him.” (Program Participant)



The IT industry is primarily comprised of male workers. This gender disparity was reflected in the KickStart program in 2019, at the time of our data collection. There were no young women in KickStart during this period, however the program had previously included young women. In order to promote gender equity in the KickStart program, Workventures leadership have pursued gender-focused funding initiatives.

3.1.3 Location

WorkVentures is a national social enterprise with a central location in Mascot, Sydney (NSW). Mascot is a gentrified suburban area located near Sydney Airport. The cost of living in the area is high and it is home to professionals, clerical and administrative workers, managers, technical and trades workers (ABS, 2016). Major industries of employment in the area include cafes and restaurants; computer systems design and related services; air and space transport; and banking and hospitals (ABS, 2016).

The organisation benefits from close proximity to the CBD and public transport lines. This means that not only does the location open up commercial opportunities and stakeholder relationships, but that training facilities are also accessible to young people living outside the area. Sydney has a large youth population, with many living in regional and rural areas (66.7% of young people in NSW live in Sydney, while 33.1% live in regional and rural areas) (Youth NSW, 2019). WorkVentures engages with local schools to connect with young people, and those who contact the organisation seeking a placement.

3.2 Organisational features that enable WorkVentures support health equity outcomes for young people

3.2.1 Structure

An organisation's structure is how its functions and people are arranged to allow implementation of the organisation's mission and strategy. The key features of WorkVentures' structure are:

- Multi-site organisation
- A dedicated Youth programs team
- Diverse staff and spaces
- Paired Youth Programs: KickStart and Host-Employment



3.2.2 Culture

An organisation's culture is the collection of stated rules and rules in use (that is, the way things are done) that are enduring and guide how people engage in their work and with each other. Culture is shaped by shared values and principles, and tends to stem from organisational history, especially the values and customs of founders. WorkVentures has a culture that is:

- Empowering and inclusive
- Safe and understanding
- Longterm, careful and solid relationships



3.2.3 Policies and Processes

An organisation's policies and processes are the mechanisms through which work gets done—how information is managed and shared, how staff are recognised and rewarded, how resources are allocated, and goals articulated. Policies and processes that enable WorkVentures' impact include:

- Formal communication processes (i.e. weekly meetings) and informal practices (i.e. informal conversations)
- Non-hierarchical leadership practices, (in addition to, for example, OHS formality and training boundaries) and skilled and experienced staff
- Personalised matching of young people with site areas and employers



The organisational features listed here help inform a program that improves the social determinants of health equities for young people by:

- ✓ Engaging young people in learning and education through *different options for learning and an 'all-rounder' approach*;
- ✓ Encouraging personal development through *diverse relationships* and a *safe and understanding environment*; and
- ✓ Supporting young people to *transition into new employment* through *strong stakeholder relationships* and *personalised matching*.

3.3 How WorkVentures supports engagement in education and training

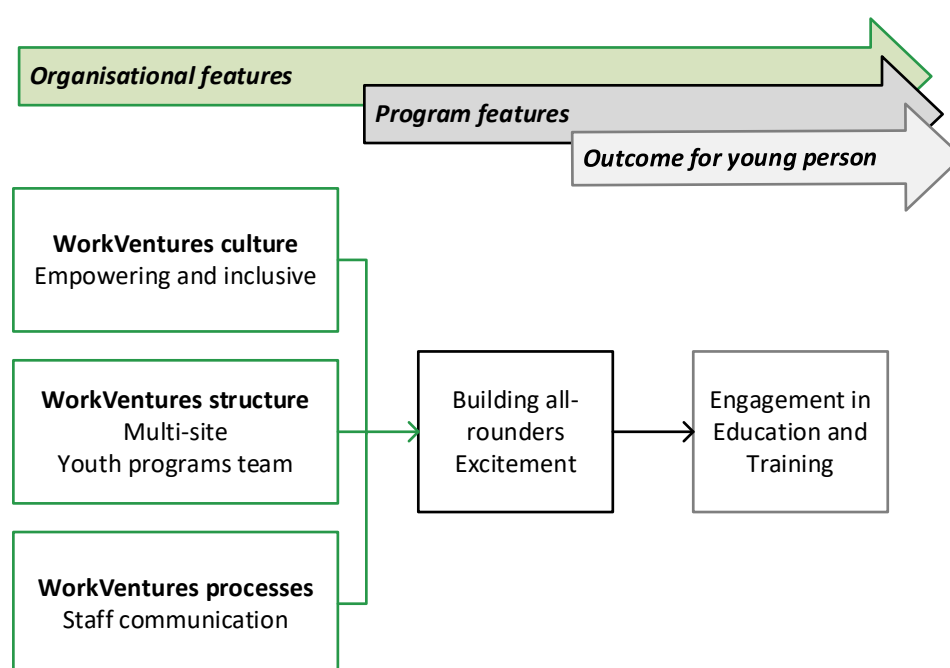


Figure 5 shows the key cultural, structural and policy elements that create an engaging program with outcomes in education and training.

3.3.1 Empowering and inclusive culture

WorkVentures provides opportunities for young people to develop skills and gain experience in technical areas, while empowering them through a sense of belonging and purpose as contributors to the organisation's social mission. Communicating the youth-focused organisational culture to young people and building this culture starts on Day One of the KickStart program.

On their first day, young people are introduced to their Program Manager/Trainer who will be their guide and go-to person during their time at WorkVentures. Designating one key person that the young people can connect with creates certainty and clarity in the initial days.

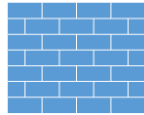
The Training Manager takes the group of young people around to meet staff members, stopping to speak with those who have a story to tell. Some staff share stories of starting out in the same position as the young person. This encourages young people to imagine themselves as *emerging staff members*.

Young people are introduced into their own space, known as the *training room*. Trainers begin the process of communicating young people's rights and responsibilities while at WorkVentures. Trainees are responsible for their own attendance and are encouraged to hold the Trainer to account for their responsibilities in the program, for example being on time in the mornings. This challenges the power dynamic between *Trainer and Student*, empowering young people to expect and encourage certain standards of behaviour in the workplace.

Trainers use a range of engagement techniques and establish ground rules through interesting stories based on past work experience. The image below illustrates engagement techniques utilised in the classroom.

"... not having certainty going and working in corporate environments, particularly white collar where people come and go all the time, gets very confusing for young people."

(Staff Member)



Boundaries: expectations for behaviour and interactions are clearly set out for young people on Induction day and reiterated in the classroom.



Excitement: there are risks involved in working with electronic equipment and these stories are shared and enjoyed.



Bonding: the cohort were all young males and able to bond with trainers and relate to the motif of adventure and risk. Managing risk – being close but in control was linked to self mastery and power.



Storytellers: trainers are skilled, experienced and able to transform learning via effective storytelling methods.



Meaningful work and training: young people learn that they are helping other people, as well as themselves, by being part of WorkVentures



Real opportunity: young people are introduced to personal growth and career opportunities as they meet staff members and undertake training

Figure 6 Key elements of KickStart program

Expectations for behaviours and attitudes are set out clearly throughout the KickStart program. During their first classroom-based training session, the trainer describes how WorkVentures started, what sort of work is involved, what the expectations are around behaviour, turning up for work and how people work together. Many of the expectations or rules are standard for the industry and may be considered a little 'dry' for the audience, but is purposefully delivered in an interactive way. Video material is used, accompanied by slides and, most importantly, stories. It is the stories of incidents in the workplace that the trainees connect with and which encourage them to share a laugh.

The students are then offered Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) training, which clearly outlines their rights and responsibilities in different WorkVentures areas. *The trainer* explains that WHS is: "How the company is going to do things." This practical explanation is the first step in setting effective shared boundaries with which the young people can engage. The Area Supervisor's responsibilities to the students are also explained. There is a strong sense of professional care expressed and mutual obligation, which is further explained through personalisation of the implications and consequences of the rules; for example, the trainer stating: "I don't want to see you hurt because I have to live with that."

The training sets important boundaries for self-care, interactions with others, and use of training and work spaces. This encourages young people to be aware of their conditions, reflexive about their own behaviour, and empowers them to be responsible.

Language used to create safe spaces and set boundaries

Conditions and expectations:

The moral obligation for the trainees is that they will put in their best effort, work diligently, start at 9.30am and finish at 3pm every day. The trainer encourages the students: “we’ll help you learn as much as you can but we expect you to do that work—we expect the same conditions for you as we have with our paid employees.”

“Don’t fall into the trap of watching and doing what other employees do though, like getting 20 cups of coffee throughout the day!”

Working ethically:

“‘If you see something say something’. For instance, if there’s sensitive or inappropriate content on one of the machines you have been assigned to work on you need to report it immediately. Sometimes when working on gear from customers you might come across information—‘we have to treat all this information confidentially and you must tell a supervisor if you encounter it.’”

Anti-discrimination:

“If you hear or see something that upsets you please let me or your supervisor know. We’re going to offer you a worker buddy while you’re here to help you through any issues.”

“We have a great diverse range of people here.”

“Treat people how you would like to be treated.”

3.3.2 A multi-site organisation with a Youth Programs team

WorkVentures is a multi-site organisation, with different areas available for its programs. As young people progress through the program, they are encouraged to understand the value of being an ‘all-rounder’, of working in different areas and having different skill sets. They are also encouraged to experience different forms of work to know what they enjoy doing. Different areas have different tasks associated with them:



ReUse: young people are taught how to clean and reboot Laptops and Desktop computers. They work with three staff members who have strong IT experience and interact with many other staff in this area of the warehouse.



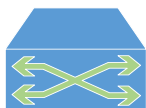
Call Centre: young people work with a team of three staff members in an open plan office next to reception. They take calls from customers who are purchasing computers or troubleshooting IT issues and develop customer service skills.



Reception: young people work with one mentor behind a desk receiving phone calls and queries about WorkVentures. They complete administration tasks and greet staff and visitors who enter the building for meetings.



The Warehouse: young people work with one Warehouse manager and additional staff to manage, store and distribute IT equipment. This involves use of a forklift which requires a license to drive.



The Bench: in their final two weeks of the program young people may be sponsored by a staff member to work at the electrical bench. Multiple technicians work in this area opposite the staff offices. Working at the bench requires a strong interest in the repair of electrical equipment and an understanding of safety standards.

3.3.4 Staff communications

Processes are embedded in KickStart through the timetabling of the program. Staff know when young people will be coming into their section and what activities they will undertake. Staff in sections like ReUse are able to coach young people through their everyday tasks and rely on their long-term experience working in the area. Youth program staff work in real time to share developments, questions and reaffirm tasks and goals on a daily and weekly basis through informal morning huddles and formal group meetings.

3.4 How WorkVentures support personal development and relationship building

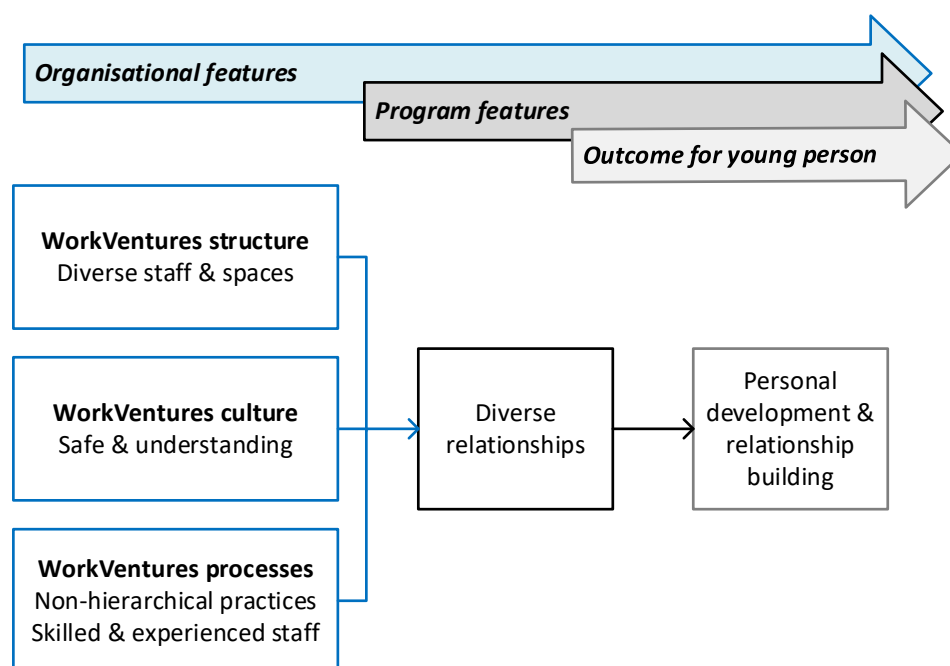
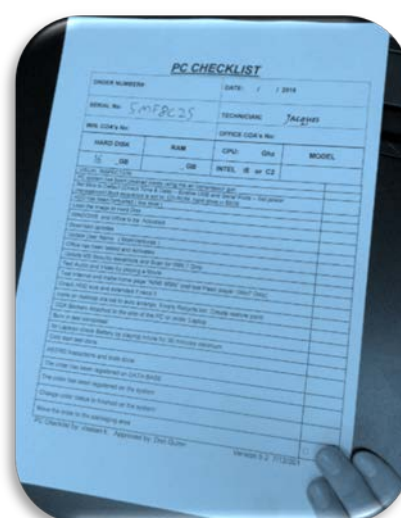


Figure 7 shows the key cultural, structural and policy elements that enable diverse relationships leading to outcomes in personal development.

3.4.1 Diverse staff and non-hierarchical staff practices

Across training areas there are different staff for young people to engage with. They are encouraged to connect with staff and imagine themselves working in various roles. Staff at all levels are approachable and check in with KickStarters, which has a positive effect upon organisational culture.

As young people move towards the end of their time in KickStart they are asked to specialise in an area. This means that they will be working with a particular staff member. This is a recognition that they have performed to a satisfactory level in the initial weeks and are 'ready' to be placed in extended training at WorkVentures. This is a time of recognition and of personal growth.



The trainers in different areas of WorkVentures provide guidance and certainty to young people as they work through various tasks. As one staff member explains:

“KickStart is a preamble to actually getting young people into normal business. It's not all the technology, it's actually the boundaries, and often a lot of these young people haven't actually had good boundaries. And it's not just boundaries in one area, when you go to a supervisor, they are going, ‘What are you doing there?’ It's a consistent boundary and we've got a blue collar work environment that allows those boundaries to flourish a bit because we have start times, stop times.” (Team member)

3.4.2 A safe and understanding culture

WorkVentures is described by trainers and others as having a supportive and relaxed ‘family’¹ environment. Staff feel that they are listened to and can communicate easily with managers and leadership. Staff also feel their work has a strong social purpose, as one team member tells us:

“... it's not a KPI here for the sake of a KPI and just money. It's you're wanting to be able to work more effectively, build up the business, so you can then have something to actually help people with. It's not just you're earning money for the big boss who wants another Ferrari.” (Staff Member)

Managers create a supportive culture by monitoring individual staff workloads and ensuring that tasks and the overall workload are shared. As part of this model staff care for the young people involved in KickStart by creating safe and welcoming spaces.

A space is safe and understanding when you feel like you can be yourself, that your needs and interests, skills and uncertainties will be understood, and that you will be valued for who you are. WorkVentures creates safe and understanding spaces by valuing the minds and bodies of its young people. There is an understanding among staff that everyone faces different challenges and people have different ways of learning. This translates into an informed and responsive approach to training where the participant's challenges, strengths and communication preferences are factored into their placement within WorkVentures. This understanding of the positivity of difference creates a culture of acceptance and safety for young people.

Staff understand the importance of this culture based on their experience working with young people from diverse backgrounds. Participants describe having a place where can come to learn, and where they can manage mental health challenges like anxiety. Space plays an important part here—the warehouse is a place to ‘get some air’ and move the body to release any tension.



3.4.3 Understanding, skilled and experienced staff

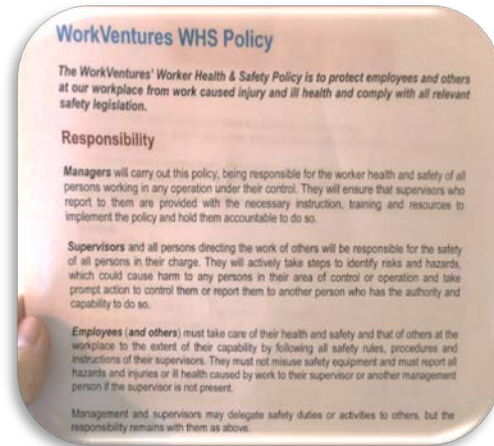
WorkVentures staff are experienced, knowledgeable and are able to provide background information in IT, electronics, PC repair and warehouse management.

¹ While the concept of ‘family’ is complex for many young people, encompassing both positive and negative associations, many WorkVentures staff used to word to describe their work environment.

As young people progress through Kickstart and near the end of the program they are prepared for their transition into apprenticeship, employment and/or education. Staff prepare young people with the necessary information to step into the workplace, knowing that:

“... it’s different in that it’s paid, it’s for a longer timeframe and there’s a hell of a lot more expectation on them.” (Youth Program Team)

The career preparation workshop empowers young people by giving them strategies and tools to de-mystify the interview process and assist with resume preparation. Key messages include: *self-belief, awareness, and being yourself*. Young people experience forward momentum and a crystallising moment as they see their next steps laid out in front of them—this creates a sense of energy in the room! The staff member encourages a guided discussion of the expectations employers may have and how they can actively manage these.



3.5 How WorkVentures supports transitions: Apprenticeship-based employment

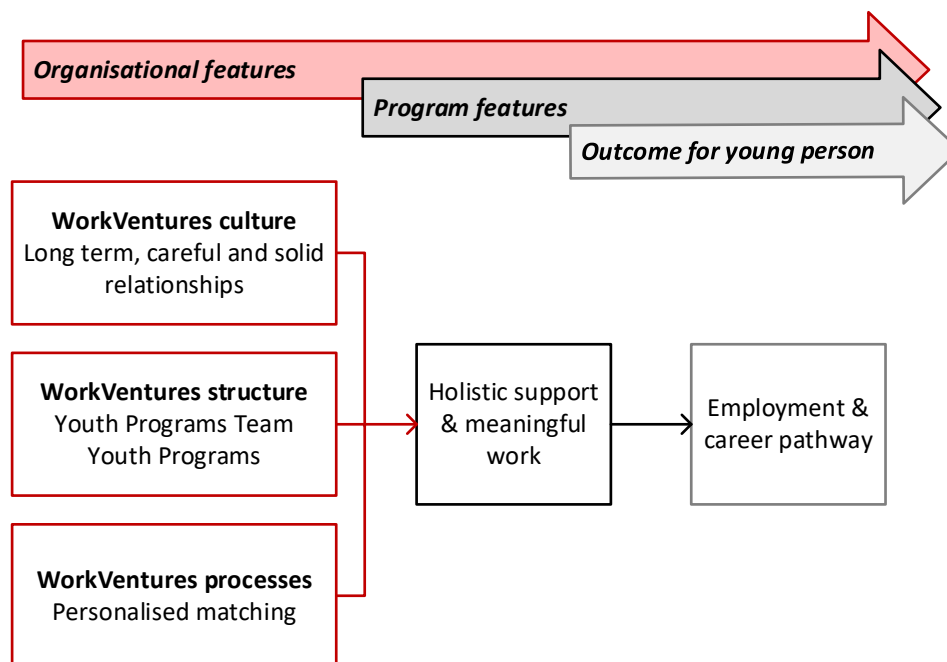


Figure 8 shows the key cultural, structural and policy elements that create meaningful, holistic support with outcomes in employment.

3.5.1 Relationships with external stakeholders and partners are long term, careful and solid

WorkVentures' culture has been developed in partnership with its external stakeholders. Shared ideas and approaches towards supporting young people are based upon:

- *The philosophy that a social enterprise should offer a commercially competitive product or service and have a sustainable business model.*
- *A preference for funding and trading income that is aligned to social purpose, with the aim of developing organisational and collective identity.*
- *A shared concern for young people's education.*
- *Enthusiasm for mentoring and coaching diverse groups of young people.*

"Industry contacts that we have who sort of have the same ethos as we do; other foundations who I have dealings with I would always reach out to them. They may have young people who are looking for an opportunity like we've got. And we do support each other through that, which I think is good. But it can be tough."

(Youth Programs Team)

This alignment of values means that not only do stakeholders share in WorkVentures' social mission but they actively engage in similar methods of engagement and program delivery at their own independent organisations. The host employers we interviewed expressed their desire to make a difference in the lives of young people by supporting their personal development and transition into work. Through these relationships, tailored wraparound support is provided to young people, and many stakeholders describe this as the ultimate goal:

"Well I think that's what sets a group training organisation a bit apart from say, a trainee that comes through just one employer, or just by themselves, is that there is that extra party that is interested, and wants to see them do well, and there's that person that is actually specifically going out to visit, to check in and make sure that they're on track." (Stakeholder)

3.5.2 The Youth Programs Team and the Traineeship program



The Traineeship program is supported by a four-way relationship between Registered Training Organisations (RTO), WorkVentures (the Group Training Organisation, GTO), Training Services and the Host Employer. WorkVentures have been working with their RTO since 2012. RTOs provide the educational curriculum/course work for young people, for instance in Business and IT. The Curriculum itself is online, which helps students access the course. Some courses require face to face training which is provided by the employer. Sophisticated communications processes, including

regular meetings, student check-ins and evaluations keep everyone on the same page. A Youth Program Team member explains:

"You know, an example - I had two young girls working in a law firm and they were not getting along. And the client rang me and said oh look, I can't deal with this rubbish, this is ridiculous. So the next time I was in the city I sort of sat them down and they wouldn't look

at each other the entire time. And I was just like this is ridiculous, come on. And you had to sort of have a bit of a talk. They ended up being best mates.

Total miscommunication between them. Whereas maybe an employer out in the real world would just go this is ridiculous, get out."

As one staff member says, there are many 'touch points' in supporting one young person that numerous staff members from different organisations must be involved in. Building relationships between staff members supports this process and creates shared goals. For instance, in line with WorkVentures' mission, host employers consider how they can develop their in-house traineeship to offer 'next levels' of training and employment to young people. As one host employer says:

"The next step after the reception and junior admin staff is junior legal assistant where you start doing - it's a foot in the door towards the legal secretary path." (Stakeholder)

The result of this support means that young people sometimes finish their coursework early. The traineeship itself is 12 months in duration and has high completion rates:

"At the end of the program, which is usually 12 months, they finish and I would say around 80% get offered a full-time job and stay on. Others may finish and then they get another trainee to come through to give another kid an opportunity." (Youth Programs Team)

At the conclusion of the traineeship there is a review process that captures the experience of the employer and the young person. The young person then decides if they would like to follow this career path and if possible, the host employer offers employment.



3.5.3 Personalised matching

Apprenticeship-based placements with host employers are supported by the Recruitment Supervisor, who liaises with trainees and host employers to find the right match. Young people entering WorkVentures are given a description of the kind of support they will be offered:



"If you think of yourself, the trainee is in the middle, and then around them you've got WorkVentures employing them. And then we have relationships out in the community, which does include ourselves, and the trainee will do their traineeship with one of those organisations for the whole of their traineeship. And it's half/half of your paid practical work, so your job. And then you're working towards a course at the same time. So you get three hours a week to do that at work." (Youth Programs Team)

The process of matching a young person with a host employer is intuitive rather than mechanical. It requires an understanding of their personal interests and ambitions, strengths and challenges, along with a good understanding of the employer's needs and culture. This background information is attained in the interview process and throughout the KickStart program. Staff ensure that the young person is interested in the job they are being placed in. This is why it is so important to WorkVentures to offer a range of training options during KickStart so young people have the opportunity to try different things.

"One of our youngest trainees, she was 15 when she started, and we were able to help her get some – she had to be out of home. So she got her housing and just being able to sort of set her up with all the networks. It is time-intensive and you are sort of taking on some of the issues."

(Youth Programs Team)

4.0 Conclusion

This case study report discussed findings primarily related to **Research Questions One and Two** of the broader study, and as such has focused on organisational features—contextual and characteristic—that support the social determinants of health outcomes of the enterprise.



WorkVentures' 'human' approach toward young people promotes dignity and respect. Young people are encouraged to understand why they are doing an activity, not just how to do it. This approach creates layers of engagement, meaning, and provokes curiosity as young people are invited into the different areas of the organisation and encouraged to feel at home, to try out different activities and reflect on what they enjoy doing. Further to this, WorkVentures' emphasis on mental health awareness and supports translates into an informed and responsive approach to training and work placement.

Health equity outcomes were not experienced in the same way by all young people. For those transitioning into further education or employment the program was a way to boost their work experience resume and build employment connections. For those with a more complex background and no set trajectory into education or employment, WorkVentures' impact was greater, providing a vital support network and transitional pathway that may not have otherwise existed. Entry points into the labour market were highly valued by most participants. Employment was discussed by young people as: central to their future, hard to get into, and something that WorkVentures was providing access to via skills development and networks. WorkVentures carefully crafts long-term relationships with partner organisations and stakeholders to support these transitions into the IT Industry, banking and law sectors. Through these relationships, WorkVentures mitigates social isolation by providing spaces for belonging and personal development. This creates protective factors in young people's lives that have positive impacts on mental health and well-being, employment and education with the potential for long-term impact on health equity.

Youth programs provide well-being benefits for staff as they engage in meaningful and purposeful interaction not just with young people, but with each other. While staff burnout in the social enterprise sector is a real issue, it is worth noting that, despite its many years of operation, staff report an absence of staff burnout at WorkVentures. This is in part due to the origins of the staff team, the skill set they bring to the organisation and the strong sense of shared responsibility throughout the whole staff body. Staff wellbeing was positively impacted by the non-hierarchical practices of leadership via everyday conversations and the possibility of working with young people not only as trainees but as potential/future staff members.

WorkVentures' next steps involve keeping pace with the ever-evolving IT industry and unpacking what this means for the KickStart program curriculum. Additional opportunities for funding which connect the program to policy initiatives regarding sustainability and inclusion will also shape the Youth Program and organisational culture.

"The challenge of course like any social enterprise, and this is a challenge for us in what we're trying to do is you know if you're understanding here, the life cycle of a not for profit business is that when you've been around for nearly 40 years sort of this huge start-up scale and the new opportunities, new business and then you sort of peter off and then you've got to reinvent yourself to grow again. So we're sort of in this phase that we're trying to reinvent ourselves to grow."

(Leadership Team)

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Appendix A

This case study was developed using ethnographic data collection methods including two focus groups, 22 interviews, analysis of documents and two weeks of participant observation.

Focus groups

To kick-start data collection, CSI facilitated a 90 minute workshop at WorkVentures on 8 November 2018. The first workshop focused on a single element of WorkVentures' strategy: the engagement and support of young people. The purpose of the workshop was to:

- ❖ *Identify how WorkVentures delivers social impact and value*
- ❖ *Create a Theory of Change that can be used to guide measurement of social impact and test assumptions*

The workshop was attended by seven Youth Program staff and members of the executive. CSI facilitated a second, two-hour workshop at WorkVentures on 17 October 2019 once all data had been collected and preliminary data analysis had commenced. The purpose of the action learning workshop was to provide WorkVentures with insight into early findings and seek feedback about how to direct future analysis. The workshop was attended by 10 staff including members of the executive.

Participant observation

Two members of the research team participated in 13 days of the 4/5 week KickStart program and its day-to-day activities. The 13 days of participant observation occurred between weeks one and five of the program. This time was spent in different areas of WorkVentures, as follows:

- ❖ Weeks 1 – 2: Training room (i.e. the Classroom); Warehouse and ReUse
- ❖ Weeks 2 – 5: ICT Hardware Repair Technicians; PC Assembly/Build Technicians; Warehouse & Logistics; or Administration and Call Centre

The researcher wrote extensive field notes at the conclusion of each day.

A second member of the research team observed two Board meetings on 25 July 2019 and 28 November 2019 and wrote extensive field notes at the conclusion of each meeting.

Interviews

Two members of the research team interviewed **22** of WorkVentures stakeholders between 26 November 2018 and 28 November 2019, including:

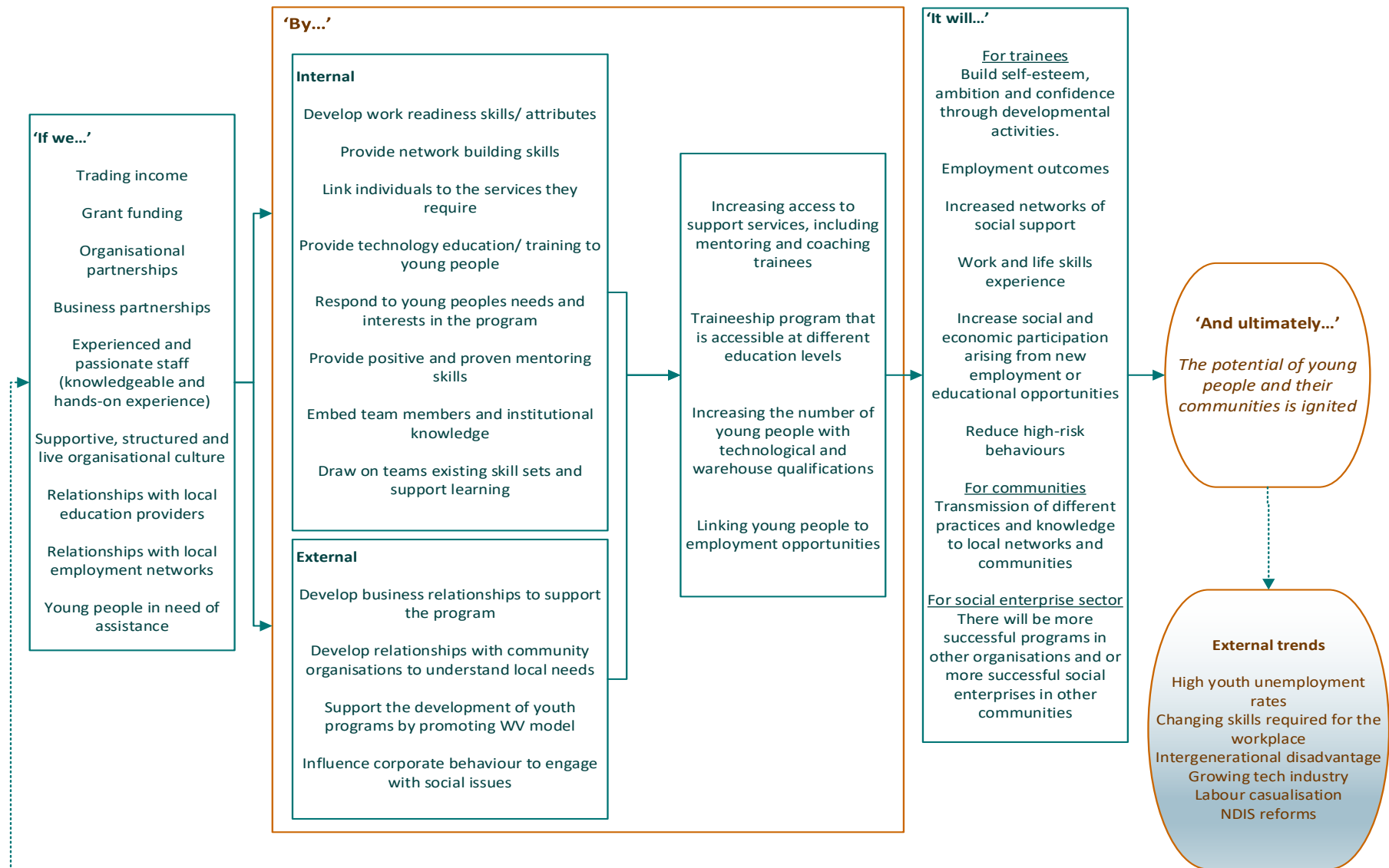
Stakeholder	Number
Participants of KickStart and trainee staff (young people)	6 interviews
Program Staff	6 interviews
Managerial staff	3 interviews
Executive staff	1 interview
Board members	1 Interview
Youth service providers (external)	2 interviews
Host-Employers (organisations)	2 interviews
RTO (organisations)	1 interviews

Appendix B

Theory of Change

The Theory of Change model below has been revised to take into account the influence of the evolving IT and electronics industry. WorkVentures aim to develop their IT skills and knowledge base to support their commercial business which in turn supports their Youth Programs.

Theory of Change Workshop 1 model



Revised Theory of Change Model 2

