

# MODELS OF WORKPLACE ENGAGEMENT

Implementing models into practice

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## Executive summary

The Models of Workplace Engagement Project is set within a highly volatile and changing environment. COVID-19 has significantly impacted the economy. Employment levels have declined across the world, and young people are more likely than others to be in precarious work. Within this context, models of workplace engagement that can broaden young people's understanding of the world of work, build their skills base and their capability to adapt are even more crucial.

This project revisits the Models of Workplace Engagement pilot program that operated during 2019. The 2019 project drew on evidence that young people need multiple touchpoints with employers and workplace engagement to support their transition to their future careers. Schools engaged in pilot projects to support young people to engage in workplace learning, responding to student feedback around their desire to start earlier and how greater exposure to real-world learning would support them to build aspirations and understand future pathways. Pilots fell into four broad models – in-house capability building, aspirations and pathways, engagement, and skill development, although some projects extended into several categories. Research from the pilots revealed students built their understanding and skills base and many had undertaken follow on careers exploration once the pilots concluded. Schools benefited from having the flexibility to implement new projects but took time to start and often changed path.

The 2021 project utilises the research, case studies and models from 2019 to provide 14 schools with a launch pad to choose and apply a model in their own context. The schools in the 2021 project were, as a rule, able to commence their projects quickly as they linked existing ideas to the models and design features and were able to explore and adapt the suggested next steps. This meant many schools were able to plan, and in some cases act before COVID-19 related lockdowns impacted the state in terms 3 and 4. Many schools have not yet completed their projects, needing to pause on site activities due to the remote learning and restrictions on excursions including workplace engagement.

Despite this schools have shown the capacity to achieve positive outcomes in workplace engagement, helped in part by the provision of flexible funding and clear models that helped them to locate and validate their ideas, and provided confirmation on first steps.

Staff express whilst extra funding is important the program itself was pivotal – it was empowering and provided them with the authority to make decisions locally. They used the seed funding as an impetus to try different and at times more resource intensive models. Staff expressed the challenge of securing resources and staffing support for their programs more broadly, and the juggle to ensure they can support all students and particularly the most disengaged to find pathways.

Students in the project were more likely to indicate that they benefited from the project, that they learned about employers and workplaces and that they had a stronger sense of what they wanted to do for a career than the 2019 cohort. Many students reported researching and deciding on a career, discussing options with parents and careers educators. Students were also likely to be more engaged with their studies. Young people demonstrated resilience despite COVID-19's impact on the youth labour market. One in three students had changed their resume and/or looked for work, with nearly one in five students gaining a job, an apprenticeship or a traineeship.

Opportunities and challenges remain to scale the models of workplace engagement. The careers coordinators in the current projects are enthusiastic and motivated to succeed despite sometimes thin support networks and competing priorities. Further resources and showcases of success stories would support other early adopters to utilise the models. Finding ways to sell the engagement benefits of career education to key learning area coordinators could extend program reach.

Industry engagement remains a challenge, particularly for metropolitan schools. Further resources could be developed, including guides to engaging industry and support locating the range of intermediaries that can help schools to reach out to employers.

Parental engagement has been an outcome of the project, but not factored into the design. COVID-19 adaptations including contacting parents and students at home via ZOOM have been beneficial in reaching a wider range of parents than in-school sessions. Consideration should be given to how to factor parental engagement into the models, and to draw on parental networks.

A challenge remains to scale the models to more students and more schools. Evidence of the longer-term success of the models, for example longitudinal data on student transitions, could support broader system change to ensure all young people, including academic students, experience a range of workplace experiences.

# 1. The context of student workplace engagement – COVID-19 update

The models of workplace engagement project is set within a highly volatile and changing environment. When the project commenced in 2019 young people were facing an already changing labour market, and likely to face a long transition to employment and multiple job changes throughout their lives. COVID-19 has impacted the economy heavily, with young people being particularly impacted by increasing unemployment and underemployment as industries such as retail and hospitality, traditionally large employers of young people, curtailing operations and economic downturns impacting employment levels across the world. Within this context, models of workplace engagement that can broaden young people's understanding of the world of work, build their skills base and their capability to adapt are even more crucial.

## 1.1 Background - Developing the models in 2019

In 2019 a pilot project was conducted with 11 schools in New South Wales. These pilots draw on evidence that young people need multiple touch points with the world of work, and that authentic employer engagement, vocational exploration and experiential learning support young people to develop, maintain and pursue their aspirations.

A research project was conducted alongside the pilot projects to draw on and understand the student voice and experience. Students in Year 9 indicated they had little experience with the world of work and desired greater workplace experience. Their desire for information commenced in Year 7 but heightened as they entered the middle years with young people wanting practical experience as well as knowledge.

The 2019 pilots were unique but shared some common elements including:

- Engaging in tours or visits
- Designing and developing outputs in a school
- Training and skills development
- Engaging with experts
- Integrating with or connecting to work experience.

The pilots helped young people to understand career options and be more prepared, including understanding what workplaces are like and building their own skills and knowledge related to work. Most young people took steps beyond the course of the pilot such as discussing careers with parents, developing a resume and looking into careers. Some young people also re-engaged in

classes at schools in response to identifying a future pathway, or the realisation that the world of work was more difficult than they had imagined.

For schools, the pilot project provided them with seed funding that was a licence to try something new. Schools relished to opportunity to test new ideas, although found themselves needing to re-scope and re-orient projects at times as they managed competing priorities and faced roadblocks including with developing relationships with local industry. Keys to project success included devoting sufficient planning time, drawing networks of support and engaging students in shaping the project.

The research found the pilot projects were grouped into four key models:

In-house projects developing capabilities	Discovery, exploration and broadening aspirations	Engagement, motivation and inspiration	Skills training and work readiness
Creating elements of the workplace experience in school	Providing exposure to different worksites and job roles	Creating opportunities to entice, engage or reconnect with school	Developing confidence and capacity to be work ready
Outreach and exposure to the real thing	Authentic interaction with workers	Work on or develop a passion or interest	Specific vocational or job ready training
Producing something real and visible	Documenting, sharing & applying to school	Building self-esteem, growth and direction	Providing qualifications and experiences

An accompanying presentation from the research articulated design considerations to support schools engaging in workplace learning models:

Establishing the concept	Student selection and participation	Project parameters and timelines	Fostering and facilitating outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Identifying need	<input type="checkbox"/> Targeting individuals	<input type="checkbox"/> Allowing sufficient upfront lead time	<input type="checkbox"/> Developing a product or outcome in school
<input type="checkbox"/> Leveraging existing ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> Using 'opt in' approaches (e.g. EOIs, pitches)	<input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility to adapt and evolve	<input type="checkbox"/> Linking to curriculum
<input type="checkbox"/> Drawing on school strengths	<input type="checkbox"/> Group composition	<input type="checkbox"/> Resourcing - other staff?	<input type="checkbox"/> Students documenting journey and learnings
<input type="checkbox"/> Tapping into local partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/> Group size	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning around other school activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Engaging industry/the community
<input type="checkbox"/> Exploring / testing ideas with students	<input type="checkbox"/> Group autonomy	<input type="checkbox"/> Intra and inter-school collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability / replicability

## 1.2 Re-applying the models in 2021

### 2021 in context

The need to support young people to transition from secondary school to further education and work is more vital than before. COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on the youth labour market with young people more likely to lose their jobs, or lose hours, given they are over-represented in

hard hit highly casualised sectors of employment<sup>1</sup>. In Australia youth unemployment has remained high since the global financial crisis and has been exacerbated during COVID-19<sup>2</sup>. Whilst youth unemployment has fallen in recent months, so too have the participation rates meaning more young people are now not seeking to engage in the labour market<sup>3</sup>.

Schools have a key role in building young people's workplace engagement, including supporting young people to explore a range of careers and industries, and sparking and building young people's aspirations, engagement and capacity to navigate to their future destinations. All young people benefit from workplace engagement – it can support disengaged young people to re-engage in school or find non-school pathways, and help academically strong students to understand their pathways, make better decisions about tertiary education and have a smoother transition to their careers<sup>4</sup>. Given the link between young people's aspirations, capacity to explore careers and workplace experiences and their success in transitioning for further education and employment as adults, careers and transitions support will be pivotal to young people's capacity to navigate the changing future<sup>5</sup>.

The challenge to support young people to explore the world of work has been heavily impacted by COVID-19. Schools have been closed for extensive periods across 2020 and 2021 as a response to COVID-19. Schools in New South Wales were closed for a term or more depending on location, shifting delivery to remote learning. Even when open restrictions were placed upon student activities and movement, for example limitations on incursions and excursions.

This posed challenges for schools implementing the models and restricted the capacity of many schools to complete their project by the time of the research concluding at the start of term four. Many schools are seeking to hold on-site experiences by the end of the year. The research is conducted within this context – of schools pivoting, adapting and at times pausing their projects in response to the impacts of COVID-19.

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<sup>1</sup> OECD Employment Outlook 2021: Navigating the COVID-19 Crisis and Recovery, [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/5a700c4b-en/1/3/1/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/5a700c4b-en&\\_csp\\_=d31326a7706c58707d6aad05ad9dc5ab&itemI=oe&itemContent=book&\\_ga=2.265428939.599323540.1632445673-1115976153.1630361894#abstract-d1e295](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/5a700c4b-en/1/3/1/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/5a700c4b-en&_csp_=d31326a7706c58707d6aad05ad9dc5ab&itemI=oe&itemContent=book&_ga=2.265428939.599323540.1632445673-1115976153.1630361894#abstract-d1e295)

<sup>2</sup> Wood, D. & Griffiths, K. (2021) *How COVID Hit Young People Hard*, Grattan Institute, <https://grattan.edu.au/news/how-covid-hit-young-people-hard/>

<sup>3</sup> ABS Labour Force Survey August 2021

<sup>4</sup> FYA, *New Work Reality*, 2017

<sup>5</sup> Mann, A., V. Denis and C. Percy (2020), "Career ready?: How schools can better prepare young people for working life in the era of COVID-19", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 241, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e1503534-en>.



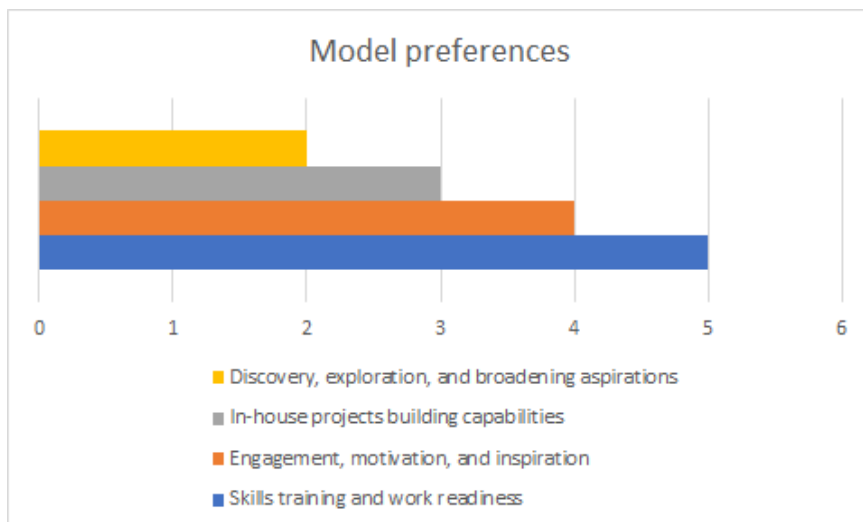
## Applying the models

An expression of interest was released in 2020 to invite interested schools to apply to test the models in action. A range of resources was made available to schools, including the original research and case studies and the assistance of a mentor to support schools. Throughout the project a range of resources were made available on the Teams site to support schools, including descriptions of the quadrants of engagement for each of the models and supportive documents around workplace engagement.

Applications were received from 14 schools, which were invited to participate in the project:

Name of school
Nepean Creative and Performing Arts High School
Seven Hills West Public School
Sydney secondary college Blackwattle Bay
TRSC - Richmond River High Campus
Camden Haven HS
Swansea High School
Ulladulla High School
Yass High School
Henry Kendall High School Special Education Centre
Crestwood High School
Cumberland High School
Northern Border Senior Access Program
Wadalba Community School
Blayney High School

Each school was asked which model they wished to apply in order of preference. The top preferences were:



### 1.3 The research approach

Megan O’Connell Consulting was appointed as the research partner with a particular focus on examining COVID-19 disruptions and adaptations. The research process consisted of interviews with 8 model schools (schools selected to implement their chosen model/s) and one control school to explore how the models supported their projects, how the projects progressed and COVID-19 related interruptions and adaptations. Written surveys were completed by six model schools and additional information was provided by the project mentors – both on the current projects and how their schools progressed after the 2019 pilots. Information from initial school applications was also accessed to gain insight into original project objectives and planning ideas.

An online self-complete survey was distributed via teams and careers coordinators for students to complete. It should be noted that this occurred during the context of COVID-19 with NSW schools largely engaging in remote learning. It was also distributed in the second last week of term, making it difficult to reach students. Despite this, 26 students across six model schools completed the survey and provided important insights into the program. It must be noted that the student insights represent a small snapshot of students within the projects and may not be representative of all students. Nonetheless, they provide valuable insights into the experiences of some students within the project.

A survey and interview were also conducted with a control school to determine if there appeared to be a difference between the schools in the project, the ‘model schools’ and the control school,

noting that only four student surveys were completed by the control school. Given this, data from the control school is drawn upon sparingly.

This research also draws upon the 2019 research to compare and contrast young people's needs and wants and satisfaction with the projects, and to ascertain the difference the models may make to schools' capacity to start.

## 2. How do school students approach a future of work?

This section examines how students are feeling about their future, including students' attitudes to careers, the impact of COVID-19 on students' perceptions about their ability to navigate to a pathway post school. It is drawn from the survey of the 26 students in the pilot projects and noting that the survey was conducted during lockdown and towards the end of term it is possible that only the most engaged students completed the survey.

### 2.1 How do students feel about the future?

Research in 2019 showed that students were excited about their future careers but also uncertain about the pathways they would take, and what the future would hold. Students in this new research were asked about how COVID-19 has or will impact their experience of the world of work. 21 students out of 25 answered this question and spoke about the immediate impacts.

These ranged from rules around limited movement, the need to wear masks, immediate effects on work experience being postponed and effects on learning.

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*Covid has had a big impact because we can't get out and do work placements, internships, and work experience, when a lot of that will impact student's decisions on careers.*

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Two students were unsure of the effects of COVID-19 on the world of work, whilst four thought it would reduce their chances of employment.

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*COVID-19 makes it hard to work or find work. I think it will lower my choices and opportunities for future work*

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Whilst students expressed concerns about the impact of COVID-19 this was most often focused on the immediate impact with students usually not commenting on long term affects.

*I feel we will get through it if we just all get vaccinated and follow restrictions*

Students overall retain a sense of optimism about their future. Nearly three quarters of students surveyed can't wait to work for a living, and a similar proportion are confident they will find a job in the future. A career ranks as highly important for almost all students. Students valued work experience and finding out about jobs, with students in the model schools more likely than students in the control school to agree that a career is important, to express confidence in the future and to link their current actions to their work prospects.

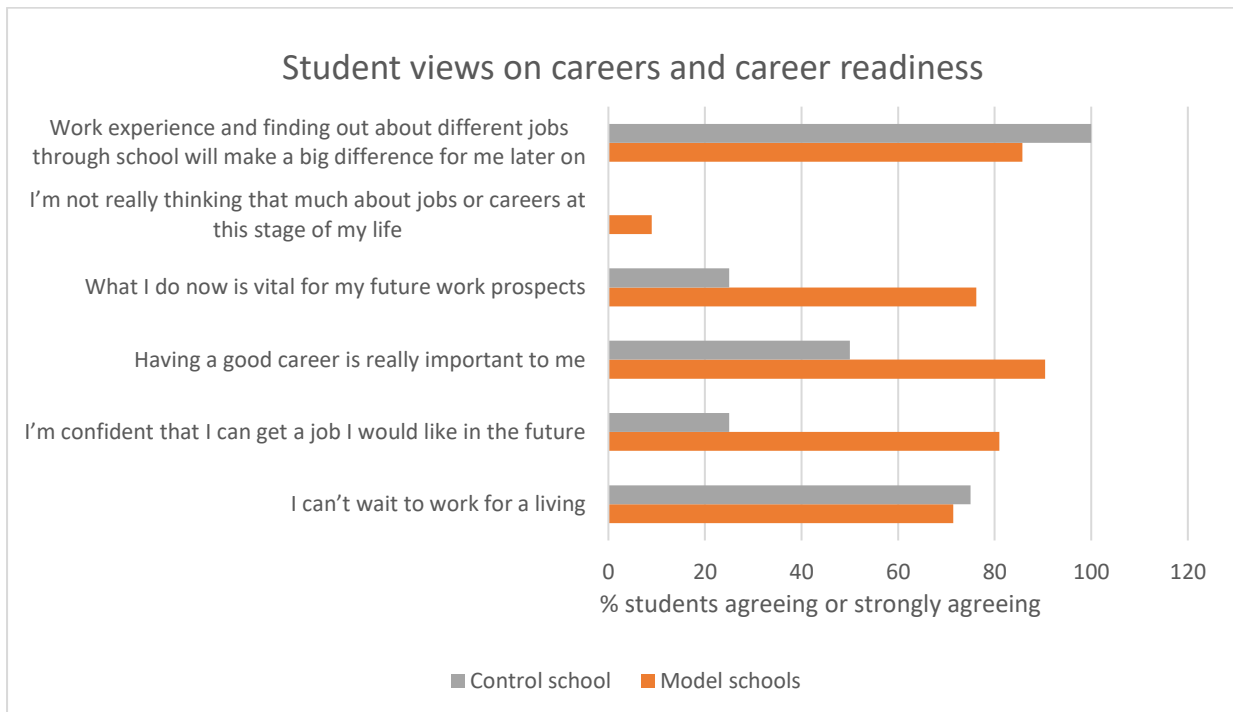


Figure one: Student views on career readiness

2021 survey respondents were more likely to indicate that they possess a range of information about jobs and careers than the 2019 cohort. The comparative results are below for similar items, noting the questions were phrased differently and are usually the reverse of each other.

2019 Items	% 2019 Student indicating needing some or a lot of help	2021 items	% 2021 students indicating agreeing or strongly agreeing
Deciding what to do for a job or career	42%	I know what I want to do for a job or career	68%

Understanding what employers are looking for from applicants	51%	I know what sorts of things employers are looking for from applicants	82%
Finding out about the different jobs and careers that are out there	43%	I know what sorts of jobs are out there to choose from	64%
Figuring out the best choice of subjects and courses to take	55%	I know which subjects are best for me to get a job	64%
Understanding different ways to look for work	61%	I know already a lot about a job I might like	72%
Finding out about different study and training options after school	59%	I know the best study options for me after I leave school	55%

Table One: Comparison of student needs and knowledge 2019 and 2021

The data reveals that 2021 students were likely to indicate that they have a good sense of their likely career path, including the subjects suited to them. In particular a key area of strength in 2021 is students' understanding of the sorts of things employers are looking for in students. This will be explored more in discussion of the schools' models, to understand if and how this has been brought to the fore in the 2021 projects.

## 2.2 What do students say about how much help they need?

Despite many students indicating a career intention, students overwhelmingly report that they require additional assistance with the world of work, with two thirds of students wanting some assistance and nearly a quarter requiring a lot of assistance.

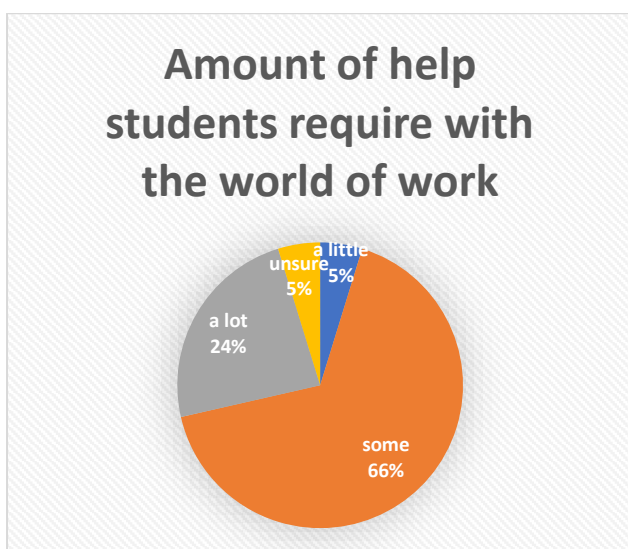


Figure Two: How much help students require with the world of work

### 2.3 How much contact with the world have students received?

Despite the advent of COVID-19, nearly half of all students report having a little or a lot of contact with the world of work. This may reflect the skew towards regional students in the student survey, from towns which were less restricted by COVID-19 lockdowns than city locations where many workplaces and school sites were closed during mid-2021. The use of virtual work experience, however, was also mentioned in interviews with staff, as an alternative way to connect students to the world of work (see Section 3).

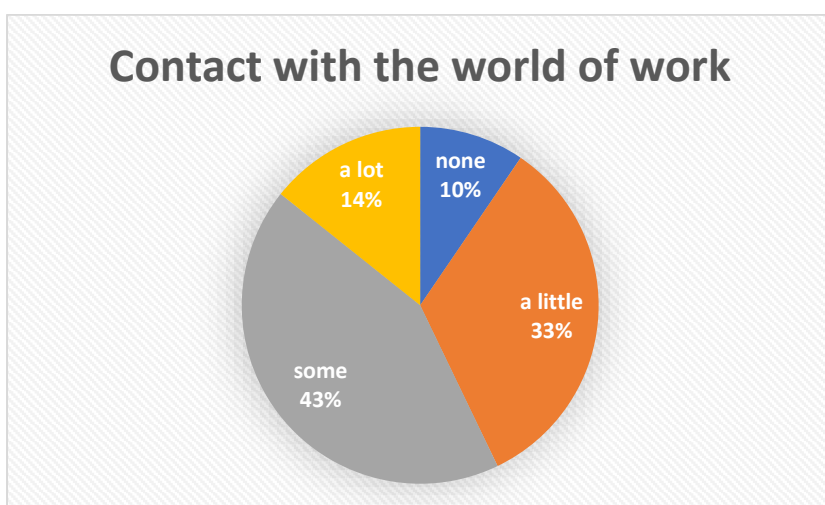


Figure 3: How much contact students have had with the world of work

Over half of all students suggested they had just right amount of contact with the world of work, although around one in three thought the contact was not enough. This is in contrast with the 2019 model where nearly 60 percent of students answered that they had not had enough engagement.

#### Student reports on support received

Students' reporting of support received within the school is like students in the pilot schools except for students knowing where to go in the school for advice or support. This may be in part due to COVID-19 limiting students' physical involvement in school activities.

	2019 Pilot Students	2021 Model Schools
My school helps me learn what I need to know to be able to get a job	-	67%
My school provides information, advice or support that is relevant to me	69%	67%
I know where or who I can go to in school for information, advice or support	92%	76%
My school provides lots of opportunities to find out what world of work is like	74%	71%

My school helps me consider my options for working in the future	72%	71%
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Table Two: Comparison of provision of information to students 2019 and 2021- agree and strongly agree

## 2.4 How did students find the projects?

Students reported that the projects were enjoyable and comfortable, at the same time as making them think about their future. More students reported that the projects were easy than in 2019, which may be reflective of a higher level of planning afforded by the models providing a smoother start and/or limits to workplace engagement due to COVID-19.

The planning stages also included an assessment of needs and expectations with a central focus on student engagement a key part of the model implementation. This aimed to result in projects better suited to the student needs and targeting those with capacity to benefit. The 2019 pilot projects involved students more in a co-creation of projects with staff which required students to stretch more, or differently, given the agency some were afforded and the need to work in the uncertainty of pioneering ideas. Despite the limitations to the projects' implementation in 2021, nearly all young people in the survey cited they learnt something new.

	2019 Pilot Students	2021 Model Schools
It was easy	51%	68%
I felt comfortable about it	62%	74%
It was clear what I was supposed to do	73%	74%
It was enjoyable	-	74%
It made me think about my future	-	79%
I learnt something new	-	84%

Table Three: Comparison of student views 2019 and 2021- agree and strongly agree

Students were asked what the best and the worst things about the projects were. They reported the best things were learning new skills, including fabricating, having to wash hair and learning different things they will need in life. Only six students were able to articulate what the worst things were - these included understanding languages and not having their normal teachers. A further two students expressed regret at missing work experience due to illness.

Nearly three quarters of students found their workplace experiences very or quite useful, with over half of these students finding the experience to be better than they expected. Students expressed that the projects helped build understanding of workplaces including providing skills and resources



that students can draw on into the future. The projects were less successful at linking work to studies and motivating students to stay at school longer, although the staff interviews report that this was a positive outcome for at least some participants. The former may be due to the projects often operating outside of the standard curriculum, whilst the latter may be both due to the survey being likely to have been completed by the most engaged young people or the deliberate focus of many projects on finding pathways outside of school for disengaged young people.

	2019 Pilot Students	2021 Model Schools
Building my understanding about different work and career options	60%	71%
Giving me skills that will help me get on in the workplace	62%	67%
Showing me the link between work and my studies	54%	48%
Making me feel more prepared to enter work in the future	55%	67%
Helping me understand what workplaces are like	58%	67%
Motivating me to go to, or to stay at school longer	-	43%
Helping me understand what employers want	59%	67%
Giving me confidence to approach businesses and employers in future	56%	67%
Allowing me to develop relationships and contacts that I might use in future	47%	62%
Giving me the skills and resources that I might use in the future	-	71%

Table Four: Comparison of student views 2019 and 2021- quite useful and very useful

## 2.5 What were the project outcomes reported by students?

### Student achievement of skills and qualifications

Most students learned new recognised skills or worked towards a qualification over the course of their workplace engagement.

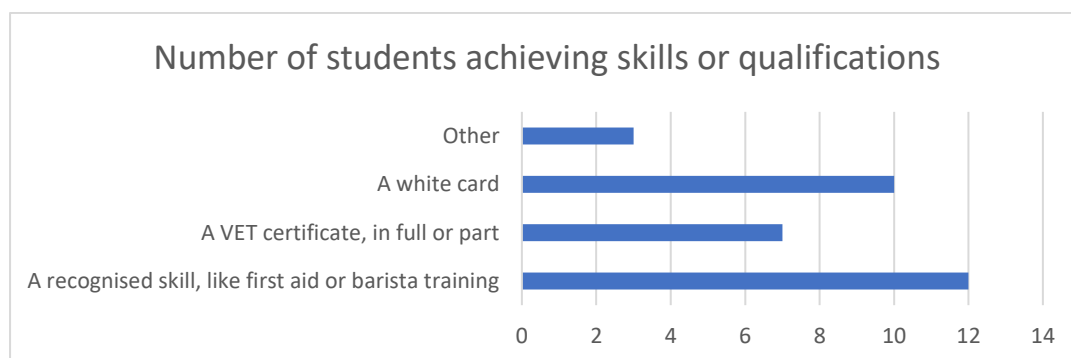


Figure 4: Student skills and qualification by number of students

### Student action following workplace engagement

The response of students, by way of action following their participation in the project, reinforces the positive impacts of the project despite COVID-19 related delays and setbacks.

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*Nine out of ten students completed further actions following the project with students, on average completing four actions each*

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Students have continued to think about and research, and in many cases decided, what career they wish to pursue. They have made decisions about what they want to study and discussed their career intentions with their parents, and sometimes with a career advisor. Confirming earlier indications that workplace engagement can be a motivator to remain in school, over a third of students were focusing more on their studies. Further, confirming young people’s resilience despite the effects of COVID-19 on the youth labour market, one in three students had changed their resume and/or looked for work, with nearly one in five students gaining a job, an apprenticeship or a traineeship.

These actions confirm the outcomes the students are reporting from the projects, and that the effects of the projects continue after they have concluded, or when they have been put on hiatus due to the advent of remote learning.

Schools have faced very changed circumstances in 2020 and 2021, but despite this have shown the capacity to achieve positive outcomes in workplace engagement even when workplaces are closed, and schools are cycling through periods of remote learning.

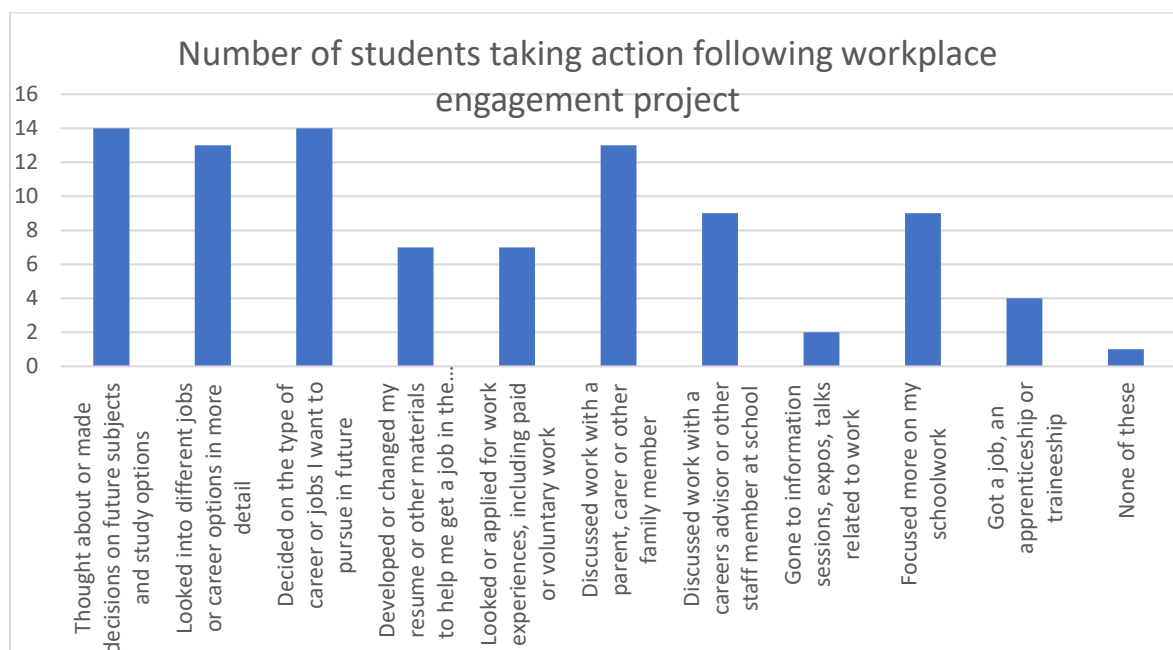


Figure 5: Student actions taken following project – number of students

### 3. How schools implemented projects based on the models

#### 3.1 What were schools hoping to achieve?

A total of 14 schools were successful in their applications to join the projects for 2021. These were made up of a diverse range of schools including large and small schools, some in metropolitan, regional, rural, and remote settings, and including some combined schools, a special education unit in a secondary school, and one primary school. The table below lists the schools involved and highlights the types of students, or the year levels, they were aiming to target using the models.

Participating schools	Years or students targeted by project	Most preferred model type
<b>Metropolitan</b>		
Cumberland High School	Year 10 (targeting disadvantaged and disengaged students)	Discovery, exploration, and broadening aspirations
Crestwood High School	Year 10	Skills training and work readiness
Nepean Creative and Performing Arts High School	Disengaged students across the board, but mainly years 9, 10 and 11	Skills training and work readiness
Seven Hills West Public School	Primary, K – Yr 6	Engagement, motivation, and inspiration
Sydney secondary college Blackwattle Bay	Stage 5	In house projects developing capabilities
<b>Regional, remote, or combined schools</b>		
Blayney High School	Year 7 through to 12 for site visits & years 9-12 for work placement opportunities.	Discovery, exploration, and broadening aspirations
Camden Haven High School	Year 10 (targeting 14 students)	Skills training and work readiness
Henry Kendall High School Special Education Centre	Students with special needs in Stage 5 & 6, Years 10-12, and Stage 4 in some activities	In house projects developing capabilities
Northern Border Senior Access Program	Year 10, disengaged	In house projects developing capabilities
Swansea High School	Years 9 and 10	Engagement, motivation, and inspiration
TRSC - Richmond River High Campus	Stage 6	Skills training and work readiness
Ulladulla High School	Stage 5	Engagement, motivation, and inspiration
Wadalba Community School	Year 9 & 10, focusing on disengaged students in Stage 4 & 5	Engagement, motivation, and inspiration
Yass High School	Stage 5 Boys class (Years 9 and 10), targeting disengaged students	Skills training and work readiness

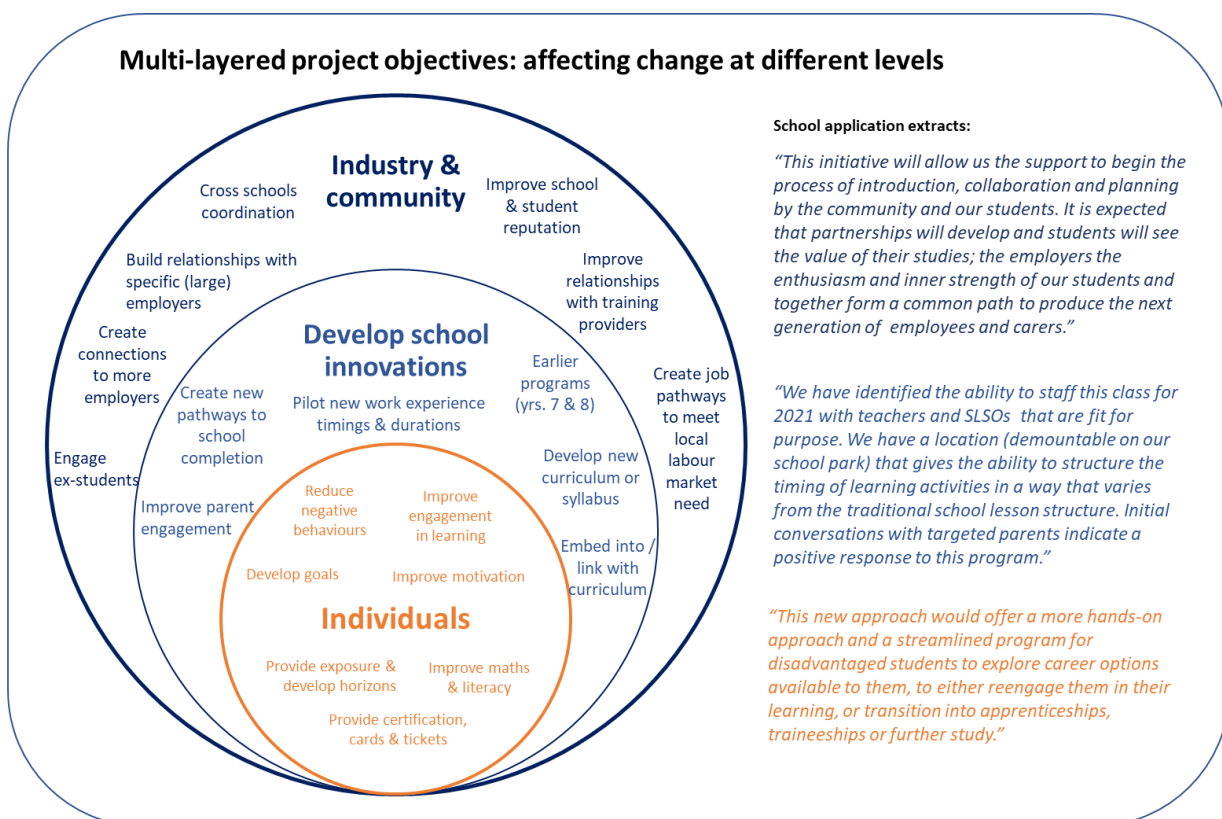
Table Five: Summary of participating schools - application information

School contacts were excited about the opportunity presented by this project funding to allow them the chance to explore new ways of engaging students or advancing existing ideas or plans already being considered. While several projects sought to focus on current groups of students in need –

most notably, cohorts of disengaged or disadvantaged students - they also had an objective of learning about how workplace education could be delivered differently so there was a repeatable delivery models for future cohorts. Some schools were looking to find efficiencies at the same time as increase impacts for students, that is, to achieve more by doing things differently.

*“Currently each teacher is working independently, and the new approach combine strategies for better outcomes for the students’ pathways.”  
(School application)*

Figure 6: Overview of project objectives



As illustrated above, projects were aiming to be affecting change on a few intersecting levels.

Some projects included aims to engage and outreach at the **community level**, incorporating approaches to build relationships and reputations; as well as exploring the potential of new ways of engaging and connecting with employers and other organisations. This was to create real job opportunities and local labour market connections for individual students, as well as to develop ongoing partnerships serving the school and community beyond this project.

Projects also looked to trial **school level innovations**, setting out to use the funding to advance or extend existing ideas or pilot new ways of doing things within classes or across the school. This included a wide range of ideas tied back to the better practice suggestions surfaced in the model development of the 2019 pilots, including most importantly, wider, or more frequent, and authentic contact with employers; and student engagement in personalised programs to support and motivate individual aspirations and goals; as well as developing approaches suitable for earlier engagement with students in year 7 and 8.

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*“Currently the school encourages students from year 10 to engage in work placement. Our ambition would be to start the process earlier to develop our student's capacity to engage in employment opportunities from year 7. We would create opportunities by visiting local workplaces, discovering interests and career aspirations, developing rapport with local businesses and developing students from a much earlier age to increase their confidence and ability to readily engage in employment opportunities of choice.” (School application)*

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Several schools aimed to set up alternative models of work experience which moved away from the traditional ‘work experience week’, requiring a rethinking or redesign of curriculum and class structures and timetabling, creating new ways of engaging, educating and staffing. In some cases, this was designed to be in combination with other programs or to be achieved by pooling funding from other sources.

Intrinsic to all projects was a focus on student needs and the aim of **engaging individual students** through providing new experiences. Several projects were designed with a specific group in mind – some to enable improved behaviour, increased attendance and better engagement in learning and the world of work. Some projects aimed to be working with students one on one, or in small groups, or using case management, counselling approaches, and several were purposefully including parents, to change trajectories for these individual young people.

All the projects aimed to improve exposure to the world of work. Some were designed to allow access to programs for those who had not previously been engaged in these existing programs. Others set out to build new ways of supporting these students to be inspired, develop personal goals, and be better able to make relevant choices about work and study options.

At least 7 out of 14 schools, explicitly mentioned the need to target disengaged students as part of their project. Schools were keen to make sure students didn't "slip through the cracks" and felt something new was really needed. Including a focus on closing gaps in maths and literacy skills were particularly considered for some of these projects, with a view that once re-engaged, students could be better placed to have choices about staying at school or being more work-ready if they chose vocational pathways.

**At least 7 out of 14 schools were targeting disadvantaged or disengaged students**

Other practical, work-ready components such as individuals achieving certifications, tickets, or cards, as well as building skills for applying for jobs were designed into many projects for 2021. When considering first and second preferences, all four models were equally of interest to schools (see Figure to follow). During interviews, some schools indicated that they liked all the models, and chose some elements of each of them to construct a multifaceted approach, drawing on several activities to achieve multiple objectives.

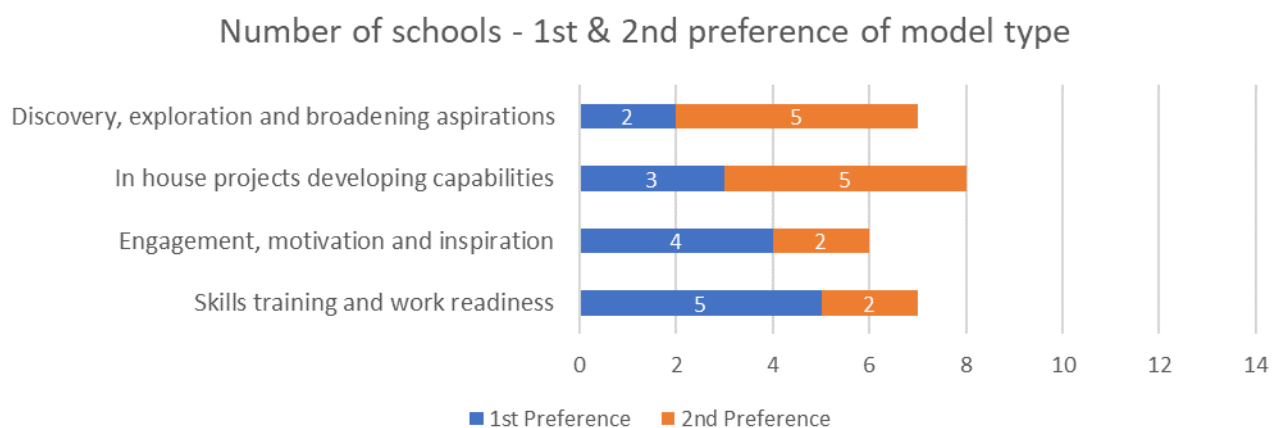


Figure 7: Model preferences of 14 schools, from school applications

### 3.2 How did schools come up with model projects?

Several schools fed back in survey responses, or commented unprompted in interviews, that the funding "was perfect" for an idea they already had. The models were seen as highly relevant to the needs in school communities. Interviewers observed great enthusiasm and motivation in the tone and nature of discussions with school staff – they felt validated and encouraged by the concepts presented in the models, and general program direction. Whilst several schools reported already having ideas or prior plans, the nature of the funding program description, the models themselves, and the supporting documentation, were contributing factors to the final project designs. More

specifically, using the quadrant documentation and supporting questioning framework centred on student voice, facilitated student needs assessments and the associated refinement of projects (see figure below).

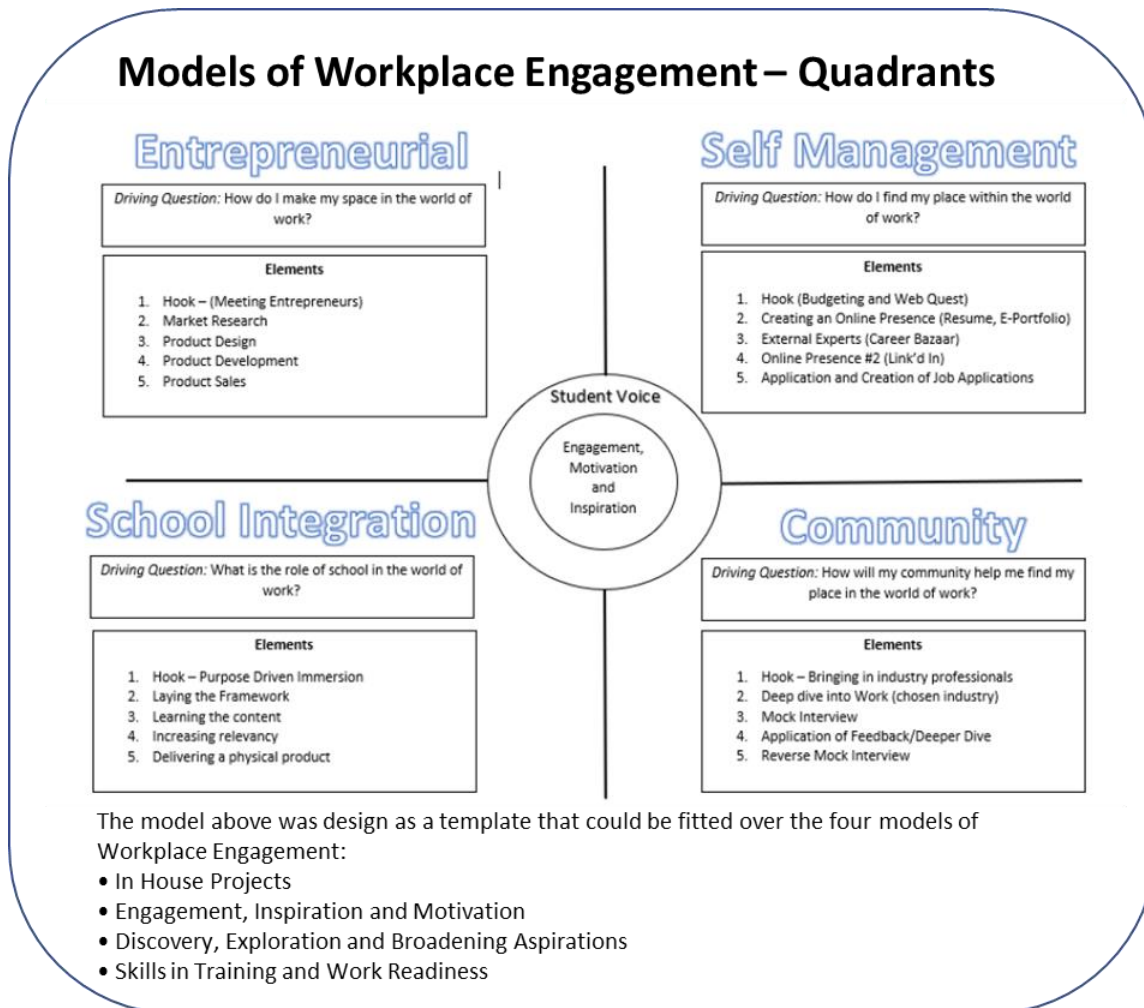


Figure 8: Quadrant explanation extract

*“The support provided by the models to change what we were doing to best support students (was most helpful)” (School Staff Survey response)*

*“The models provided guidance on what might work in our local context which allowed us to select the most suitable to have success.” (School Staff survey response)*

School applications specified parties to be involved in setting up and driving the project. Most schools planned to have multiple staff members engaged and included senior staff and leaders, most often the Deputy Principal or Year advisors / leaders, as well as key roles in larger schools such as

VET coordinators, Wellbeing or Welfare leaders. Some schools listed a large team, others had only one or two staff. Not all projects were to be led by a career advisor, although many (at least half) were.

Schools also relied on other inputs in forming projects, including:

- Consulting with school community networks, partners, and industry
- Gaining information from training organisations and certification providers
- Reviewing documentation on past projects
- Consulting the department
- Contact with mentors.

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*“(We) looked at the projects already completed for additional ideas, spoke with local agencies such as... Schools Industry Partnerships - Inspiring the Future and training providers for white card, first aid and other short courses.” (School Staff Survey response)*

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The review of the pilot projects in 2019 found that the autonomy and flexibility to create innovative, localised projects, driven by student engagement approaches, was highly beneficial for schools and students. However, it was also highly challenging as the co-creation process, lack of clear guiding principles, or a line of sight on definitive outcomes from the outset – as is the nature of innovation pilots - took time, required more energy, and called for perseverance through uncertainty. For at least some schools reporting in, this year’s projects seemed to strike a good balance between autonomous innovation, and guidance and support to facilitate better design and decisioning.

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*“Knowing we had the freedom to implement our ideas and project without restrictions was great. We were given a lot of support and encouragement from (the Department) ... time and ideas.” (School Staff survey response)*

*“I think the four models are readily applicable for schools to adopt and embrace. I guess they reflect best practice in workplace engagement. Most schools will already be offering programs and activities for their students that relate to the four models. I feel the use of... (the) four quadrants breaks it down even more...it isn't overwhelming.” (Mentor feedback)*

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Interviews with a sub sample of schools also reflected that, at least for some, the better practice recommendations from past research and pilot experiences, were being picked up in the design of



these projects, across all model types. These were namely the recommendations to include elements of:

- authentic and contextualised employer engagement,
- vocational exploration and building of aspirations,
- experiential learning, and
- opportunity for student-led activities leading to personal accomplishment.

More support or specific advice was needed in getting started on some of these aspects, and the COVID situation impeded actual implementation for many (see later discussion), however, the design intent was there to include student feedback and evaluation; to provide experiential learning and growth, as well as contextualised employer engagement; and to ultimately expand student horizons.

### 3.3 How did seed funding support projects?

As outlined above, the objectives of the projects were often multi-layered, and schools were seeking to achieve sustainable change beyond what was likely with this project funding alone. The program, with funding, was the impetus for action – an inspiring and very practical way to break down barriers to change.

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*“Schools like extra funding to be able to do something out of the ordinary.”  
(Mentor feedback)*

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**Just being in the program was empowering for staff, giving them permission to act on their ideas**

While funding was a critical program component, just being in the program was empowering for staff, giving permission to put their ideas into action and the funding provided the authority to make local decisions more easily. This was identified in 2019 pilots as a great motivator for staff who might otherwise feel hamstringed by mindsets in existing paradigms and was reflected again in the staff autonomy and enthusiasm observed in interviews in 2021.

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*“The funding did give us the freedom to be able to buy the few little things that we needed ... Otherwise, to just access money like that in a school is quite a task .... you can't just get cash; you've got to submit a lot of paperwork... it is off-putting.... We were so excited to be part of the project... you get the broad understanding that we can achieve a lot more, you are not restricted to our own world.” (School staff interview)*

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Participation in the project was seen as a low risk means for the school generally to be able to try something. Schools were able to pilot or prove out an idea (to themselves or to leadership or to partners), to then be adopted or expanded if successful.

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*“We have a number of disengaged students in Stage 5 who currently work with the Careers Adviser and Deputy on an individual basis. A more formal approach may offer better outcomes for these students, giving them a wider variety of exposure and experiences, and could be offered to a wider range of students who are quietly disengaged.” (School application)*

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Schools having access to funding was a key factor in projects getting off the ground. Schools were freed up to develop something new such as new programs, new classes, use of external training programs, paid incursion visits or creating more elaborate hands-on experiences:

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*“Money will be spent to develop a mentor program for students who can help talk and answer questions, build relationships and develop skilled, independent young adults.” (School application)*

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It was noted that funding didn't cover everything schools felt was needed, and that existing program fees or third-party provider costs were often beyond the scope of the funding or only limited numbers of participants could participate given fees.

**In house projects to build capacity used funds for one-off purchases to get things physically set up**

The funds did allow for some staffing allocation, such as casual staff to cover for project staff absences, as well as for provision of very practical things for in house projects or transport costs for getting to external sites and events. Schools who were involving students with support needs had additional costs to manage any personal care or supervisions requirements while off school site.

Funding for in house projects to build capacity such as setting up op shops or coffee carts included the one-off purchase of a range of items such as:

- Point of Sale transaction equipment
- Storage cupboard and tubs
- Display materials - full size mannequin, portable clothes racks, coat hangers
- Ironing board and iron.

Funding also contributed to supporting work experience placements, including transport costs, and fees associated with certificates and tickets to be able to be trained for operating equipment, gaining a barista certificate etc. The funding was also a catalyst for larger scale change and at times the program was seen as a binding agent - the glue - to combine sources of funding for achieving shared outcomes.

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*“I have applied for a number of grants that if successful, will hopefully provide a number of options for disengaged students. I am hoping to be able to have a Transition Adviser join me as part of the Careers team for 2021 (National Careers Partnership Grant) and have also hoping to have a "Hands On Learning" program up and running.” (School application)*

*“I think this could supplement School-To-Work Funding that already exists and give switched-on Careers Advisers and their schools the continuity of funding to allow great programs to co-exist.” (Mentor feedback)*

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Further still, the funding seeded or contributed to large scale change at some schools, where significant pathway development is underway (see section 3.4 examples). There was recognition that the scale of these solutions was way beyond the funding capacity of this project alone, but the directional and monetary support from the Department was further validation, motivation, and practical support for the projects to gain authority and momentum.

Of those schools reporting back on as part of the research, there were at least 2 who had made little or no progress, and a further few who also had not yet spent the money allocated. Barriers and facilitators to progress are discussed further in sections to follow.

### **3.4 What kinds of things did schools do?**

The feedback available from schools indicates considerable project progress over 2021, despite the challenges of the pandemic. Section 3.5 describes the extent of project implementation progress and more specifically, the impact of COVID. Given not all projects were captured as part of the research, it is unclear how representative those who have been able to be interviewed are of the nature of projects or extent of progress made. Nonetheless, these examples illustrate significant potential for the models to be adopted and to affect real change in a range of settings given the diversity of projects and the early indications of impacts for students, and for schools.

The table and case summaries to follow provide some insight into the nature of projects for schools where some form of feedback was received.

## EXAMPLES OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

<p>Bringing workplace engagement earlier - exposure for younger students</p>	<p>Year 7, 8 and 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing workplace visits and tours</li> <li>• Involvement in incursion and employer talks</li> <li>• Exposure to online programs</li> <li>• Involvement in some aspects of inhouse projects</li> </ul>
<p>More frequent and varied work experience or contact with employers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five jobs in five days for year 8 students - visits to 5 different workplaces in one week</li> <li>• Two days' work experience a week over a ten-week term for year 9 and year 10 students</li> <li>• Arrange employer talks and visit to the school, sometimes through ex-students or parents</li> </ul>
<p>More practically oriented (hands on) experiential learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "EduQuip" incursions where employers bring equipment to school and the expo type event includes hands on experiences for students</li> <li>• Mock group interviews over 2 hours at Office Works site</li> <li>• Establishing a clothing op shop on school site with all aspects managed by the students from sourcing to selling</li> <li>• Coffee carts and cafes on site with students shopping, growing a kitchen garden, preparing food, serving, selling, and cleaning up</li> </ul>
<p>Multiple activities building a suite of experiences over the year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole of school events e.g. holding a winter op shop and a summer op shop event</li> <li>• In house projects and outreach into community linked e.g. learning retail and hospitality skills, visiting workplaces with these types of roles, looking for work experience placements to use the skills they are now more confident in (i.e. work experience ready students)</li> <li>• Linking into curriculum and laddering across year levels</li> </ul>
<p>Wider exposure to employers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leveraging and creating virtual work experience programs</li> </ul>
<p>Intensive individualised support for disengaged or disadvantaged. Targeted a specific cohort of ~ 10 to 20 at-risk students, often Year 9 or 10.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case management - deputy, wellbeing and careers transitions staff meeting once a week to discuss status for each student and coordinating contacts and next steps for each student's education, training or work experience needs</li> <li>• Mentoring programs for individuals</li> <li>• Parental and student zoom calls to check in and work together</li> <li>• Supporting tailored work experience programs for individuals including support students to take up work experiences in larger regional towns (facilitating travel etc)</li> </ul>
<p>Flexible approaches to curriculum delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class timetable and curriculum development</li> <li>• "Super charging" FSK to complete in shorter time frame</li> <li>• Creating individual learning pathways – selection for an opportunity</li> <li>• Tailored maths and literacy approaches</li> </ul>

## Yass High School

**Project context and features:** The school already used Links to Learning and PCYC Fit for Life to address targeted disengagement in Year 8 and 9 girls and boys. These two year groups are their largest year groups and both have a higher male student enrolment. Classes (particularly in Year 9) are large and regularly disrupted by a small core of students.

The school created a Stage 5 Boys class for 2021 which targeted 15 students and offers Links to Learning (PDHPE outcomes), work experience, explicit literacy and numeracy for work (Maths and English outcomes), and Project Based Learning (HSIE and Science outcomes). The students attend mainstream classes for practical PDHPE lessons, electives and whole school sport. The students benefit from research-informed pedagogy that has a focus on how boys learn best. This model allows students to engage in TAFE youth programs (e.g. YES) and work experience without losing connection with their school work, which tends to occur when they miss mainstream classes. There is also the opportunity to develop their Social and Emotional Learning Skills (HT Welfare) to increase their work readiness.

The plan evolved to allow each student to have teaching in maths and literacy and a cross curricular coverage of other subjects such as science in an individually paced program. The resulting program was a standalone curriculum – the “Pathways Program”. The class was staffed for 2021 with teachers and SLSOs that are fit for purpose and using a demountable on the school park that gives the ability to structure the timing of learning activities in a way that varies from the traditional school lesson structure. Targeted parents were positive about the program.

The students have undertaken at least 2 days work experience each week, on any day, and then work in a flexible individualised program of education over a ten week term. Local business has been supportive and engaged in the program throughout, reflective of the sense of community in the small town.

**Benefits and successes:** The students became more work ready, built relationships and interpersonal skills for work. They become more focused on their future and exploring ideas of an apprenticeship with the businesses. They improved in their attendance, participation and focus on maths and literacy skills. Behaviour at school improved. Some were able to get weekend paid work. Within 6 months of this year, 3 boys have transitioned into paid work and Cert II TAFE pathways programs, 2 have moved into full time employment, and 2 have moved back into mainstream education, settled back into the classroom on a path to complete year 12, with better focus and behaviour.

**Next steps:** Given the positive pathways developed, boys moved out of the dedicated classroom, and the program has been extended to 6 girls now participating. This has also had a positive influence in stabilising the class for the boys and in reducing truancy rates for the girls. The program will continue into next year although long term sustainability depends on funding.

**Some reflections from staff:** *“We are so excited. It’s been a big success... It’s a big win win...kids are getting into an alternative education path, they are moving in the direction they want to, building up work skills, while we have supported them to get there and the school benefits from less disruption.”*

## Crestwood High School

### Project features:

- Trialling a new approach to engage with students in year 10 to 12 using coordinated case management involving Careers Adviser, Deputy Principal, LST Team and Work Studies teachers (CATs Team) and tailored job readiness skills and work experience support
- Currently each teacher is working independently, and the new approach combines strategies for better outcomes for the students pathways
- Targeting 20 disengaged or at-risk students in years 10-12
- Established in Term 2, using a case management and coordinated resources approach with career and transitions staff working with the head teacher of welfare and with the Deputy directly. Meetings every Monday, engaging on each student - discussing, collaborating, keeping each other up to date and agreeing next steps. Then acting, logging calls and parent and student contacts, each knowing exactly where the last one left off.

### Nature of activities with students:

- Conducted a survey and collaboration with students on interests and then organised work experience and investigating paid work trials
- Developing interviews skills and resumes
- Online sessions with Gateway as well as through career education resources
- Provide individual counselling and pathway decisioning support linked to relevant work experiences – the experiences help them decide whether to continue at school or take other work options
- During lockdown staff were contacting the students and helping with vaccinations so they are ready to go to work experience and work trials as soon as things open.

### Benefits:

- Time effective, team approach which gets faster engagement and action for each student
- Parents and Deputy involvement early in the year / straight away made a bigger difference to engagement sooner
- Students respond positively, attendance improved
- Better able to make decisions about study or work options sooner in the year

**Next steps:** looking to Term 4 and although work experience block release is cancelled, anyone who wants to do a work trial will be released during term 4 as priority candidates. The school will keep this model going next year for the next cohort of students needing more intensive transition support.

**Reflections from staff:** *“Attendance improved, and some kids are right on board and quite excited. Year 11s can see a light at the end of the tunnel and the parents are helping them at home so it’s really helping. It is happening faster, and everyone is working together. COVID has made me run it even more effectively – everyone is there (on Zoom) it has been easier to make appointments, come together a lot quicker...Parents can just do it on their phone, they don’t have to take time off work.”*

## Henry Kendall High School Special Education Centre

### Project features:

- Target group is students with support needs – years 9, 10, 11 and 12 – not previously engaged in any workplace engagement programs
- Outreach into community with workplace visits and work experience placements, targeting retail centres in particular, included visits and mock group interviews held with Officeworks
- Visits to school by training providers and employers
- Running an inhouse retail project – setting up an Op Shop
- Links to curriculum and wider school engagement

**Business contact:** attempted to connect with several large retailers in the local area. There is a shopping precinct that has four major retailers: Hardware, Sports, Office Supplies and Fabrics & Homewares. Specifically, looking for work experience places, including for students with physical needs and those who may need assistance with personal care during the day. Officeworks hosted a 2-hour class visit with information on their hiring process and mock group interviews.

**Funding:** used to pay for specialised taxi transport, materials to set up the Op Shop and for casual staff to cover for workplace visits and to support students out of school and at work experience.

**In house project:** students created an Op Shop as a small business venture. Students were involved in setting up the business, advertising, sourcing used clothing, sorting donations, washing/ironing and displaying clothes for sale, pricing items and serving customers. The plan was for the school Op Shop operate once/twice a term and invite staff and students to purchase items at recess and lunch time. The aim was to target items for collection at different times of the year. For example, seasonal t-shirts or jumpers. Items for mothers/fathers in May and September. Business attire before the Year 10 and 11 school interview days. Formal wear for dinner dance functions towards the end of second semester. One Op Shop was run in mid-year before the COVID lockdown.

**Links with curriculum and laddering across school year levels:** Much of the project was undertaken as part of the science class linked to the curriculum on sustainability i.e., the benefit of promoting recycling and demonstrating ways of living more sustainably. Higher support needs students participated in their IT classes by making posters for the event. Year 12 retail students also engaged in components of the project e.g. window displays and point of sale logistics. The Op Shop project announcements were made at all school assemblies and the event involved the whole school. It was a great way to connect students in the Special education Centre with mainstream students and staff.

**Next year:** aiming to recapture the business audience – hospitality and retail, sale experience workplaces, and find work experiences places for the students who now have more hands-on experience and confidence in that setting. Would like to run the Op Shop again.

**Some reflections from staff on student work skills:** *“Our students gained many new skills from the in-school project. Retail skills developed: planning, teamwork, stock storage, item inventory, quality control and sorting, window decoration and stock display, pricing, selling, customer service, advertising, technology skills to produce signs and advertisements, money handling...The new work experience placements began in Term 2 and gave our students wonderful retail experiences. The visit to Office Works for a mock interview was great practice for the students. They loved this 'Real life' opportunity. The in-school visit from a local Training organisation certainly boosted the students' confidence.”*

### 3.5 How did COVID-19 impact the projects including innovations?

#### Project progress

The feedback available from schools indicates considerable project progress over 2021, despite the challenges of the pandemic. The smoother transition to start up facilitated by the program documentation together with already advanced ideas in some schools, meant they could get started faster compared to projects of 2019. Also of note is that some schools who made quite significant progress were regional schools who were not impacted as early by COVID-19 lockdowns when compared to metropolitan schools.

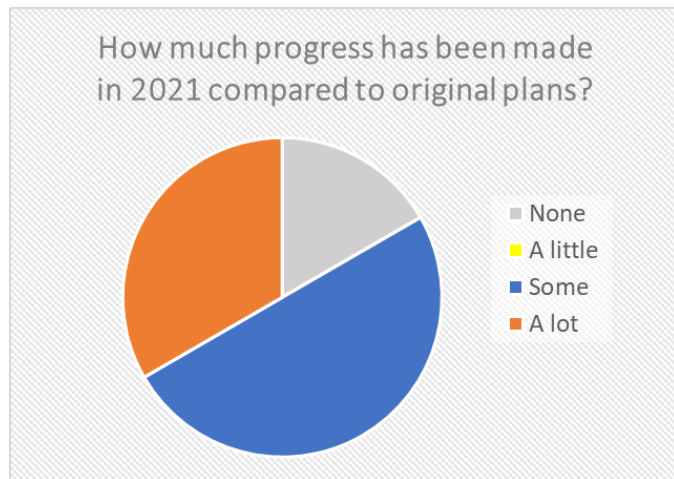


Figure 9: Reported progress from school staff survey (n=6)

Given the COVID restrictions unfolded in earnest by Term 3, project officers who had made a quick start, or who were building on or extending existing plans, were able to make relatively more progress. It is noted that the leadership support and culture of these schools was readied for change and supportive of the innovations, potentially enabling faster implementation.

Most of the schools reporting in were successful in at least planning and implementing early and important preparatory stages of the work. This included, for example, organising courses or connecting with community programs, booking in with partnership organisations, selecting and preparing students, getting parent support and permissions for activities, as well as making the logistical adjustments to schedules in negotiation with school leaders and other staff. For those who were able to get going early, those Term 1 experiences helped validate the direction and benefits of projects, helping gain more momentum, or alternatively, helped identify what needed to be adapted or scaled back for Term 2 and beyond.

---

*“Students are wanting to have the industry engagement - work experience was possible in the first terms - so that was good and reinforced that we were on the right track - in both developing micro credentials for the students and the industry exposure.” (School Staff survey response)*

*“The financial support to allow us to engage the selected students. However, due to COVID restrictions we have been unable to yet complete.” (School staff survey response)*

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Of those schools participating in the research, only two felt they had made little, or no, progress on their projects. In addition to workplace experiences on site with employers, projects that required gathering of large groups such as Expos, incursion showcase events or career days have not gone ahead as planned.

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*“100% impact, plus lack of staff. Without restrictions, will aim to implement next year.” (School Staff survey response)*

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### COVID lockdown impact

Notwithstanding the project progress made, the impact of COVID remains significant, not just on current projects but on plans moving forward given the uncertainty for all stakeholders. The NSW wide lockdown threw all schools into remote learning and closed many businesses. It was reported that COVID ‘stopped projects in their tracks’. Particularly if disadvantaged students were not already on an improved engagement path, the closure of school sites meant some students were “lost” and staff were struggling to see how they could even reconnect with the students at all in those circumstances. Several schools shut the project down, either pausing and waiting to see if term 4 could allow them to restart, or given the level of progress made already, conceding that Term 1 2022 was a more realistic aim. The two key barriers were not having students engaged face to face and not having access to the employers’ workplaces, given these were the primary design parameters and objectives for many projects.

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*“Cannot run project unless students are on site.” (School Staff survey)*

*“Has stopped everything - was relying on industry engagement in program” (School Staff survey)*

*“Access to workplace learning environments for students - local businesses closed, cancellation of work experience etc.” (School Staff survey)*

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### Looking to term 4 and adapting

Term 4 was being planned for among those who had capacity to keep working on the project management during remote schooling arrangements. This included shortening or adapting plans to fit tighter time frames. This was more realistically considered by sites who had in house projects or contained pieces they could reschedule with less reliance on others given the wide uncertainty for vocational training and certification providers.

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*“We may be able to run our Op Shop late in term 4 Hopefully, we will get our work experience program up and running in term 1 2022. We also want to place new students into some new workplaces. We are hoping to have students do the White Card Course.” (School Staff Survey)*

*“Changes - condensing program into last few weeks of term 4 - if students return to school. Adaptations - hoping to introduce Maths in Trades units of work into classwork now.” (School Staff survey)*

*“2020 & 2021 have been a write-off unfortunately...We were set in 2020 but TAFE pulled the pin on us as soon as COVID started to take hold. 2021 has all parties reluctant to plan anything.” (Mentor feedback)*

---

One school was looking forward to what opportunities may be available in Term 4 in the absence of the planned block release of work experience which was not likely to be going ahead. With support of the principal, the career and transition advisor would be able to organise the release of any student wanting to be part of a paid work trial. In anticipation, the staff member was reaching out to targeted students helping facilitate access to vaccinations so they would be ready to take up any trial places when things open up. The contact also acted as a purpose and means of engagement with each student i.e.an opportunity to speak (via zoom) with parent and student together and check in.

### **Momentum, motivations, and mental health impacts**

While schools are generally resilient institutions and staff attracted to these projects were observed to be exceptionally motivated and enthusiastic, COVID-19 has challenged everyone. School staff are no exception, and the challenge of remote learning bring an additional level of expectation to already packed and pressured roles. The capacities of individuals and schools to maintain any momentum on projects such as these during this context understandably varied. Expectations of progress during COVID lockdowns also varied and some schools struggled with what to do next, what should we be doing? If it had been hard work to date and staff were battling other challenges to get projects up and running, to then have remote schooling and the personal challenges of being in lockdown themselves was observed to be extremely demotivating. Those with more progress made and local support already established where more taking stock of what could be salvaged or looking to the future with some optimism, even if they could not act right now.

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*“Covid 19 will impact on work experience without a doubt. We need to follow up on help from the community as well as reinventing some ideas as to maintain positivity on existing project.” (School Staff Survey response).*

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The challenge for mentors and the Department staff, themselves also in lockdown, was to balance providing information or enabling support to projects without increasing pressure. At a minimum there did seem to be a need for, and benefit in, managing of expectations and providing advice about how to proceed (or not) - touching base for understanding and encouragement. Observation during interviews was that the chance to connect, talk about the experience and share the diverse circumstances was motivational and supportive. This allowed staff to reflect and gain perspective and validation on their progress to date. Staff also got valuable information about how to handle funding administration in the circumstances. While this need for communication and guidance is more extreme during the circumstances of the global pandemic, the benefits of building in regular connection into program design - to mitigate loss of motivation in the face of challenges or to provide recognition and encouragement for progress - remains an important consideration for future programs.

### COVID innovations and 'silver linings'

While COVID generally, and the NSW lockdowns specifically, significantly challenged all projects, the circumstances have given rise to opportunities for even further innovations and some successful engagement in the remote learning context. Examples surfacing in interviews and surveys included improved engagement with students, parents, and employers via online platforms.

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*"We have actually seen that a couple of the girls in particular, their truancy rates were through the roof, and we have seen they are doing schoolwork (online) at 2 o'clock in the morning. So their sleep patterns are out but they are doing work now that they weren't doing at school."*  
(School staff interview)

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Coordinators report that COVID-19 has changed how they do business:

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*"COVID has made me run it more effectively, to get appointments and meet with people"*

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It easier for staff to hold meetings, and parents are responding to messages through multiple communication channels including emails, school portals and through Zoom meetings:

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*"Parents who don't like to talk to you will often message you which they would not have done in the past.... that's another way that we are catching more parents."* (School staff interview)

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Students are using a range of online learning tools to build resumes and engage in interviews. The high number of students taking actions during or after the program may be helped by COVID-19 limiting activity and providing concentrated time at home that can be focused on workplace learning and career development. A limited number of students are doing online work experience – some students do not choose to engage in this at all whilst others are embracing it. For those engaging it provides a cost-effective manner to engage with a range of industries that are geographically dispersed. Online career support has also been utilised by some schools and students.

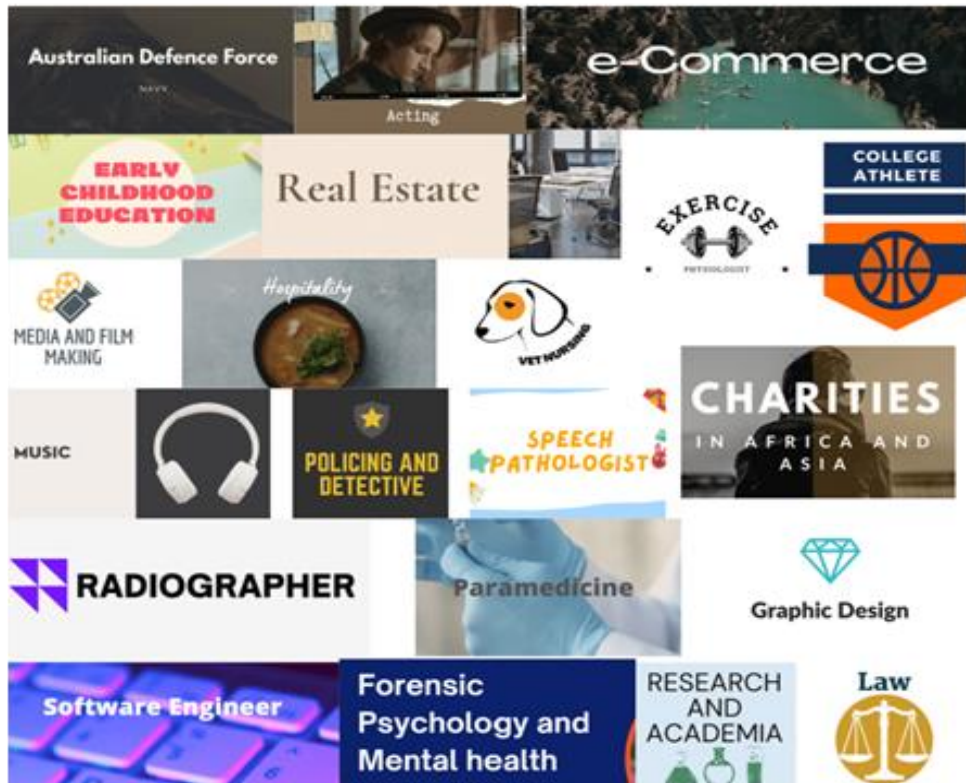
Virtual work programs were mentioned with different levels of enthusiasm and success. Some students connected and fully participated while other students didn't log in at all. The nature of content and level of participant engagement with material is a consideration. The case study example shared by the Lindfield Learning Village (a project mentor from the 2019 pilot) shows the potential of these programs to be highly engaging for students, driven by student interests and make authentic connections with employers. Even in the absence of COVID limitations, this type of innovation could be useful as a cost-effective way of engaging more students in learning about workplaces, broadening horizons and developing aspirations.

Figure 10: Overview of virtual work experience – 2021 implementation from 2019 pilot school

**VIRTUAL WORK EXPERIENCE CASE STUDY EXAMPLE:**

Lindfield Learning Village (supplied)

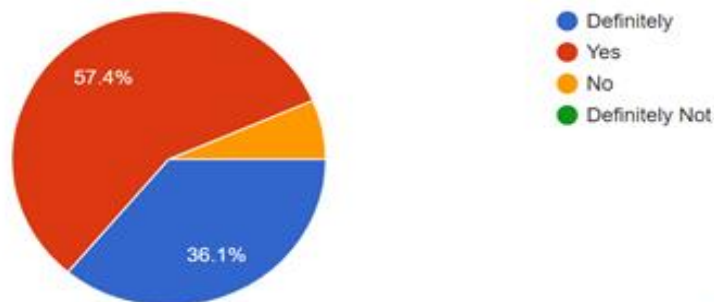
In response to COVID lockdown, in order to provide students with exposure and immersion into the world of work, the Future Advisor developed and delivered a Virtual Work Experience, which involved getting in touch with local community and industry members to interview them about their industry and, in consultation with the expert, come up with activities for the students to do. The students could opt into the industries, allowing for their voice to be heard, while completing five from a range of 21.



**Student feedback:**

Do you feel more knowledgeable about the world of work than when you started the program?

61 responses



### 3.6 What did they achieve and what additional barriers existed that could be addressed?

Those school contacts and students who participated in the research outlined considerable positive impacts for individual students against the project objectives. There were some significant limitations for achieving some of the school and community level objectives given the restrictions of COVID, although considerable progress was made from some projects, and potential evidence in online innovations. Impacts were not positive for all students in all projects and at least two schools reported that projects ceased. Some students remained disengaged and disconnected from school all together during lockdown. This section outlines what information was available on achievements from a sample of schools.

A much reported and central objective for several projects was re-engagement of identified students. Projects enabled the development of relationships and the connections required to re-engage students and positively impact participation. Schools noted positive improvements in:

- Attendance and participation in school
- Motivation and attitudes to learning and working
- Engagement in online learning during lockdown
- Application in developing maths and literacy skills
- Reduced negative and disruptive behaviours.

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*“(the project) Built relationship capacity with un-engaged students”  
(School staff survey response)*

*“Engagement in school has increased due to access to workplace learning and the ability to further differentiate the curriculum for students learning needs.” (School staff survey response)*

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Beyond the significant outcomes of re-engaging students, individual level achievements were reflected in student survey responses reported in Section 2, together with schools contact and mentor feedback across four broad areas:

- Building understanding and knowledge of the world of work
- Building confidence and preparedness for work or work experience
- Developing skills and resources
- Shaping job opportunity.

School contacts noted that “getting exposure”, especially for students in years 7 to 9, was developing interests, inspiring with new ideas and supporting personal goal development so students could aspire to jobs they might not have previously considered. For older students - years 9 and 10 - interest in the world of work was growing through the more frequent exposure to work experience and hands on opportunities. Job aspirations were developing as students were observed talking to other classmates back after work placement, comparing stories, “bragging” about what equipment they were able to use. The student survey results from the virtual work experience (see previous Figure) are further evidence of how students learnt about options in the world of work.

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*“A couple of our students who are just so keen to be out there, every hour or the day we were out there..... they were kids that it’s so hard to engage in the classroom. The ones that you probably thought ‘they won’t be interested’.... they were out there loving every minute of it.” (School staff interview)*

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Students were also reported to grow personal skills and makes choices, including:

- Developing self-esteem and a sense of achievement
- Gaining perspective and confidence around strengths and needs
- Engaging in goal setting and self-direction
- Making informed choices about work and study pathways.

Although not related strongly in the student survey, at least two schools reported that students had decided to go on at school because of their workplace engagement experiences. They were more focused on study leading to something – a new aspiration they had - or were more aware that they were not ready to enter full time work and school was a better choice for them.

Students were also reported to have gained the skills and resources to be more ready to enter workplace and therefore to have greater capacity to benefit from engagement with employers through work experience or greater potential to be successful in gaining paid employment.

This included:

- Transferable “soft” skills development including communication, teamwork, and confidence
- Hands on work skills for example for retail, hospitality, hairdressing, other trades, horticulture, or labouring settings
- Qualifications or certificates such as White cards, barista training or VET certifications (in part or full)

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*“They enjoyed having ownership of the project and helping with the planning. They developed teamwork and communication skills. Overall, many gained confidence and had fun trying new things. It was refreshing to see the students so enthusiastic to work. It provided opportunity to mix with students from other classes.” (School staff survey response)*

*“The in-school visit from a local Training organisation certainly boosted the students' confidence.” ((School staff survey response)*

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As evident in the student survey responses and further evidenced by school contact reports, pathways to job opportunities have been created from the projects. One in five students in the survey reported getting a job, apprenticeship, or traineeship. At least one project has also successfully facilitated paid work trials as part of jobs pathways.

While projects reported many achievements, there were limitations and barriers to success, beyond the obvious of COVID 19. Innovation and change can be difficult, and the support of leaders was needed but not always felt. Creative thinking and moral support were required to work around or challenge rigid systems or rules when projects were gaining momentum so as not to have “our legs knocked out from under us” when faced with barriers. The most significant barrier was observed to be the challenge of scale and costs for true sustainability of project ideas. Project elements cost money or have limits to capacity or flexibility – courses and partnerships, paying providers, and resourcing teachers for scaling programs. Having seen the benefits, schools wished they could have more students involved, or could do it for longer or do it differently to how the current system works.

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*“In regard to training for work readiness, schools are hamstrung by training providers that limit the amount of students that can partake in specific training...as in, White Card courses have a 20 student limit. In some schools, obviously, they will have to adapt based on student numbers. For my situation with over 200 Year 10 students, ideally training courses would need to be available for a cohort and be able to run during fortnightly careers lessons to get maximum exposure if that is what I am after.” (Mentor feedback)*

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### **3.7 Where to for the projects from here?**



As outlined in section 3.5, COVID restrictions had caused limitations and a pause on many aspects of original projects and for some has meant projects had ceased altogether. Schools were looking toward term 4 and into 2022 for when to next take up opportunities for work experience or re-engage employers on projects.

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*“We may be able to run our Op Shop late in term 4 Hopefully, we will get our work experience program up and running in term 1 2022. We also want to place new students into some new workplaces. We are hoping to have students do the White Card Course.” (School staff survey response)*

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All schools interviewed and surveyed were positive about having connected to the program and were hopeful that 2022 would allow at least some implementation of ideas formed during 2021. The enthusiasm and commitment of some school staff during interviews was demonstrative of positive mindsets, being determined to forge ahead with what they had learnt through exposure to the program. Buoyed by having witnessed the positive outcomes for the students involved, they were naturally looking ahead to “what’s next?”, considering how inhouse project skills could lead to work related placements or how investment in student programs could be scaled to benefit more students. Some schools were also considering how they could expose different year levels or different types of students to the models trialled in 2021. One school had already commenced development of a program for girls given the positive experiences with boys during this year. Setting aside COVID implications, for schools who had had the opportunity to set up an inhouse project, to set in motion new ideas or trial news systems and processes, there were lessons and benefits to take forward into 2022 and beyond. Changes in curriculum and delivery via new pathways incorporating more frequent exposure to workplaces while completing studies were seen as highly successful by those proponents. Despite the significant resource requirements for establishing and running those types of pathways, schools were aiming to continue to pursue the innovations into at least the next year or two, pending funding, given the great success they felt they had had with year 9 and 10 students.

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*“We know that we possibly will get through next year but into 2023 I don’t know that we can afford it. The funds are just so tight ...it probably cost us between \$100,000 and \$150,000 to run this program this year because of the staffing loads, that’s the biggest cost. Has it been worth it? Yeah sure, it has! But is it long term sustainable because where do we continually find that money from? We could continue to find it but what are we taking it*

*from? Are we taking that out of technology or somewhere else?” (School staff interview)*

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Community links, and the nature of training and employer workplace experiences need to evolve with the changing circumstances of COVID restrictions. Schools are wondering what forms these might take and the sharing of ideas as situations evolve will be useful for gaining momentum over 2022. From reflections from mentor feedback about their own projects two years in, and with the benefit of having embedded model concepts in their own working, it is clear that the initial project can set career advisors on a journey to view things differently over time and identify sustainable activities or ways of working that don't call for significantly more resources.

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*“Schools would do well to be able to sit and reflect on which of the models they are doing, once they are trained up in the application of these models, so that they can ensure the Careers Education program is continuing to move forward. There is a particular strength within the models as it meets multiple elements of the Work Education Syllabus, meaning that Careers Advisors will be able to implement the models with little/no extra effort (depending on how their current careers education program is set up)... reflecting on their own careers program, it will allow schools to both implement the models more effectively and use this program to develop greater community relationships.” (Mentor feedback)*

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## 4. Design elements and key influences for implementation and outcomes

### 4.1 Collateral and facilitators

#### Project collateral and supports

Projects have successfully drawn on model intent and objectives, formulating a custom project rather than taking a rigid interpretation and application of model. Indeed, several schools while taking one model type as the more relevant or useful, picked elements from across the quadrants to form a multi-faceted project, affecting change at more than one level and for longer term impacts. The provided documentation and collateral to support project design was reported to be relevant and useful and facilitated this flexible implementation.

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*“I reckon it is easy to understand. Careers Advisers are critical and time poor so whatever is produced needs to be short and sharp to lure them in and have the "nuts & bolts" available for deeper understanding if so desired.” (Mentor feedback)*

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Schools, however, required more support in translating the ideas into practice. There was benefit for those who had leveraged conversations with Departmental contacts or had Zoom calls with mentors earlier in the term to work through issues. The feedback from schools validated the need for more practical insights such as the resource pack currently under development by the Department with mentors to provide alternative ways of overcoming barriers or working around material issues. In 2021, schools were aided by, and needed more universal access to, the following:

- Access to examples and to case studies
- Contacts with other schools who have implemented something similar
- Opportunities to bounce ideas, evolve ideas into action through brainstorming potential barriers and alternative options
- More than one resource involved at their own school – partnerships, teams, or groups – to evolve ideas locally.

Additionally, it was noted that there was a need for more information on which employers to target and advice on how to connect with local industry. This was especially the case if they were not already in partnership or had not formed relationships with employers. For many staff, career advisors included, this represents a new skill requiring development.

The draft resource pack would fulfil much of this need. Ensuring the resource is accessible, practical in its links to the models and industry, and illustrative of many case examples, will be enabling for any schools looking to formulate ideas and to get started on implementation.

### Mentors

Three mentors were engaged in the program for 2021 and allocated schools from the 14 participating. These mentors were all school contact participants in the successful 2019 pilot projects and enthusiastic about evolving the nature of work placement engagement programs in schools. Engagement with schools appears to have varied from emails contact to Zoom calls. At least two schools responded to the survey that the mentor engagement was very useful, but others appeared to have had no or little contact with a mentor.

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*“The mentor role was one of upskilling and being a sounding board for ideas that allowed the schools to build a revolving program that would be self-sustaining as they moved forward, and we as mentors were able to help them do that”*

*“I felt under-utilised by my three schools as I never received a call or a “help please” email for support. This may be a reflection of how well their ideas for project funding were to start with. I sent three emails and received replies in due course”*

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The level of mentor engagement did not necessarily align with project progress – schools who made good progress may not have sought out mentors but equally schools with competing priorities may have not reached out due to delayed project starts. The concept of mentorship from coordinators is sound, as it should address isolation felt by some project participants. However, approaching a mentor may be another task that cannot always be prioritised, or coordinators may have felt unsure of what issues to approach a mentor with and when. An alternative, or additional approach, could be for mentors to lead communities of practice with set convening dates and times, so project participants are obliged to check in as part of their project and form part of a support network for others.

## 4.2 Student voice

The 2019 pilots demonstrated that student engagement is both a crucial part of establishing more impactful projects, as well as being an important end outcome from the projects themselves. The intrinsic benefits students gain from participation are made possible through:

- their input in the project design and implementation;

- the challenges they face in driving or navigating elements of the projects themselves, often in unfamiliar contexts; and
- the resulting agency and self-efficacy they develop to be able to make self-directed choices about their future study and work.

The transition to the 2021 projects has included the core design principle of student engagement and the essence of these learnings from 2019, while providing somewhat clearer guidance frameworks from which to get started. The project documentation of the quadrant explanation encouraged and supported schools to consider and seek student voice in early project design. This involved needs assessment and relevant questioning frameworks which translated in practice to student collaboration and surveying and including feedback and evaluations from students around various activities.

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*“We absolutely had positive engagement from our students. We shared the project and they embraced it with open arms. There were no setbacks but a lot of hard work from all.” (Staff survey response)*

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Some projects targeted students to be involved in the program but their agreement and engagement to participate were still critical features. Some projects invested in the engagement and selection of student as part of readying them to have greater capacity to benefit from the training and experience on offer. Other projects called for interest or asked students to apply or state claims to be included in the opportunities. Student engagement, confidence and empowerment are reflected in the student and staff feedback from 2021 projects. Students who were able to respond to the online survey, rated the opportunities highly and were likely to engage in multiple follow up activities as a result (see section 2.4 and 2.5). Staff reported student engagement and growth for many participants who were able to benefit from activities prior to lockdown (see section 3.6).

It is evident from mentor feedback who reflected on their own 2019 projects two years on, that the continuous consideration of student voice leads to longer term positive outcomes and the ability of career advisors to more effectively mould programs to meet diverse needs. Embedding this design feature into all program rollouts and looking for ways to further demonstrate the value of student voice and illustrate what student engagement can look like will be helpful for future implementations.

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*“My 2019 project was fruitful in a sense that it provided confidence for students to ultimately join the workforce. There are only 2 out of the original 12 still at school. One student is completing a School Based Apprenticeship as a Carpenter and one girl who is destined to be a Mounted Police Officer and is combining her love of horses (and equestrian ability) and getting prepared for recruitment.” (Mentor feedback)*

*“Each term I have focused in on one of the quadrants, that were put together last year to help schools implement the models. Term 2 – Entrepreneurship, Term 3 – Work Readiness (Community), Term 4 – Self-Management (projected). This, when combined with Careers Education being implemented throughout individual KLA’s throughout the school, has allowed for greater engagement from students and increased inspiration for where they want to go next.” (Mentor feedback)*

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### **4.3. Industry, employers, and community**

A focus on authentic experiences with employers and the broader world of work in community was again observed to be an important design feature of impactful projects. The benefits were observed for both disengaged students as well as higher performing students who all had something to gain. This was a learning experience for teachers and careers staff as well, appreciating first-hand and then reflecting on the range of community and business contacts they might engage with in a multifaceted program of workplace management.

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*“We seem to be better off targeting these employers. Providers give an overall summary, and that’s what we do too, but getting the actual employer is a better facility for students. The outcomes are far higher in achievement than anything else.” (School staff interview)*

*“In the last 10 years we have become like a university referral service instead of looking at employment” (Mentor feedback)*

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Effective and continuous links to employers were observed to be prevalent for schools in smaller communities where many in the town know each other or where business owners are themselves parents of children at the school or ex-students. Establishing links with new and larger employers was observed to be more difficult and several projects in a range of locations reported that original ideas that had held in planning didn’t eventuate when they started to contact employers.

Investment in practical resources, contacts, and skills development for working with employers and industry would be beneficial for future projects.

#### 4.4 Parent engagement

Research shows parent engagement in student learning is a positive driver of life outcomes for young people<sup>6</sup>. Further still, parental aspirations and engagement in conversations with their child are one of the biggest factors influencing the development of a student's sense of the world of work<sup>7</sup>. Engaging parents in the project journey of broadening horizons and developing student aspirations and agency is therefore an opportunity to increase engagement and positive outcomes.

The 2019 pilot projects highlighted greater engagement of parents and families as a potential area for expansion in future models and suggested considering both ways parents might be involved, and how students engage with parents at home in and around the project and what supports may be useful to encourage quality interactions. Parent involvement was not explicitly explored in the research, although, as in 2019, students were highly likely to report that they spoke with parents or family members about work as a result of being involved in the project (see section 2.5). Parents were used as contacts or pathways to access business organisations. Otherwise, it was unclear – other than signing off consent forms – how engaged they were within the projects. For disengaged or disadvantaged students who were targeted for projects, engaging with parents was a key activity in the project establishment. Particularly where schools were seeking to trial something new or redirect students into a new curriculum pathway, parent engagement was necessary and useful. Schools having something tangible to point to as an outcome for their child was useful:

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*“I think it is an easy sale to parents if they know that during the year their child will have the opportunity to complete a number of nationally recognised qualifications from short courses that prepare them for life post-school.” (Mentor feedback)*

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COVID lockdown and remote learning gave rise to the opportunity to better engage with parents at home via zoom calls and enter into fruitful student-parent-teacher collaborations (see section 3.5). This offers a key insight into ways of engaging with parents in general in future, given parents could

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<sup>6</sup> Emerson, L., Fear, J., Fox, S., and Sanders, E. (2012). Parental engagement in learning and schooling: Lessons from research. Prepared for the Family School and Community Partnerships Bureau. Canberra: ARACY.

<sup>7</sup> Bedson, L. & Perkins, D. (2006). A positive influence: equipping parents to supporting young people's career transitions. Brotherhood of St Laurence, Fitzroy VIC

far more easily be engaged via message and Zoom compared to the regular face to face meetings more traditionally requested pre-COVID.

#### 4.5 School leadership and project resourcing

COVID was a significant impediment for all schools, but progress was also hindered for some schools by challenges in implementing their ideas. This included insufficient support from senior leaders and other colleagues, and the logistics of translating project ideas into practice when faced with rigid structures of existing school systems. It was also reported that unanticipated staffing changes or resource constraints may have hindered immediate progress for at least two schools.

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*“...fitting the program into the year 10 timetable and not disadvantaging students who participate in relation to them finishing at the end of year 10 (was a challenge)”. (School Staff survey)*

*“Some staff were reluctant to be involved and thought the project was too much work which meant most of the organisation fell on 2 staff members.” (School Staff survey response)*

*“With changing of staff within the school, including in some cases a change of leadership, this meant that the MWE project was put onto the back burner, and therefore making it harder to engage with the project.” (Mentor feedback)*

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Project success factors identified by some schools were the senior school resources and the team approach for the project – having a peer or support person, “dynamo teachers” or access to senior leaders on a regular basis. One project deliberately sought to coordinate activities across schools to achieve greater motivation and momentum through collective action:

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*“Combined schools will hopefully reinvigorate the staff and bring the passion to enthuse the students.” (School application)*

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It was recognised that trying to stand up a project without peer and leadership support was much more difficult. For these schools, the project provided impetus, authority, and a valid reason for engagement. However, the mentors, network support of other project schools or peer career advisors in other schools, as well as access to Department staff becomes even more important scaffolding to prevent projects failing to meet objectives. Further evolving discussion of resourcing and leadership engagement of as part of application processes may be a future consideration.



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*“Throughout the process it has made me aware that the direction of Careers Education within a school does rely heavily on the senior executive within this schools, to either share the vision or be open to changing their vision... This did require some buy in from the senior executive, and I feel that this project has allowed for the conversation to start” (Mentor feedback)*

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#### **4.6 Wider school engagement, curriculum links and longer-term change**

The projects were often targeted at a subset of the school, for example disengaged students, students likely to leave school at the end of year 10 or students who expressed interest in an industry. Part of the reason for this was limitations on how many students could be accommodated, for example on a bus, at TAFE or in a workplace. Another reason is the urgency in finding pathways for students who are not attending school or who have intentions to leave.

Given the importance of workplace learning for all students, there are opportunities to embed career exposure and linkages throughout the curriculum, and to extend and engage across school. Students who have a sense of their future pathway and can link it to what they are studying are likely to be more engaged at school<sup>8</sup>. Research from the 2019 pilots shows students are seeking this earlier, by year 9. Evidence from this project confirms the role of workplace learning in driving student engagement, with a third of students becoming more engaged in school following the project. However, students still generally did not see links between their studies and their career, providing are area of opportunity for improvement.

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*“More workplace engagement could occur in schools, but teachers need to work within the school time and other activities such as exams and other testing. Planning has to occur early. Also teachers have pressure to complete the curriculum/syllabus requirements/assessments and withdrawing students from class can be difficult.” (Mentor feedback)*

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Despite the pressures on time to complete the curriculum, subject teachers may find that, by linking the curriculum to careers, student outcomes and engagement improve. Future projects could seek to confirm links between career activities within subjects and student engagement. An extension of

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<sup>8</sup> Galliot, N. Graham, L. School based experiences as contributors to career decision-making: findings from a cross-sectional survey of high-school students, Aust. Educ. Res. (2015) 42:179–199

the models could be multi-year career engagement activities that build on each other. Some schools were planning this, with information forums in lower secondary leading to workplace experiences in the middle years.

The application of the models in a more holistic, ongoing, and sustainable way was not explored in the research. The potential for schools to be “trained up” in the models, however, could provide for even greater embedding and sustainable evolutions for career advisors and the school.

Consideration of processes and mechanisms for enabling this would be worthwhile. The longer-term adoption of concepts and development of skills and mindsets for regularly incorporating student voice and innovative workplace engagement were evident in mentor feedback and observations about the developments in those three schools, now two years on from the 2019 pilots. Developing the “wrap around” to the projects to engender this mindset and process shift will help support embedding better practice and more sustainable system change.

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*“I found that it helped to refine my personal careers program and delivery by sitting down and going through every aspect of my job and placing it under one of the Models. Similarly, I was able to go throughout the school and figure out where different subjects and KLA’s were also meeting those models. By doing this we were able to adjust the focus of the Career Program to ensure that we are creating a more holistic approach to apply the Models of Workplace Engagement.” (Mentor feedback)*

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Building and sustaining communities of practice could help coordinators to drive whole school change by providing support including to develop, trial and share innovations.

## 5. Key learnings and opportunities

The models of workplace engagement have supported schools to broaden and deepen student engagement in workplace learning. The development of the models and accompanying resources have supported schools to confirm and validate their ideas and identify and pursue next steps, whilst the provision of flexible seed funding provided staff with the impetus and authority to try something different.

The models, funding and access to mentors provided support to a dispersed and stretched workforce. Careers coordinators report juggling teaching loads with coordination, and differing levels of school support. This includes being expected to support pathways out of school for the most disengaged students particularly in academically focused schools. Project participants report a desire for more support – perhaps by way of a community of practice – to enable them to develop and test ideas with like-minded colleagues and showcase success. As the sole person with responsibility for pathways in many instances, there remains further opportunity to connect and network coordinators as they seek to embed new ways of working.

Location poses opportunity and challenge for co-ordinators. Regional and rural schools often reported an existing close and supportive relationship with employers who were willing to take students on, and to accept not all students will be the right fit. In these communities there was seen to be an obligation to support and develop the future workforce within the community. This contrasted to metropolitan areas where schools needed to reach out and try and engage employers, which had varied levels of success. Intermediaries played a strong role in supporting schools to make these relationships. Further guidance could be provided to support schools to connect with industry partners.

Locations proves helpful in metropolitan areas to access a wealth of workplaces and education facilities. Schools can access a wide range of industries if they can make connections. In contrast, in country areas schools report of the need to hire buses and spend sufficient time in a more populous regional location to make the journey worthwhile. This is viewed as normal for rural students – taking a week or more to undertake a block of experience at a variety of workplaces but is costly and limited to a set number of students.

Across all schools, the cost of a rigorous workplace experience program was seen to equal or exceed one teachers' salary. Although the return on this investment is significant, with reports of cohorts of students from 2019 projects finding employment, and one in three students in this years' program returning to school more motivated, this return may not be aligned with how the school or school community measures itself by way of academic outcomes. Promotion of what long term success looks like for all students, and the centrality of career education in support of all young people to locate pathways and achieve their goals, is necessary within schools and education systems more broadly.

The projects did not have parental engagement as a central component but were successful in encouraging young people to discuss pathways with their parents. Innovations due to COVID-19, including holding family ZOOM meetings to discuss careers and pathways, helped to engage families in conversations that were usually conducted with young people alone. Parents were more engaged due to remote learning making schooling more visible, and parents needing to support young people to log into school and complete work. This added engagement, and capacity to be contacted more readily online than to attend after hours on-site functions, could be harnessed and built into the models. Models could be adapted to include a focus on engaging parents and harnessing parent resources.

The models have shown themselves capable of adaptation and implementation across a variety of schools. The addition of resources has supported schools to adopt and adapt models. There are a range of considerations regarding scaling the adoption of the models further:

- Flexible funding provided careers coordinators with authority to trial something new, and in many cases leverage additional resources. Consideration could be given to what funding is available or can be repurposed for this to occur in an ongoing manner.
- Coordinators reported a sense of isolation at times as they were often the sole staff member responsible for careers and transition in their school. Developing and supporting a community of practice for models of workplace engagement could enable a network to share ideas and innovations and support early adopters.
- Resources will further support schools to implement the models. This could include how to link the models to curriculum areas, including ways to engage key learning area staff and

‘sell’ the engagement benefits of linking subjects to careers. Additional support on locating intermediaries and building relationships with employers and industries would also be worthwhile.

- Ongoing profiling of good practice case studies and successes would support broader adoption of the models. As part of this, consideration could be given to how the models can support a range of students, including disengaged students and highly academic students who are unclear of their future destinations or study choices, to locate pathways.
- Learn from COVID-19 adaptations including different ways to engage students and families. Families were engaged in career discussions during remote learning, with online meetings proving more successful in reaching a wider range of parents. Some students were able to more easily engage in careers activities online than to accommodate in classroom lessons.
- Showcasing and spreading success is vital. In many cases the projects operated on the periphery of core school business and in all cases were driven by ambitious careers coordinators and school staff. Further research, particularly longitudinal research over time, would build understanding of how enhanced workplace engagement can improve student engagement and student transitions post school. This could reinforce the existing evidence base on the need for multiple career interventions with evidence on successful practices that can be adopted at scale.