

BETHANY BRIDGING THE GAP

Phase 2: July 2013 – April 2015
Final Evaluation Report



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Abbreviations used in this Report

BTG	Bridging the Gap
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
PAT	VicHealth Partnerships Analysis Tool
RG	Reference Group
SUSS	Service User Satisfaction Survey

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 and training provider Karingal, 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, running from July 2013 to April 2015, sought to further this work through, inter alia, a focus on improving the ability of family and housing service systems to support clients with complex needs to transition to appropriate training and employment pathways.

This document serves as the final evaluation report for Phase 2 of the project. It has been prepared utilising data obtained to April 2015 through Work Star, meetings with the Project Worker, Reference Group, clients, volunteer mentors and case managers, data recorded by case managers and the Project Worker, case studies and review of Service User Satisfaction Survey and Partnership Assessment data.

Between July 2013 and April 2015 a total of 104 cases were considered in the BTG project. Fifty four cases were considered between July 2014 and April 2015, of which 12 were continued from the previous year. This represents a total of 42 new cases in 2014-15.

In addition to work done under the BTG banner, in 2013-14 case managers began acting pre-emptively to provide cross-program support to clients. Nineteen clients were supported in this manner during 2013-14 and a further 19 during 2014-15. By the time this final evaluation was conducted, this level of support was considered a critical component of the BTG program, and the 19 clients for 2014 -15 were not separately reported.

Client Demographic Summary

Referred clients came from 23 suburbs, townships or localities. The suburbs with the highest representation across the entire reporting period were Norlane, Corio and Whittington. Client ages ranged from 16 to 57. The 'under 30' age group was most commonly represented and approximately 69% were female (across the Phase 2 reporting period).

Client Outcome Summary

Of the 104 cases considered during BTG Phase 2:

- Twenty-nine clients were given employment support. Of these, 11 gained paid employment and two clients participated in volunteer work.
- Forty two clients were given training support (supported with enrolment in or information about training opportunities). Of these, 30 clients enrolled in 40 training courses, with 14 clients completing a total of 21 courses during their BTG engagement. An unknown number will have completed courses after their case was closed.
- Thirty five of the clients who were actively engaged during the reporting period achieved limited progress towards outcomes. Of these, 10 were recent referrals to the program in 14-15 and were still to achieve outcomes, and 10 withdrew after some engagement.
- Fifteen clients did not achieve any outcomes, either because they attained training or employment opportunities before commencing the program, they could not be contacted, their case was otherwise inactive and closed for personal reasons, or they had elected to withdraw from the program.

Of the 35 open and active cases in 2013-14, 23 were closed during the year and 12 remained open. In addition, five referrals remained on the waiting list and 19 were supported directly by case managers.

Of the 54 cases under consideration during 2014-15, 49 were deemed open and active at some time during the year, including 19 clients directly supported by case managers. Five of the 54 were closed without engagement. Thirty five of the active cases were closed during the year and 14 remained open.

Throughout Phase 2, BTG capacity was increased through the engagement of sixteen volunteer mentors and the training/supporting of case managers to work directly with clients.

Summary of Progress towards BTG Outcomes and Objectives

The Program Logic for BTG identified two desired outcomes for the project:

- Improved engagement of clients with complex needs in vocational training and employment opportunities.
- Increased opportunity for economic participation for the target population.

There is no doubt that substantial progress has been made towards each of these aspirations, as evidenced by the client outcomes achieved and the substantial feedback by case workers, volunteer mentors, Reference Group members and clients described in this report.

Substantial progress towards the five BTG Program Objectives was also evident:

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

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

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

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

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

More specifically, this evaluation found that BTG Project Phase 2 has made significant progress towards indicators of success for 10 Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs):

- KEQ 1 – diversity of partnerships and collaborations,
- KEQ 2 – integrated services between organisations,
- KEQ 3 - provision of training, jobs and careers information to staff,
- KEQ 4 - provision of training, jobs and careers information to clients,
- KEQ 6 – clients motivated, encouraged and supported to engage in vocational pathways,
- KEQ 7 – adoption of a solution focused framework,
- KEQ 8 – building of client confidence, self-esteem and skills,
- KEQ 9 – development of an evidence-informed practice model,
- KEQ 10 - shared information, forums and networks leading to improved case management practices, and
- KEQ 11 – improved community capacity through volunteer engagement in the project.

Substantial progress was apparent towards indicators of success for 2 KEQs, but there were challenges in accessing definitive evidence:

- KEQ 5 – BTG support assisted clients to remain engaged, and
- KEQ 12 – increased social inclusion.

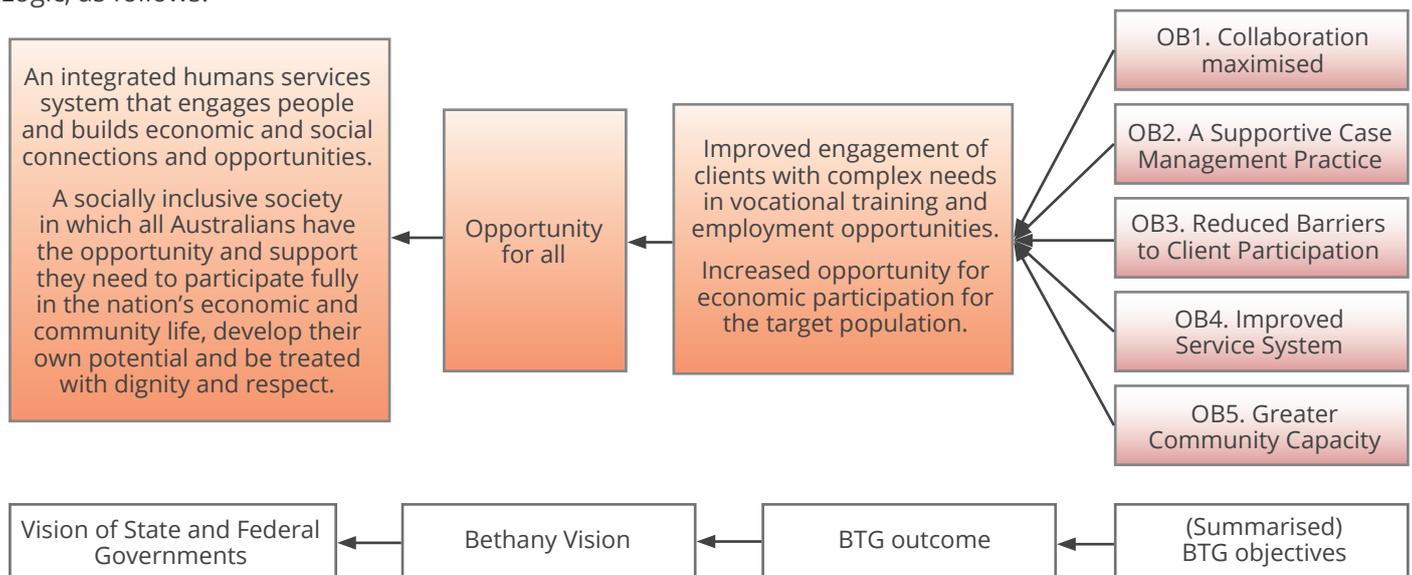
INTRODUCTION

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 and Karingal as a training provider. Funding was provided by Give Where You Live. 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 the project initiation/development phase, running from November 2011 until June 2013. Phase 2, running from July 2013 until April 2015, sought to further this work through, *interalia*, 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 was developed in the context of various State and Federal government policies and directions that were relevant at the time. These included The Social Inclusion Agenda², The Best Interests Framework³ and Case for Change⁴. The broad aspirations outlined in these documents were included in the Bridging The Gap Program Logic, as follows:



The BTG Phase 2 Evaluation Plan provides further detail around the five Project Objectives. Twelve Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) collectively seek the evidence to determine whether the five BTG Objectives have been achieved; all of the KEQs are reviewed in this report. A summary of the Phase 2 BTG Evaluation Plan is included as Appendix A.

This report covers the Phase 2 period July 2013 to April 2015, with a focus on 2014-15. It builds on earlier evaluation reports^{5,6} and documents project activities, achievements and challenges.

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

² Australian Government (2009) *The Australian Public Service Social Inclusion Policy Design and Delivery Toolkit*

³ Government of Victoria (2007) *The Best Interests Framework for Vulnerable Children and Youth*

⁴ Government of Victoria (2011) *Human Services: The Case for Change*

⁵ Kismet Forward (2014) *Bridging The Gap Phase 2 Interim Evaluation Report*

⁶ Kismet Forward (2013) *Bridging The Gap Phase 1 Final Review and Phase 2 Benchmark Review*

The Bridging The Gap Project Phase 2 Evaluation Plan noted that this assessment would be 'a major review utilising data obtained through a focus group of Bethany case managers, interviews with clients, case studies, meetings with the Project Worker, Work Star, Vic Health Partnership Tool and review of Bethany's Service User Satisfaction Survey (SUSS) data, the Impact Assessment Tool and the economic participation database'. In keeping with this direction, the following data sources were used in the preparation of this report:

- Project Worker interview and data provided,
- Reference Group evaluation meeting/survey (6 members),
- Focus Groups or surveys with 19 case managers and 8 volunteer mentors,
- VicHealth Partnerships Analysis Tool (PAT) assessment by the Reference Group,
- Work Star⁷ self-assessments, completed by clients together with the Project Worker and/or case managers (13 completed 2014-15, 19 completed over duration of program),
- Bethany's Service User Satisfaction Surveys (SUSS)⁸, completed by clients (12 attempts, 6 completed in 2014-15; 17 completed throughout Phase 2),
- BTG Impact Assessment Tool results (completed with 10 clients 12 months after the closure of their BTG involvement),
- Employment Pathway Support Tool & Training Pathway Support Tool,
- BTG DVD (produced by Bethany)
- Case studies detailing the impact of BTG on individual clients, and
- Interviews with three clients.

None of the data (other than the client interviews) identified individuals, and all related to BTG support provided to Bethany clients during the Phase 2: July 2013 to April 2015 period.

A note regarding collecting data

One of the challenges in undertaking this evaluation has been the lack of data available from clients. Only 6 clients completed SUSS surveys in 2014-15, and a further 6 were partially completed. In addition, only 10 Impact Assessments (undertaken a year or so after case closure) could be completed. The Project Worker commented on the difficulty of contacting clients after case closure, particularly due to the high frequency in which client phone numbers are change.

Whilst some data has been available, the sample sizes (and the fact that only 3 clients were interviewed for the evaluation) made it difficult to draw definitive conclusions in some instances. Continued improvement in the completion of these tools following the closure of cases will assist measurement of the ongoing success of the program.

⁷Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd (2010) *Work Star – The Outcomes Star for Work and Learning*

⁸SUSS assessments are completed at the end of client engagement with BTG

CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

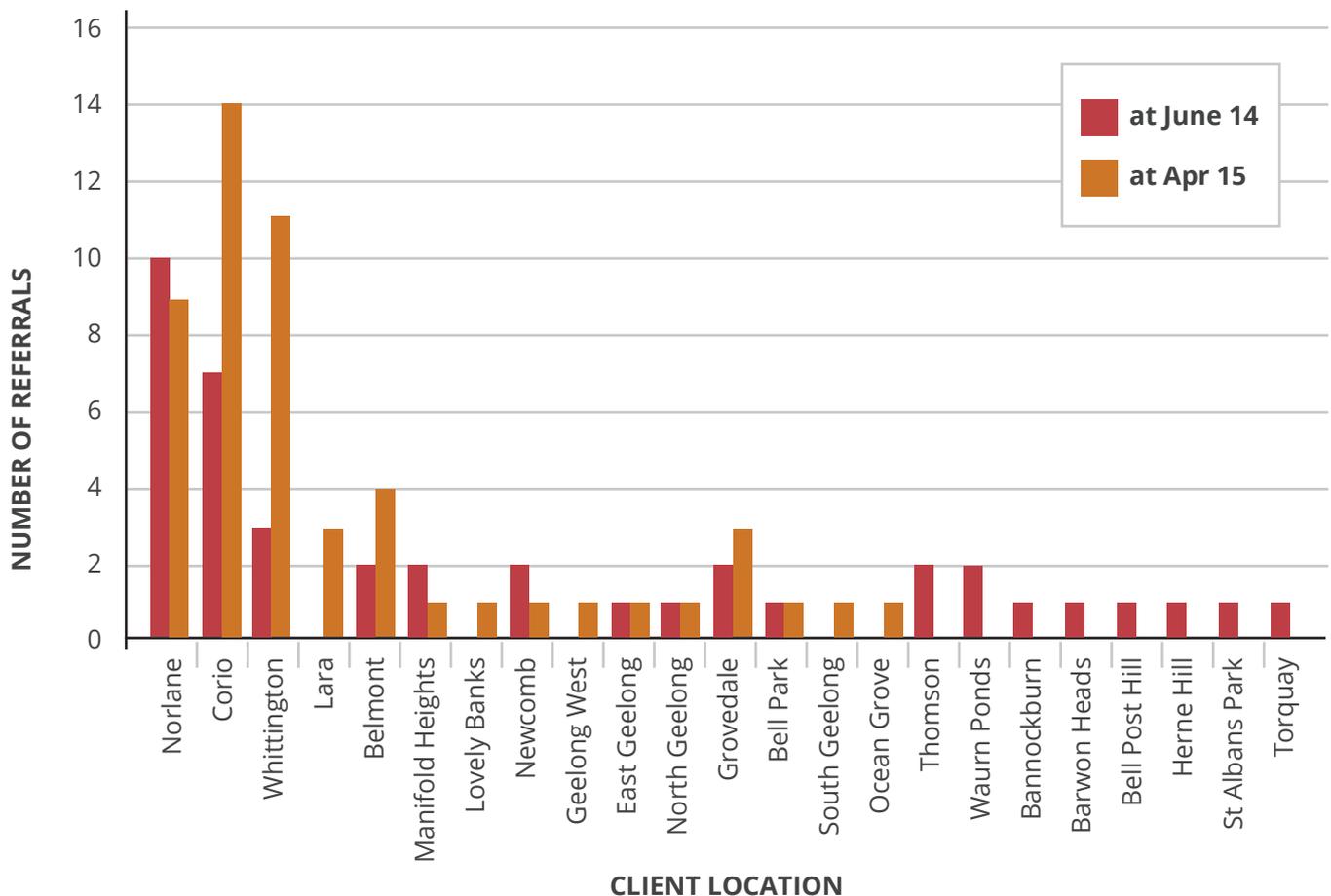
Between July 2013 and April 2015 a total of 104 cases were considered in the BTG project. This number comprises:

- 62 cases (43 BTG plus 19 directly supported by Bethany case management) considered between July 2013 and June 2014, of which 35 were open for some time during the year and eight cases were not opened due to withdrawal or wait listing.
- 54 cases considered between July 2014 and April 2015, of which 12 were continued from the previous year and 19 were directly supported by case managers. There were 42 new cases in 2014-15.

Demographics⁹

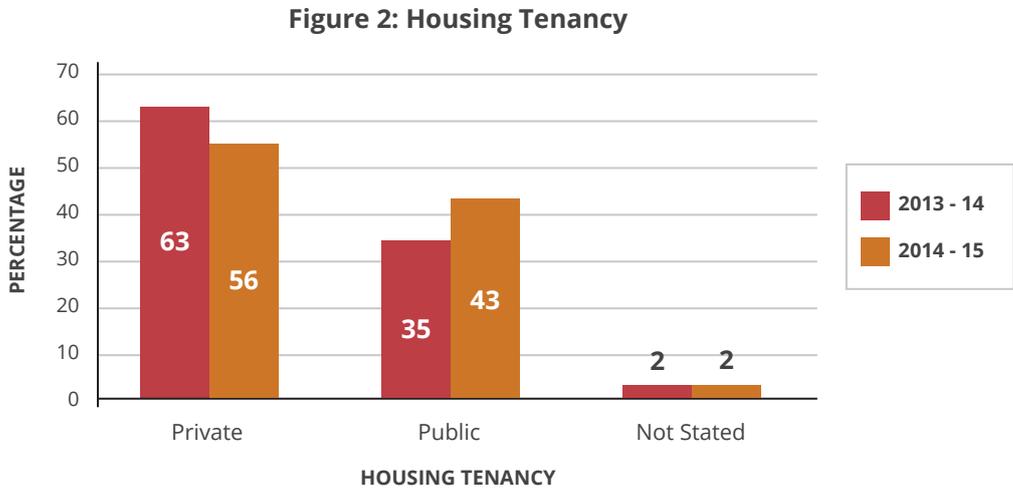
Figure 1 shows the number of BTG clients from 23 locations over the reporting period June 2013 – April 2015. Norlane, Corio and Whittington were well represented across the entire reporting period, housing 47% of BTG clients in 2013-14 and 63% in 2014-15.

Figure 1: Referrals to BTG by Location

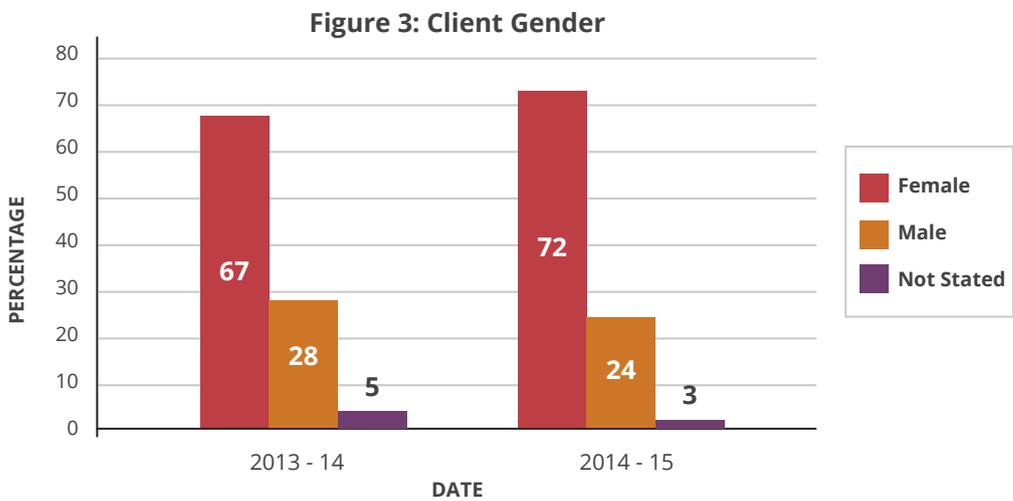


⁹Note that the 2013-14 figures do not include the 19 clients supported directly by Bethany case management during that year

Of the 54 clients in 2014-15, 23 (43%) were from public housing and 30 (56%) from private housing. Tenancy was not recorded for one client (2%). The proportion of clients in public housing figures has increased (35% in 2013-14). These results are shown in Figure 2 below.

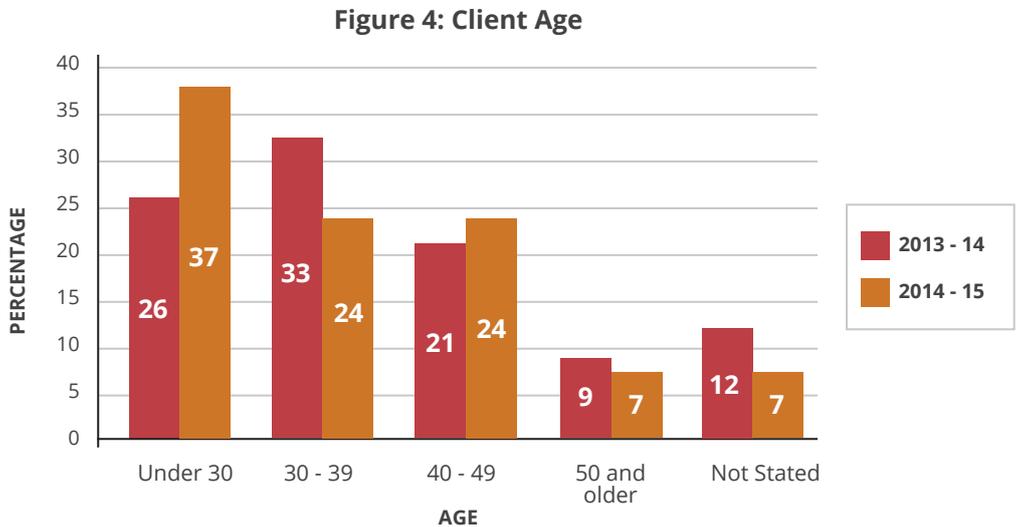


The gender breakdown in 2014-15 was 39 (72%) female, 13 (24%) male and 2 (3%) not stated. This is a similar gender mix to 2013-14 (67% female and 28% male¹⁰).



¹⁰Note that the 2013-14 figures do not include the 19 clients supported directly by Bethany case management

The age of clients across the entire reporting period ranged from 16 to 57. In 2014-15, 37% were aged under 30, 24% were aged 30-39, 24% in their forties and 7% were 50 or older. The below graph compares these results to that of the previous year, which had a higher proportion of clients aged 30-39.



Vocational support beyond BTG

In addition to work done under the BTG banner, in 2013-14 case managers began acting pre-emptively to provide cross-program support to clients. Nineteen clients were supported in this manner during 2013-14 and a further 19 during 2014-15. By the time this final evaluation was conducted, this level of support was considered a critical component of the BTG program, and the 19 clients for 2014-15 were not separately reported.

Client reasons for participation

Many clients of the BTG program in 2014-15 listed multiple reasons for participating in the program. Twenty two (41%) identified 'to get a job' as one of their primary motivators. This figure is significantly lower than that in 2013-14 (70%).

Twenty one clients (39%) in 2014-15 stated that one of their reasons for participating in the program was to pursue study or self-development. This figure is significantly lower than that in 2013-14 (44%). Other common motivators included wanting a new or better career and personal interest.

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Client outcomes

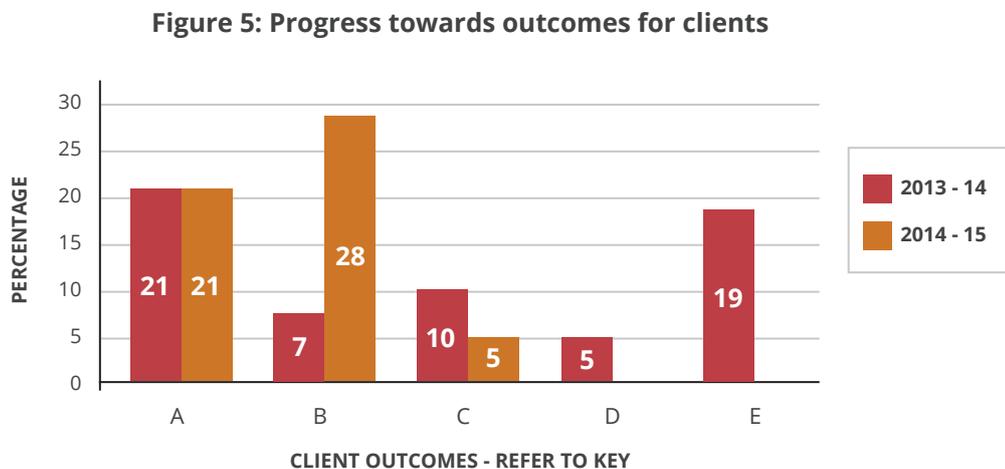
Of the 54 cases under consideration during 2014-15, 49 were deemed open and active at some time during the year. Five cases were closed without engagement due to client withdrawal.

Thirty-five of the remaining 49 active cases were closed during the year and 14 remained open.

For the purpose of project evaluation, the 54 clients in 2014-15 and 62 clients in 2013-14 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,
- supported directly by Bethany case management. This category existed in 2013-14; in 2014-15 these clients were included in one of the above four categories.

Figure 5 summarises progress towards outcomes for each group across the 2013-14 and 2014-15 periods; and detailed explanation is provided thereafter.



KEY

- A - Actively engaged; achieved vocational outcomes
- B - Engaged; limited outcomes
- C - Withdrew from or inactive within BTG; no outcomes
- D - Wait listed; no outcomes yet
- E - Supported directly by existing Bethany case management

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

2014-15: 21 clients (38% of the 54 BTG referrals) were referred to training, study, volunteering or an employment provider. Of these, four gained paid employment and four completed a course during their engagement. One client participated in volunteer work.

2013-14: 21 clients (49% of the 43 BTG referrals, not including those supported by case managers) 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 during their engagement. 1 client participated in volunteer work.

Total: 42 clients achieved outcomes¹¹

Employment support:

In 2014-2015 twelve clients were given employment support (careers counselling, employment service connection, job application and/or resume assistance, interview skills etc). Providers included Diversitat Employment, Gforce and MatchWorks. Four of the 12 clients (33%) who received employment support were successful in obtaining employment. This is less than that achieved in the previous year in which 7 of the 17 clients (41%) who received employment support gained or increased their employment status.

In addition to paid employment, clients engaged in work experience, identified potential employers, linked with job service agencies and attended interviews. One client engaged with volunteer work in 2014-15, as did one during 2013-14.

Training support:

Eighteen clients were given education support during 2014-15 (see Appendix B). Seventeen clients enrolled in a total of 20 courses. 5 clients completed training courses during engagement, including one who had enrolled during the previous year.

In addition, an unknown number of courses will have completed courses after their case was closed.

Providers included Gordon TAFE, Wodonga TAFE, Monash University, Karingal Training, Northern Futures, Health Services Australia, BRACE, Rosewall Neighbourhood House, Cloverdale Community Centre, Whittington Works, Ashley Institute, Diversitat Arts and Journey Management.

In comparison, 24 clients were provided with education support in 2013-14 resulting in the enrolment of 13 clients in education courses.

Nine clients were given employment support plus training support in 2014-15, compared with 15 in 2013-14.

Other client outcomes for 2014 - 2015 included:

- Advocacy received with employment service x 1
- Advocacy received with Centrelink x 2
- Information on L2P program x 1
- Referral to Keys to Connect for driving lessons x 2
- Information on Bethany's Children's Contact Services for extended family x 1
- Information on Barwon Health D&A services for family member x 1
- Information on Bethany Family Relationships counselling service
- Practical assistance to purchase printer for course work x 1
- Brokerage to assist with course fees x 9
- Successful application to Queen's Fund for course funding x 1
- One client self-advocated to receive a training opportunity

¹¹Note that this figure includes some clients who achieved various outcomes in both years

Category B: Engaged; limited outcomes

2014-15: 28 (52%) clients were actively engaged during the year and had achieved limited progress towards outcomes. Of these, 10 were recent referrals to the program and had not yet achieved outcomes and 7 withdrew after some engagement.

2013-14: 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.

Total: 35 clients

Twenty eight clients who were engaged during 2014-15 achieved limited progress towards outcomes. Of these, ten were opened since 1 January 2015 and were, therefore, not as well advanced as those opened earlier in the financial year.

Three of these clients had an Assessment and Action Plan completed and were awaiting a mentor match at the time of writing this report.

Seven clients disengaged from the program during 2014-15; five of these clients were continuing from the previous year.

- One didn't progress since their initial engagement and outcomes in 2013-14,
- One completed a course during 2014-15 that they had enrolled in during the previous year and also enrolled in an additional course in 2014-15. Following the completion of one course they disengaged from the program (see Appendix B),
- One relocated to another regional centre in Victoria and their information was forwarded to support services in this new location,
- One disengaged from the program following the provision of information on relevant courses,
- Another was referred to a computer donation program and provided with information on relevant courses to support study intentions,
- Another client also enrolled in a course before disengaging from the program (see Appendix B), and
- A further case was closed following initial engagement followed by unsuccessful attempts to maintain contact with the client.

In comparison, a substantially lower number of clients (7) were placed in this category in 2013-14, including three clients who disengaged from the BTG program during that year.

The Project Worker noted that case managers completing BTG work during their case management in Family Services or Housing has increased the number of clients in Category B significantly. This could indicate that case managers have limited capacity to support clients effectively for BTG outcomes during their case work.

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

2014-15: 5 (14%) clients did not achieve any outcomes.

2013-14: 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.

Total: 15 clients

Five clients withdrew from the program in 2014 - 2014 before any outcomes could be achieved. Of these, one client stated she was no longer interested in the BTG program and another withdrew due to life stressors. The remaining three withdrew following enrolment in training, securing an apprenticeship and connecting with Gforce employment service prior to receiving BTG support.

This result is a significant improvement on the previous year in which ten (23%) clients withdrew from the program without achieving outcomes.

Category D: Wait listed; no outcomes yet

2014-15: No clients were on the waiting list for BTG support at the end of Phase 2.

2013-14: 5 (11%) clients were on the waiting list for BTG support and BTG outcomes had not been achieved at the time of the interim evaluation.

Total: 5 clients

No clients were on the waitlist at the end of Phase 2, in which the average waiting list was 49 days. 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.

In comparison, the average waiting time for open cases during Phase 1 was 21 days. However, at the conclusion of that Phase there were 13 waitlisted clients who had been waiting an average of 80 days.

Category E: Supported directly by existing Bethany case management

2014-15: Clients were included in one of the above categories

2013-14: Further to the formal BTG program, 19 additional people received information about, and/or connections to, relevant employment and training services.

Total: 19 clients

In addition to the other categories, 19 clients were assisted directly by case managers in 2013-14 to provide cross-program support. Information on client outcomes was not collected during that year.

Commencing in 2013-14, case managers were encouraged to provide vocational support to their clients rather than referring them to BTG. The objective of this exercise was to increase sustainability of the systems developed through BTG, by ensuring that outcomes did not depend on the BTG Project Worker or volunteer mentors.

By 2014-15 it was felt that BTG had been successful in building the capability of case managers to actively integrate services for their clients, and outcomes were incorporated into one of the Categories A-D above.

6

ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT 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 – 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?

Results:

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?

Data for this question was obtained in July 2013 as part of the benchmark report and, again, in April 2015. Data was sought through the Project Worker interview, Reference Group evaluation meeting and case manager focus group. This question was not considered in the Interim Review Report July 2014.

Success Indicator: The number and breadth of BTG partners increases over the course of the project (compared to those reported in the final evaluation of Phase 1).

Table 1 identifies 15 organisations that collaborated during the course of the project, many of which had no relationship with Bethany at the commencement of BTG Phase 2. Two service providers, (Diversitat Training and Diversitat Employment), were involved in collaborative work with BTG for the first time in 2014-15.

Table 1: Collaboration facilitated between services -July 2014 to June 2015

Organisations Involved	Collaborative Work	Outcomes (where known)
Pathways	Economic participation support tools and resources shared with project worker for use in developing programs	
DHS integrated planning project	Presentation to DHS case managers and Employment Services re BTG approach for economic participation.	
Diversitat Employment Services	Meeting with Team Leader and Manager to share information and discuss support for clients (esp re access to electronic resumes).	Clients to be given PIN to access resume on Job Search website, or emailed resume regardless of whether they have a computer at home.

Organisations Involved	Collaborative Work	Outcomes (where known)
Pathways	Meeting with student developing project, to assist with work plan for increased economic participation for clients.	
DHS integrated planning project	Phone call from staff member regarding recording barriers to economic participation / developing survey for potential clients.	Survey developed.
DHS Local Connections	BTG presentation to Team Meeting	
Gforce	Collaboration and liaison to improve support for individual client.	Greater level of support accessed by client. Greater understanding of barriers to employment and engagement.
Diversitat Employment and BRACE	Collaboration and liaison for individual client	Increased communication
Geelong Economic Participation Pathways Group	Presentation to meeting.	
Department of Employment	Meetings re mentoring for retrenched workers.	Contribution to potential mentoring program.
GWYL	Participation in Community Services forum.	
Whittington Works	Attendance at Whittington Works Information session	Client enrolment in Whittington Works course
Northern Futures	Meeting for increased collaboration	Increased understanding of programs. Increased communication
MatchWorks, Northern Futures, Karingal Training, New Horizons DES	Promotion of each organisation and the collaborative approach taken, in BTG video story.	Shared goals achieved
Diversitat Training	Visit and meeting with Training Coordinator to gather further information on course options for clients	Greater awareness of programs
Northern Futures and wide variety of community organisations / industry reps	Industry breakfast and 'Bridges Out of Poverty' workshop	Networking opportunities
Northern Futures	Collaboration to determine options for individual BTG clients	Client enrolment in Northern Bay Guarantee Program
Work Development Centre	Meeting to discuss ways BTG/ Bethany and the WDC can work together to benefit clients	Information on eligibility and support provided by WDC
Geelong Economic Participation Pathways Group	Ongoing participation in network	Ongoing collaboration with a range of services

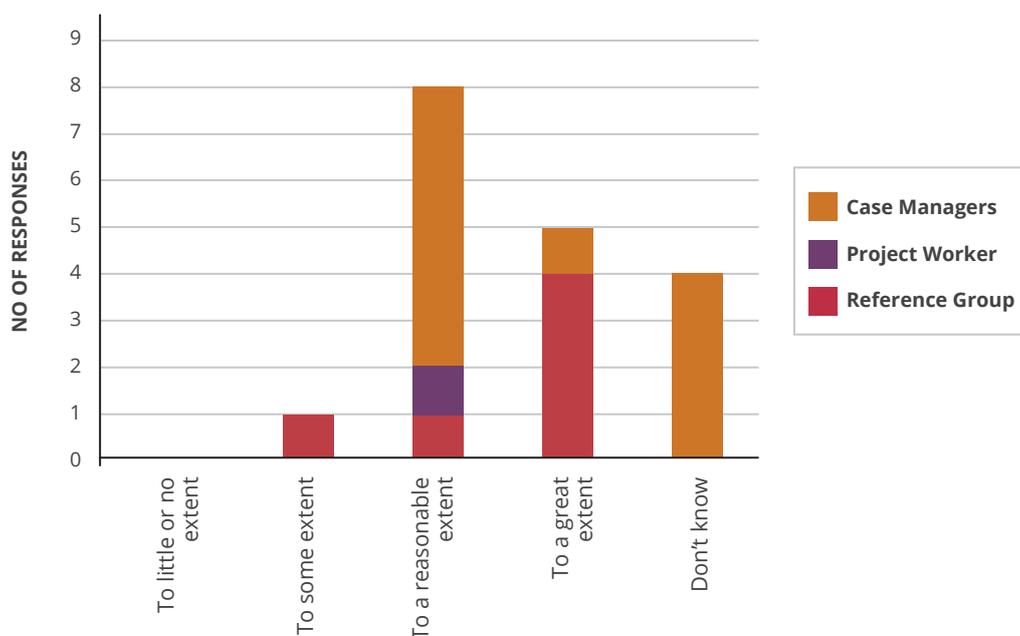
Case managers and Reference Group members suggested that a lot of this work was going on prior to the BTG project but was not necessarily obvious, overt, structured or measured. Since the BTG project however, the partnerships have become stronger and truly collaborative. Communication has improved as has information sharing and knowledge creation amongst staff across and within organisations.

Furthermore, the BTG program has facilitated the forging of relationships between some organisations that had not traditionally collaborated together or with Bethany. This has led to improved client outcomes in the form of easier access to suitable employment and training opportunities.

A forum of community service organisations, training providers and employment service providers meet regularly to discuss common issues and, whilst not a direct result of BTG, provides an excellent example of collaboration between organisations.

Figure 6 summarises the results of this question across the Reference Group, case managers and Project Worker. Fourteen of the eighteen (72%) respondents suggested that 'to a reasonable or great extent' there is a greater diversity of partnerships and collaborations as a result of the BTG project. A further four respondents indicated that they 'didn't know'.

Figure 6: To what extent is there a greater diversity of partnerships and collaborations between Bethany, education/training providers and employment services as a result of the BTG project?



This result is similar to that obtained in July 2013 where the vast majority of respondents indicated greater diversity of partnerships and collaborations 'to a reasonable or great extent'. The success indicator for this KEQ is considered achieved.

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

Data was sought through the Project worker interview, Reference Group evaluation meeting, case manager focus group, and the VicHealth Partnerships Analysis Tool. This question was also considered in both the 2013 Benchmark Report and the Interim Review Report July 2014.

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

The provision of a single continuous support person to assist a client to navigate between service providers e.g. Bethany, employment, training etc. was considered to be a significant attribute of the BTG project. The Project Worker, BTG case manager¹² and volunteer mentors assist in keeping clients engaged and motivated, and provide a critical link between services.

“Service integration is one of the biggest benefits of BTG and, without that, my clients don’t move forward” (Family Services case manager)

One example of effective integration was given where three organisations worked together to negotiate and achieve funding for a client to undertake a training course.

Case managers stated that integration is more evident as a result of engagement with other services through BTG. It was acknowledged that integration can happen at many levels and has sometimes occurred at the grassroots level unbeknownst to those more senior in the organisations. Integration is also dependent on the willingness of all providers to engage in that process.

Several benefits of integration across BTG were evident including sharing of vocational information and approaches across organisations. One example was provided whereby email discussions regarding relevant training courses led to the provision of that training course information being made available more broadly to employment providers who then passed it on to additional clients.

Table 1 identifies instances where cross-organisational collaborative work was undertaken in 2014-15. There were 19 instances where collaborative work was undertaken and outcomes were achieved in 13 of those instances. This builds on the 9 instances of collaborative work between organisations in 2013-14.

The Vic Health Partnerships Analysis Tool (PAT), completed by Reference Group members, was also used to help answer KEQ2. A summary of the results for 2014-15 are shown in Table 2 below along with those from July 2013 for the purposes of comparison. It should be noted that only four Reference Group members completed the April 2015 survey, compared with 8 in 2013.

Table 2 – PAT results for July 2013 and April 2015

PAT categories	July 2013		April 2015		% change
	Range of scores	Average score	Range of scores	Average score	(based on averages)
Determining the need for the partnership	20-25	23.3	19-25	22.3	-4.5%
Choosing partners	19-23	20.7	18-24	20.8	0.5%
Making sure partnerships work	19-25	21.3	18-25	21.0	-1.4%
Planning collaborative action	21-23	22.0	18-25	20.3	-8.4%
Implementing collaborative action	18-24	20.7	18-25	21.0	1.4%
Minimising the barriers to partnerships	18-21	19.4	17-25	21.3	8.9%
Reflecting on and continuing the partnership	17-24	20.4	18-22	19.5	-4.6%
Average	17-25	21.1	17-25	20.9	-0.96%

¹²BTG had additional assistance from a case manager on a part time basis for 6 months.

The overall April 2015 PAT scores are very similar to those of July 2013, suggesting that the strength, value and integration of partnerships had remained a focus of project partners throughout Phase 2.

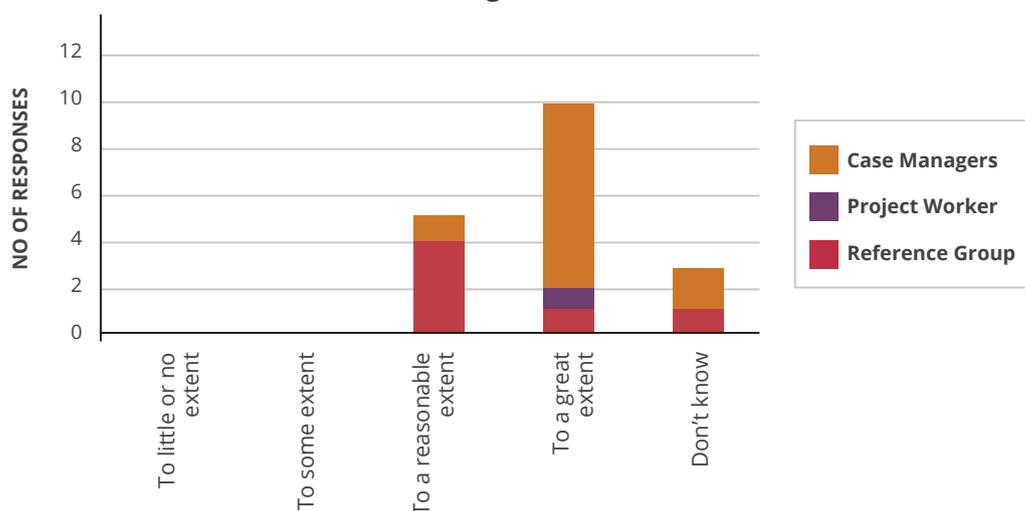
In the April 2015 review, categories with the highest scores were 'determining the need for partnership', followed by 'minimising the barriers to partnerships', indicating that current partnerships are particularly strong in both of these realms.

Interestingly, 'minimising barriers to partnerships' was noted as an area requiring improvement in the July 2013 review. These latest results – a score increase of 8.9% over the 18 months - suggest that there had been significant work done to overcome any barriers to collaborative partnerships this year.

Corresponding decreases in scores at April 2015 were seen in three categories: 'planning collaborative action', 'determining the need for the partnership' and 'reflecting on and continuing the partnership'. The decrease in the first two of these categories may be due to the fact that BTG has moved from a phase of planning to one of implementation and outcome achievement.

Should the program continue, partners will need to focus on 'reflecting on and continuing the partnership' to ensure that strategic relationships remain strong and conducive to program success.

Figure 7: To what extent did the partnering organisations demonstrate effective integration of services?



In responding to the KEQ2 question in 2014-15, fifteen of the eighteen respondents indicated that services were integrated throughout project implementation to 'a reasonable or great extent' (see Figure 7).

Those closest to the 'grassroots' (case managers and Project Worker) tended to rate the integration level more highly than those further removed from the day-to-day operations of the BTG program (Reference Group).

In the 2013 Benchmark Review Report, 7 of the 8 Reference Group members and the Project Worker indicated that integration was occurring to a 'reasonable or great extent'. One member indicated that it was occurring to 'some extent'. The results suggest that integration is continuing and may indeed be increasing.

In consolidating the data from the various sources to assist in answering this KEQ, it would appear that there is anecdotal and objective evidence that services were integrated throughout the project. Hence the success indicator is considered achieved.

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 – 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?

Results:

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?

In answering KEQ3, data was obtained from Project Worker, case manager and volunteer mentor interviews and surveys during July 2013 and again in the final evaluation. This question was not considered in the Interim Review Report July 2014.

Success Indicator: Bethany staff state that information and training improved their ability to facilitate clients with complex needs to engage in education, vocational training and employment.

No formal training was run for Bethany staff during 2014-15 due to resource limitations. The training run in February 2014 was extremely well received by the 12 Family Services and 12 Housing Services staff who attended. The average score attributed to this training was 8.9 out of 10 in terms of its value to better equip staff.

During 2014-15 individual consultations with case manager were held as needed, whereas a four-session training program for volunteer mentors was undertaken.

Case managers and volunteer mentors considered that the support they obtained from the Project Worker was extremely helpful in meeting their information needs.

'I'll give Linda a callIf she doesn't know the answer, she'll go and get it' (volunteer mentor)

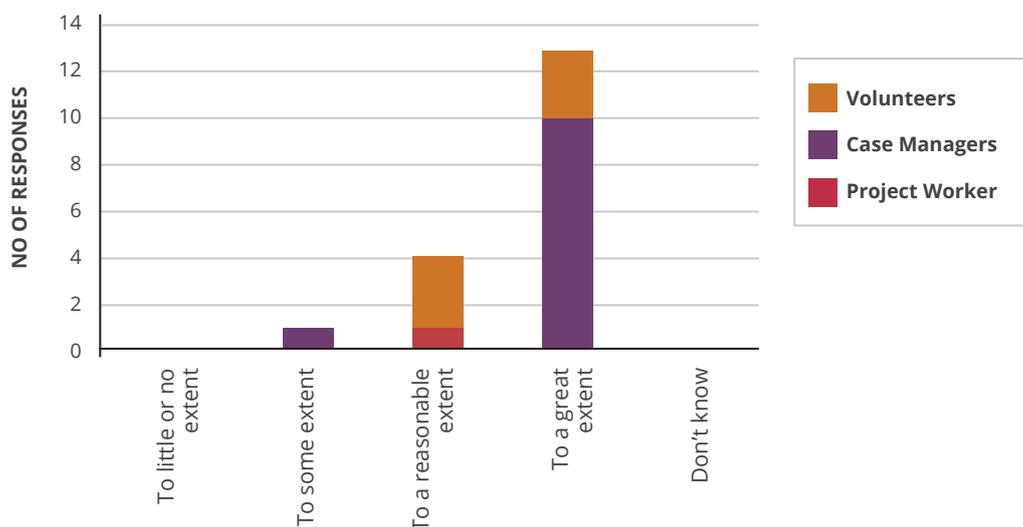
Several references were made by both the Project Worker and case managers as to the amount and quality of BTG information made available on the intranet. Case managers and volunteer mentors also commented on the ease of accessing the Project Worker and her ability to provide them with helpful and relevant information or links. The Project Worker constantly updated intranet information and was proactive in furnishing case managers with information.

One case manager cited an example in which she requested advice from the Project Worker to help her assist a young client to write a resume. The Project Worker not only provided the links to appropriate templates and other resources, but also directly supported the case manager and client to put the resume together.

Many of the case managers still refer to handouts, flowcharts and notes provided at the training session run in 2013-14.

Throughout 2014-15, there were 30 recorded instances in which the Project Worker provided support in the form of relevant information to individual or all case managers. Examples included training course information, online job application resources, educational programs for people with a disability and careers expo information.

Figure 8: Were you provided with information and/or training opportunities to improve your ability to facilitate clients with complex needs to engage in education, vocational training and employment?



In answering KEQ3, 13 of the 18 respondents indicated that they had been provided with information and training opportunities to improve their ability to facilitate clients 'to a great extent' whilst a further 4 agreed with this statement 'to a reasonable extent'.

In comparing these results to those in July 2013, a common thread was the knowledge, willingness and efficiency of the Project Worker in providing information and support to case managers and volunteer mentors when needed. It is clearly apparent that this individual has played a critical role in linking case managers and volunteer mentors to relevant information to enable them to be effective in meeting client needs.

On the basis of the evidence provided above, the success indicator for this KEQ is considered achieved.

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

To answer KEQ4, data was obtained through the Project Worker interview, case manager and volunteer focus groups and surveys, client interviews, and the BTG Service User Satisfaction Report (SUSS). This question was also considered in both the 2013 Benchmark Report and the 2014 Interim Review Report.

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

Case managers and volunteer mentors all stated that their clients had been provided with information on training, jobs and careers.

One case manager recalled a client commencing a training program within one week of entering the BTG program. Another client with numeracy and literacy issues had, until the BTG program, considered the attainment of her driver's licence too difficult. However, access to the Keys to Connect Program, made available through BTG, coupled with the encouragement of her case manager motivated her to meet the challenge of trying for her driver's licence again.

One frustration expressed by a volunteer related to the fact that, whilst they may have a client who would benefit from undertaking a particular course, training providers are often not prepared to run the course until they have a minimum number of participants:

'It is always about the numbers isn't it? You may find a few people who would benefit (from a course) but then when you contact the education provider, they say they need a minimum of X and then those people are left hanging' (volunteer mentor)

Both the case managers and volunteer mentors highlighted the support role that they play for their clients in whatever capacity is required, whether it be discussing childcare options, confidence building or merely just being another adult to discuss issues with.

"Some of these people don't have a sounding board" (volunteer mentor)

Three clients were interviewed in 2014-15 for this question, all indicating that they had been given substantial information regarding training, jobs and careers. One client was assisted in the preparation of her resume and the securing of job interviews. As a result of her BTG engagement she considered herself able to attend the interviews on her own and succeeded in obtaining some casual work in hospitality.

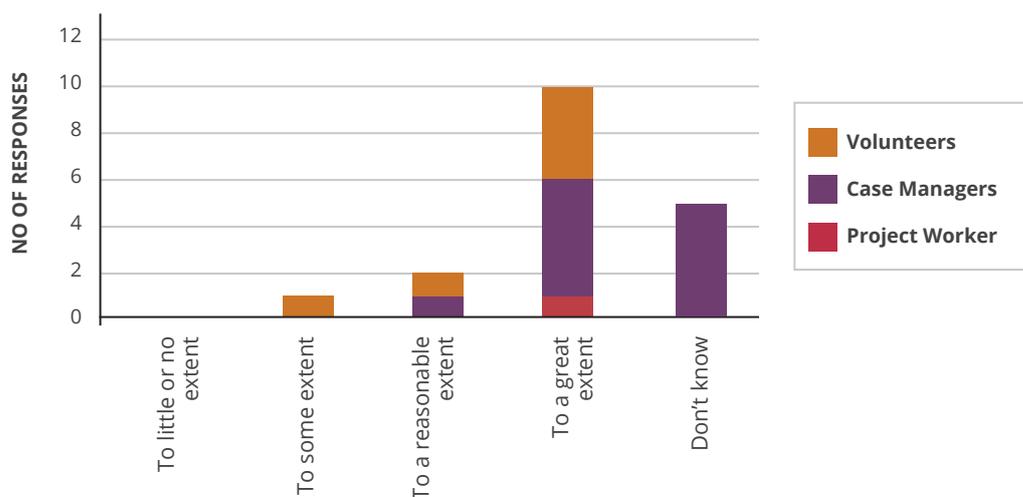
Another client was limited in her ability to attend training outside the home due a sick child, and was assisted in seeking online training opportunities. She is currently undertaking this training and is pleased to be improving her skills and to be 'doing something', adding that she was pleased to be able to undertake the online training when it suited her and her family.

The third client was assisted with driving lessons, practice interviews and is currently undertaking a 14 week training program at Whittington Works which he is hoping may lead to an apprenticeship in carpentry, plastering or cementing.

Section 5 outlines the breadth of information provided to clients on training and employment opportunities and the resulting take-up. Vocational information was provided to 41 clients in 2014-15, and 62 clients in 2013-14. This means that a considerable total of 103 clients received vocational information during Phase 2.

Through SUSS, exiting clients were asked whether they had been assisted to make contact with employment/training services in the community. Five responses were received, all of which stated 'yes'.

Figure 9: Was information about training, job seeking and careers in the local area provided to clients with complex needs?



In answering KEQ4, 12 of the 18 respondents (67%) indicated that clients with complex needs had been provided with information about training, job seeking and careers 'to a reasonable or great extent'. Five respondents (28%) indicated that they 'didn't know'.

In reviewing the results of July 2013 and July 2014, it is evident that the strong push to provide relevant and constructive information to clients on future employment and training opportunities continued throughout 2014-15. Interestingly, participants at all levels valued this aspect of the program, cementing it as a critical component.

The success indicator for this KEQ is therefore considered achieved.

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

Information to address this question was drawn from the Project Worker interview, case manager and volunteer focus groups and surveys, as well as client interviews. This question was also considered in both the 2013 Benchmark Report and the 2014 Interim Review Report.

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

The Project Worker expressed frustration that the level of support provided to clients depends on time and resource constraints. Therefore, whilst the program seeks to keep cases open until they are confident that the clients are on the right track, this limits the ability for new cases to be opened.

Both case managers and volunteer mentors suggested that the level of client engagement achieved depended heavily on the degree to which the client wanted to stay engaged. Where clients are dealing with other issues, their level of engagement may be limited. However, knowing that the case manager/volunteer mentor is there, willing and able to help is still beneficial.

A task identified as a critical step in ensuring clients achieved successful outcomes was the Project Worker's follow up with training providers and employment agencies. This enabled her to determine whether clients attended courses or interviews and, if not, what the BTG program needed to do to assist them to fulfil their appointments.

In answering this KEQ, clients gave feedback that suggested that BTG support did assist them to remain engaged. One client stated that ***'BTG was a big help to me when things are stressful at home. They have helped my mental stability.'*** Another client felt that the program staff were helpful in providing advice to her ***'on how to deal with situations at work... they help me feel more confident at work.'***

A client explained the value of their relationship with their case manager as:

'The worker was real, bringing me back to reality and what I can manage. Set me achievable goals.'

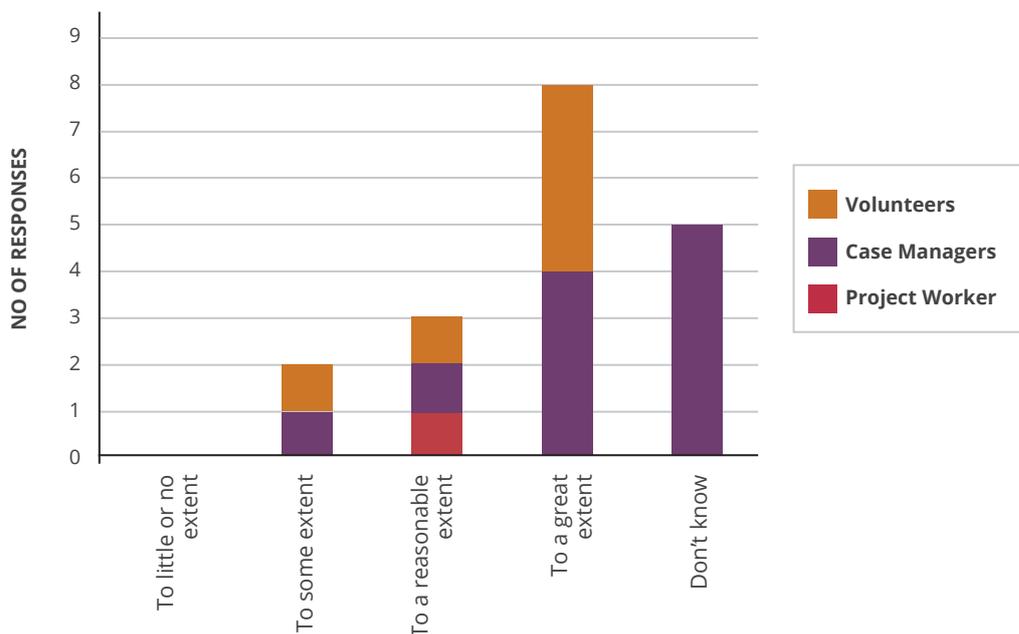
The average waiting time from the date of referral to their commencement date with the BTG program was approximately 6 weeks in 2014-15. The longest wait time was 15 weeks while the shortest was 3 days. All clients referred to the program in 2014-15 were accommodated during the year.

BTG Phase 2 saw the introduction of the volunteer mentoring program.

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

During the 2014-15 reporting period 22 volunteer mentors participated in BTG, including twelve who had been recruited in the previous year. Three volunteer mentors remained working on open cases at April 2015 and a further 4 were trained and ready to become active. During the year, nine withdrew or were removed from the program. Many of the withdrawals were related to the mentor relocating or changing employment/study commitments. One volunteer was not matched due a change in their circumstances and is undertaking voluntary administration tasks instead.

Figure 10: Was there facilitated support to assist clients to remain engaged in vocational training and employment opportunities?



In answering KEQ5, 11 of the 18 respondents (61%) indicated that clients were assisted with facilitated support to remain engaged in vocational training and employment opportunities 'to a reasonable or great extent'. Five respondents (28%) indicated that they 'didn't know'.

In July 2014 it was reported that significant progress was being made towards achieving this success indicator.

Certainly, the fact that clients were able to be accommodated within reasonably short wait times is a significant improvement on previous years.

Notwithstanding the feedback from case managers and volunteer mentors, the Success Indicator for this question specifically relates to the clients' perception that they were supported to remain engaged.

Given that client sample size is so small, it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions as to whether the success indicator for this KEQ has been achieved.

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 a solution-based 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?

Results:

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

Information examined to assess this question was drawn from the Project Worker interview, case manager and volunteer focus groups and surveys, client interviews, Work Star reports, BTG Service User Satisfaction Report (SUSS) and the BTG Impact Assessment Tool Results. This question was also considered in both the 2013 Benchmark Report and the 2014 Interim Review Report.

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

Feedback from the Project Worker, case managers, volunteer mentors and clients would suggest that BTG clients have been supported, encouraged and motivated to engage with employment opportunities and pathways. Both case managers and volunteer mentors have supported and encouraged clients in their initial interactions with job service agencies.

Over half of the 2014-15 clients listed one of their major reasons for involvement in the program was to gain employment. A case manager stated that, given the program is client-led, getting clients onto the appropriate pathway is a far more straightforward process for those who are clear about what they want.

One example was provided of a client who, since joining the program, had been accepted into a pre-program for nursing and is now happy and motivated to reach her goals.

Another client stated that she had an increased confidence and self-esteem, stating that the program is **'helping me to be strong, to stand on my own feet..... I can do this..... since I have been with them (BTG), I have been doing this so well'**.

On the other hand, one client took 12 months to find the vocational training they needed, were eligible for and could attain funding for.

Data was collected during 2014-15 on vocational engagement of clients throughout the year. This data is summarised in Section 5 and Table 3 (Appendix B). It shows that 49 clients participated in vocational pathways over the course of the year and 77 did so over the course of Phase 2; resulting in 11 clients gaining paid employment, and two working as volunteers.

Seventeen clients enrolled in 20 courses, with 5 course completions during BTG engagement, in 2014-15. In total this equates to 30 enrolments in 40 courses with 21 course completions during BTG engagement across Phase 2.

Work Star, a tool used to assess participants' readiness for vocational activities, was undertaken for all clients in 2014-15, although some clients only completed one during the reporting period.

Two Work Star assessments are typically undertaken for clients: one at the start, and one at the completion of the BTG program to measure the impact of the support received. Importantly, Work Star is the clients' own assessment of their vocational readiness and progress. Further detail on Work Star and an analysis of the data for the thirteen clients is located in Appendix D.

Motivation is a factor specifically addressed in Work Star (Work Star Domain 2: 'Aspiration and motivation'). Self-assessment by clients against the aspiration and motivation Work Star domain shows an increase in averaged scores from 6.7 to 7.9 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 comments in their individual Work Star assessments, indicating that many are more motivated, encouraged and supported to engage with vocational pathways. Clients reported that:

"I'm motivated and confident. I just need a little support."

"I am motivated and confident. I have been gaining employment and working. I am excited about starting my Pathology course."

"I want to volunteer and am taking steps in the right direction."

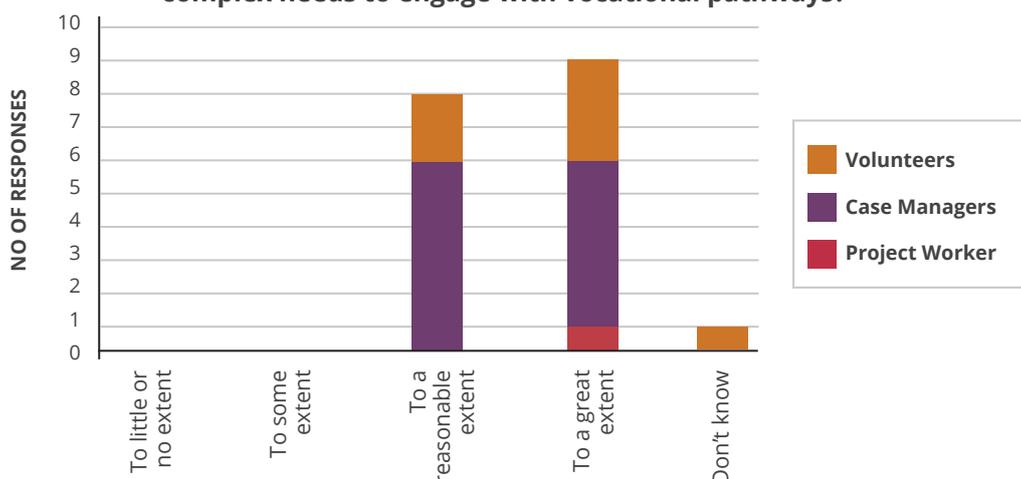
"I know I want to work with my hands and get more skills. I feel hopeful sometimes. I want to take steps forward."

Client data and comments recorded in the SUSS also offer insights into this KEQ. Of the six respondents to the question regarding whether their circumstances have changed since being engaged with BTG, four stated that they had better qualifications, four stated that they had improved skills and 3 stated that they had improved confidence.

However, of the ten respondents to the question regarding whether they had met their employment goals, only two stated that they had. In elaborating on this question, only two comments were offered. One reported that they **'could not have done it without the Bridging the Gap program'** whilst the other stated that they **'did not hear from the program and no goals were set'**.

Other comments offered through the SUSS were that the program **'made me feel as I am not lost in a sea of anonymous faces. It was not BTG's fault I did not reach my goals as that would be asking too much. I am more positive than I have ever been'**.

Figure 11: Did the project motivate, encourage and support clients with complex needs to engage with vocational pathways?



In making an assessment regarding KEQ6 in 2014-15, Figure 11 shows that only one respondent indicated that they 'didn't know' whilst 8 respondents suggested that the project had motivated, encouraged and supported clients with complex needs to engage with vocational pathways 'to a reasonable extent' and 9 indicated this 'to a great extent'. These results suggest an overwhelmingly positive view of the achievement of the success indicator for this KEQ.

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

To answer this question, data was obtained from the Project Worker interview, case manager focus group and survey, Reference Group evaluation meeting, the 'Employment Pathway Support Tool' and the 'Training Pathway Support Tool'. This question was not considered in any of the previous BTG evaluation reports.

Success Indicator: *Framework developed, documented and used by Project Worker and case managers.*

KEQ7 is quite specific in that it requires evidence that the framework was not only developed and documented but also used. Appendices E and F contain diagrammatic representations of the employment and training pathway frameworks currently being employed through the BTG program. In addition, a comprehensive Practice Manual¹³ was developed towards the end of Phase 2 to assist ongoing implementation of BTG.

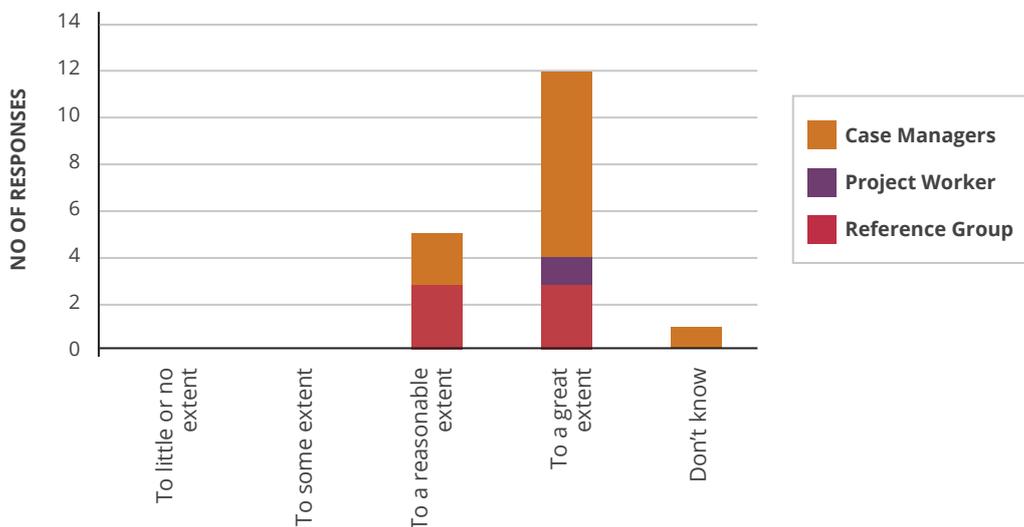
Feedback from the Project Worker, case managers and Reference Group suggest that the BTG program is certainly centred around a solution-based framework in that it focuses on individual client needs and objectives, rather than being a 'one size fits all' approach.

'BTG provided us with different pathways that could be taken, if there were barriers'. (case manager)

'BTG worked hard to ensure that it improved participants' ability to achieve realistic training it used integrity to make sure that people were getting the right service and support. It operated from a client perspective.... this highlights the principle of a solution based framework.' (Reference Group member)

As shown in Figure 12, seventeen of the eighteen responses indicated that they felt that the framework was developed, documented and used by Project Worker and case manager to 'a reasonable or great extent'. One indicated that they didn't know.

Figure 12: Was a solution focused framework adopted to assist clients to overcome barriers to economic participation?



These results suggest that the success indicator for this KEQ has been achieved.

¹³Bethany (2015) *Bridging the Gap Practice Manual*

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

To address this KEQ, information examined to assess this question was drawn from the Project Worker interview, case manager and volunteer focus groups and surveys, client interviews, Work Star reports, BTG Service User Satisfaction Report (SUSS) and the BTG Impact Assessment Tool results. This question was also considered in both the 2013 Benchmark Report and the 2014 Interim Review Report.

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

There was unanimous agreement amongst the Project Worker, case managers, volunteer mentors and clients that, as a result of the BTG program, clients had succeeded in building confidence, self-esteem and skills.

The Project Worker indicated that she considered the ultimate sign of the program's success was when one client told her that *'I don't need you anymore, I can do it on my own but I want you to stay connected until I find out if I have got the job'*.

One case manager stated that she has seen clients gain *'skills to go forward to make their own decisions and create their own pathways'*. A volunteer stated that the increased confidence and self-esteem was evident in her client's appearance and manner and that they were *'more open, not so reserved and laughs all the time'*.

Another example provided by a volunteer related to the confidence her client showed in independently investigating childcare options, tasks she would not have considered at the commencement of the program.

Clients indicated improvements in skills such as interviewing and behaviour in the workplace. One client was successful in gaining four jobs over the course of the program and had acquired skills in food preparation, kitchen duties and cleaning. She indicated that she now had the confidence to talk to her employers and fellow colleagues in the workplace.

Another client was appreciative of the support that the BTG staff had shown her in dealing with her many personal and family challenges, stating *'I do the best I can and they accept that.....they don't degrade me, they say, this is how we are going to help you'*. A further comment offered by a client was *'I'm a lot more confident when I go into an interview I'm actually doing something now'*. This client was also acquiring manual skills through the Whittington Works program.

The Project Worker cited an example of a client who had enrolled in an online administration course which enabled her to study when it suited her and around her family commitments. She had received an 'A' for her first assignment and was achieving 100% for her on-line assessments. She told the Project Worker that *'I'm not a dumb b**** after all!'*

Appendix D of this report provides an analysis of Work Star results for thirteen BTG clients during 2014-15 and nineteen clients over the course of their engagement in the program (includes assessments completed by clients in previous years). Work Star data shows that there was an overall improvement in averaged client scores in five of the seven Work Star domains during 2014-15.

The largest average increases were in the domains: 'job specific skills' (1.4), 'aspiration and motivation' (1.2) and 'job search skills' (1.6). The domain of 'basic skills' and 'social skills for work' saw a smaller increase and 'challenges' remained the same. The 'stability' domain decreased by 0.2. For individual clients, there were some striking changes, for example one reported a shift from 5 to 10 for 'social skills for work' and 5 to 8 for 'aspiration and motivation'.

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

"I am working and ... [have] an increase in confidence and a desire to go onto to even greater things"

"I have found a way ahead and can see it's possible for me to study despite my challenges."

"I enjoyed participating in the course, building relationships with my fellow students and being part of a team in the workplace"

“I am committed to more learning. I know how to take the next step when I am ready”

“I now have upgraded qualifications. Six months of hands-on experience in a school has given me confidence in the education support role.”

“I can research opportunities. I am confident to approach employers and training organisations. My phone conversation skills have improved.”

In analysing the Work Star results where nineteen clients completed the assessment across the entire BTG program, the results indicate an even greater increase in ‘job specific skills’ (1.6), ‘aspiration and motivation’ (1.5) and ‘job search skills’ (2.0) from the beginning to the end of their engagement. All other domains also saw an overall increase, although they were smaller. These results are particularly significant in that they are client self-assessments and therefore give an insight into the clients’ own perspectives of their readiness for work.

Three case studies have been included in Appendix C and one reports that:

‘Steve’ finished school after Year 10 and has worked in factory and labouring work in the past... Through the Bridging the Gap program, Steve was connected with Whittington Works where he attended an information session on a Certificate II in General Construction course..... Steve has commenced his course, has an excellent attendance record and reports that he is thoroughly enjoying it. He has also secured some casual labouring work and has mentioned a desire to go on to do further training for the construction industry.

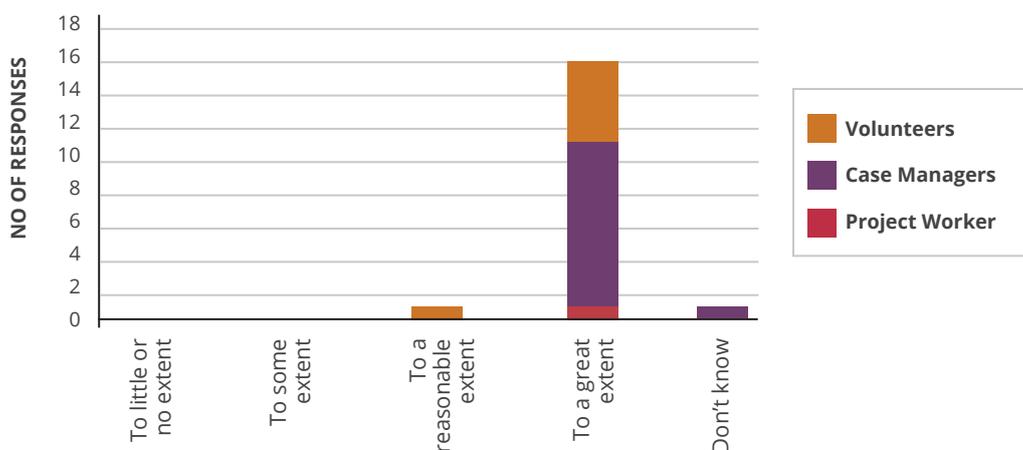
The SUSS results offer further insights into this KEQ. In offering comments about the BTG program, one client stated that it *‘worked out very good for me. I have nothing but praise. I obtained work since. I knew I could do it’*. Another stated that *‘the workers really helped me get more confidence’*.

‘The best thing about being involved is just giving someone confidence to walk into a place and think they are worthy for the job because prior to the program it was all too hard’ (volunteer mentor)

‘I’ve come from a dark place and now four years later, with the help of BTG, I’ve come alive again’ (client)

Figure 13 also shows that, of the eighteen responses to this question, sixteen indicated that this indicator had been achieved ‘to a great extent’.

Figure 13: Do clients have increased confidence, self-esteem and improved skills as a result of their engagement with Bridging The Gap?



It is clear that the success indicator for KEQ 8 has been achieved as evidenced by both the anecdotal feedback and in the broad spectrum of data collated for this question. This result is consistent with conclusions drawn in July 2014 and July 2013 that the BTG program had made significant progress in helping clients to build their confidence, self-esteem and skills.

Objective 4: Improved service system

Project Objective:

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

Key Evaluation Questions:

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?

Results:

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

Information examined to assess this question was drawn from the Project Worker interview, case manager focus group and survey, Reference Group evaluation meeting, the 'Employment Pathway Support Tool' and the 'Training Pathway Support Tool'. This question was not considered in the previous BTG evaluations.

Success Indicator: *Practice model developed, documented and referred to relevant organisations.*

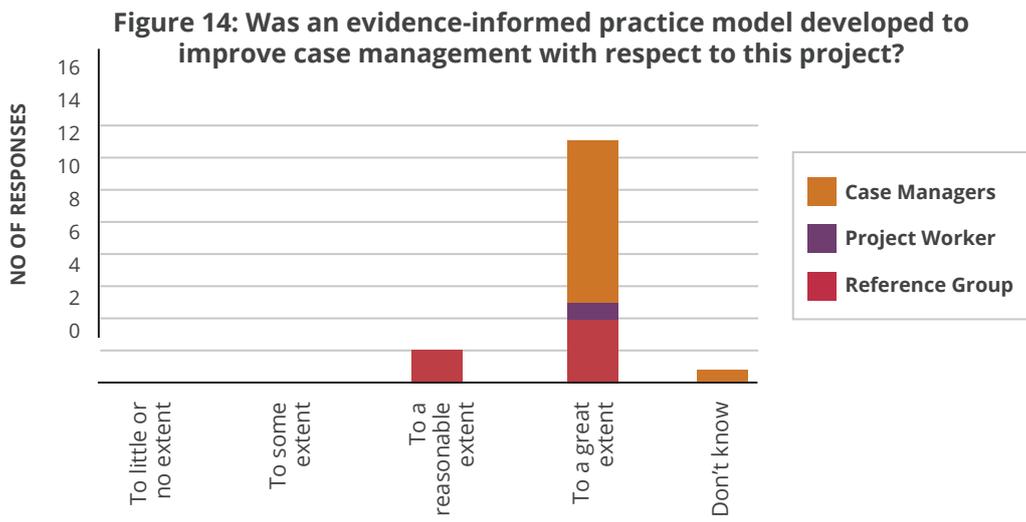
The Success Indicator for this KEQ requires that evidence-informed practice models are not only being developed and documented but also referred to other organisations outside Bethany. This, therefore, requires evidence that other organisations are aware of the models. Given that the membership of the Reference Group comprises representatives from external organisations, their feedback is critical to evaluating the success of this KEQ.

Appendices E and F contain diagrammatic representations of the employment and training pathway decision trees that were practice models developed and refined, employed through the BTG program, and shared with other agencies. The Project Worker and Reference Group members indicated that they continually evaluated what was working and what was not working within the program, and that workers adjusted and revised their way of working accordingly. Continually seeking feedback from clients, volunteer mentors and all those involved in the program was a key method of informing and revising the working models. Indeed, the regular progress reporting was also a critical method by which learnings could be incorporated into the program and discussed with Reference Group members from other organisations. These learnings were always aimed at improving case management and, ultimately, client outcomes.

Reference Group members stated that the broadening of staff knowledge within and across organisations has resulted in a broader level of service being able to be offered to the client.

***'My primary focus centres on parenting and I did not previously have much knowledge of other areas, such as training and employment. As a result of the program, I have gained a better understanding and knowledge of those other areas and I now offer a broader and much improved level of service to my clients.'* (Family Services worker)**

A case manager commented that the ability for clients to move between services e.g. Bethany and MatchWorks has greatly improved and there is less confusion for the client as a result. Another stated that, as a result of the program, she was now emailing training providers to identify available courses that she didn't even know existed previously. These examples demonstrate the degree to which the practice models are infiltrating other areas within Bethany as well as external organisations.



Of the eighteen responses to this KEQ, seventeen indicated that an evidence-based practice model was developed to improve case management with respect to the project. These results, coupled with the anecdotal evidence above and the usability of the decision trees, would suggest that the success indicator for this KEQ has been achieved.

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

Information gathered to examine this question came from the Project Worker interview, and the case manager focus group and survey. This question was also considered in the Interim Review Report July 2014.

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

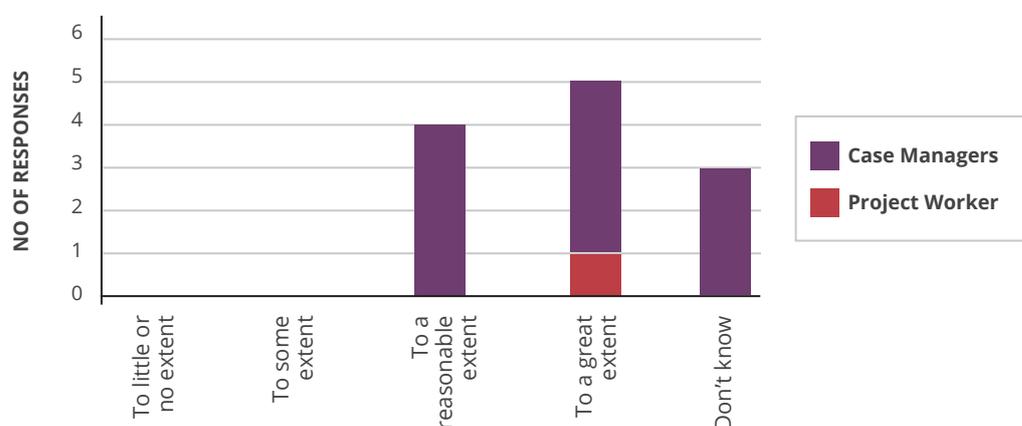
Table 1 (Objective 1: Collaboration maximised) outlines the extent to which organisations have collaborated during the program. The table shows that there were 19 such instances with 13 recorded outcomes during 2014-15. In all of these instances, information sharing, networking and/or participation in forums were key components of the collaboration exercise. In four of the instances where outcomes were recorded, improved outcomes were related specifically to individual or multiple clients.

In addition, it is almost certain that further benefits leading to improved case management practices – and enhanced client outcomes – would have resulted from the remainder of the collaboration instances that were not formally recorded. These instances build on the outcomes of the 9 instances of collaboration recorded during 2013-14.

The Project Worker provided examples of improved communication and linkages with Northern Futures and Whittington Works. These providers are now proactively asking the BTG program what courses their clients are looking for rather than reacting to BTG approaches and requests. Indeed, some of the Northern Futures graduates were BTG clients.

It was acknowledged, however, that some organisations are more challenging to work with than others and therefore the strength of collaboration with other organisations varies somewhat. One case manager highlighted the use of email as a key mechanism by which she is kept updated as to training, employment and funding opportunities available for her clients.

Figure 15: Did links with external organisations facilitate information sharing and teamwork at case management level for the benefit of clients?



Case managers and the Project Worker were asked this KEQ and the results are indicated in Figure 15. Of the 12 responses, nine stated that links with external organisations benefited clients 'to a reasonable or great extent'. Three case managers indicated that they 'didn't know'. It was deemed too early to assess this KEQ in the July 2014 report, although it was suggested that some progress was being made towards improving case management outcomes through the sharing of information, forums and networks.

The success indicator for this KEQ specifically outlines that improved case management outcomes have resulted from shared information, forums and networks. It would appear clear that links are being established and continually strengthened within and across organisations. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence indicates that the clear beneficiary of this collaboration is ultimately the client. Therefore, it can be concluded that this indicator and hence success for this KEQ has been achieved.

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?

Results:

KEQ 11 – Is there improved community capacity as a result of involving volunteers in the project?

Information examined to assess this question was drawn from the Project Worker interview, case manager and volunteer focus groups and surveys and the Reference Group evaluation meeting. This question was also considered in the Interim Review Report July 2014.

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.**

All those interviewed for this question thought that the involvement of volunteers in the BTG program had improved community capacity.

Through their involvement in the program, volunteer mentors gained a broader understanding and knowledge of the issues and barriers facing disadvantaged people. Furthermore, they reported that their skills and confidence had improved, particularly in dealing with complex issues. These skills were considered to be useful both within the program and for future employment requirements.

'The volunteering experience makes you stop and think about your own life...it makes you appreciate life and what you've got' (volunteer mentor).

This increased appreciation and understanding of the issues facing disadvantaged people is then able to be discussed within their own family, social and employment networks to further increase understanding more broadly in the community. The skills they acquired through the program can also be used to assist others within their own networks.

***'The best thing was seeing my client have a positive outcome, and the increase in her confidence. I enjoyed the opportunity to give something back to the community.'* (volunteer mentor)**

***'My client missed appointments and there was a lack of communication from him which was frustrating. But there were rewarding interactions and achievements when it worked.'* (volunteer mentor)**

The Reference Group members stated that they were impressed with the diversity of volunteer mentors who engaged with the program. Contrary to the assumption that the volunteers would largely be retired individuals, tertiary students and people newly arrived to the community were attracted to volunteer to the program.

Across Phase 2, a total of 25 volunteer mentors were recruited and trained, including 15 during 2013-14.

During 2014-15:

- 10 new volunteer mentors were recruited and trained.
- 16 volunteer mentors were matched with clients;
 - 6 worked with clients until case completion to meet/partially meet outcomes
 - 3 undertook work with a second client (one of these to case completion)
 - 9 withdrew from/ended the program,
 - 3 were actively participating at the time of this report,
 - 1 was ready to be matched with a second client
- 4 were trained and ready to be matched
- 2 requested to delay a match until a later date

Of the nine volunteer mentors who withdrew from or ended their involvement in the program,

- 3 withdrew due to study or work commitments,
- 2 moved away,
- 2 withdrew due to a change in their personal circumstances, and
- 2 lost interest in or were inconsistent in their engagement with the program.

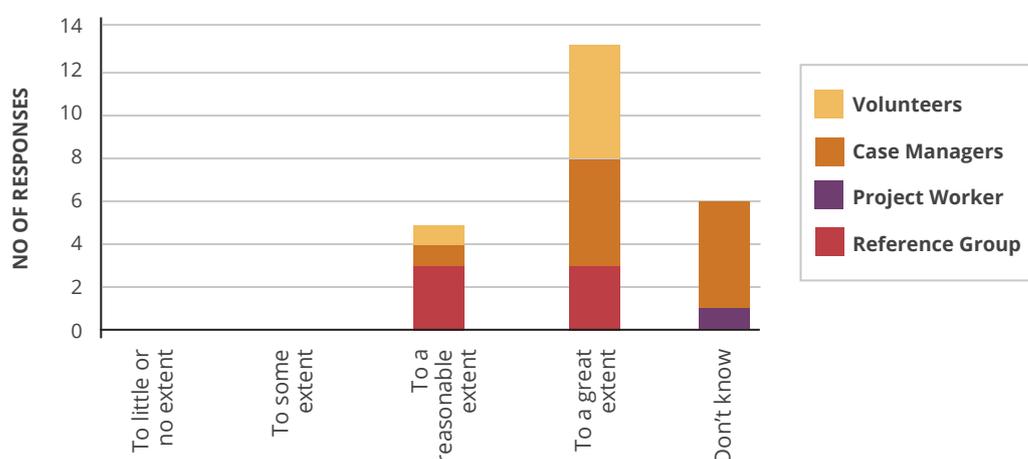
The Project Worker stated that the intention of the volunteer involvement was that a great bank of volunteer mentors would be built. However, retention of volunteer mentors proved an issue as several volunteer mentors withdrew from the program for various reasons.

The work involved in recruiting, training and then supporting volunteer mentors in the program is substantial. Further work and disruption is then created for the Project Worker if the volunteer leaves in that they need to re-match the client with another volunteer or work directly with the client themselves. Clearly it would be desirable not to continue to lose 40% of volunteer mentors each year as experienced in 2014-15.

It is not known to what extent the volunteer mentors who do not remain in the program still contribute to an enhanced community capacity more broadly. They may use their skills in other avenues, other social situations and networks, in employment etc.

In terms of the third success indicator of project partners reporting that collaboration enhances capacity, the Reference Group indicated that, through cross organisational involvement, 'word of mouth' spread across organisations and services resulting in the linking of other volunteer mentors with the program.

Figure 16: Is there improved community capacity as a result of involving volunteers in the project?



The July 2014 Report determined that it was too early to evaluate progress towards the success indicators given that volunteer involvement was a recent addition to the program at that time. Figure 16 shows the 2014-15 results for this question.

Of the total 24 responses, over half (54%) indicated that volunteer mentors had improved community capacity 'to a great extent', including 5 of the 6 volunteer mentors who responded. SIX respondents (25%) 'didn't know' how to respond, including five case managers who had not had personal interactions with BTG volunteer mentors.

The evidence collated for this KEQ would suggest that the success indicators have been met.

However, the retention of volunteer mentors and the ability to build up a 'bank' of volunteer mentors to support the program into the future is an issue, although it would appear that this is slowly improving as numbers of volunteer mentors have increased from the previous year.

As the numbers of volunteer mentors increases so too will the awareness of barriers and solutions more broadly in the community as more volunteer mentors share their learnings and knowledge within their own personal and professional networks. Similarly, the third indicator, that of collaboration enhancing capacity appears to have been met as demonstrated in the Reference Group feedback on this question.

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

Information to address this KEQ was sourced from the Project Worker interview, case manager and volunteer focus groups and surveys, Reference Group evaluation meeting, client interviews and the BTG Impact Assessment Tool. This question was also considered in both the 2013 Benchmark Report and the 2014 Interim Review Report.

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 responding to this question, Reference Group members were absolutely certain that greater social inclusion had resulted from involvement with the BTG program. Indeed, social inclusion was identified by the Reference Group as one of the greatest benefits for clients from their involvement in the program.

The Project Worker suggested that social inclusion could be measured by the number of connections people make, or the number of 'things' people attend and that these had both increased for a majority of clients.

It should be noted that when people drop out or choose to leave, that doesn't necessarily mean that they don't move on to other things. Family Services case managers suggested that several of their clients are single parents dealing with complex issues with no support. The moment they have the capacity to venture out into the community, it can make a huge difference to them as it is a **'change of pace, stimulation, connection with other adults with similar abilities or interests'**. The simple process of **'getting clients to walk out their front door to start feeding their mind'** can be quite a challenge.

For many clients who have never experienced any level of academic success, the ability to complete some training provides valuable positive reinforcement that they can achieve. It also gives both the Family Services staff and their clients a new focus which can temporarily remove them from the other issues they are dealing with. It gives people **'a purpose, a routine'**.

'When I was not part of society and contributing, I felt less worthy' (client)

The two volunteer mentors interviewed were not certain that their clients were ready to interact with the broader community. However, one volunteer stated that **'if she (client) didn't have access to the program, she may not have made the changes she's making currently'**.

When asked directly, two of the three clients stated that they felt more connected with the local community. The third stated that while she wasn't confident making new relationships socially, she was more confident interacting with others in a workplace setting.

Unfortunately, the small number of responses to the Impact Assessment Tool (completed a year or so after case closure) makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions. However, the results are interesting in that results are less positive than those provided by clients whose cases are open. In responding to the question, 'since participating in BTG, are you connected with any local community programs or activities etc?', 7 of the 10 responses (70%) indicated 'No' whilst only 3 (30%) said 'Yes'. Of the 3 positive responses, 1 indicated that they were visiting the library with their children, another was participating in the Encompass Community Services program whilst the third was participating in the MyWay program.

In responding to a question regarding whether their circumstances had changed since engaging with the BTG program, 3 of the 6 responses (50%) said they had a 'better social network', 3 (50%) had completed job applications, 2 (33%) had ongoing work, 1 had completed more training and 1 had undertaken voluntary work.

Figure 5 (see Section 5) summarises the outcomes for clients of BTG and other Bethany programs as a result of BTG support. It shows that 49 clients referred to BTG were actively engaged in the program during 2014-15. Of these 21 achieved vocational outcomes, and a further 28 achieved more limited outcomes. This means that, of the total number of clients in 2014-15, 49 (90%) received positive outcomes from the program. These figures build on the 2013-14 results in which 75% of clients achieved positive outcomes from involvement in the program.

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

'I know how to find positions and apply for jobs. I know how to do cover letters now. I am more confident with applications and interviews.'

'I have approached schools and volunteering Geelong for volunteer work. I know how to find volunteering opportunities now. I have a resume now.'

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

'I know what is expected. I am friendly and I work hard.'

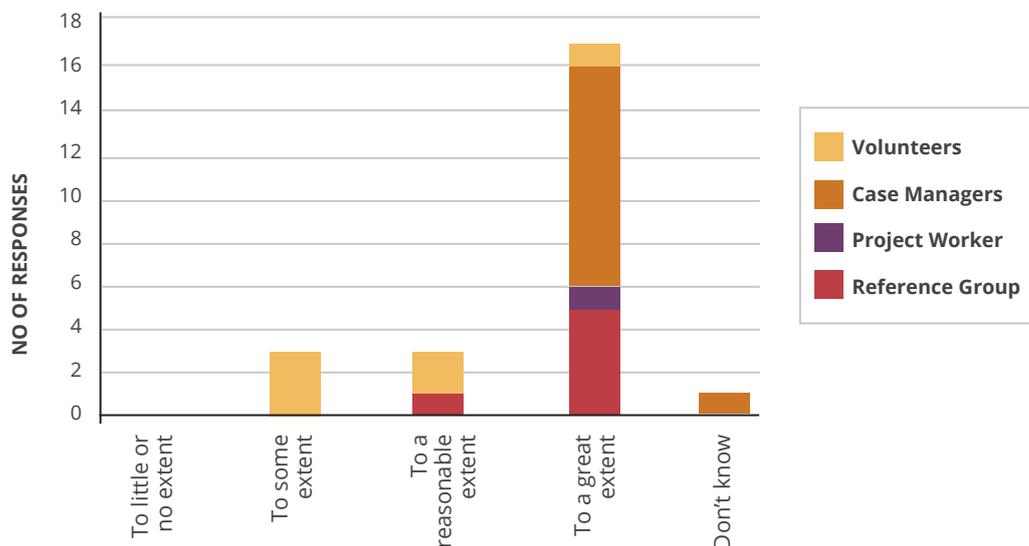
'I get on "great" with other people. I am a good team member.'

One client offered the following insight:

"If I had grown up in your family, then I would be achieving things when you did. But in my family there were drugs and violence. I had to do what I could to cope. Then there was violence again when I had my own children. I had to concentrate on protecting and caring for them. You can't achieve anything when you are just trying to survive. I didn't have any support network until I came to Bethany. With all the help I've had, my life is settled down now. Things are safe and happy, so now I can think about achieving things for me. Now I can study and get qualified for work. You don't get to choose the family you are born into. People like me just need support and time so we can catch up."

The SUSS report undertaken for 2014-15 was of limited value: of the twelve surveys attempted, only 6 were completed. When asked if their case manager had helped the client make contact with training/employment services in the community when needed, all five who answered this question responded with a 'Yes'. When asked if they felt better connected to their community through the services accessed in the BTG – four responded 'Yes', and one responded 'Not at all'.

Figure 17: Is there increased social inclusion through greater economic participation as a result of this project?



Of the 24 responses to this question, 17 indicated that there was increased social inclusion through greater economic participation as a result of this project 'to a great extent' whilst 3 indicated this 'to a reasonable extent' and 3 'to some extent'. Interestingly, this KEQ generated the greatest number of 'to some extent' responses, suggesting that there is less certainty about the progress of this KEQ. These responses were all from volunteer mentors.

The conclusion drawn in the 2013 Benchmark report was that it was too early to determine the progress made toward the success indicators for KEQ 12. The 2014 Interim Review stated that progress was clearly being made. Comparing these results with the 2014-15 results, it would appear that certainly amongst the case managers, Reference Group and Project Worker, there is a growing sense of achievement, although the response is less positive amongst the volunteer mentors and clients themselves. (It must be noted, however, that the volunteer and client feedback samples were extremely small.)

It is concluded that there is greater social inclusion as a result of BTG, the extent of which is difficult to ascertain. It is considered likely that social inclusion would continue to increase if the program is continued.

CONCLUSION

The Program Logic for BTG (see the Introduction on page 3) identified two desired outcomes for the project:

- Improved engagement of clients with complex needs in vocational training and employment opportunities.
- Increased opportunity for economic participation for the target population.

There is no doubt that substantial progress has been made towards each of these aspirations, as evidenced by the client outcomes achieved and the substantial feedback by case workers, volunteer mentors, Reference Group members and clients described in this report.

More specifically, the following table summarises the progress made towards the achievement of each of the five objectives that sit under the two outcome statements:

Collaboration maximised

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

Key Evaluation Question	Indicator of Success	Status
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?	The number and breadth of <u>BTG partners</u> increases over the course of the project (compared to those reported in the final evaluation of Phase 1).	
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 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?	Bethany staff state that information and training <u>improved their ability</u> 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?	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.	

KEY:



Significant progress towards success indicator



Substantial progress appears to have been made, but definitive evidence is lacking.



Further work required to ensure progress towards success indicators

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 7 – Was a solution-based framework adopted to assist clients to overcome barriers to economic participation?	<u>Framework developed, documented and used</u> by Project Worker and case managers.	↑
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>	↑

Improved service system

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

Key Evaluation Question	Indicator of Success	Status
KEQ 9 – Was an evidence-informed practice model developed to improve case management with respect to this project?	<u>Practice model developed, documented and referred</u> to relevant organisations.	↑
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.	↗

BRIDGING THE GAP

EVALUATION PLAN SUMMARY

Project Objectives and 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
July 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.	1,2,3,4,5,6,8,12 ¹⁴	Bridging The Gap Phase 2 2013 Benchmark Evaluation Report
July 2014	An interim review utilising data obtained through Work Star, 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, Work Star, 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

¹⁴Providing benchmark data for later reviews

TRAINING OUTCOMES

Training outcomes during BTG engagement are listed below.

Table 3: Training course enrolments and completions July 2013 to April 2015

Course	Provider/Referral Agency	Enrolments 2013-2014	Enrolments 2014-15 ¹⁵	Completions 2014-15
Bachelor of Arts (Community Development)	Open University	1		
Cert IV Business Administration	Ashley Institute	1		
Cert IV Mental Health	Karingal Training	1		
Cert IV Disability Services Work	Ashley Institute		1	
Cert III Children's Services	One World for Children			
Cert III Children's Services	Ashley Institute		1	
Cert III Aged Care/ Home & Community Care	Karingal Training	1	1	
Cert III Business Admin	Macquarie College	1		
Cert III Business Admin	Wodonga TAFE		1	
Cert III in Pathology Services	Health Services Aus		1	
Cert III Beauty Services	Gordon TAFE		1	
Cert II Warehouse Logistics	Northern Futures	1		1
Cert II General Construction	Whittington Works		1	
Cert II in Nail Technology	Gordon TAFE		1	
Certificate in Education Support	Monash University		1	1
Certificate of General Education for Adults	Gordon TAFE		1	
Computer skills course	Cloverdale Community House	1	1	1 + 1
Computer skills course	Rosewall N'hood House		1	
Digital Literacy	Karingal Training			
Hospitality	Whittington Works	1		
Asthma & Anaphylaxis course	Geelong First Aid	2		
First Aid Certificate	Geelong First Aid			
Responsible Service of Alcohol	JSA referred directly	1		
Responsible Gambling	JSA referred directly	1		
Food Handling Course	Karingal Training	1		
Getting Ahead/Northern Bay Guarantee	Northern Futures		1	
Getting Ahead/Northern Bay Guarantee/ Furniture Restoration	Northern Futures and Gordon TAFE (partnership)		1	
Construction Induction (white card) course	Gordon TAFE	2	1	1
Civil Construction/General Construction/ Plant Operations	Journey Management		1	
Boom Type Elevated Platforms	Gordon TAFE		1	
Coffee Making certificate	Advanced Career Training	2		
Café Skills Course	Rosewall N'hood House		1	
Skills for Work	JSA referred directly	1		
Painting Class	Diversitat Arts		1	
Tag and test (course did not run)		1		
English as Additional Language course	Gordon TAFE	1		
English Language classes	BRACE		1	
Totals		20	20	5

¹⁵Text in black indicates clients in Category A, blue text indicates clients in Category B (refer Section 5).

CASE STUDIES

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

Case Study 1

'Sharon' was working full time when she sustained an injury which caused a level of permanent disability. As a result, Sharon could no longer work in the field she was trained for. This not only placed Sharon and her two sons in significant financial difficulty, but it also impacted on her mental health. Sharon experienced depression, anxiety and a loss of confidence. Sharon came to the Bridging the Gap (BTG) program seeking support with finding new employment.

Sharon matched with a Bridging the Gap volunteer, 'Melissa'. Together, Sharon and Melissa explored options for a career change so that Sharon could return to work. Sharon completed a first aid course and applied for kindergarten and education assistant positions. Melissa assisted Sharon with her resume and job applications. Information was also supplied on interview skills. Sharon successfully obtained a short term, part-time position in a school but wanted to gain ongoing employment. Her applications for integration work were often overlooked because she did not hold a Certificate III in Education Support. As Sharon already held a Diploma level qualification, she was not eligible for further government subsidy and would have to pay full fee for service to study at a lower level.

Melissa and Sharon explored all possible avenues to access funding for this. Sharon was provided with information on applying for an 'extenuating circumstances' exemption for Victoria Training Guarantee eligibility, but she found a part-time Education Support course through a university for a much lower than normal full fee. Bridging the Gap provided some brokerage support towards the cost of the fees. An application was also submitted to the Queen's Fund which provided further funds, making the course accessible for Sharon.

Sharon's short term contract was extended for a further 12 months and she now has the opportunity to apply for additional education support positions due to her relevant qualifications. Sharon reported that she feels much more confident due to her increased skills and employment experience, and that her mental state has improved by participating in the work force.

Case Study 2

'Steve' finished school after Year 10 and has worked in factory and labouring work in the past. Since losing his most recent job, Steve had been unable to find further employment. He reported that he wanted support to gain employment, as he wanted to improve his income and have a reason to get up each morning. Steve stated that he liked working with his hands, and that he wished to gain a Construction Induction card in order to be able to work in the construction industry.

Through the Bridging the Gap program, Steve was connected with Whittington Works where he attended an information session on a Certificate II in General Construction course. The course includes a Construction Induction card and industry experience, and is based on hands-on learning. Classes are held within walking distance of Steve's home. Steve stated that the course was exactly what he was looking for, and decided to enroll, however he had concerns about his ability to pay for the course fees. The Bridging the Gap worker liaised with Steve's employment service provider so that the course fees were covered.

Steve has commenced his course, has an excellent attendance record and reports that he is thoroughly enjoying it. He has also secured some casual labouring work and has mentioned a desire to go on to do further training for the construction industry. A referral from Bridging the Gap to the Keys To Connect Program (Bethany) has allowed Steve to access free driving lessons, to help to remove another barrier to employment.

Case Study 3

'Mark' expressed to his Family Services worker that he wished to access support to find employment. A change in Mark's life circumstances had necessitated him leaving his past employment to cope with the challenges he was facing. He indicated that he was now ready to re-enter the workforce, but wanted to take on a different role than his previous employment.

Mark and his Family Services worker, 'Isabel', researched courses related to the construction industry. Isabel assisted Mark to enroll in a Construction Induction course to gain the necessary qualifications to work in a labouring role. Mark completed the course and secured some casual labouring work in the construction industry. He also enrolled in an Elevated Platforms Course, and Bridging the Gap was able to provide brokerage to assist with the course fees.

Mark was then matched with a BTG mentor, to support him to develop a new resume and to apply for permanent positions.

WORK STAR ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Work Star¹⁶ 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. Work Star assessments are completed by the client and they provide valuable data to assess the clients' perspectives of trends in the seven Work Star 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.

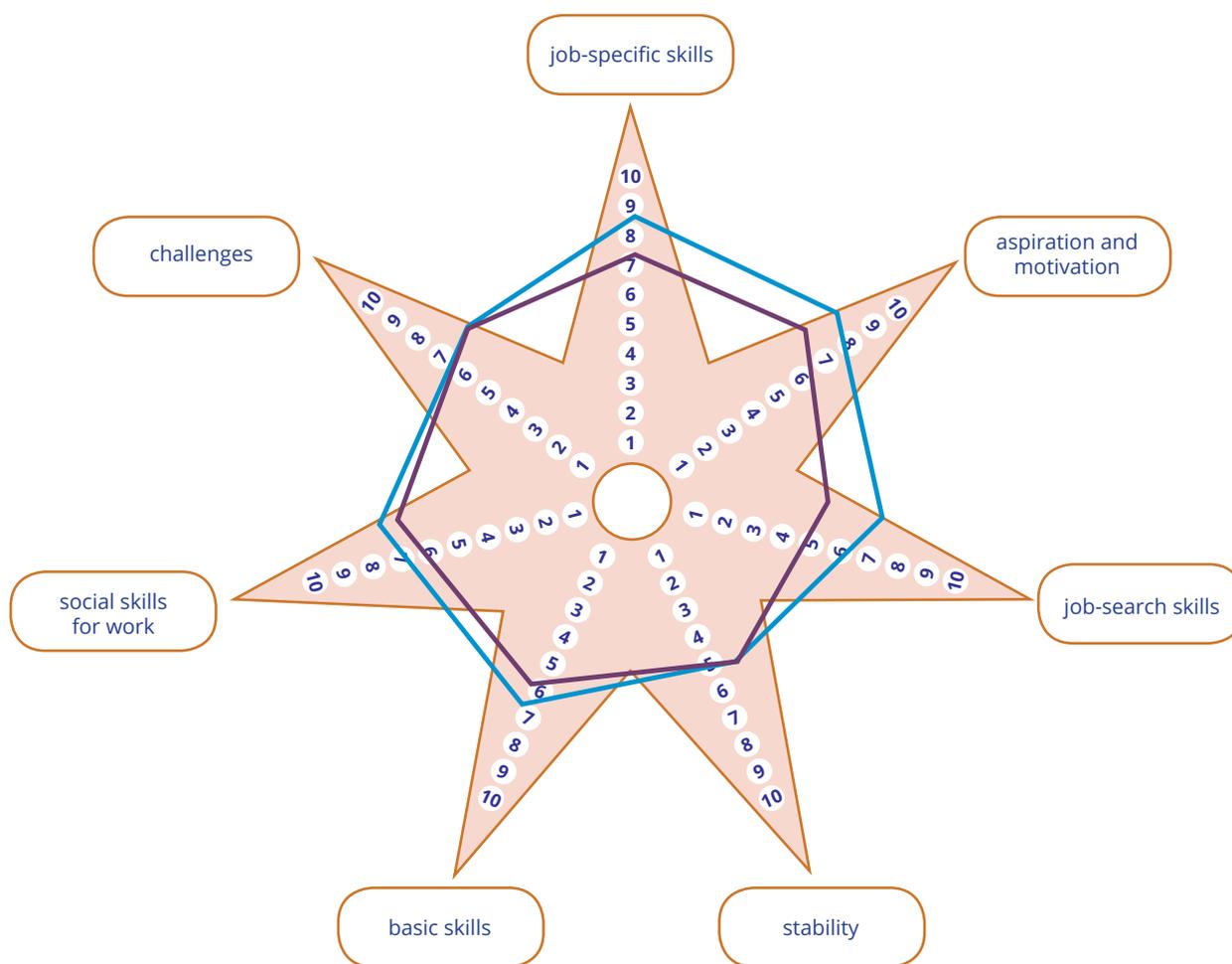
In using Work Star, clients self-assess each domain against a 10 point scale, and scores indicate the following:

- 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.

Thirteen BTG clients undertook a Work Star assessment both near the beginning and the end of their BTG engagement in 2014-15. Figure 18 shows the total average change for each Work Star domain over time for the grouped thirteen clients. Results are derived from the two assessments undertaken by each of the clients near the beginning and the end of their BTG engagement in 2014-15.

¹⁶Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd (2010) *Work Star – The Outcomes Star for Work and Learning*

Figure 18: BTG Work Star comparison 2014-15: start to end, scores averaged for thirteen clients



KEY

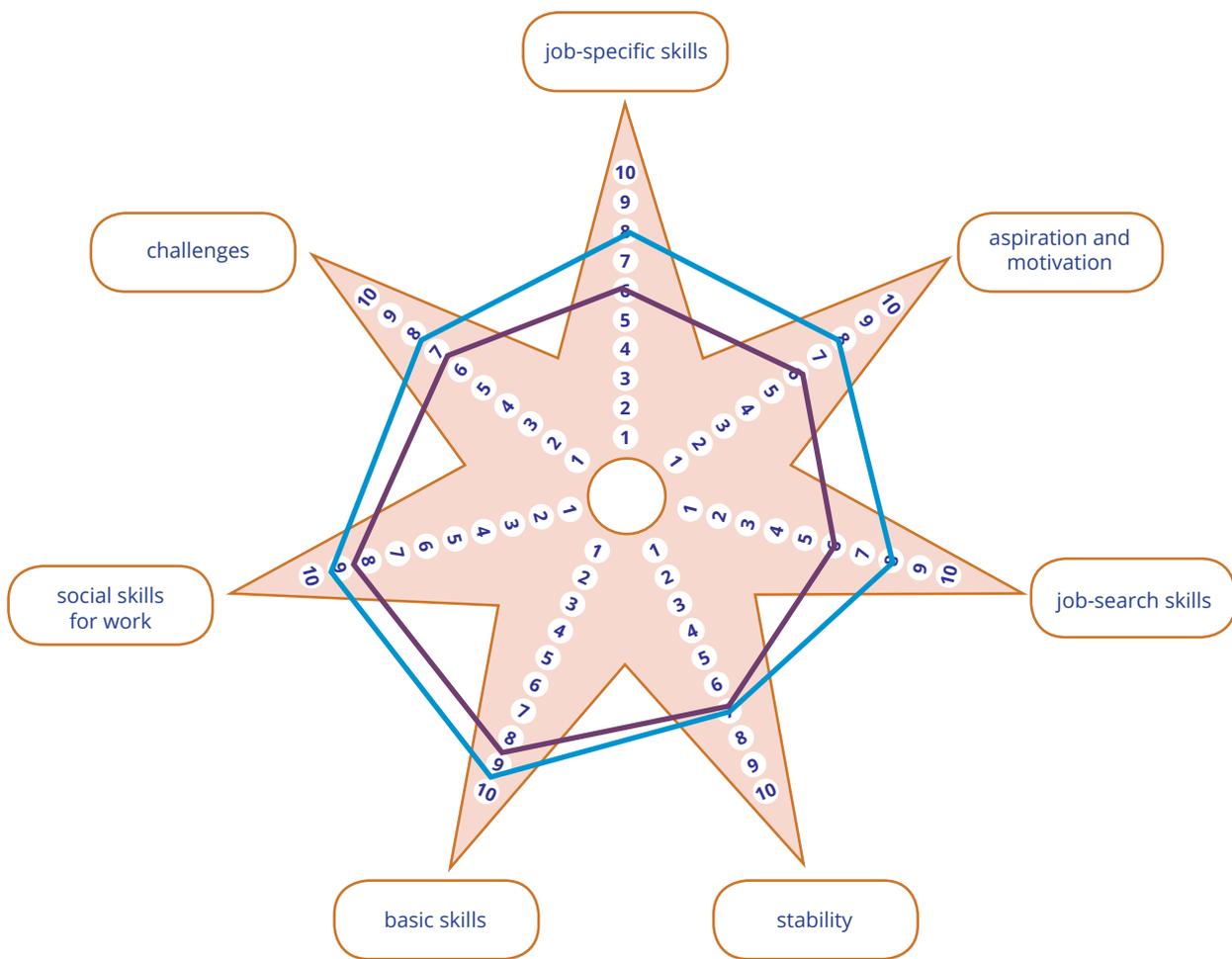
- Average combined scores for each Work Star domain near the beginning of client BTG engagement
- Average combined scores for each Work Star domain near the end of client BTG engagement

Of the seven domains, five showed an improvement in their total averaged score, one ('Challenges') remained the same and one ('Stability') decreased slightly (-0.2). Three increases were considered 'big' as they moved more than one point up the scale. These were 'Job specific skills' (1.4), 'Aspiration and motivation' (1.2) and 'Job-search skills' (1.6).

When analysing individual client assessments, some individuals reported decreases in their 'stability', 'job search skills', 'social skills for work' and 'challenges' domains, the overwhelming majority reported either 'no change' or increases in their individual assessments for these domains.

A Work Star report was also produced using data from nineteen clients who had completed the assessment over the entire course of the BTG program. These clients include the thirteen from 2014-15 as well as six from previous years. Figure 19 shows the total average change for each Work Star domain over time for the grouped nineteen 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 19: BTG Work Star comparison for entire BTG program – start to end, scores averaged for nineteen clients



KEY

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

Areas of improvement in the combined scores for the nineteen clients were evident in all seven domains. Of the improved areas, the biggest change (of 2 points) was in the 'job search skills' domain. The domains of 'job-specific skills' and 'aspiration and motivation' saw increases of 1.6 and 1.5 respectively. Smaller increases (less than one point) were seen in the remaining domains with 'stability' being the smallest increase of 0.3.

As with the 2013-14 results, some individual client assessments reported decreases in their 'stability', 'job search skills', 'social skills for work' and 'challenges' domains, the overwhelming majority reported either 'no change' or increases in their individual assessments for these domains.

Table 5 shows the averaged client scores against each of the seven Work Star domains at the end of the clients' engagement with the BTG program for 2014-15. Table 6 shows the same results for the nineteen clients over the course of the entire BTG program.

Table 5. Average Work Star domain score (thirteen clients) at case closure 2014-15

Work Star Domain	Average Score per Domain	Score Category	Score Category Description
Basic Skills, Social skills for work	9.2 8.9	9 -10	Self-reliance; in work, work ready or engaged in work related training; no support required.
Job search skills Job specific skills Aspiration & motivation Challenges Stability	7.9 7.8 7.9 6.8 7.2	7-8	Work-ready with support; barriers mostly overcome or can be worked around; support required to maintain progress

Table 6. Average Work Star domain score (nineteen clients) at case closure for entire BTG program

Work Star Domain	Average Score per Domain	Score Category	Score Category Description
Basic Skills, Social skills for work	9.4 9.2	9 -10	Self-reliance; in work, work ready or engaged in work related training; no support required.
Job search skills Job specific skills Aspiration & motivation Challenges Stability	8.2 8.1 8.1 7.3 7.3	7-8	Work-ready with support; barriers mostly overcome or can be worked around; support required to maintain progress

The results from the two sets of data are comparable, indicating that client results in 2014-15 are not significantly different from those across the entire program. What is pleasing to note is that, at the conclusion of clients' involvement in the program, they appear to be better placed and ready to embark on positive work-related pathways than they were before they commenced with the BTG program.

A benchmark report was generated, comparing the Work Star assessments for the BTG program with other similar types of services and client groups. Results from 4812 reports were analysed and the results shown below. Table 7 shows the average first and last scores for clients. The difference between the two is the 'change'. The results indicate that the BTG results mirror very closely those across comparable programs.

Table 7. Benchmark Report - Average increase and decrease in scores for each scale

Service	Initial	Final	Change
Bridging the Gap	7.1	8.2	1.1
Star online benchmark	6.1	7.1	1.0

Furthermore, Table 8 shows the proportion of clients in the report who are making progress, staying the same or slipping back based on their overall Star score. It can be seen that the BTG program compares favourably to other programs/services in all areas. Impressively, the 'big increase' of 53% is significantly greater than that experienced in comparable programs.

Table 8. Benchmark Report – Percentage change across all scales

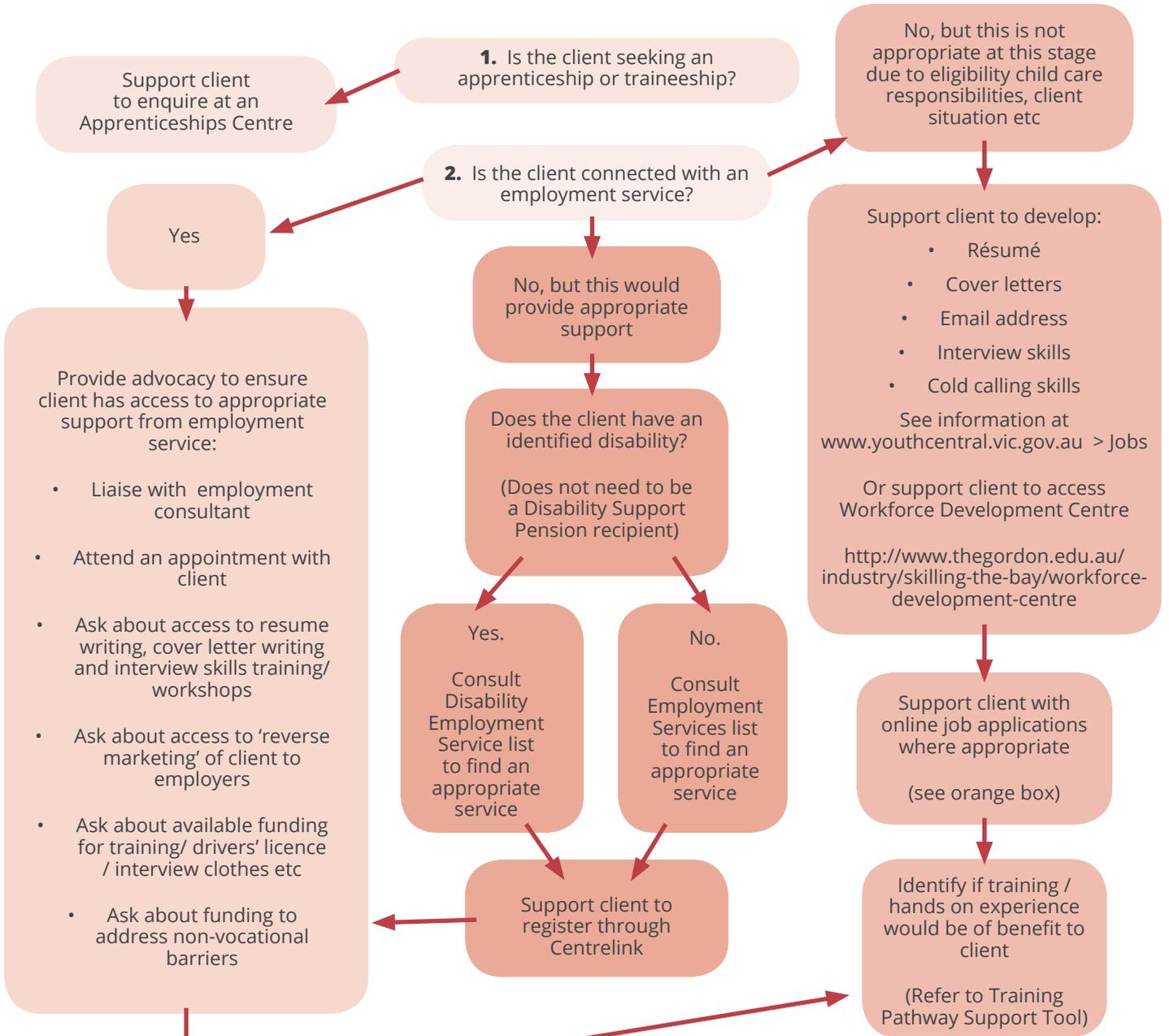
Service	Big Decrease	Small Decrease	No Change	Small Increase	Big Increase
Bridging the Gap	5%	5%	11%	26%	53%
Star Online Benchmark	5%	7%	13%	30%	45%

Note: Work Star provides the following definitions:

'A 'big' increase or decrease is defined as more than one point up or down across all scales. 'No change' means an average change per scale of between -0.25 and +0.25'.

EMPLOYMENT PATHWAY SUPPORT TOOL

(Clients seeking employment)



Online Job Applications:

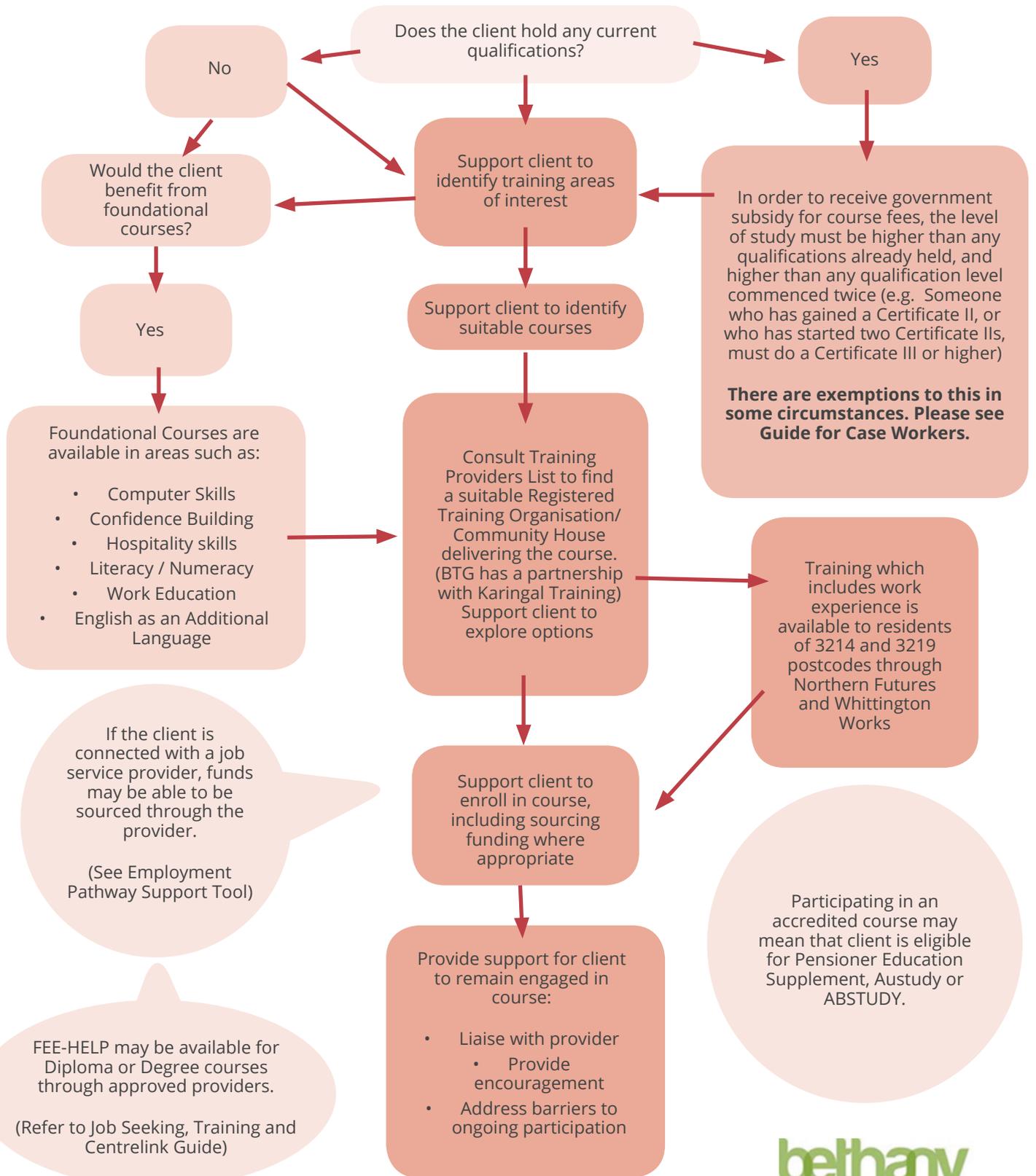
- Apply directly to companies via their websites
- Search employment websites:

www.jobseeker.com.au/jobs-in-Geelong
<http://au.indeed.com/jobs-in-Geelong-VIC>
www.mycareer.com.au/jobs/geelong-surf-coast
www.gumtree.com.au > Jobs > Geelong region
www.jobsearch.gov.au
www.seek.com.au
www.careerone.com.au



TRAINING PATHWAY SUPPORT TOOL

(Clients seeking education and training)



**KISMET
FORWARD**

A graphic element consisting of a horizontal line that extends to the right from the end of the word 'FORWARD'. From the left end of this line, a vertical line segment extends downwards, and then a diagonal line segment extends upwards and to the right, meeting the horizontal line.

www.kismetforward.com.au