

Reimagining the Employment  
Services System of Australia:

**Solution prototypes and  
implementation plans**

# About this document

---

This document summarises insights obtained during co-design workshops with job seekers and stakeholders across the employment services system, as well as recommended solutions that could be trialled. The Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) conducted these consultation activities on behalf of System 2, as part of the Reimagining the Employment Services System of Australia project funded by the Paul Ramsay Foundation (PRF). The co-design workshops took place from August to October 2023.

**The purpose of the co-design workshops was to design and prioritise ideas to reimagine the employment services system.**

This document summarises:

- Key insights from our research – findings are further detailed in the Rapid Evidence Review report and the Explore report
- The co-design workshop approach and breadth of stakeholders engaged
- Ideas generated during the co-design workshops
- Our recommendations for two solutions that could be implemented and trialled

This document is not intended to provide an exhaustive summary of all ideas generated throughout the workshops. Rather, this report provides a summary of the key areas where a change could have a positive impact for job seekers with complex needs. We believe there is an exciting opportunity to implement and test some of these ideas to generate evidence that can guide future reform of the employment services system.

**(c) Copyright 2024 System 2.** Copyright of all the material in this report, including logos, is vested in System 2. The use of logos contained within this report is strictly prohibited. The report may be downloaded, displayed, printed and reproduced without amendment for personal, in-house or non-commercial use. Any other use of the material, including alteration, transmission or reproduction for commercial use is not permitted without the written permission of System 2. You may contact System 2 at [info@system2.org.au](mailto:info@system2.org.au)

## About System 2

[System 2](#) is a not-for-profit focused on tackling complex social issues by combining behavioural science, systems thinking and insights from deep collaboration with those with lived experience. System 2 was created by the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) and Nesta in 2022 with the launch mission of enabling young people experiencing disadvantage to thrive. Our inaugural project on reimagining employment services was delivered in partnership with BIT and in collaboration with YLab.

# Contents and acknowledgements

---

<b>Definitions of key terms</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Key research findings</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Co-design workshop approach</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Solutions to reimagine the employment services system</b>	<b>22</b>
• Longlist	24
• Pilot 1: Building agency and trust	30
• Pilot 2: The Jobs and Training Deal	34
<b>Conclusion and next steps</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>40</b>

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank and acknowledge the job seekers, provider staff, experts and stakeholders who contributed to this project. The insights we obtained were critical in rapidly developing our understanding of the key challenges and opportunities in the system from a range of perspectives, and ideas generated during co-design workshops informed our recommended solutions. We are grateful for the time, openness and expertise of every person we engaged with.

# Definitions of key terms used throughout this report

---

- **Behavioural insights:** The practical application of concepts from behavioural science to design policies, programs and communications that are aligned with how people behave and make decisions in a real-world context.
- **Behavioural science:** The study of human behaviour through the use of systematic experimentation and observation, including disciplines such as behavioural economics, psychology, sociology, neuroscience and anthropology.
- **Job agents:** Refers to the frontline staff that deliver employment services, and who are employed by employment service providers.
- **Employers:** Refer to people and businesses that employ people.
- **Employment providers:** Organisations that are contracted by the government to provide employment services, including providing information and support to job seekers. Service providers also play a key role in monitoring and reporting on job seeker compliance.
- **Employment services system** (also referred to as “**the system**” in this report): The actors who are involved in delivering employment services (including job seekers, service providers, nonprofit organisations, all levels of government, and employers), the interactions between these actors and the rules that govern their behaviour.
- **Government:** In this report, ‘government’ is used to refer to the federal government, unless otherwise stated.
- **Job seekers:** Individuals who receive income support and participate in the employment services system.
- **Lived experience:** Individuals who have direct, recent experience of interacting with the employment services system.
- **Mutual Obligation Requirements** (MORs; also referred to as “**mutual obligations**” or “**compulsory activities**”): The tasks and activities that job seekers agree to complete in exchange for receiving income support payments.
- **Not in Education, Employment or Training** (NEET): Individuals who are not participating in education, employment or training. Note, for the purposes of this report, “NEET” is used to refer to individuals aged 15-24 years who are not in education, employment or training, unless otherwise specified.
- **Vocational barriers:** Training, skills or qualification gaps that present challenges for individuals seeking employment.
- **Non-vocational barriers:** Barriers that can hinder an individual’s ability to participate in education, employment or training, including homelessness, lack of transport, mental or physical health challenges, drug or alcohol addiction, or abuse, among other barriers.
- **Workforce Australia:** The employment service delivered by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. Workforce Australia is also the name given to mainstream employment service programs, which can be delivered by service providers. For a list of key programs, see [Appendix 2](#).

# Executive summary: Project background

---

**The current approach to employment service delivery in Australia is ineffective in meaningfully supporting job seekers, especially those with complex needs.** The Paul Ramsay Foundation (PRF), one of Australia's largest philanthropic funders, is committed to tackling cycles of disadvantage, and employment is one of the foundation's key strategic focus areas. In 2022-23, PRF funded research to reimagine the employment services system for job seekers with complex needs. This research was delivered by System 2 in partnership with the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT).

**This project focuses on reimagining the employment services system to better support job seekers with complex needs.**

Our original research focused on 2 target cohorts:

- Young people: Individuals aged 15-24 years who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- Parents: Families with dependents under the age of 15 years where no persons are employed (single- or dual-carer families).

**We conducted primary and secondary research, and deeply collaborated with people with lived experience, across 3 phases.**

1. **Rapid evidence review of the system:** including interviews with experts and a rapid literature scan, summarised in the Rapid Evidence Review report
2. **Explore research with target cohorts:** including in-depth interviews and fieldwork, summarised in the Explore report
3. **Solution prototypes and implementation plans:** including co-design with people with lived experience and other stakeholders, to develop solutions to reimagine employment services for job seekers with complex needs, summarised in this report.

**We focused on reimagining mainstream employment services that are delivered via Workforce Australia Services providers.**

During our research, we obtained insights about Workforce Australia Services, Workforce Australia Online, ParentsNext, Transition to Work (TtW) and, to a lesser extent, Disability Employment Services (DES). Unless otherwise stated, our findings and recommendations relate to the Workforce Australia Services program.

# Executive summary: Key research findings

We structured our research findings from the rapid evidence review and Explore research based on the primary actor of the challenge or opportunity. This approach resulted in four key categories: Job seekers, providers, employers / intermediaries and the system as a whole. Key research findings summarised below relate to Workforce Australia Services, unless otherwise stated.



## Job seekers

**The system is overly rigid and compliance-driven, which squeezes out job seeker agency and trust.**

Job seekers tend to experience Mutual Obligation Requirements (MORs) and appointments with job agents as generic and unhelpful in supporting them to progress toward quality employment. Job seekers with complex needs rarely get the support they need to overcome non-vocational barriers to employment, and can feel frustrated by spending years stuck in the system.



## Providers

**Providers operate within structures, incentives and practices that don't serve job seekers with complex needs.**

Providers' funding model, particularly financial incentives for placing job seekers into any job, is a significant driver of behaviour. High levels of compliance requirements, administrative burdens and caseload numbers leaves job agents with little time to invest deeply in holistic, person-centred case management of job seekers.



## Employers / intermediaries

**Employers are a critical actor in the system but they are generally disconnected and disengaged. Social enterprises present a promising opportunity as a stepping stone for job seekers to mainstream employment.**

Very few employers engage with service providers. Employers strongly prefer to recruit experienced candidates and many lack the capability or resources to take on inexperienced or disadvantaged job seekers. Social enterprises and intermediaries play an important role in equipping job seekers with the experience they need, but can face challenges in balancing social mission and the need to be financially viable, and engagement with providers is patchy.



## The system

**There is a severe evidence gap about what works. Measures of success are blunt and rarely capture job seeker voice.**

There are few robust evaluations about programs and strategies that are intended to support job seekers. Success tends to be measured by job seekers obtaining any job, and measures of quality employment or wellbeing-related outcomes are inconsistent or not measured at all. Job seeker voice is rarely captured in a meaningful way that informs program design.

# Executive summary: Co-design approach and ideas

We conducted a series of workshops across Western Sydney and Western Melbourne to co-design potential solutions to reimagine the employment services system. Workshop participants included job seekers, providers, experts, social enterprises, advocacy groups and community organisations.

We synthesised and consolidated ideas generated from the workshops to create a shortlist of approximately 12 solutions. The shortlist was further consolidated into 2 solution ideas that could be implemented and evaluated in a trial, namely:

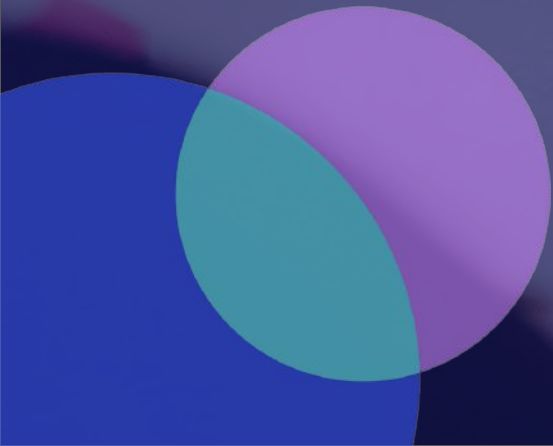
- 1. Building agency and trust** – an iteration on Workforce Australia Services case management that includes removing Mutual Obligation Requirements (MORs) and changing other system structures (such as provider workforce capability and funding). The solutions aims to ensure that job seekers have the ability to focus on activities that would meaningfully help them to progress toward employment.
- 2. The Jobs and Training Deal** – a time-constrained, guaranteed offer of quality, paid work experience, coupled with pre-employment training, wraparound support and support to transition to further training or employment. The program aims to ensure that job seekers gain experience, skills and confidence to transition to quality employment.

Many of the ideas featured in our shortlist and the two trial ideas align with the House Select Committee's recommendations for system reform laid out in the [Rebuilding Employment Services](#) report. Now is a once-in-a-generation opportunity where the system is undergoing a significant period of change, and therefore we believe that now is the perfect time to collect evidence about the effectiveness of the proposed solution ideas to inform the government's reform agenda. We welcome the opportunity to partner with organisations that are focused on understanding effective support for job seekers with complex needs to secure quality employment.

**We engaged with over 70 participants across:**

- 3** Stakeholder workshops
- 2** Job seeker workshops
- 1** Provider workshop

# Introduction





# Project background

---

**The employment services system is not consistently and effectively supporting job seekers with complex barriers to employment.** The system, originally intended to be a temporary solution to unemployment issues which occurred in the aftermath of World War 2 (O'Sullivan et al., 2021), is no longer fit-for-purpose, given **1 in 3 job seekers have been in the employment services system for 12+ months, and 1 in 5 have been in this system for 5+ years** (Department of Jobs and Small Business, 2018). Despite multiple iterations of the system over the 25 years since employment services were outsourced in 1998, there appears to be little evidence of meaningful progress for disadvantaged job seekers (O'Sullivan et al., 2021).

Further, despite the strong recovery of the Australian labour market since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020 (e61 Institute, 2022), with the national unemployment rate sitting at 3.5% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, June 2023), **individuals furthest from the labour market have been “left behind”** (e61 Institute, 2022). Moreover, despite the low national unemployment rate, there has been a 26% increase in the number of Australians in the employment services system compared to pre-pandemic levels. This includes approximately 111,000 young people currently in the system (McLeod, 2022). The misalignment between the low unemployment rate and the increasing number of people receiving employment support signals a key issue in the types of jobs being offered and the way that ‘success’ is measured. For example, if individuals are employed in insecure or low-paid work, they may still need support payments to supplement their income.

It is clear that structural, evidence-based approaches to reimagine the employment services system are needed. The reimaged system should ensure that all job seekers, including those with complex needs, receive the support they need to help them progress on the path to meaningful, quality employment.



# Project vision and aims

---

System 2, BIT and PRF share a vision to create an **equitable employment services system**, where everyone is given the opportunity and support that they need to **access secure and meaningful employment**. This project aligns with PRF's Employment strategic impact area, which not only aims to address unemployment itself, but also the deeper social and economic conditions that create systemic barriers to employment.

The aim of this project is to identify how employment services could be better designed and delivered, to provide more effective and meaningful support for job seekers. This includes ensuring that job seekers receive the support that they need and have a better experience while working with service providers, and ensuring that job seekers can obtain meaningful employment.

The project vision is underpinned by our commitment to:

- **Consult and co-design** with people with lived experience to build our understanding of the problem and develop solutions
- **Be guided by research** to ensure that solutions are evidence-based, including insights from behavioural sciences
- **Develop solutions that are measurable** to ensure that pilots of new solutions are able to be evaluated, leveraging existing data sources where possible

The ultimate objective of this project is to develop **implementation and evaluation plans** for three evidence-based and co-designed solutions. These plans will identify how the solutions could be piloted and evaluated, to provide evidence for the effectiveness of those solutions and ultimately enable change in the system.

# Project approach

**Applying behavioural insights:** We applied a behavioural insights (BI) lens to conduct research and design solutions to reimagine the employment services system. This involved applying findings from behavioural science to design and develop evidence-based solutions that create better alignment between behaviours and the contexts that they are performed in.

**Target cohorts:** Our project initially focused on young people (aged 15-24 who are not in education, employment or training) and parents (with dependents under the age of 15 years in households where no persons are employed). However, our research provided insight into the challenges and opportunities for improving employment services for job seekers with complex needs more broadly. Therefore, solutions have been developed to support all job seekers with complex needs.

Phase	1. Rapid evidence review of the system	2. Exploratory research with target cohorts	3. Solution prototypes and implementation plans
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rapid scan of academic and grey literature</li><li>• Interviews with experts and stakeholders across the system</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In-depth job seeker interviews</li><li>• Fieldwork visits to gain deep insight into job seeker interactions with providers and other employment programs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Solution co-design workshops with job seekers, stakeholders and providers to generate possible solutions to reimagine the system</li></ul>
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand current challenges and opportunities</li><li>• Identify previous initiatives that have been developed to support our target cohorts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the needs of, and the behavioural barriers and enablers faced by, our target cohorts</li><li>• Identify potential leverage points for intervention</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop implementation and evaluation plans for two ideas to identify key solution elements and trial options</li></ul>
Reporting	Findings are summarised in the Rapid Evidence Review report	Findings are summarised in the Explore report	<b>Findings are summarised in this document</b>

# The current context: A pivotal opportunity for reform

---

At the time of writing this report (in November and December 2023), the House Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services just released the [Rebuilding Employment Services report](#). The report provides a comprehensive view of core issues in the system, informed by consultation with a range of experts and stakeholders, including PRF and other experts that we engaged throughout our project. The report lays out **75 recommendations** for comprehensive system reform, across the following topics and chapters:

- **Foundation principles for a future Australian system:** Including the core objectives that underpin services, the need for a national and coordinated system and the role of government in delivering services
- **Supporting job seekers and employers:** Including profiling of job seekers, the range of services available, approaches to supporting particular cohorts, eligibility for employment services and the development of services that respond to employers' needs
- **Workforce and service capability:** Including the makeup of the workforce, frontline staff turnover, qualifications, skills and professional development
- **Regulation, accreditation and oversight:** Including the contracting and operating framework, and the role and functions of a proposed new independent regulator of employment services
- **Innovation, research and evaluation:** Including access to data, evaluation and research, innovation and experimentation
- **Gateway to services:** Including initial contact and onboarding of job seekers, job seeker assessments, the referral process, transfers and handovers once in assistance, and recognising disability and illness
- **Digital/hybrid services:** Including job seekers' capacity to use online tools and digital protections, and online assistance for job seekers and employers
- **Service provision and program design for job seekers:** Including pathway planning, the Employment Fund, and in-house services and related entities
- **Service provision and program design for employers:** Including access to quality job seekers, provider engagement with employers, and streamlining recruitment and talent acquisition
- **Active labour market and complementary programs:** Including paid work experience, community and voluntary work, wage subsidies and financial incentives and the role of social enterprise
- **Mutual obligation, activation, compliance and enforcement:** Including the Points Based Activation System, activation and mandatory activity requirements and the Targeted Compliance Framework
- **Commissioning, funding and regulatory culture:** Including the market structure, funding arrangements and performance management
- **Implementation and transition arrangements:** Including leadership, engagement and co-design of reforms

# Key research findings



# Introduction to the insights

The employment services system is highly complex, interconnected and overlapping, and therefore many of the insights related to one actor influence the experience of another. For ease, we have structured our research findings based on the primary actor of the challenge or opportunity, resulting in the four categories listed below.



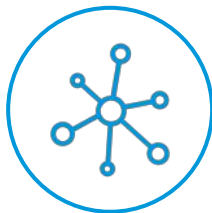
Job seekers



Service providers



Employers /  
intermediaries



The system






This section provides a high-level overview of key findings from our research, which included:

- **A rapid evidence review** – consisting of interviews with experts and stakeholders, and a complementary literature scan
- **Explore research** – consisting of interviews with job seekers and fieldwork site visits to 12 locations across New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland








# Key findings: Job seekers

## The system is overly rigid and compliance-driven, which squeezes out job seeker agency and trust

-  Mutual Obligation Requirements (MORs) reinforce the onus of finding work on the job seeker. Job seekers who do not prove compliance can be subject to payment suspensions, which can cause anxiety and add further burdens to their cognitive load.
-  Appointments with job agents and completing MORs can feel like a generic, tick-box exercise which takes job seekers' resources away from activities that would meaningfully help them progress toward employment. This serves to erode job seekers' agency and trust in the system. Job seekers' trust is further diminished by high levels of job agent turnover and job seekers being required to accept any job, even if it is not aligned with their skills or interests.
-  Job seekers often feel that they aren't getting the type of help they need. The current system fails to tap into the power of relationships or to provide support with holistic, non-vocational dimensions of seeking employment. As many job seekers face complex barriers, they can become trapped in the system, completing MORs and attending appointments but feeling no closer to employment and no better off.
-  Job seekers can struggle to feel that they are making progress, especially if they have been engaged in employment services for many years without obtaining a job interview or an offer of employment. This is reinforced by job seekers' Points Based Activation System (PBAS) target resetting to zero at the start of each new reporting period.
-  The fragmented system is difficult for individuals to navigate, exacerbated by overlapping programs, multiple points of entry and different eligibility requirements. This is especially true for young job seekers.

# Key findings: Providers






## Providers operate within a set of structures, incentives and practices that don't serve job seekers with complex needs

-  The majority of job agents that we engaged with during our research are well-intentioned, but are often constrained by the system. Some job agents manage to establish strong relationships with job seekers, but this appeared to be the exception rather than the norm.
-  Job seekers with complex needs are often sidelined, as providers focus on more job-ready job seekers. This is because the contracting and funding model – particularly employment outcome payments – creates a perverse incentive for job agents. Providers are incentivised to focus on quantity over quality of employment outcomes. Definitions of success and employment incentive payments can discourage providers from supporting job seekers to make progress on non-vocational dimensions.
-  The stark differences between Workforce Australia Services and Transition to Work (TtW) highlight the strong influence that the contracting and funding model has on job seekers' experiences. TtW providers receive significantly more funding upfront and are subject to less compliance and job seeker monitoring. As a result, job seekers tend to be highly engaged with TtW and providers are more likely to collaborate with each other.
-  Job seekers rarely receive personalised case management support as job agents are often squeezed by administrative requirements and high caseloads. The job centres often lack privacy and vibrance, which can create a cold, indifferent atmosphere that is not conducive to job seekers opening up to their job agents.
-  Job agents are often poorly trained and poorly paid, and lack the resources or capability to support job seekers to progress on non-vocational dimensions. Job agents often have fairly limited strategies to help a job seeker to increase their job readiness, and many of these strategies focus on vocational dimensions (such as employability skills or obtaining certifications).








# Key findings: Employers and intermediaries

**Employers are a critical actor in the system but they are generally disconnected and disengaged. Social enterprises and intermediaries present a promising opportunity as a stepping stone for job seekers to mainstream employment.**

-  Very few employers engage with service providers. Employers are often frustrated by receiving unsuitable referrals from providers and a large number of unsuitable applications from job seekers who are required to submit a minimum number of applications each month.
-  Employers strongly prefer to recruit individuals who are job-ready and experienced. However, many employers do not feel it is their responsibility to provide training for inexperienced job seekers. This means that many job seekers become locked out of employment opportunities, as they lack the experience to be recruited and there are few opportunities for them to gain the experience they require.
-  Social enterprises and intermediaries play an important role in equipping job seekers with hands-on work experience coupled with wraparound support. Gradually increasing participants' time commitments and responsibilities builds their confidence and self-efficacy. However, there is a lack of structured pathways for job seekers to transition from working at a social enterprise to mainstream employment.
-  Social enterprises and intermediaries often have limited engagement with employment services providers due to misaligned priorities and incentives. Social enterprises prioritise social mission and providing person-centred support for job seekers, while some providers prioritise profit.
-  Social enterprises and intermediaries can face challenges in balancing the need to remain profitable while focusing on their social mission and the need for long-term investments to support job seekers with complex needs.

# Key findings: The system overall

**There is a severe lack of evidence about what works, for who and why. Measures of success are blunt and rarely capture job seeker voice.**

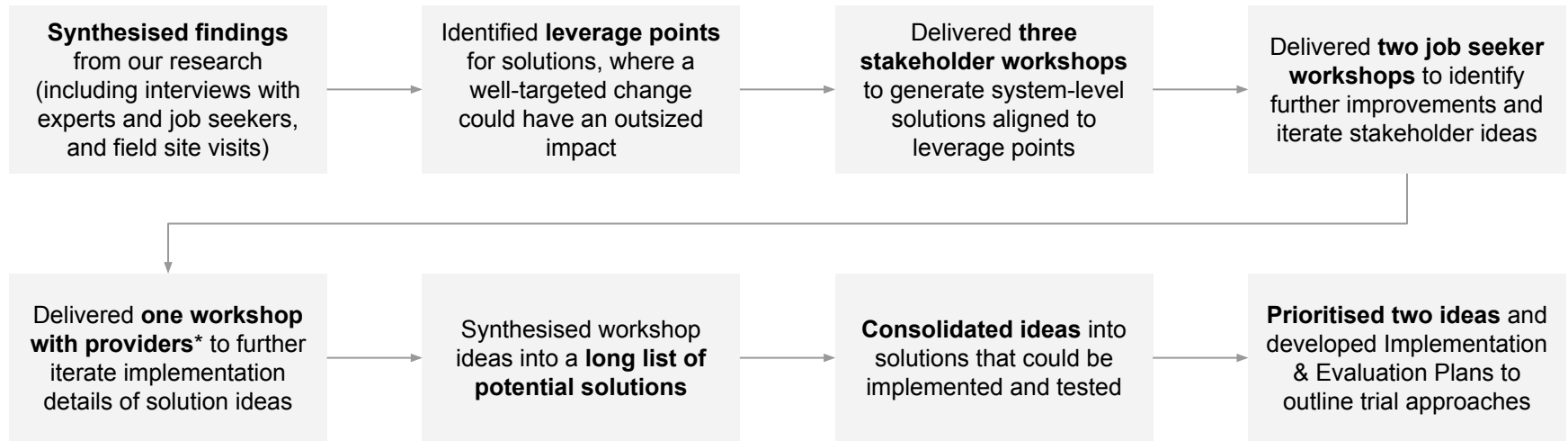
-  While there is a plenty of anecdotal evidence about the effectiveness of programs and strategies to support job seekers, there are few robust evaluations. This makes it difficult to understand what is driving the effectiveness of programs or to translate successful elements into new programs or contexts.
-  Tools used to measure the success of employment services and programs are blunt. Success is typically defined as a job seeker obtaining employment for 4, 12 or 26 weeks. The quality of employment and other wellbeing-related non-vocational barriers are not consistently measured or reported.
-  System actors – including providers, social enterprises and intermediaries – need mechanisms to test and measure programs and services. There is also a need for effective knowledge-sharing mechanisms to reduce duplication and ensure that system actors can adopt and scale-up successful approaches.
-  Job seekers are rarely consulted in the design or delivery of programs and services that are intended to support them. Job seeker feedback is rarely captured in a meaningful, nuanced way and they are often unclear about how their feedback is used.
-  There is a lot of data about job seekers in the system, but it is difficult to access or use. Smarter use of nuanced data could enable personalised approaches that better support job seekers.



# Co-design workshop approach




# Workshop approach

We engaged with **over 70 participants** across 3 stakeholder workshops, 2 job seeker workshops and 1 provider workshop (see [Appendix](#) for participant details). These workshops were focused on generating ideas for reimagining the employment services system for job seekers with complex needs, including young people and parents. The leverage points used as a starting point for discussion were iterated between each workshop – see further details on the next page.



\* The provider workshop was delivered as a session at the National Employment Services Association (NESAs) conference.

# Aim and structure of each set of co-design workshops

	Workshop aim	Leverage points used as a starting point for solution ideation during the workshops
 <p><b>Stakeholder workshops</b></p>	<p>Generate a long list of system-level ideas to reform employment services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating pathways to mainstream employment, by considering the role of employers, social enterprises, intermediaries, experiential training providers and pre-employment training</li> <li>• Reimagining Mutual Obligation Requirements (MORs) by personalising employment support for job seekers and helping job seekers to access wraparound support services</li> <li>• Reimagining definitions of success for provider incentives and evidence-generation, and co-designing with job seekers</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Job seeker workshop</b></p>	<p>Seek job seekers input on the changes they want to see to employment services, and iterate a short list of ideas generated during stakeholder workshops</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reimagining MORs by personalising employment support for job seekers and helping job seekers to access wraparound support services</li> <li>• Elevating job seeker voice and identifying ways to co-design with job seekers when designing and delivering programs, and when measuring provider performance</li> </ul> <p>Seeking job seeker feedback on ideas related to: paid work experience or training, job seeker incentives, employer badges to recognise employers that are accommodating of diverse job seekers, and tapping into job seekers' networks to support them as they search for work.</p>
 <p><b>Provider workshop</b></p>	<p>Seek provider input on ideas generated during stakeholder and job seeker workshops</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a 'job readiness framework' to support job agents to reimagine MORs by personalising employment support for job seekers and helping job seekers to access wraparound support services</li> <li>• Reducing compliance for providers and making MORs more flexible to enable job agents to deliver personalised employment support</li> <li>• Providing job seekers with guaranteed access to paid employment for a fixed period to create pathways to mainstream employment – this could involve social enterprises</li> <li>• Providing short-term, paid work 'sampler' opportunities to support pathways to employment</li> </ul>



# Solutions to reimagine the employment services system

# Introduction to the solutions

---

This section includes a summary of solution ideas generated during the co-design workshops. All solution ideas have the ultimate aim of better supporting job seekers with complex needs to obtain employment. However, in order to support job seekers, a change may be needed at a different point in the system (for example, a change that targets providers or employers).

The [Longlist](#) subsection provides a non-exhaustive summary of the key ideas generated during our co-design workshops with stakeholders and job seekers.

Later in this section, we present two solutions that could be implemented and evaluated in a trial. These two solutions are:

- [Pilot 1: Building agency and trust](#) which focuses on removing Mutual Obligation Requirements (MORs) and making other system-level changes to support job seeker agency and trust in the system
- [Pilot 2: The Jobs and Training Deal](#) which provides job seekers with guaranteed access to time-limited, paid work experience as a stepping stone to mainstream employment or further training

We provide an overview of the case for change, the key elements of the solution and a proposed evaluation approach for each trial. The two trials consolidate a number of ideas from the longlist and reflect feedback obtained from stakeholders and job seekers throughout our consultations.

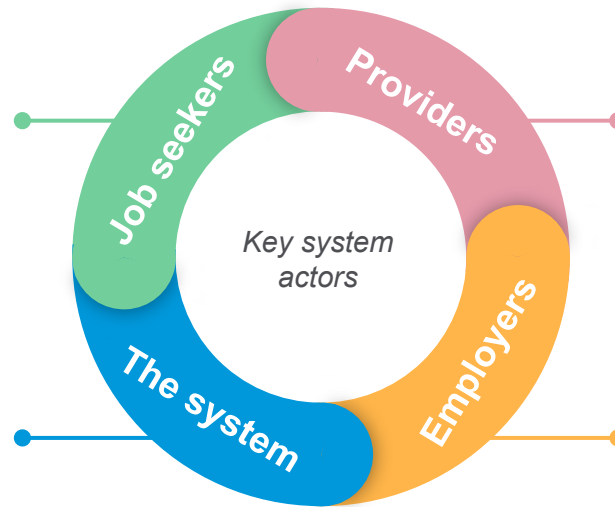


# Ideas longlist



# Ideas longlist from co-design workshops

- Personalised assessment, support and mutual accountability, coupled with a range of tools to support job agents
- Job seeker incentives
- Incorporate social elements into employment services that tap into job seekers' networks
- Local job, training and support guarantees
  
- Place-based decision-making and governance with funding allocated at a local level
- Local learning co-labs and feedback loops
- Involvement of job seekers in the design and development of programs



- Training and tools for job agents to support job seekers across vocational and non-vocational issues, and connect with wraparound support services
- Risk-based regulation to radically reduce compliance and free up job agent time to support job seekers
- Redesigned funding to incentivise providers to focus on holistic progress
  
- Clear pathways to employment that involve intermediaries, social enterprises and experiential training providers
- Showcase employers who support diverse job seekers (e.g. via badges on job ads)

# Ideas longlist: Solutions focused on job seekers

Idea name	Core elements of the idea	Key challenges the idea aims to address
Personalised assessment, support and mutual accountability	<p>A holistic framework (and complementary tools) to support job agents to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete a holistic appraisal of a job seeker's context, strengths and aspirations across multiple vocational and non-vocational dimensions</li> <li>• Co-develop a tailored Job Plan that is underpinned by mutual accountability (i.e. the job agent identifies activities that they will undertake to support the job seeker)</li> <li>• Measure and celebrate job seeker's progress across multiple dimensions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual obligations are often experienced as a generic, tick-box exercise.</li> <li>• Job seekers often feel they aren't getting the help they need across holistic dimensions.</li> <li>• Job agents need tools to tailor their approach to job seekers' needs.</li> </ul>
Job seeker incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offering financial or non-financial rewards to job seekers when they make progress toward vocational and non-vocational goals.</li> <li>• Goals would be co-designed between the job seeker and the job agent.</li> <li>• Progress across holistic dimensions could be measured using a distance-travelled metric.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment services is currently very compliance-driven and is focused on avoiding punishment rather than obtaining rewards.</li> <li>• Job seekers can struggle to feel that they are making progress.</li> </ul>
Incorporate social elements into employment services that tap into job seekers' networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job seekers nominate one or more 'supporters' (people of their choosing) to be involved in supporting them to progress toward employment. The supporter/s would be engaged in the initial holistic diagnosis of a job seeker's situation, and would also be engaged in ongoing support of the job seeker (e.g. attending appointments with job agents, helping to follow-up on the job seeker's activities, recommending opportunities).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current system fails to tap into the power of relationships.</li> <li>• There have been some successes with taking a more social approach (such as the family-centred pilots – see Benevolent Society, 2013) but these have not been scaled-up.</li> </ul>
Local job, training and support guarantees	<p>A time-limited guarantee of support, training and employment with two phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1, for less job-ready job seekers: Placement in a social enterprise to receive on-the-job vocational training while receiving wraparound support</li> <li>• Phase 2, for more job-ready job seekers: Paid employment for a fixed period to receive on-the-job training and support to obtain employment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers strongly prefer to recruit job-ready and experienced job seekers, but there are limited opportunities for job seekers to gain the required skills and experience.</li> <li>• Some job seekers require wraparound support to participate in training and employment.</li> </ul>

# Ideas longlist: Solutions focused on providers

Idea name	Core elements of the idea	Key challenges the idea aims to address
Training and tools for job agents to support job seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivering training and tools to help job agents to deliver holistic, person-centred support to job seekers. Tools could include a framework (discussed on the <a href="#">previous page</a>) to help job agents to operationalise the various dimensions of vocational and non-vocational progress for job seekers.</li> <li>Other tools could include a dynamic dashboard that leverages behavioural data and AI to inform tailored strategies that job agents could use to support job seekers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job agents are often poorly trained and lack the resources or capability to support job seekers to progress on non-vocational dimensions.</li> </ul>
Risk-based regulation to radically reduce compliance and free up job agent time to support job seekers	<p>Radically reducing monitoring and reporting burdens on job agents to free up time for them to provide holistic, person-centred support to job seekers. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shifting from a compliance model to a risk-based regulation model</li> <li>Allowing job agents to use their discretion when supporting job seekers</li> <li>Making mutual obligations more flexible for job seekers (or removing them altogether) to alleviate the need for monitoring job seeker compliance</li> <li>Decoupling 'policing' and 'coaching' responsibilities for job agents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job seekers rarely receive personalised case management support as job agents are often squeezed by administrative requirements and high caseloads.</li> <li>The stark differences between Workforce Australia Services and TtW highlight the strong influence that the contracting and funding model has on job seekers' experiences.</li> </ul>
Redesigned funding to incentivise providers to focus on holistic progress	<p>Redesigning provider funding and contracting mechanisms. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A revised Payment by Results model: This would still include financial incentives for providers, but would involve broadening the definition of success beyond narrow employment outcomes to include broader measures (e.g. job seeker progress on non-vocational dimensions).</li> <li>Service Level Agreements and fixed-term funding: Removing (or at least, radically reducing) financial incentives for providers. Providers would receive fixed-term funding upfront. Performance would be decoupled from payments and would be managed via achievement of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These KPIs would be tailored to the local context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The contracting and funding model – particularly employment outcome payments – creates a perverse incentive for job agents. Job agents can therefore engage in 'creaming and parking', where the most job-ready job seekers receive the most support.</li> <li>Definitions of success and employment incentive payments can discourage providers from supporting job seekers to make progress on non-vocational dimensions.</li> </ul>

# Ideas longlist: Solutions focused on employers

Idea name	Core elements of the idea	Key challenges the idea aims to address
<p>Clear pathways to employment that involve intermediaries, social enterprises and experiential training providers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for job seekers to transition to further employment after developing skills at intermediaries, social enterprises or experiential training providers.</li> <li>• This might include developing a framework of skills developed at social enterprises. The purpose would be to increase the recognition of skills developed at one social enterprise to support the job seeker to progress to higher-skilled roles or take on more responsibility when transitioning to another social enterprise. This creates a career pathway between multiple social enterprises.</li> <li>• This could also include other forms of recognition or certification of skills developed at intermediaries, social enterprises or experiential training providers to enhance job seeker applications when applying for roles with mainstream employers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social enterprises and intermediaries play an important role in equipping job seekers with hands-on work experience coupled with wraparound support. However, there is a lack of structured pathways for job seekers to transition from working at a social enterprise to mainstream employment.</li> </ul>
<p>Showcase employers who support diverse job seekers (e.g. via badges on job ads)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making it easy for both job seekers and job agents to see available roles with employers who are able to support job seekers with varying support needs</li> <li>• This could include the development of a consolidated platform which hosts roles for social enterprises and mainstream employers with a track record of effectively supporting job seekers with diverse support needs. Alternatively, this could be implemented as employer 'badges' on job ads and profiles on well-known job boards (such as Seek).</li> <li>• Employer badges could operate as a "double nudge". The badges could nudge job seekers to apply for roles with more inclusive employers. The increase in applications and the opportunity to recruit a more diverse workforce could serve as a secondary nudge to employers, encouraging more organisations to adopt practices that support inexperienced job seekers, thereby increasing the total number of employers and available roles that have been accredited with the badges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many employers do not feel it is their responsibility to provide training for inexperienced job seekers, and job seekers can become locked out of employment opportunities.</li> <li>• There are employers (including social enterprises and mainstream employers) who do invest in supporting job seekers with varying support needs. However, job seekers may not be aware of such organisations (for example, job seekers at our co-design workshops hadn't heard of social enterprises before, but were interested to know more).</li> </ul>

# Ideas longlist: Solutions focused on the system

Idea name	Core elements of the idea	Key challenges the idea aims to address
Place-based decision-making and governance with funding allocated at a local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding provided at the LGA level, which is directed toward services that the community collectively decides are the areas of greatest need.</li> <li>• This would include mechanisms (such as incentives or reporting requirements) to encourage collaboration among local system actors, including providers, employers, social enterprises, training providers, Group Training Organisations and other community services such as organisations providing support with education, housing, mental health or domestic violence.</li> <li>• Service users and job seekers would be involved in making decisions regarding the services that require additional resources. Users would also be involved in keeping services accountable for delivering on outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job seekers often feel that they aren't getting the type of help they need to address complex barriers. Job agents can refer job seekers to community support services, but long waiting lists or lack of resources can hinder job seekers' ability to access the support they need when they need it.</li> <li>• Employment Facilitators are intended to support collaboration among system actors in the local community, but limited funding restricts the impact they could have.</li> </ul>
Local learning co-labs and feedback loops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each employment region is assigned an independent Local Learning Partner (LLP). The LLP supports local services to test, evaluate and share learnings, and supports capability-building within services to conduct their own evaluations.</li> <li>• The LLPs would be connected via a centralised Centre of Excellence (e.g. one per state and one at the national level to connect the state-based centres).</li> <li>• The LLPs would support services to incorporate user feedback and holistic measures of success into the evaluation approach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a severe lack of robust evidence about the effectiveness of programs and strategies to support job seekers.</li> <li>• System actors need support and mechanisms to test approaches and share learnings.</li> <li>• Job seeker feedback is rarely captured in a meaningful, nuanced way and they are often unclear about how their feedback is used.</li> </ul>
Involvement of job seekers in the design and development of programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a coalition or representative body of job seekers to provide input into the design of programs and services. Job seekers who participated in our co-design workshops suggested that more workshops of that nature would be useful.</li> <li>• This could also include ensuring that people with lived experience are always represented on teams or working groups that are responsible for designing programs or policies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job seekers and users are rarely engaged in the design or delivery of programs and services that are intended to support them. This creates a risk that approaches do not end up effectively meeting job seekers' needs.</li> </ul>



## **Pilot 1: Building agency and trust**

# The case for change

The system is overly focused on conditionality and policing, undermining job seeker agency and trust

High levels of churn at the provider and job agent level **erodes relationships**

In July 2022,  
**80% of regions experienced a substantial turnover in providers,**  
with 22% of regions experiencing 100% turnover

(Sally Sinclair, NESAs, quoted in Marin-Guzman, 2022)

Job seekers are often **stuck in the system for many years** without meaningful progress

**25% of job seekers**  
in Workforce Australia and Transition to Work have been unemployed for **5+ years**

(Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2023a)

Mutual Obligation Requirements (MORs) **are not fit for purpose and can cause harm**

**Over 70%**  
of job seekers in Workforce Australia Services have been subject to **payment suspensions**

(Commonwealth of Australia, 2023)

Job agents often **lack the capability and tools to deliver person-centred support**

Staff spend up to **60% of their time on administration** rather than working with clients and employers

(Commonwealth of Australia, 2023)

# The proposed intervention

Solution aims

Job seekers are focused on **co-designed activities** that cover vocational and non-vocational dimensions

*Job seeker agency and trust*

Every job seeker receives **quality, person-centred employment services** from empowered job agents



Core components

## A: Shared commitments

- Job seekers are empowered to determine goals across a range of vocational and non-vocational dimensions.
- **Relaxed minimum activity requirements.**
- **Minimal compliance or threat of punitive outcomes.**

## B: Person-centred case management training and tools

- Training and tools to build job agent capability to support job seeker progress on vocational and non-vocational dimensions
- Job seeker progress is regularly recognised and celebrated

## C: Upfront funding and reduced sludge

- Increased upfront fixed-term funding for providers with no outcome-based payments
- Reduction in reporting and administrative burden for providers

Service providers are enabled to deliver holistic support to job seekers

Additional trial aim



## Complementary enabling mechanism: Open book accounting

- Providers who participate in the trial would be asked to share data about funding flows and expenditure to provide insight into the true cost of delivering quality services to different job seekers



# The proposed evaluation approach

## Trial design

The Building Agency and Trust solution could be evaluated via a Prospective Matched Cohort Study (PMCS). We propose that this would involve:

1. Recruiting Workforce Australia Services sites from two providers
2. Selecting a pair of sites for each provider that are most similar to each other in terms of outcomes
3. Randomly allocating one site per provider to the control group and one to the intervention group (see figure)

We propose delivering the trial for a 3-year period to provide sufficient time to observe employment and wellbeing-related outcomes. All job seekers who are enrolled at the provider sites that are allocated to the intervention group would receive the solution, including job seekers whose commencement date occurs during the trial period.

## Benefits of the proposed evaluation approach

- ✓ Ability to tease apart changes in outcomes due to the intervention versus due to existing trends, seasonal fluctuations or other events (e.g. other policy changes)
- ✓ Ability to measure changes in objective vocational outcomes, due to the ability to compare with an independent control group
- ✓ High feasibility to ring-fence job seekers and providers to participate
- ✓ High quality of implementation and depth of insights from participants due to a small number of sites

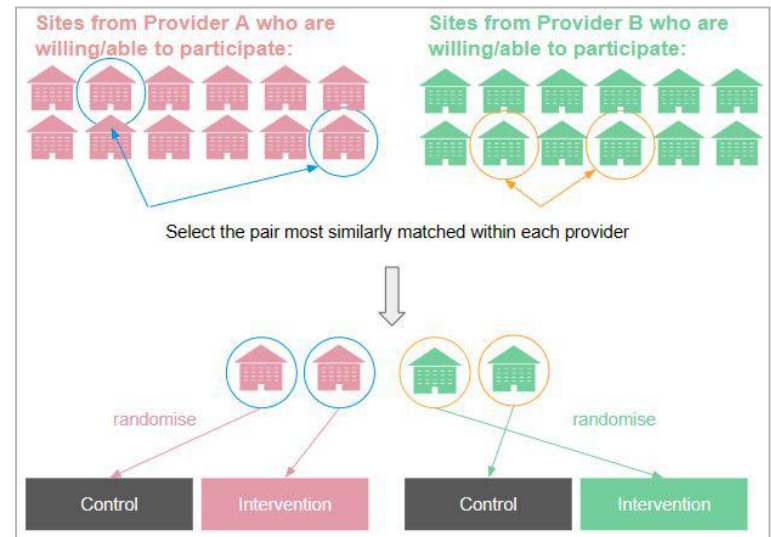


Illustration of the trial design with two providers and four sites.



## **Pilot 2: The Jobs and Training Deal**

# The case for change

Job seekers are caught in a perpetual cycle of not having enough experience to obtain employment but also not having any employment opportunities to obtain the experience they need

- 📌 **Job seekers are locked out of employment opportunities** as employers seek experienced candidates, but work experience programs are limited
- 📌 Job seekers are often **referred to generic programs** which are not tailored to their individual needs or goals
- 📌 Many job seekers face a range of non-vocational barriers to employment, but **pre-employment training is fairly narrow** and lacks wraparound support
- 📌 Job seekers are rarely consulted or engaged in the design of programs intended to support them; **there is a need for greater job seeker choice and agency**
- 📌 Job seekers lack access to quality work experience programs as **organisations have limited capacity to deliver them**
- 📌 Job seekers often **face challenges with transitioning from employment programs** or social enterprises into mainstream employment

“

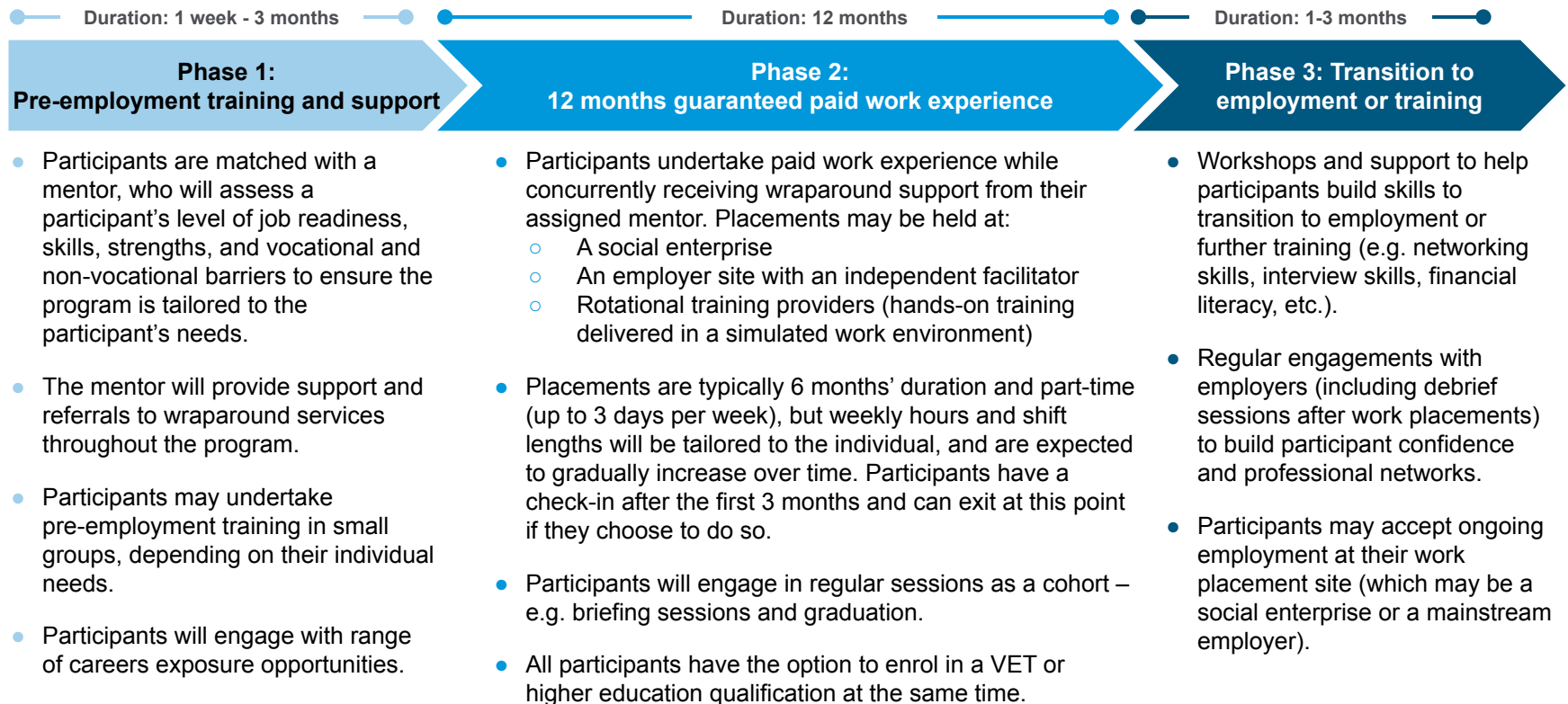
*Entry level jobs have been slowly disappearing and becoming harder to compete for. Nearly half, or 44 per cent, of all vacancies [in 2022] required tertiary education or at least three years' experience.”*

(Anglicare, 2022)

Year Up is a program in the USA which consists of 6 months of full-time training followed by a 6-month internship. Robust evaluations of the program revealed **participants earn 28% more than non-participants, and the program achieves a return of \$2.46 per dollar spent over a 7-year period.**

(Fein & Dastrup, 2022)

# The proposed Jobs and Training Deal program



-----  
*Gaps in training and employment opportunities would be addressed by amplifying the role of social enterprises and creating opportunities in in-demand sectors.*

# The proposed evaluation approach

## Study design

The Jobs and Training Deal program could be evaluated as a place-based Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT). We propose this would involve:

1. Selecting a specific geographic area (which may be at the LGA level) to participate
2. All Workforce Australia Services providers in that given region would be recruited into the trial
3. Job seekers would be randomly allocated to either participate in the Jobs and Training Deal program or to continue to participate in business as usual employment services

We propose delivering the trial for a 2.5-year period, which allows 18 months for program delivery and 12 months to observe post-program outcomes.

## Benefits of the proposed evaluation approach

- ✓ RCTs represent the 'gold standard' of evidence, which gives us high confidence that differences in employment or wellbeing-related outcomes for job seekers who participate in the Jobs and Training Deal are due to the program itself, rather than due to other factors
- ✓ Ability to measure changes in employment and wellbeing-related outcomes
- ✓ Place-based delivery supports depth of implementation and ability to create deep, local relationships
- ✓ Relatively constrained sample size can mitigate capacity issues at social enterprises and employer sites, and increases depth of insights obtained from participants

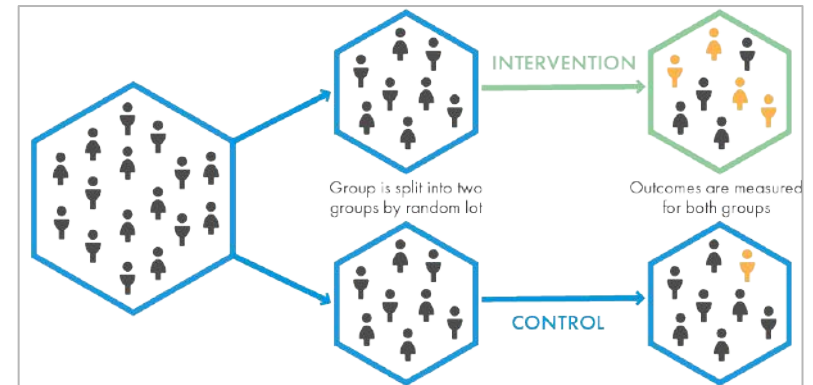


Illustration of RCT where individuals are randomly allocated to groups.

The background of the slide features a close-up, slightly blurred image of wooden puzzle pieces. A semi-transparent blue overlay covers the entire background. In the bottom-left corner, there are two overlapping circles: a larger blue one and a smaller purple one, with a teal area where they overlap.

# Conclusion and next steps

# Conclusion

---

**This document summarises ideas for ways to reimagine the employment services system for job seekers with complex needs.**

This document summarises key findings from our research conducted as part of the Reimagining the Employment System of Australia project. The research involved interviews with experts and job seekers, and fieldwork site visits to 12 locations across New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Our research was complemented by ongoing, deep collaboration with two young people with lived experience of employment services via our partnership with YLab.

This document also summarises key ideas generated from co-design workshops which involved over 70 participants, representing a diverse set of stakeholders and job seekers. We consolidated a number of ideas to design two potential trials – the Building Agency and Trust trial and the Jobs and Training Deal trial. These trials are informed by ideas generated during co-design workshops and underpinned by findings from behavioural science.

## **Next steps**

A number of ideas summarised in this document align with the recommendations from the [Rebuilding Employment Services report](#). We welcome the opportunity to implement and evaluate the ideas presented in this document as part of generating robust evidence to support the reform of the employment services system.



WHAT'S  
NEXT?



# Appendix



# Experts interviewed for the rapid evidence review

We conducted semi-structured interviews with **27 experts** to develop our understanding the challenges in the employment services system, opportunities for change and domestic or international approaches that have been developed to better support young people and parents.

#	Name and affiliation
1	<b>Alison Inglis</b> - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
2	<b>Andrew Shaw</b> - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
3	<b>Anna Ritson</b> - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
4	<b>Annette Gill</b> - National Employment Services Association
5	<b>Angharad Lubbock</b> - White Box Enterprises
6	<b>Barry Sandison</b> - Australian National University
7	<b>Bruce Cunningham</b> - Dept. of Employment and Workplace Relations
8	<b>Jan Kruger</b> - Imagine More
9	<b>Dr Jeff Borland</b> - University of Melbourne
10	<b>Jim Stanford</b> - Future Work Australia
11	<b>Joanne Anderson</b> - Dept. of Employment and Workplace Relations
12	<b>Josephine Auer</b> - e61
13	<b>Kate Munro</b> - Youth Action
14	<b>Kristin O'Connell</b> - Antipoverty Centre

#	Name and affiliation
15	<b>Lisa Fowkes</b> - Social Ventures Australia
16	<b>Lukas Lehner</b> - University of Oxford
17	<b>Prof. Mark Wooden</b> - University of Melbourne
18	<b>Prof. Max Kasy</b> - University of Oxford
19	<b>May Lam</b> - Per Capita
20	<b>Meg Price</b> - Give Where You Live foundation
21	<b>Prof. Michele Belot</b> - Cornell University
22	<b>Nick Gruen</b> - Lateral Economics
23	<b>Ruth Hunt</b> - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
24	<b>Sally Sinclair</b> - National Employment Services Association
25	<b>Shane Johnson</b> - Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian government
26	<b>Shelley Mallett</b> - Brotherhood of St Laurence
27	<b>Prof. Siobhan O'Sullivan</b> - University of New South Wales



## **Appendix 1: Stakeholders engaged during our research**

# Explore research: Fieldwork visits and job seeker interviews

We conducted 16 one-hour semi-structured interviews with young people and parents. We visited 12 sites across New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland as part of our fieldwork research. Fieldwork visits included observations, interviews with provider staff and interviews with job seekers.

Virtual interviews with job seekers	Fieldwork sites	Fieldwork job seeker interviews
<p>One-hour, semi-structured interviews conducted online with job seekers from two cohorts:</p> <p><b>Young people:</b> Seven young people aged 18-24 who are unemployed and currently receiving a Jobseeker payment, Youth Allowance or Disability Support Payment. This comprised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 Workforce Australia + 2 TtW + 1 DES participant</li> <li>• 4 VIC + 1 NSW + 2 QLD participants</li> <li>• 5 metro + 2 rural/regional participants</li> <li>• 4 female + 2 male + 1 nonbinary participant</li> </ul> <p><b>Parents:</b> Nine parents of at least one child under 15 who are unemployed and living in a household where no other persons are employed; and currently receiving a jobseeker payment or parenting payment. This comprised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 Workforce Australia (6 of which were previously in ParentsNext) + 1 current ParentsNext participant</li> <li>• 7 VIC + 2 NSW participants</li> <li>• 5 metro + 4 rural/regional participants</li> <li>• 8 female + 1 male participant</li> </ul>	<p>We visited 12 sites across New South Wales (3), Victoria (5), and Queensland (4). This comprised four Workforce Australia providers, three TtW providers, two DES providers, two ParentsNext providers, two social enterprises and one Experiential Training Provider (ETP).<sup>*</sup> Among service providers, six were non-profits and three were for-profits.</p> <p>The visits involved semi-structured interviews with job agents and senior staff (e.g. managerial staff), observing the physical environment, observing workshops and appointments between job seekers and their job agents, and 10-minute opportunistic interviews with job seekers.</p> <p><i><sup>*</sup>The total does not sum to 12 as some service providers offered more than one employment program at the site that we visited.</i></p>	<p>Participants were recruited opportunistically during our fieldwork site visits. We interviewed a total of 19 participants, which comprised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 participants from sites in New South Wales</li> <li>• 7 participants from sites in Victoria</li> <li>• 8 participants from sites in Queensland</li> </ul> <p>Fieldwork sites were specifically chosen based on their servicing of young people and parents, and due to the rates of unemployment in that region. However, we did not specifically target particular job seekers, to ensure that we received a broad set of insights.</p>



## **Appendix 2: Key federal government employment programs**

# Key federal government employment services programs (1 of 2)

In our Explore research, we focused on understanding the on-the-ground delivery of key federal government employment programs, particularly those that support a large proportion of job seekers who are young people or parents or jobless families. Below is a high-level summary of the key programs which we focused on in our research, and are summarised in this report. Many service providers deliver multiple employment programs, sometimes at the same site.

**Workforce Australia:** Workforce Australia is the mainstream federal employment program, with a caseload of approximately 615,000 job seekers as of April 2023 (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2023a). Job seekers receiving JobSeeker, Youth Allowance and Parenting Payments are eligible, and are required to meet their Mutual Obligation Requirements (MORs) to avoid a payment suspension, using the Points Based Activation System (PBAS). There are two subgroups within the program: Workforce Australia Online (the most job-ready job seekers, who self-manage meeting their MORs online for a maximum of 12 months) and Workforce Australia Services (job seekers with more complex needs, who either require support from a job agent, have requested to work with a service provider or have been in Workforce Australia Online for more than 12 months) (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2022). The majority of participants are in Workforce Australia Services and work with service providers, while a sizeable proportion are streamed into Workforce Australia Online.

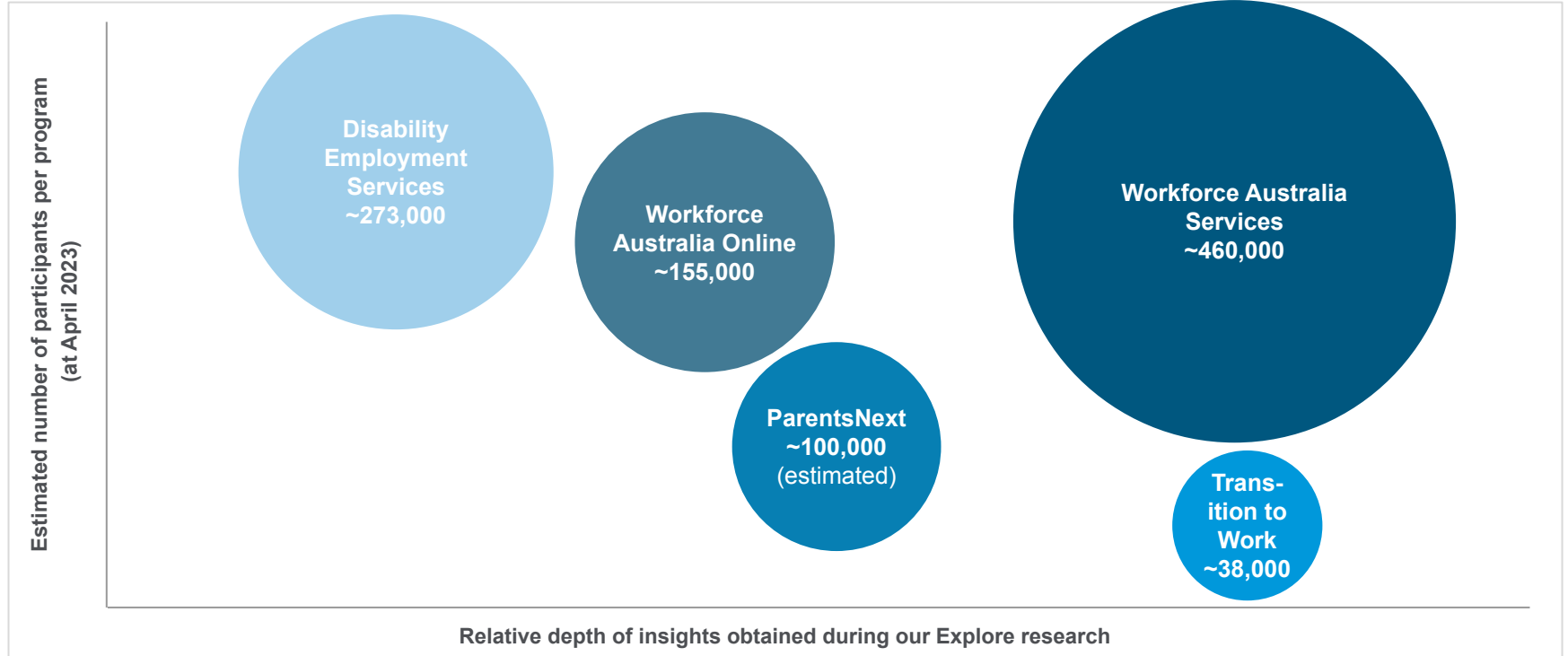
**Transition to Work (TtW):** Transition to Work (TtW) is an employment program designed to assist young people aged 15-24 to transition to training or employment (Workskil Australia, n.d.). TtW is a much smaller program than Workforce Australia. Eligible young people receiving income support payments can choose to participate in TtW instead of Workforce Australia, and can choose to opt out of the program after attending their first appointment (Workforce Australia, n.d.). Young people aged 15-24 who are not receiving income support payments can choose to participate in TtW as a volunteer. All participants must complete 25 hours of activities per week. Unlike Workforce Australia, there is only one TtW provider in each of Australia's 51 employment regions. Young people can typically participate in TtW for a maximum of 18 months, after which they are referred to Workforce Australia.

**ParentsNext:** ParentsNext is a pre-employment program for parents and carers who have been receiving a Parenting Payment for at least 6 months, have a child between 9 months and 6 years old, and have some level of disadvantage (e.g. have received income support continuously for at least four years) (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2023b). The MORs for ParentsNext participants were paused in early 2023, and participants are no longer required to attend appointments with their service provider, to agree to a participation plan (outlining activities aligned to a their education or employment goals) or to complete the activities outlined in the participation plan (Services Australia, 2023). Participants can do these activities, but they won't face payment suspensions if they don't.

**Disability Employment Services (DES):** Disability Employment Services (DES) is comprised of two services: the Disability Management Service for job seekers with a disability or health condition who need assistance to find a job, and the Employment Support Service for those who have a permanent disability and therefore require regular, ongoing support to maintain employment (Department of Social Services, 2023).

# Key federal government employment services programs (2 of 2)

The relative size of the circles below highlights the relative size of each of the federal government employment services programs, determined by the number of participants (note that the circles are not to scale). The visual also highlights the depth of insights that we obtained about each program during our virtual interviews and fieldwork site visits, which are summarised in this report. (Caseload figures from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2023a).



## **Appendix 3: References**

# References

---

Anglicare Australia. (2022). [Jobs Availability Snapshot 2022](#). Anglicare Australia: Canberra.

Benevolent Society. (2013). [Family joblessness and pathways to employment](#).

Commonwealth of Australia. (2023). [Rebuilding employment services: Final report on Workforce Australia employment services](#). Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services.

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2023a). [Workforce Australia caseload data time series October 2022 to October 2023](#).

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2023b). [Workforce Australia Services](#).

Fein, D., & Dastrup, S. (2022). [Benefits that Last: Long-Term Impact and Cost-Benefit Findings for Year Up](#).

Marin-Guzman, D. (2022). [Job services industry stunned after wave of contract terminations](#). *Australian Financial Review*, 29 March 2022.





# Get in touch

For more information, please don't hesitate to contact us!

**John Craven - Executive Officer**

[john.craven@system2.org.au](mailto:john.craven@system2.org.au)

**Prathesa Selvaraj - Program Officer**

[prathesa.selvaraj@system2.org.au](mailto:prathesa.selvaraj@system2.org.au)

**Tash Freeburn - Senior Advisor**

[tash.freeburn@bi.team](mailto:tash.freeburn@bi.team)

**Rory Gallagher - Director**

[rory.gallagher@system2.org.au](mailto:rory.gallagher@system2.org.au)

**Erin Lawn - Research Advisor**

[erin.lawn@bi.team](mailto:erin.lawn@bi.team)

**Saul Wodak - Advisor**

[saul.wodak@bi.team](mailto:saul.wodak@bi.team)