

Bridging the Gap

Project Evaluation: Phase 2: Interim Evaluation Report

- July 2014 -



Improving our community



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Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary.....	4
2	Introduction	7
3	Evaluation methodology	8
4	Client demographics.....	9
5	Outcomes and achievements	11
	Client outcomes	11
	Progress towards achieving objectives.....	16
6	Conclusion	29
	Appendix A: Bridging the Gap Evaluation Plan Summary	31
	Appendix B: Training outcomes	33
	Appendix C: Case studies.....	34
	Appendix D: Workstar assessment summary.....	36

Abbreviations used in this Report

BTG	Bridging the Gap
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
RG	Reference Group
SUSS	Service User Satisfaction Survey

1 Executive Summary

Bridging the Gap (BTG) aims to increase the support provided to the most disadvantaged people living in the Geelong region. It is a new approach which seeks to integrate a range of services provided to vulnerable people and to address the causal factors of disadvantage. BTG is a partnership between lead agency and community service provider Bethany Community Support, training provider Karingal and employment specialist Gforce, with investment provided by Give Where You Live.

BTG Phase 1 was designed as a pilot demonstration project, running from November 2011 to June 2013. Phase 2 seeks to further this work through, *inter alia*, a focus on improving the ability of family and housing service systems to support the transition to appropriate training and employment of clients with complex needs.

This document serves as an interim evaluation report for Phase 2 of the project. It has been prepared utilising data obtained through Workstar, meetings with the Project Worker, data recorded by case managers and the Project Worker, case studies and review of Service User Satisfaction Survey data.

Between July 2013 and June 2014 there were 43 cases under direct consideration of the BTG project. Nineteen of those were referred during the 2013-2014 reporting period, 11 open cases continued from the previous year and 13 referrals from 2012-2013 were opened during 2013-2014.

In addition to this, case managers acted pre-emptively to provide cross-program support to a further 19 Bethany clients outside the BTG program. These clients are evidence of the effectiveness of the approach to build BTG capability amongst Family Services and Housing Services case managers.

Client demographic summary

Referred clients came from 18 suburbs, townships or localities, with ages ranging from 17 to 56. Approximately 33% of clients were aged 30-39 (the age range most represented) and approximately 67% were female.

Client outcome summary

Progress towards outcomes for BTG clients included:

- 21 clients were referred to training, study, volunteering or an employment provider. Of these, 7 either gained paid employment, started a business or increased employment hours, and 5 completed one or more courses. 1 client participated in volunteer work.
- 24 clients were given education support (supported with enrolment in, information about, or connections to training opportunities). Of these, 3 clients continued training from the previous year in a total of 4 courses, and 13 clients enrolled in a total of 20 training courses during 2013-2014. 9 clients completed 16 training courses whilst being engaged with BTG. An unknown number will have completed courses after their case was closed.
- 7 clients were engaged and achieved limited outcomes: three withdrew from the program after some engagement and two were awaiting a mentoring match. A further 2 clients started with a volunteer mentor towards the end of the reporting period, and had not yet achieved significant outcomes.

- 10 clients withdrew from or were inactive within BTG and achieved no outcomes: either they could not be contacted, their case was otherwise inactive and closed, they elected to withdraw from the program or (in the case of one client) they were withdrawn by their case manager in order to receive direct support outside the program.
- Due to the program being at capacity, and an influx of referrals towards the end of the financial year, five people were placed on a wait list and had not yet achieved outcomes. An additional client's referral was withdrawn by the case manager due to the waiting time, and the case manager opted to support the client directly.
- In addition to the BTG program, a further 19 Bethany clients were provided with BTG style support outside the program: predominantly this took the form of information about, and/or connections to, relevant employment and training services.

Of the 35 open and active cases, 23 were closed during the year and 12 remained open. In addition, five referrals remained on the waiting list.

Summary of progress towards BTG objectives

The BTG Evaluation Plan describes five objectives, each with a number of Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) and associated indicators of success. This interim evaluation reports on progress towards the achievement of success indicators for KEQs 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, and 12.



This Evaluation has found that the BTG Project Phase 2 has made significant progress towards indicators of success for five KEQs:

- KEQ 2 – integrated services,
- KEQ 4 - provision of training, jobs and careers information to clients,
- KEQ 5 – BTG support assistance to clients to remain engaged
- KEQ 6 – clients motivated, encouraged and supported to engage in vocational pathways,
- KEQ 8 – building of confidence, self-esteem and skills.

Some progress was evident towards indicators of success for two KEQs:

- KEQ 10 - shared information, forums and networks leading to improved case management practices,
- KEQ 11 – volunteer engagement in the project.

Challenges in achieving or reporting on one KEQ indicator of success were identified, noting that further work is required:

- KEQ 12 – clients connected and feeling connected to a broad range of vocational and community programs.

Recommendations

Three recommendations are made in this report:

Recommendation 1: Initiate and promote a procedure whereby if things get too much for a volunteer, they send the Project Worker a simple email advising they are taking a break, and no further explanation is required.

Recommendation 2: Administrative support staff or volunteers to conduct SUSS interviews with clients on closure of cases and enter data directly into survey monkey. This will alleviate the data entry workload for the Quality Manager and facilitate the completion and compilation of reports for all closed cases.

Recommendation 3. Use and report on the Impact Assessment Tool following case closure to measure longer term impacts of the BTG program on social inclusion and economic participation.

2 Introduction

Bridging the Gap (BTG) aims to increase the support provided to the most disadvantaged people living in the Geelong region. As its name suggests, the project aims to 'bridge the gap' by supporting the transition of participants to vocational training and employment pathways as a bridge out of disadvantage¹.

The BTG project is a partnership between Bethany Community Support as lead agency and community service provider, Karingal as the training provider and Gforce as the employment specialist. Highly vulnerable individuals with complex needs are identified through Bethany's Family Services and Housing Services programs, and referred to BTG. The program seeks to break the cycle of entrenched poverty and poor employment prospects by addressing the multiple barriers that clients experience.

BTG Phase 1 was designed as a pilot demonstration project, running from November 2011 until June 2013. Phase 2 seeks to further this work through, *inter alia*, a focus on improving the ability of family and housing services systems to support the transition to appropriate training and employment of clients with complex needs.

The project operates in the context of various State and Federal government directions, including:

- *The Social Inclusion Agenda*, a Federal Government initiative that strives for a socially inclusive society in which all Australians are able to participate fully in the nation's economic and community life, develop their own potential and be treated with dignity and respect². The *Social Inclusion Agenda* is supported by a toolkit which directs the Australian Public Service to design and deliver social policy to better meet the needs of disadvantaged people³.
- *The Best Interests Framework*, which is the Victorian Government's framework for case management. The *Best Interests Framework* recognises that child and family experiences are strongly influenced by family income, housing and access to community networks and resources⁴.
- *Case for Change*, a more recent, overarching Victorian Government policy that outlines the need for an integrated, client-centred case management system across all services⁵. Whilst *Case for Change* was developed after the conception of BTG, it nonetheless articulates the current direction for all DHS-operated programs including Disability, Housing, Child Protection and Family Services.

The BTG Phase 2 Evaluation Plan prescribes five Project Objectives and 12 Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs), eight of which are reviewed in this report. A summary of the Phase 2 BTG Evaluation Plan is included as Appendix A.

This report addresses client cases under active consideration during the 2013-2014 reporting year. It documents project activities, achievements and challenges over this period.

¹ Bethany (2013) Application for funding through Give Where You Live's Innovation Grants program

² Australian Social Inclusion Board (2011), *Breaking Cycles of Disadvantage*, Australian Government

³ Australian Government (2009), *The Australian Public Service Social Inclusion Policy Design and Delivery Toolkit*

⁴ Government of Victoria (2007) *The Best Interests Framework for Vulnerable Children and Youth*

⁵ Government of Victoria (2011), *Human Services: The Case for Change*

3 Evaluation methodology

The Bridging The Gap Project Phase 2 Evaluation Plan noted that this assessment would be *'an interim review utilising data obtained through Workstar, meetings with the Project Worker, case studies and review of Bethany's Service User Satisfaction Survey (SUSS) data'*. In keeping with this direction, the following data sources were used in the preparation of this report:

- Work Star^[1] self-assessments, completed by clients together with the Project Worker and/or case managers,
- Bethany's Service User Satisfaction Surveys (SUSS)^[2], completed by Family Services and Housing Services team leaders,
- Feedback and data compiled by the Project Worker and case managers regarding client demographics and outcomes,
- Feedback and data provided by the Project Worker regarding support provided to volunteers and case managers to build their capability to assist clients with economic participation,
- Surveys completed by volunteers following Bridging The Gap training,
- Case studies compiled by the Project Worker, detailing the impact of BTG on individual clients, and
- A recorded interview with a client and her volunteer mentor.

None of the data (other than the videoed interview) identified individuals, and all related to BTG support provided to Bethany clients during the first year of BTG Phase 2: July 2013 to June 2014.

^[1] Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd (2010) *Work Star – The Outcomes Star for Work and Learning*

^[2] SUSS assessments are completed at the end of client engagement with BTG – see Appendix B for a full summary of results

4 Client demographics

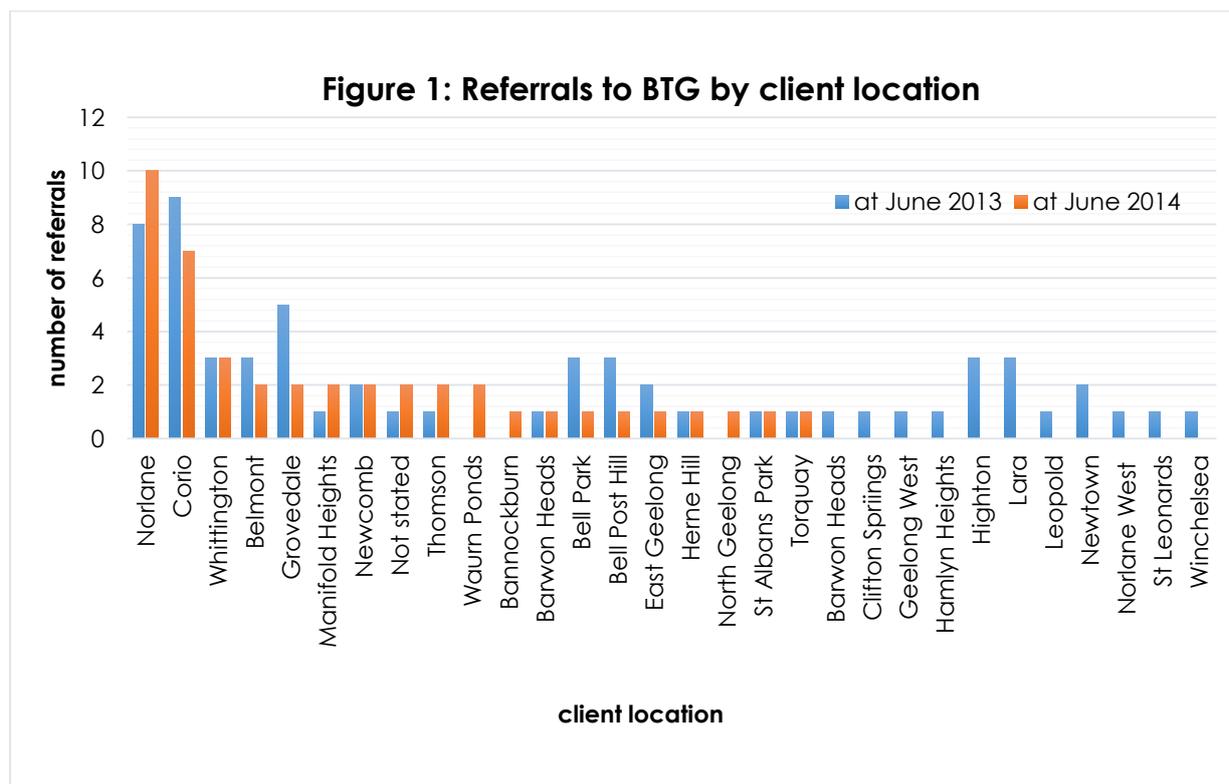
Between July 2013 and June 2014 there were 43 cases under consideration of the BTG project. Of those, 35 were open for some time during reporting period. Eight cases were not opened by June due to withdrawals or wait listing.

Nineteen of the 43 cases were referred during the 2013-2014 reporting period, 11 open cases continued from the previous year and 13 referrals from 2012-2013 were opened during 2013-2014.

Demographics

Figure 1 shows the number of BTG clients from each location for the 2013-2014 year and compares that with the previous year. It should be noted that 21 of these clients are represented in both years.

The 43 clients came from 18 different locations. The highest proportion of clients (47%) came from Norlane and Corio, followed by Whittington. Some differences are notable from the previous year, such as no referrals from Highton, Lara and Newtown, and a decrease in referrals from Grovedale, Bell Park and Bell Post Hill.



Of the 43 clients whose case was open in the 2013 – 2014 year, 15 or 35% were from public housing and 27 or 63% from private housing. Tenancy was not recorded for one client (2%). Compared with the previous year, a smaller percentage of clients came from public housing, and a corresponding larger percentage from private housing (2012-13: 42% public, 53% private).

Twenty nine (67%) of these clients were female, and 12 (28%) were male, with two (5%) unrecorded. This is a similar gender mix to the previous year (72% female and 28% male).

The age of clients, where known, ranged from 17 to 56. Approximately 26% were aged under 30, 33% were aged 30-39, 21% were in their forties and 9% were 50 or older. Age was not recorded for 12%. This is similar to the previous year, where the ages ranged from 16 to 54, 23% were under 30, 33% were aged 30 to 39, 23% were in their forties and 7% were in their fifties.

Vocational support beyond BTG

In addition to work done under the BTG banner, case managers acted pre-emptively to provide cross-program support to a further 19 people. This is a new phenomenon since the establishment of BTG, and was undertaken in order to work towards integrating the BTG economic participation approach into existing Bethany case management, for sustainability.

These 19 additional clients were from a range of Bethany functional areas including Housing Services (1), Family Services (15), Kinship Care (1), Family Violence (1) and Child First(1).

Client reasons for participation

Clients of the BTG program frequently listed multiple reasons for participating in the program. Thirty (70%) participated 'to get a job'. Of these, 12 participants stated additional motives including personal development and building new skills. This is very similar to the previous year.

Nineteen participants (44%) stated that one of their reasons for participating was to pursue study or self-development, seven wanted a new or better career, six identified personal interest as an important motivator, and one each sought to improve English, gain confidence and explore options.

5 Outcomes and achievements

Client outcomes

Of the 43 cases under consideration during 2013-2014, 35 were deemed open and active at some time during the year. Eight of the 43 cases were not opened;

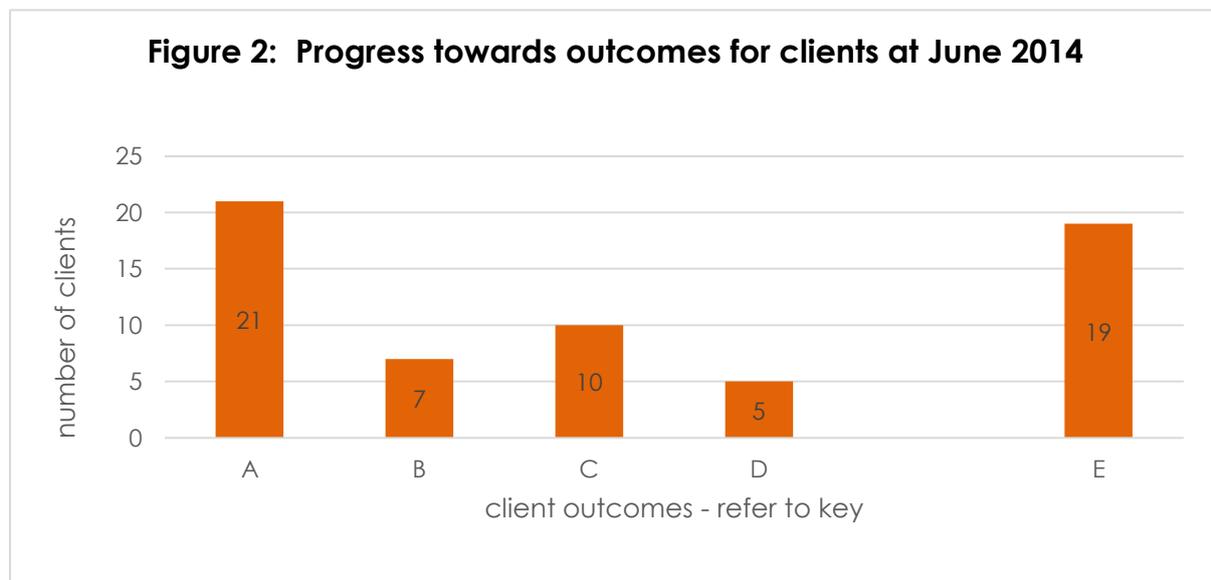
- five referrals arrived later in the year and these were placed on the waiting list,
- one client initially requested her referral be put on hold due to personal reasons and later requested the referral be withdrawn,
- one client withdrew her referral due to life issues, and
- one case manager withdrew the referral in order to work directly with the client, due to wait times.

Twenty-three of the active cases were closed during the year and 12 remained open.

For the purpose of project evaluation, the 62 clients (43 direct BTG support + 19 supported by existing Bethany case management) have been categorised as:

- actively engaged; achieved vocational training or employment outcomes,
- engaged; achieved limited outcomes,
- withdrew from or inactive within BTG; no outcomes,
- wait listed; no outcomes yet,
- additional to BTG program.

Progress towards outcomes for each group is discussed in detail below, and a summary is provided in Figure 2 and associated key.



Key	Progress towards outcomes at June 2014 (Summary)
	Actively engaged; achieved vocational outcomes
A	21 clients (49% of the 43 BTG referrals) were referred to training, study, volunteering or an employment provider. Of these, 7 either gained paid employment, started a business or increased employment hours, and 5 completed one or more courses. 1 client participated in volunteer work.
	Engaged; limited outcomes
B	7 (16%) clients were actively engaged during the year and had achieved limited progress towards outcomes. Of these, 3 withdrew after some engagement, and 2 were awaiting a mentoring match but did undertake preliminary activities. 2 clients started with a volunteer mentor towards the end of the reporting period, and had not yet achieved outcomes.
	Withdrew from or inactive within BTG; no outcomes
C	10 (23%) clients did not achieved any outcomes – either they could not be contacted, their case was otherwise inactive and closed or for personal reasons, or they elected to withdraw from the program before achieving outcomes. One case manager withdrew the referral in order to work directly with the client, due to wait times.
	Wait listed; no outcomes yet
D	5 (11%) clients were on the waiting list for BTG support and BTG outcomes have not yet been achieved.
	Additional to BTG program
E	Further to the formal BTG program, 19 additional people received information about, and/or connections to, relevant employment and training services.

Each of the categories is described in more detail below.

Category A: Actively engaged; achieved vocational training or employment outcomes

Twenty one people were referred to training, study, volunteering or an employment provider. (category **A** above). Outcomes for this group are discussed below.

Employment support:

Seventeen clients were given employment support (employment service connection, advocacy, job application and/or resume assistance etc). Providers included Gforce, Matchworks, and Ostara New Horizons.

- Seven people gained paid employment or increased their hours of employment:
 - one person gained new employment in the retail industry,
 - after participating in the BTG program, a client reported success in gaining employment,
 - a client increased their casual work through cold calling and also had an interview for a permanent part time position,
 - one person started their own business via a local market and Facebook. The client organised business cards, a catalogue, a customer mailing list, insurance, suppliers and products,
 - as the result of a successful four day industry work placement, one client secured a job interview as and successfully gained permanent part time employment,

- one person gained part time employment as a kindergarten assistant/integration aide,
- another client obtained casual work and two further job interviews.

This represents significant increase in employment outcomes in comparison with the previous year: up to June 2013, three clients had secured employment during their BTG engagement.

- One client engaged with volunteer work, compared with two the previous year.

Training support:

24 clients were given education support (supported with enrolment in, information about, or connections to training opportunities). Of these,

- 3 clients continued training in a total of 4 courses during 2013-2014 (but were enrolled during the previous reporting period);
- 13 clients enrolled in a total of 20 training courses over the year, with some clients enrolling in multiple courses.
- 9 of the above clients completed 16 training courses whilst being engaged with BTG during 2013-2014 (see Appendix B). An unknown number will have completed courses after their case was closed.

Providers included Karingal Training, Geelong First Aid, Gordon TAFE, Open Universities, Northern Futures, Cloverdale Community Centre, Whittington Works, Macquarie College, and Ashley Institute.

This compares with 13 clients supported with enrolment in training in the previous year. There were also fewer providers in 2013-2014 year.

15 clients were given employment support *plus* training support; this compares with nine clients given support for both in the previous year.

Other client outcomes included⁶:

- Advocacy received re Centrelink x2
- Information on courses of interest x 3
- Participation in COACH mentoring program x 2
- Information provided on Barwon Youth services for friend of client's son
- Assistance with application for VicRoads exemption for supervised driving hours
- Information on L2P program
- Learner's permit obtained after BTG assistance
- Client self-referred to counselling
- Client self-referred to health service.
- Child Protection report

⁶ Data sourced from Bridging the Gap Report 1-07-13 to 30-06-2014

Category B: Engaged; limited outcomes

Seven clients who were engaged during the year achieved limited progress towards outcomes. Of these, three withdrew after some engagement, and two were awaiting a mentoring match after their assessment and action plan were completed. 2 clients started with a volunteer mentor towards the end of the reporting period, and had not yet achieved outcomes.

The three people who withdrew from BTG following some engagement were all supported with information about relevant courses and other opportunities. One elected to put their case on hold and then could not be contacted after the on-hold period; this case was closed. Another withdrew from the program due to life issues and because appropriate support was being offered from an employment service. The third withdrew from the program after moving interstate. The extent of benefit received by these clients is unknown.

Category C: Withdrew from or inactive within BTG; no outcomes

Ten clients withdrew from the program before any outcomes could be achieved. Of these, four clients could not be contacted and did not engage in the program at all. Three sought to have their referral withdrawn due to personal/life issues. One client's case was inactive for the entire year and only stayed open because of her husband's active participation with BTG. Prior to engagement with BTG, one client found suitable employment as a cleaner and advised they did not wish to participate in the program so the case was closed.

One case manager withdrew a referral in order to work directly with the client, due to wait times.

In the previous reporting year, 12 of 57 referrals withdrew from the program without achieving outcomes. A further 8 withdrew after being referred to vocational support and outcomes achieved for these were unknown. Sixteen of the 20 people who withdrew from the program did so because of personal circumstances, or because other matters took priority. The remaining four of the 20 could not be contacted.

Category D: Wait listed; no outcomes yet

Due to the program being at capacity, and an influx of referrals towards the end of the financial year, five clients were on the waiting list for BTG support and their cases had not been opened. These five clients will potentially receive BTG support and achieve outcomes during the 2014-2015 year.

It is apparent that the capacity of the BTG program limits the number of clients that can be engaged through BTG at any one time. During the course of 2013-14, the volunteer program was significantly increased with the objective of increasing the program's capacity and reducing the waiting list.

Category E: Additional to BTG program

In addition to work done under the BTG banner, case managers acted pre-emptively to provide cross-program support to a further 19 clients who had raised economic participation. Support predominantly included information about, and/or connections to, relevant employment and training services.

This is a new phenomenon for BTG, and was undertaken in order to work towards incorporating the BTG approach into existing Bethany case management for sustainability. It demonstrates that BTG has been successful in building the capability of case managers to actively integrate services for their clients.

Progress towards achieving objectives

Objective 1: Collaboration maximised

Project Objective:

Build on existing collaboration between project partners and increase links with vocational services.

Key Evaluation Questions:

KEQ 1 – was not examined as part of this review.

KEQ 2 – *To what extent did the partnering organisations demonstrate effective integration of services?*

KEQ 2 examines the extent to which the partnering organisations demonstrate effective integration of services. Information to address this question was obtained from: data collected by case managers and the Project Worker, case manager feedback following training, and the Bridging the Gap 2013-2014 End of Year Report.

Success Indicator: Representatives of BTG partnering organisations state that services were integrated throughout project implementation.

Previously, in response to KEQ 2, RG members indicated that information sharing, as well as offering 'joined up services', were key achievements of the BTG project. This included connecting clients to pathways rather than duplicating existing services, as well as making links with partnering agencies (including family services and housing staff) to share information. The information examined for this review indicates that this is both continuing and increasing.

Of note in this reporting year is the work undertaken by case managers outside of the formal BTG program. There were 19 recorded events of case managers providing information and connections to employment and training services for people who were not part of BTG. These events were from the following services; fifteen from Family Services, one each from Housing Services, Family Violence, Kinship care and Child First. This did not occur in previous years.

In the previous year the Project Worker and Reference Group reported, through a survey, that integration was occurring to a reasonable extent. Whilst this survey was not repeated for the 2013-2014 evaluation report, it is clear from the degree of integration reported outside the formal program that integration continues. Further, there is evidence that integration may be growing and becoming embedded in other Bethany programs. (See Table 1)

Table 1: Collaboration facilitated between services -July 2013 to June 2014⁷

Organisations Involved	Collaborative Work	Outcomes (where known)
Bethany BTG and Economic Participation Pathways Group (formerly DHS & Employment Services Network)	Ongoing BTG participation in Network	Information sharing. Greater understanding. Assistance with promotion of Barwon Neighbourhood House Network Job Seeker training. Project Leader nominated to join working party to develop strategies for DHS case managers to support DHS Housing clients in economic participation.
Bethany and City of Greater Geelong / New Horizons DES	BTG passed on info re DES specialising in mental health via Child First, to City of Greater Geelong Social Worker with referrals for their clients	CGG social worker reported three referrals made to New Horizons.
Bethany BTG and Gordon TAFE / Ashley Institute	Discussions re engaging Community Service students as BTG volunteer mentors	One volunteer mentor applicant from Ashley Institute.
A4E (Tracy's) and Diversitat JSAs	BTG facilitated JSAs working collaboratively to provide potential employment opportunity for BTG client.	
Bethany and DHS	BTG Economic Participation tools provided for use of DHS Case Mangers	
Bethany and Matchworks	Cross sector workshop held in partnership with Matchworks to inform Matchworks Disability Employment Service clients of services available through Bethany. Workshop on conflict resolution skills provided to clients.	Greater awareness for clients of support services available. Opportunity to develop skills for the workplace.
Bethany and Economic Participation Pathways Group	Cross sector forum. Information provided to employment services on the support that clients can access through Bethany. Case studies presented, and barriers to employment and training identified by Family Services case manager.	Greater awareness of services available which could support people to address non-vocational barriers, which could in turn lead to greater work readiness (particular interest in Gambler's Help and Family and Relationships counselling).
Bethany BTG and Pathways	Meeting with Pathways staff. Discussion of BTG work and the resources developed to assist case managers in support clients to access vocational pathways.	Pathways has been added to Economic Participation Pathways Group.
DHS Services Connect worker	Request for information on Employment Services and the type of support provided.	Information provided for advocacy and referral for client.

Evidence examined suggests that significant progress is being made towards project integration.

⁷ Table from the Bridging the Gap Project Report 1-07-13 to 30-06-14

Objective 2: A supportive case management practice

Project Objective:

Develop and maintain a supportive case management practice that links Bethany and vocational service providers.

Key Evaluation Questions:

KEQ 3 – was not examined as part of this review

KEQ 4 – Was information about training, job seeking and careers in the local area provided to clients with complex needs?

KEQ 5 – Was there facilitated support to assist clients to remain engaged in vocational training and employment opportunities?

In answering **KEQ 4**, which looked at information provision to clients, data was obtained from: the Bridging the Gap 2013-2014 End of Year Report, client data recorded by case managers and the Project Worker, the BTG Service User Satisfaction Report (SUSS), and correspondence to clients departing the program.

Success Indicator: Clients and case managers recall that they (clients) were provided with training, jobs and careers information.

Information was provided to case managers and clients through the BTG program and also to those 19 who were Bethany clients, but not directly part of the BTG program, as reported in Section 5 of this report. The data shows that considerable vocational information was provided to a total of 62 people. There were 52 information provision events for clients recorded in total, in addition to 19 referrals.

In the previous evaluation report, the Project Worker stated that providing information to clients is a very important part of the BTG process:

“Information is sometimes even more important than the referral – the client might not be ready, but it's there for future reference.”

Comments recorded within the SUSS report offer an insight into the views of clients. One reported that **“being able to get information and get into a course”** was most useful while working with BTG. However, another client noted that they **“had to be told about information; couldn't access it on my own. It needs to be accessible”**, and suggesting an opportunity for BTG program information to be more easily found.

Case studies also identified that the provision of information was an important factor in understanding and then selecting available pathways.

In closing BTG cases, the Project Worker provided written advice to clients on how to obtain further information as needed. The Project Worker also informed the referring area of Bethany about case closures.

Evidence examined in this review indicates that significant progress is being made towards achieving the indicator of success for this KEQ. Clients and case managers have reported that clients were provided with training, jobs and careers information.

KEQ 5 tests whether there has been facilitated support to assist clients in remaining engaged in vocational training and employment opportunities. Information to address this question was drawn from data collected by case managers and the Project Worker's experience of engaging volunteers in the BTG program, a client interview and Workstar.

Success Indicator: Clients report that BTG support assisted them to remain engaged.

In the previous evaluation report, the Project Worker acknowledged that dedication to some clients meant a growing waiting list, and that this was a barrier to the BTG project's success. A case manager also raised the waiting list as an issue.

In the 2013-14 reporting period five people on the waiting list could not be attended by the end of the year, with the longest wait being for 30 days at that time. This represents a substantial improvement on waitlist times for previous years. In an effort to ease the waiting list, the Project Worker invested heavily in ramping up the volunteer program to increase support to clients.

Volunteers can play an important role in supporting clients to remain engaged in vocational training and employment opportunities. Volunteers act as mentors to clients and if this proceeds well, it can augment work done by the Project Worker and allow more clients to be supported, more quickly, through BTG.

During the 2013-2014 reporting period, the program recruited 15 volunteers and nine clients were connected with volunteers. Six volunteers remained active at June 2014 and there were 4 ready to become active.

The Project Worker reported that while there was extra work associated with engaging volunteers (interviews, screening, difficulty with retaining contact and extra communication lines required),

"when you get an amazing volunteer who just runs with it, it saves you work".

In addition, the Project Worker identified potential benefits could be gained by providing capability building activities for case managers. Building capability of the case managers can ensure that, over time, BTG processes can be embedded in the work performed by case managers, thus resulting in true integration of services. The capability building program included frequent emails and training to inform case managers of opportunities arising for clients including programs, services and information.

An interview with one client revealed that she had been very well supported through BTG and other community programs and because of this she was able to understand and navigate the range of supports available. This client was able to select a pathway, achieve a training certificate, secure a job, and overall, increase her family's security. She said that she was "grateful" and "excited" by all this and "without this support we'd be lost". She said her participation in BTG and in particular the "wonderful support provided by... [the volunteer mentor] really built my confidence", and she was looking forward to even "better and greater things to come".

In the previous evaluation, the Project Worker noted that joint home visits were a critical aspect of support, and this was also expressed by the client interviewed in the 2013-14 year.

The Workstar tool also helped clients to stay engaged by providing feedback about their progress. In individual Workstar assessment reports, BTG clients stated:

"I am more confident now. I have more experience with interviews. I am asking for my own information. Things are improving and doors are

opening. I am persevering when it is difficult. I am planning for the future and I'm more resilient."

"I know what I need to do now and where to go. I know so much more about what is on offer in the community now."

"I feel that I am now work ready with a bit of support."

Evidence examined in this review indicates that significant progress is being made towards achieving the indicator of success for this KEQ. Clients have reported that BTG support assisted them to remain engaged.

Objective 3: Reduced barriers to client participation

Project Objective:

Identify and where possible resolve issues impacting on vulnerable individuals' ability to participate in further education, vocational training and employment opportunities.

Key Evaluation Questions:

KEQ 6 – Did the project motivate, encourage and support clients with complex needs to engage with vocational pathways?

KEQ 7 – Was not examined as part of this review

KEQ 8 – Do clients have increased confidence, self-esteem and improved skills as a result of their engagement with Bridging the Gap?

KEQ 6 looks at whether the project motivated, encouraged and supported clients with complex needs to engage with vocational pathways. Information examined to assess this KEQ was drawn from a client interview, Workstar, SUSS and data collected by the case managers and Project Worker.

Success Indicator: BTG Clients report that the project motivated, encouraged and supported them to engage with vocational pathways.

An interview with one client revealed that the client considered the project had motivated, encourage and supported her. She noted that the BTG project had identified pathways for her; she had progressed from Child First to Family Services, to BTG and then to Northern Futures. Because of the support and encouragement provided is she was able to understand and navigate the range of opportunities available. She noted the importance of BTG coming to her house – she said that **"after hearing what I wanted, they just knew where to put me"**. Whilst participating in BTG, this client achieved a qualification, then secured a job, and overall increased her family's security.

Case managers and the Project Worker collected data on vocational engagement of clients throughout the year. This data is summarised in Figure 2 and Table 2 (Appendix B). It shows that 28 clients participated in vocational pathways over the course of the year; seven had gained employment, one had worked as a volunteer. There had also been 22 course enrolments with 15 course completions.

Workstar, a tool used to assess participants' readiness for vocational activities, was commenced with 21 clients and completed for nine of those clients in 2013-14. Two assessments were undertaken for each of the nine clients; one at the start, and one at the completion of the BTG program to measure the impact of the support received. Importantly, Workstar is the clients' own assessment of their vocational readiness and progress. Further detail on Workstar and an analysis of the data for the nine clients is located in Appendix D.

Motivation is a factor specifically addressed in Workstar (Workstar domain 2: aspiration and motivation). Self-assessment by clients against the aspiration and motivation Workstar domain shows an increase in averaged scores from 6 to 8 on a 10 point scale from the start to the end of their case. Along with job specific skills and job search skills, this was the largest area of improvement overall. Clearly, clients believe their motivation has increased.

Clients also made comment in their individual Workstar assessments, indicating that many are more motivated, encouraged and supported to engage with vocational pathways.. One client reported that:

“I have done some learning. I am very motivated to join the Army. I researched this information and secured an interview independently. I am organising everything I need for the interview (paperwork, clothes, transport). I have been practicing for the aptitude test and getting the answers correct.”

Four others noted that:

“I know how to take the next steps. I am committed to advancement.”

“I am moving forward. It is possible for me to achieve despite my challenges.”

“I know what I need to do now, and where to go to get it done. I know so much more about what is on offer in the community now.”

“[the program] motivated me to improve health to achieve goals.”

Client comments recorded in the SUSS also offer insights into this KEQ. One reported that “workers support; help with motivation” was most useful while working with BTG. Another reported that “being able to work out what my goals were and achieve them step by step”, was most useful.

Data recorded by case managers indicate that the BTG project continues to motivate, encourage and support clients with complex needs. As was reported in the last evaluation, BTG has continued to support clients to find courses that are suited to them, and to link clients with appropriate job service providers. Since the last review we have seen an increase in the number of jobs gained by clients, and an increase in the number of courses both undertaken and completed.

Evidence examined in this review indicates that significant progress is being made towards achieving the indicator of success for this KEQ. BTG Clients reported that the project motivated, encouraged and supported them to engage with vocational pathways.

KEQ 8 refers to whether clients have increased confidence, self-esteem and skills as a result of their engagement with BTG. To address this KEQ, data was drawn from case studies, a client interview and the Workstar self-assessments.

Success Indicator: BTG Clients report that the project helped them to build confidence, self-esteem and skills.

Appendix D of this report provides an analysis of Workstar results for nine BTG clients over the course of their engagement in the program. Workstar data shows that overall, there was an improvement in averaged client scores in five of the seven Workstar domains from beginning to end of BTG engagement.

The largest average increases were in the domains: job specific skills, aspiration and motivation, job search skills and challenges. The domain of basic skills saw a smaller increase and 'stability and 'social skills for work' remained the same. For individual clients, there were some striking changes, for example one reported a shift from 3 to 10 for 'job search skills' and 5 to 10 for 'aspiration and motivation'.

Specific comments made by clients in their Workstar assessments which provide insights into this KEQ included:

"I am more confident now. I have more experience with interviews. I am asking for my own information. Things are improving and doors are opening. I am persevering when it is difficult. I am planning for the future and I'm more resilient".

"My computer skills have improved since doing the computer course. I now have volunteer work experience assisting in the classroom at the community centre."

"I now have a resume and the skills to update it as needed."

"I am confident enough to approach employers for work."

"I am confident enough for cold calling. I now have an updated resume and cover letter."

"My basic skills are now good enough not to be a barrier to study or employment."

Two case studies have been included in Appendix C), and one reports that:

With improved research skills, and increased confidence due to his widening skill set and growing resume, 'Jackson' decided to independently make an application to the Australian Defence Force, and he successfully secured an interview. Through his research, he discovered that he is capable of passing the required aptitude test and feels that his interest areas and personal attributes will fit well with a Defence Force career.

An interview with one client indicated that she had built confidence, self-esteem and skills through the BTG program: "I have really built my confidence in the last 6 weeks with encouragement from [my volunteer mentor] I can do anything".

The data examined in this review provides evidence that BTG has made significant progress towards helping clients build confidence, self-esteem and skills, as reported by BTG Clients.

Objective 4: Improved service system

Project Objective:

Contribute to service system development through improved case management model approaches.

Key Evaluation Questions

KEQ 9 – was not examined as part of this review

KEQ 10 – *Did links with external organisations facilitate information-sharing and teamwork at case management level for the benefit of clients?*

KEQ 10 examines the value to clients of links with external organisations for the purpose of sharing information and adopting teamwork approaches at the case management level.

Success Indicator: Case managers report that [shared information, forums and networks led to improved case management practices.](#)

In delivering capacity building for case managers, the Project Worker confirmed a network of case managers, and connected various organisations and departments of Bethany through communications and training courses. While it is too early to evaluate whether this has led to improved case management practices, the new phenomenon of Bethany case managers providing BTG-style support to clients outside the BTG program, would indicate that there is some positive impact on case management practices.

It is too early to assess this KEQ, however evidence examined in this review suggests that some progress is being made towards improving case management outcomes through the sharing of information, forums and networks.

Objective 5: Greater community capacity

Project Objective:

Build community capacity to support clients with complex needs to engage with education, vocational training and employment services.

Key Evaluation Questions

KEQ11 – Is there improved community capacity as a result of involving volunteers in the project?

KEQ 12 – Is there increased social inclusion through greater economic participation as a result of this project?

KEQ 11 examines the value of involving volunteers in the project towards achieving improved community capacity. Information used to assess this KEQ includes, volunteer report, volunteer feedback forms and meetings with the Project Worker.

Success Indicators:

- 15 volunteers engaged in the project per year
- Volunteers report that they have increased awareness of the barriers to economic participation, and solutions to overcome these barriers
- Project partners report that collaboration enhances capacity.

Volunteers play an important role in supporting clients within the BTG program as mentors. Over the reporting period the target of 15 volunteers were recruited and trained. Of these,

- 9 were matched with clients,
 - 6 of whom were actively participating at the time of the report,
 - 1 requested that her volunteering be put on hold for a few weeks and
 - 2 could not be contacted.
- 4 were ready to be matched
- 2 requested to delay a match until a later date.

The volunteer program was escalated during the 2013-2014 year in an effort to ease the acknowledged wait list issue. Volunteers are intended to assist the Project Worker by providing support to clients that may otherwise have been provided by the Project Worker.

The Project Worker reported that there was extra work associated with engaging, training and retaining volunteers (interviews, screening, difficulty with maintaining contact and extra communication lines required).

In addition, changing circumstances of volunteer mentors can mean that they are no longer able to work with their clients during business hours (e.g. if they secure employment). As Bethany policies require volunteers to work during business hours, the match must be ended.

More work is thus created for the Project Worker, in terms of facilitating another mentoring match, or by working directly with the client whose match has ended.

Matching and re-matching clients with different mentors can be unsettling for the client. There can be a delay between the support of one mentor ending and commencing with a new mentor, and a trusting relationship has to be established again.

There are also challenges for the volunteers, who are subject to 'life issues' themselves and can sometimes become overwhelmed by taking on cases and the level of support required. It can be challenging for volunteers to maintain consistent contact with the Project Worker, which has implications for the BTG program.

Recommendation 1: Initiate and promote a procedure whereby if things get too much for a volunteer, they send the Project Worker a simple email advising they are taking a break, and no further explanation is required.

In response to the four week training program, volunteers provided the following comments

"The 4 weeks of training were great. I feel like we've received so much useful information and feel ready to begin mentoring."

"I thoroughly enjoyed listening to others people's views on subjects and what they have learned in their lifetimes."

Quote from BTG volunteer June 2014:

"With everything on the news about the changes to Newstart Allowance, I know that I would have been the one in the past saying, 'Well, income support is not a given. People need to earn it and be doing everything they can to find work.' But this experience has shown me that it's not that simple. When you've been out of the work force for a long time, due to serious personal challenges, you don't have the skills and resources to just go and get a job. You don't even know where to start to find training. People need guidance and support. They need someone to take them through the process. They need more help, not less, if they are going to move forward in life. I understand that now."

It is early to evaluate progress towards several aspects of these indicators of success. For example, information has not yet been sought from project partners about the volunteer program enhancing capacity through collaboration. The next evaluation process allows for feedback from volunteers.

Evidence examined in this review indicates that some progress is being made towards achieving the indicators of success for this KEQ, for instance the target of 15 volunteers being engaged was achieved. However it is too early to provide a conclusive report on the second and third success indicators.

KEQ 12 examines if there has been increased social inclusion through greater economic participation as a result of this project.

Information to address this KEQ was sourced from client outcomes recorded by case managers and the Project Manager, case studies and interview, Workstar and to a limited degree, the SUSS.

Success Indicators:

- Clients have connected with a broad range of vocational and community programs through BTG engagement
- Clients report a feeling of greater community connectedness

In the previous evaluation report, two RG members felt that more work was required to increase social inclusion, particularly “greater participation” and building the number of people who move through BTG”. Similarly, two case managers felt that it was too early in the project to comment, or that they were yet to experience an outcome for their client.

The situation has changed for this reporting period, and while this interim evaluation can only report on progress towards achieving success indicators, it is clear that progress has been made.

Figure 2 summarises the outcomes for clients of BTG and other Bethany programs as a result of BTG or BTG-type support. It shows that overall 28 (65%) of clients referred to BTG were actively engaged in the program during 2013-14. Of these 21 (49%) achieved vocational outcomes, and a further 7 (16%) achieved more limited outcomes. In addition, a further 19 Bethany clients received support, generally in the form of information about, and/or connections to, relevant employment and training services.

Individual Workstar assessments recorded client comments on their connections with a range of vocational and community programs. Clients reported that:

“I am more confident now. I have more experience with interviews. I am asking for my own information. Things are improving and doors are opening. I am persevering when it is difficult. I am planning for the future and I'm more resilient.”

“I know what I need to do now and where to go. I know so much more about what is on offer in the community now.”

Client comments recorded in individual Workstar assessments offer some information about clients' feelings of greater community connectedness.

One reported that “I am moving forward and taking opportunities to work and study. Things are improving and doors are opening..... I am more resilient. I enjoy the group work in class and learning from other students”.

Another stated, “I feel that I am now work ready with a bit of support.”

An interview with one client revealed through participating in BTG she was able to understand and navigate the range of support options available and increase her confidence. This client was able to select a pathway, undertake a course, achieve a certificate, secure a job, and overall, increase her family's security through economic and social participation. The client stated that she was looking forward to even “better and greater things to come”.

Likewise, the two case studies highlight that the BTG project has helped to increase confidence, skills and participation in the community. The case study examples highlight that economic participation occurred through individuals engaging in training opportunities and in employment. This also led to improved social connections and links to appropriate service providers.

The SUSS report undertaken for 2013-14 was of limited value. There were 23 cases closed during the year but only 11 surveys completed. Six of those were fully completed and a further five were submitted by the Project Worker on behalf of the client but without client input after the case had been closed.

Recommendation 2: Administrative support staff or volunteers to conduct SUSS interviews with clients on closure of cases and enter data directly into survey monkey. This will alleviate the data entry workload for the Quality Manager and facilitate the completion and compilation of reports for all closed cases.

The SUSS report undertaken for 2013-14 reveals that, when asked if their case manager had helped the client make contact with training/employment services in the community when needed, one responded 'definitely yes', three responded 'yes', one 'not really', and one 'not at all'.

When asked if they felt better connected to their community through the services accessed in the BTG - one of the six responded 'definitely yes', two responded 'yes', and three responded 'not at all. While this is very limited data from which to draw a conclusion, it may be an area for further investigation.

The range of existing tools available to evaluate this program do not support long term analysis of social inclusion and economic participation, and this would be very valuable information on which to evaluate the program. Adoption of the Impact Assessment Tool, which was developed towards the end of the 2013-14 reporting period, would provide for this.

Recommendation 3. Use and report on the Impact Assessment Tool following case closure to measure longer term impacts of the BTG program on social inclusion and economic participation.

Evidence examined in this review indicates that some progress is being made towards achieving the indicator of success for this KEQ. However there are also aspects that may benefit from further examination and potential improvement in methodology. It is too early in the project to properly evaluate this KEQ. There is no long term evaluation tool currently in place.

6 Conclusion

The following table summarises the findings of the Evaluation: progress towards achieving objectives for KEQ's 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11 and 12.

Collaboration maximised		
OB1 Build on existing collaboration between project partners and increase links with vocational services.		
Key Evaluation Question	Indicator of Success	Status
KEQ 2 – To what extent did the partnering organisations demonstrate effective integration of services?	Representatives of BTG partnering organisations state that <u>services were integrated</u> throughout project implementation.	
A supportive case management practice		
OB2 Develop and maintain a supportive case management practice that links Bethany and vocational service providers.		
Key Evaluation Question	Indicator of Success	Status
KEQ 4 – Was information about training, job seeking and careers in the local area provided to clients with complex needs?	Clients and case managers indicate that <u>clients were provided with training, jobs and careers information.</u>	
KEQ 5 – Was there facilitated support to assist clients in remaining engaged in vocational training and employment opportunities?	Clients report that <u>BTG support assisted</u> them to remain engaged.	
Reduced barriers to client participation		
OB3 Identify and where possible resolve issues impacting on vulnerable individuals' ability to participate in further education, vocational training and employment opportunities.		
Key Evaluation Question	Indicator of Success	Status
KEQ 6 – Did the project motivate, encourage and support clients with complex needs to engage with vocational pathways?	BTG clients report that <u>the project motivated, encouraged and supported them</u> to engage with vocational pathways.	
KEQ 8 – Do clients have increased confidence, self-esteem and improved skills as a result of their engagement with BTG?	BTG clients report that <u>the project helped them to build confidence, self-esteem and skills.</u>	

Key:



Significant progress towards success indicator



Some progress towards success indicator



Further work required to ensure progress towards success indicators

Improved service system

OB4 Contribute to service system development through improved case management model approaches.

Key Evaluation Question	Indicator of Success	Status
KEQ 10 – Did links with external organisations facilitate information-sharing and teamwork at case management level for the benefit of clients?	Case managers report that <u>shared information, forums and networks led to improved case management practices.</u>	

Greater community capacity

OB5 Build community capacity to support clients with complex needs to engage with education, vocational training and employment services.

Key Evaluation Question	Indicator of Success	Status
KEQ11 – Is there improved community capacity as a result of involving volunteers in the project?	15 volunteers engaged in the project per year. Volunteers report that they have increased awareness of the barriers to economic participation, and solutions to overcome these barriers. Project partners report collaboration enhances capacity.	
KEQ 12 – Is there increased social inclusion through greater economic participation as a result of this project?	Clients have connected with a broad range of vocational and community programs through BTG engagement. Clients report a feeling of greater community connectedness.	

Key:



Significant progress towards success indicator



Some progress towards success indicator



Further work required to ensure progress towards success indicators

Appendix A: Bridging the Gap Evaluation Plan Summary

Key Evaluation Questions

Collaboration maximised

OB1 Build on existing collaboration between project partners and increase links with vocational services.

KEQ 1 Is there a greater diversity of partnerships and collaborations between Bethany, education/training providers and employment services as a result of this project?

KEQ 2 To what extent did the partnering organisations demonstrate effective integration of services?

A supportive case management practice

OB2 Develop and maintain a supportive case management practice that links Bethany and vocational service providers.

KEQ 3 Were Bethany staff provided with information and/or training opportunities to improve their ability to facilitate clients with complex needs to engage in education, vocational training and employment?

KEQ 4 Was information about training, job seeking and careers in the local area provided to clients with complex needs?

KEQ 5 Was there facilitated support to assist clients to remain engaged in vocational training and employment opportunities?

Reduced barriers to client participation

OB3 Identify and where possible resolve issues impacting on vulnerable individuals' ability to participate in further education, vocational training and employment opportunities

KEQ 6 Did the project motivate, encourage and support clients with complex needs to engage with vocational pathways?

KEQ 7 Was a solution focused framework adopted to assist clients to overcome barriers to economic participation?

KEQ 8 Do clients have increased confidence, self-esteem and improved skills as a result of their engagement with Bridging The Gap?

Improved service system

OB4 Contribute to service system development through improved case management model approaches

KEQ 9 Was an evidence-informed practice model developed to improve case management with respect to this project?

KEQ 10 Did links with external organisations facilitate information sharing and teamwork at case management level for the benefit of clients?

Greater community capacity

OB5 Build community capacity to support clients with complex needs to engage with education, vocational training and employment service

KEQ11 Is there improved community capacity as a result of involving volunteers in the project?

KEQ 12 Is there increased social inclusion through greater economic participation as a result of this project?

Sequencing of Evaluation

The project will be evaluated over three reviews, as follows:

Timing	Detail	KEQs to be considered	Product
October 2013	A minor review utilising data obtained through a focus group of Bethany case managers, meetings with the Project Worker, case studies, Vic Health Partnership Tool and review of SUSS data.	1 ⁸ ,2,3,4,5,6,8,12 ¹⁰	Bridging The Gap Phase 2 Benchmark Evaluation Report October 2013
July 2014	An interim review utilising data obtained through Workstar, meetings with the Project Worker, case studies and review of SUSS data.	2,4,5,6,8,10,11,12	Bridging The Gap Phase 2 Interim Evaluation Report July 2014
April 2015	A major review utilising data obtained through a focus group of Bethany case managers, interviews with clients, case studies, meetings with the Project Worker, Workstar, Vic Health Partnership Tool, and review of data from SUSS, the Impact Assessment Tool and the economic participation database.	all	Bridging The Gap Phase 2 Final Evaluation Report April 2015

⁸ Providing benchmark data for later reviews

Appendix B: Training outcomes

Training outcomes during BTG engagement are listed below.

Table 2: Training course enrolments and completions July 2013 to June 2014

Course	provider/referral agency	Enrolments (previous year)	Enrolments 2013-2014	Completions
Bachelor of Arts (Community Development)	Open University		1	
Cert IV Business Administration	Ashley Institute		1	
Cert IV Mental Health	Karingal Training		1	
Cert III Children's Services	One World for Children	1		1
Cert III Aged Care/ Home & Community Care	Karingal Training		1	
Cert III Business Admin	Macquarie College		1	
Cert II Warehouse Logistics course	Northern Futures		1	1
Computer skills course	Cloverdale Community House		1	1
Digital Literacy	Karingal Training	1		1
Hospitality	Whittington Works		1	
Asthma & Anaphylaxis course	Geelong First Aid		2	2
First Aid Certificate	Geelong First Aid	1		1
Responsible Service of Alcohol	JSA referred directly		1	1
Responsible Gambling	JSA referred directly		1	1
Food Handling Course	Karingal Training	1	1	2
Construction Induction (white card) course	Gordon TAFE		2	2
Coffee Making certificate	Advanced Career Training		2	2
Skills for Work	JSA referred directly		1	1
Tag and test (course did not run)			1	
English as Additional Language course	Gordon TAFE		1	
Totals		4	20	16

Appendix C: Case studies

Clients being assisted through BTG were interviewed to provide insights into the client experience of BTG case work.

Case Study One

Case Study June 2014

'Jackson' found mainstream schooling a challenge. He left after Year 10 and found some casual industrial work. When this work ceased, he decided to return to schooling, to complete his Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) in an alternative learning setting. With some literacy difficulties and a high level of disadvantage, Jackson found he was unable to secure any further work even after completing his studies.

Jackson's mother was been receiving Bethany Family Services support to assist her with her two younger children. The Family Services case manager discussed Bridging the Gap (BTG) with Jackson and his mother, and a referral was made to the program.

Jackson and the BTG worker completed an assessment and developed a vocational action plan. Jackson indicated interest in woodwork, metal work and outdoor activities. Jackson and the BTG worker explored apprenticeships and labouring work in the construction industry. Jackson submitted an application for a supported carpentry traineeship program, and had his name added to the waiting list. The BTG worker contacted his employment service provider to work collaboratively with the service, and to provide advocacy for Jackson to receive the appropriate level of support.

Through the employment service, Jackson was referred to a Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways, which he completed. Jackson reported that he would be interested in obtaining some casual work in retail or fast food while waiting for a traineeship to commence. The BTG worker supported Jackson to research vacant positions and to submit online job applications to hardware shops, supermarkets and fast food companies. The BTG program provided Jackson with hard copies of his resume to distribute to potential employers through cold calling, and supported him to develop cover letters.

Unfortunately, a host employer was not able to be found for a supported carpentry traineeship, and Jackson did not pass the Maths aptitude test required for entry into a mainstream carpentry apprenticeship. The BTG program provided brokerage to enable Jackson to complete a Construction Induction course to allow him to work in the building industry as an assistant or labourer. The BTG program also supported Jackson to obtain his Learner Driver Permit.

With improved research skills, and increased confidence due to his widening skill set and growing resume, Jackson decided to independently make an application to the Australian Defence Force, and he successfully secured an interview. Through his research, he discovered that he is capable of passing the required aptitude test and feels that his interest areas and personal attributes will fit well with a Defence Force career. He now also has the skills and certification needed to secure labouring work in the meantime if the Defence Force entry process is a lengthy one, or if his application is not successful.

Case Study Two

Case Study: "Debbie" (Computer Skills and Aged Care) June 2014.

'Debbie' was referred to Bridging the Gap by her Family Services case manager. She had expressed an interest in getting some qualifications in preparations for securing stable employment when her daughter attends school in 2015.

Debbie met with the BTG worker and completed a Work Star assessment tool to develop a BTG Action Plan. Through this process, Debbie identified that she had been successful at securing casual hand type work in the past through cold calling and interviews without the need for qualifications, resumes and letters of application. She concluded that she had good interview skills, but that she needed to develop computer skills in order to complete a training certificate, write a resume and apply for more permanent positions. Debbie also reported that she had good people skills, was a caring person and enjoyed the company of older people. She concluded that she would enjoy Aged Care work, and reported that she had heard it was an industry where work was available.

The BTG worker gave Debbie information on a computer skills class in her suburb, and Debbie decided to go ahead with enrolment to participate in the class on a day her daughter was at Kinder. Debbie was matched with a BTG mentor who assisted her to explore Aged Care courses. Debbie successfully completed the computer skills course, and then enrolled in a Dual Certificate III in Aged Care and Home and Community Care. Her mentor has committed to assisting her with her study as required, and will also support her to develop a resume and practice writing job applications.

As Debbie's financial situation was a major obstacle to economic participation, BTG provided some brokerage for the class fees. Some supermarket vouchers were also provided, to assist Debbie to save for a refurbished computer. Debbie's mentor assisted her with the logistics of the purchase.

By the end of the 2014, Debbie will have completed her qualification and be ready to work in the Aged Care industry.

Appendix D: Workstar assessment summary

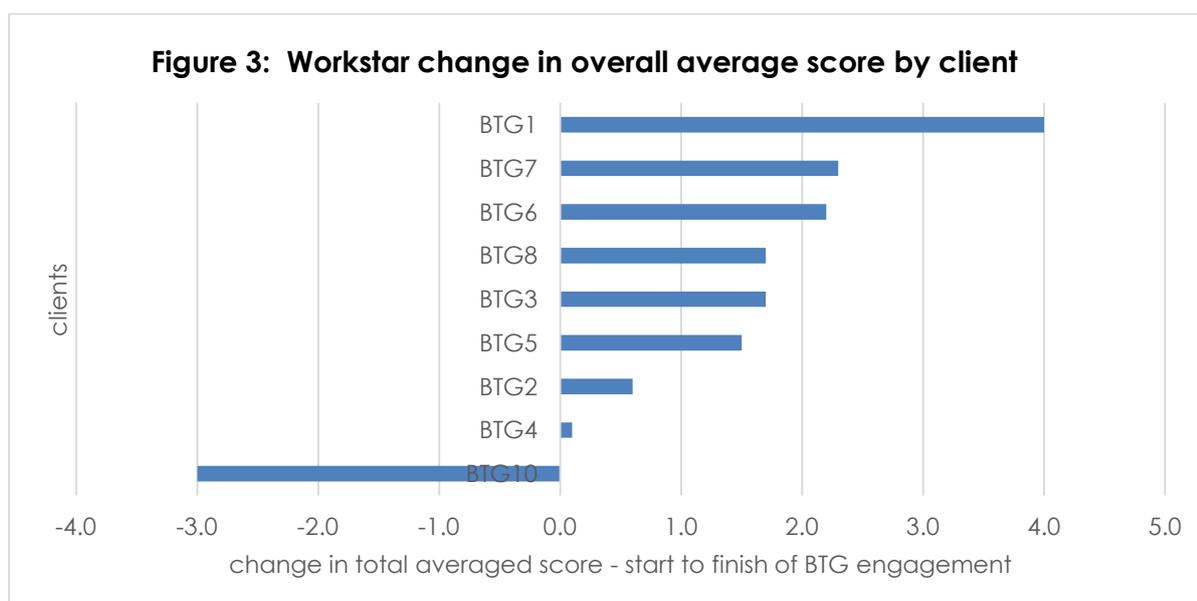
Workstar is a tool developed by Triangle Consulting to assess participants' readiness for vocational activities. The assessment is generally undertaken at both the start of a development program and at the end, and measures the change that any program or intervention may have contributed to over time. Workstar assessments are completed by the client and they provide valuable data to assess the clients' perspectives of trends in the seven Workstar domains:

1. job specific skills,
2. aspiration and motivation,
3. job search skills,
4. stability,
5. basic skills,
6. social skills for work, and
7. challenges.

In using Workstar, clients self-assess each domain against a 10 point scale, and scores indicate the following:

- 1 – 2: Not thinking about work;** substantial barriers to work or advancement and the participant cannot see their way around them.
- 3 – 4: Thinking about work;** substantial barriers, but participant is working out how to address them.
- 5 – 6: Making progress;** some barriers overcome but others are still there.
- 7 – 8: Work-ready with support;** barriers mostly overcome or can be worked around; support required to maintain progress.
- 9 - 10: Self-reliance;** in work, work ready or engaged in work related training; no support required.

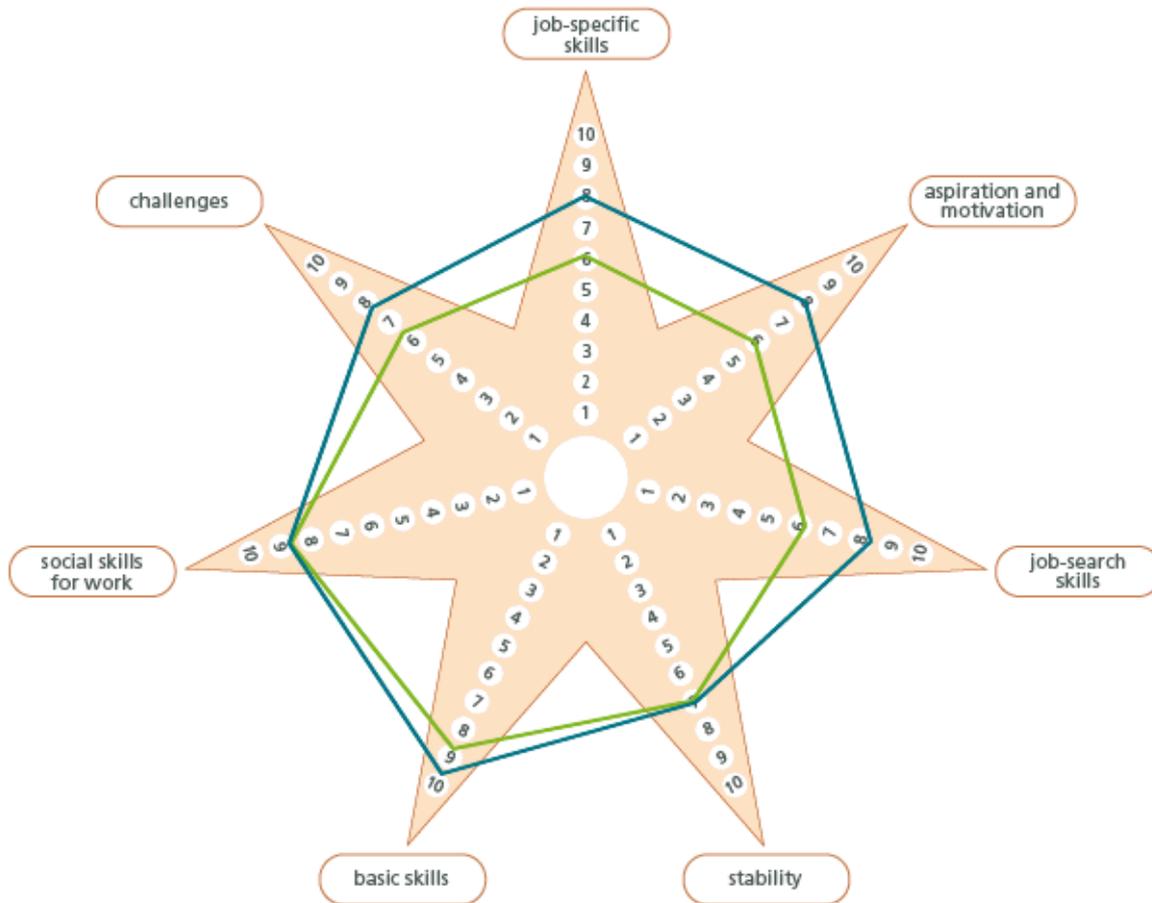
Nine BTG clients undertook a Workstar assessment near the beginning and the end of their BTG engagement. Figure 3 shows the changes in the total averaged Workstar score for each of those nine clients.



Of these nine clients, eight showed an improvement in their total averaged score (six significant, one moderate, one small) and one showed a significant decline. The significant decline of one client has been attributed to personal issues occurring separate to the BTG program.

Figure 4 shows the total average change for each Workstar domain over time for the grouped nine clients. Results are derived from the two assessments undertaken by each of the clients near the beginning and the end of their BTG engagement.

Figure 4: BTG Workstar comparison – start to end, scores averaged for nine clients



Key

- Average combined scores for each Workstar domain near the beginning of client BTG engagement
- Average combined scores for each Workstar domain near the end of client BTG engagement

Areas of improvement in the combined scores for the nine clients were evident in five of the seven domains, and there were two areas that remained the same. Of the improved areas, the biggest change (of two points) were in the domains: job specific skills, aspiration and motivation, job search skills and challenges. The domain of basic skills saw a smaller increase and 'stability and 'social skills for work' remained the same. For individual clients, there were some striking changes, for example: one reported a shift from 3 to 10 for 'job search skills' and 5 to 10 for 'aspiration and motivation'.

Over the nine clients, the main area of decline was domain 4 – stability. Three clients recorded a reduction in stability, with one client showing a drop from 10 to 2. The factors resulting in a low stability score are often outside the full control of the client or the BTG program. The reasons reported by the clients for this decline in stability included – difficulty in managing vocational activity and young children, health problems and the need to re-locate.

Table 3 shows the change in each Workstar domain for each client, with data derived from the initial and final Workstar assessments undertaken by the nine BTG clients. The change figure listed under each client is the difference between the scores for each domain in the first and then final assessment.

Table 3. Change in Workstar domain scores for each BTG client

Workstar Domain	BTG1	BTG2	BTG3	BTG4	BTG5	BTG6	BTG7	BTG8	BTG10
job specific skills	2	1	2	0	3	3	4	2	0
aspiration & motivation	5	1	1	2	0	6	2	2	0
job search skills	7	1	4	1	2	2	1	1	1
stability	4	-3	0	-1	1	2	2	4	-8
basic skills	3	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
social skills for work	2	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	-8
challenges	5	2	2	-1	3	0	3	3	-6
average change in Workstar domains for each client	4.0	0.6	1.7	0.1	1.4	2.1	1.9	1.7	-3.0

Table 4 shows the averaged client scores against each of the seven Workstar domains at the end of the clients' engagement with the BTG program.

Table 4. Average Workstar domain score (nine clients) at case closure

Workstar domain	Average score per domain	Score category	Score category description
Basic Skills,	9.6	9-10	Self-reliance ; in work, work ready or engaged in work related training; no support required.
Social skills for work	8.7		
Job search skills	8.4	7-8	Work-ready with support ; barriers mostly overcome or can be worked around; support required to maintain progress
Job specific skills	8.0		
Aspiration & motivation	8.0		
Challenges	7.7		
Stability	7.1		