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**Report:  
Evaluation of  
Economic Pathways to  
Refugee Integration  
(EPRI) program**

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# 1. Executive summary and recommendations

Employment is an important indicator of economic, social and psychological capital, reflected in the Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes Framework.<sup>1</sup> In recognition that refugees and humanitarian entrants can face significant barriers to economic participation, Australian, state and territory governments offer a range of employment supports for this cohort. The \$17.7 million Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration (EPRI) program has been a recent addition to the support ecosystem. EPRI aims to facilitate the social and economic integration of refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or English language proficiency. In 2024, the Department of Home Affairs (the Department) commissioned Where to undertake a rapid evaluation of EPRI. The evaluation assessed the effectiveness of EPRI and provided advice on future program settings. Findings were informed by qualitative consultations with 89 stakeholders and analysis of program data and documentation. Given EPRI runs until 30 June 2025, findings reflect early-stage implementation and short-term outcomes only, and have been further limited by incomplete and inconsistent program data.

## 1.1 Summary of findings

### Effectiveness

#### What supports were delivered through EPRI?

- EPRI supports were delivered by social enterprises with a focus on employment. This included work-integrated social enterprises with a focus on deriving income through trade, and able to offer direct employment, as well as social enterprises supporting self-employment and work placements with Australian employers.
- Supports offered through EPRI have been shaped by organisational profile and employment model, both of which vary significantly by provider. Models that appeared more effective included support for employers, had strong connections to the settlement sector to support recruitment, were flexible in supporting variation in participant need, had a focus on career planning and emotional support, and included wages for participants.
- The evaluation has highlighted the need for an increased formal focus on English language and soft skill acquisition, to support improved outcomes in these areas.

#### What participants have been supported through EPRI?

- At the time of the evaluation, providers reported that 2,016 people had participated in education, and 1,074 in employment, activities through EPRI. Most providers cited challenges in meeting participant numbers. These were ascribed to a number of factors, including access to community networks to support recruitment, delays in program establishment, fit of the EPRI offer with refugee/humanitarian entrant need, and the additional resources required to support people with low English.
- EPRI has attracted cohorts that have previously been flagged as difficult to support into employment – new arrivals, people without post-school qualifications and women. However, the extent to which providers adhered to the eligibility criteria with respect to participants having low skills and/or English language proficiency is not clear.

### Outcomes

#### How effectively did EPRI increase pathways to economic participation for participants?

- If implementation delays are taken into account, EPRI providers are typically making appropriate progress towards achieving their target numbers for participation in education and employment programs (short-term outcomes). There are early indications that this participation translates into medium-term education and employment outcomes, however improved data collection is required to ascertain this.
- EPRI has also contributed to an improved understanding of ‘what works’ with respect to increasing economic

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<sup>1</sup>Settlement Integration Outcomes Framework. Retrieved from <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settlement-services-subsite/files/refugee-humanitarian-entrant-settlement-integration-outcomes-framework.pdf>

participation for refugee and humanitarian entrants. This includes learnings to do with 1) defining the role of, and impact costs for, social enterprises; and 2) effective program settings including for the target population, provider type and employment model. These are addressed in the future program design section below.

**How effectively did the program increase the capacity of providers to deliver services for and improve understanding of how to support the EPRI target cohort?**

- EPRI has increased short-term provider capacity to deliver services for refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and low English. However, this uplift will likely dissipate without ongoing program funding, largely due to the impact costs associated with supporting people with low English, and lack of existing specialisation in supporting refugees and humanitarian entrants. Lack of an explicit focus in program design on how EPRI might build organisational and sector sustainability has limited opportunities to learn about social impact investment. This could be addressed in future programs.

**Value for money**

**Did EPRI represent value for money and how could the program be made more efficient?**

- The EPRI cost to deliver outcomes has varied markedly by provider. This reflects that some models are more resource intensive and also where providers have struggled to meet target KPIs. A comparison of funding between EPRI and other programs suggests that the lower end of the EPRI provider cost to deliver outcomes is competitive, but that a number of providers have reported a very high cost to deliver outcomes.
- At present, there is only evidence for short-term outcomes. If EPRI could demonstrate more sustainable outcomes for participants (as early findings suggest it might), it will represent a value for money option for government.
- The timing of this evaluation of EPRI means that efficiency gains that would be expected to be realised in later program years have yet to be realised. There are a number of opportunities to realise greater efficiencies for EPRI, including with respect to the program’s recruitment and matching mechanisms. This is discussed further in the future program design section below.

**Conclusion**

The EPRI program has supported short-term education and employment outcomes for participants, however medium-term outcomes and outcomes at the provider/program and sector level are not yet proven. There is enough promising evidence to suggest continued funding of EPRI as a learning model, with a view to exploring future integration of EPRI into the core Workforce Australia model.

**1.2 Recommendations for future program design**

There remains an ongoing need for specific employment supports for refugees and humanitarian entrants. Without EPRI or a comparable program, there are not enough supports in the existing system to this cohort to activate their economic potential. Incomplete and inconsistent measurement means that EPRI has not provided data to prove the approach’s feasibility and effectiveness in the medium-term. However, there are enough promising signs to recommend funding EPRI as a learning model for up to 5 years. Subject to funding and ongoing evaluation, if medium- to long-term outcomes are proved, there is an opportunity to fund EPRI (or similar) as an ongoing service as part of Workforce Australia.

**Table 1: Recommendations for future program settings**

Domain	Recommendation	Rationale for this
Overall	1 Funding EPRI (or similar) as an ongoing service as part of Workforce Australia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding of EPRI or similar program as part of Workforce Australia subject to funding and ongoing evaluation, if medium-term to long-term outcomes are proved.</li> <li>• Extension would allow further testing of</li> </ul>

		<p>medium-term outcomes and cost-effectiveness and also provide enough time for uncertainties in the current policy and program delivery environment (Workforce Australia and Humanitarian Settlement Program outcomes) to be resolved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In deciding on the timeframe of the extension government should consider Employment Services reform timing, noting current employment service contracts end on 30 July 2027.</li> </ul>
<b>Sector collaboration</b>	<p>2 Funding mechanisms support collaboration rather than competition at the on-ground service provider level.</p> <p>3 Funding reflects the additional effort needed to collaborate between sectors (settlement, social enterprise, employment participation).</p> <p>4 To ensure strong links to the settlement sector, continue Department of Home Affairs 'ownership' of the EPRI model <u>in the short-term</u>.</p> <p>5 To support sector collaboration and <u>future integration</u> of EPRI into Workforce Australia, consider ongoing co-funding of a future EPRI model by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing feedback from the community sector suggests that procurement options that promote competition rather than collaboration undermine place-based responses. Good collaboration between sectors takes additional resources and this be explicitly considered in funding.</li> <li>• With respect to future embedding of EPRI in Workforce Australia, a stand alone grants program that offers less certainty for proponents and risks missing that opportunity to convert from short to long term outcomes.</li> <li>• The success factors called out for EPRI in this table should further be considered in employment services reform with respect to supporting refugees and humanitarian entrants.</li> </ul>
<b>Recruitment and career planning mechanism</b>	<p>6 Site the future EPRI recruitment mechanism in the settlement sector.</p>	<p>Recruitment has been a challenge for EPRI providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The settlement sector and organisations that support refugees and humanitarian entrants on an ongoing basis will have lower barriers to accessing potential future EPRI cohorts and be best placed to undertake career planning on arrival.</li> <li>• Of note, this recruitment mechanism will also need to liaise closely with Workforce Australia employment services to ensure that these have good access to placing refugees and humanitarian entrants with EPRI.</li> <li>• This mechanism should allow for over time engagement so that people don't get 'stuck' in entry level work.</li> </ul>
<b>Strong matching mechanism</b>	<p>7 Establish a 'matching' mechanism that sits outside individual providers. This could sit in the settlement sector (e.g. a refugee recruitment coordinator role) or in the social enterprise sector as part of an aggregator role.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual social enterprises have very specific offers and don't appear well placed to direct refugees and humanitarian entrants to other supports.</li> </ul>
<b>Person-centred, activation focus</b>	<p>8 Purposefully fund 'activation' according to need rather than putting refugees and humanitarian entrants through a set program of activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The size and nature of participant activation needs will vary considerably. Some require very short-term stabilisation (a few weeks of confidence building and education in rights). For</li> </ul>

	<p><b>9</b> Models should include education and employment outcomes as well as activity funding, with tiered payments tied to the extent to which participants have higher barriers.</p> <p><b>10</b> Define activation and outcomes in terms of achieving participant-defined outcomes rather than a set timeframe.</p> <p><b>11</b> Ensure that English language and skills development are a core focus, and supplements existing programs (i.e. AMEP, Skills for Education and Employment).</p> <p><b>12</b> Models should be strengths-based and promote participant agency, with an explicit focus on healing.</p>	<p>others, a 6-month supported placement is not a sufficient bridge to support access to competitive employment.</p>
<b>Eligibility criteria</b>	<p><b>13</b> Expand future EPRI criteria to reflect Settlement Engagement Transition Support (SETS) eligibility criteria and operate in regional as well as metropolitan areas.</p> <p><b>14</b> Ensure a focus on participants with low English.</p>	<p>Stakeholders noted that an EPRI-type program could benefit other migrants with barriers to economic participation, and suggested expanding EPRI to reflect SETS eligibility criteria and regional as well as metropolitan areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants with English have much fewer options to find work independently. Those with functional illiteracy in their own language can face additional barriers.</li> </ul>
<b>Provider selection</b>	<p><b>15</b> Ensure provider selection reflects specialisation. Providers should include a combination of larger social enterprises able to service multiple locations, as well as smaller, best practice models that provide more intensive, place-based supports. All providers should have longstanding experience providing support to the target population.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of provider specialisation with supporting refugees and humanitarian entrants has been an inefficiency for EPRI.</li> <li>Inclusion of a range of providers with different models reflects the evidence that no one employment model will meet the needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants.</li> </ul>
<b>Other offers that amplify: employer support and access to capital</b>	<p><b>16</b> Ensure that employer capacity is addressed.</p> <p><b>17</b> Include access to capital as an inclusion in any future model.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addressing the needs of employers has the potential to create wider employment opportunities, as well as individual placements for refugees and humanitarian entrants.</li> <li>Whilst only one EPRI provider offered financial capital to refugees and humanitarian entrants interested in starting a new business, their track record of outcomes (a 3% loan default rate and 3 years average repayment) suggests that this is a key contribution for sustainable business. We recommend this as an inclusion in any future model.</li> </ul>
<b>Social impact investment</b>	<p><b>18</b> Ensure provider in-kind provider contributions and intention to increase capacity of social enterprises to support refugees and humanitarian entrants beyond funded periods is explicit (articulated in aims/funding arrangements and measured).</p>	<p>Lack of an explicit focus on how EPRI was intended to build organisational and sector sustainability with respect to this cohort has limited action and learnings. This could be addressed through an intentional focus on organisational and sector uplift in future programs.</p>

Below we visualise the recommended program model.

Figure 1: Future EPRI

CORE COMPETENCIES	ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION	WORK PLACEMENT	SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	
RECRUITMENT & PLANNING	RECRUITMENT & EARLY CAREER PLANNING		Ascertaining needs, wants and trade-offs	Site in settlement sector
	MATCHING - CONNECTING REFUGEES & HUMANITARIAN ENTRANTS WITH APPROPRIATE PATHWAYS		Including EPRI as an option where this is appropriate (could also fit in aggregator model)	
	A MECHANISM TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE DON'T GET 'STUCK'		Recognising that short-term trade-offs may have negative impacts in the medium and long-term	
MATCHING & HOLISTIC SUPPORT	SUPPORTED, BROKERED AND SELF EMPLOYMENT		Requiring specific expertise for people with low skills and low English	Site in social enterprise sector
	HOLISTIC CASE MANAGEMENT AND MENTORING		Recognising the importance of safe spaces and social connection for outcomes	
	INFORMAL AND FORMAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT		Tailored to meet the 'activation' needs of individual migrants	
	ACCESS TO CAPITAL		Critical to successful business start ups	
	LIFTING EMPLOYER CAPACITY		Critical to sustainable employment options	

Refer to 'full breakdown for Figure 1: Future EPRI' in Appendix 3. Full data for figures for a full breakdown of this figure.

## 2. Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration program

Recent policy reviews<sup>6</sup> have highlighted that mainstream employment service models fail cohorts that are less work-ready because they:

- are not resourced to provide the tailored, person-centred supports
- focus on short-term employment outcomes rather than meaningful and sustainable work.

For refugees and humanitarian entrants there has also been criticism of:

- lack of focus on employment in the first 12 months, when Workforce Australia involvement is not mandatory
- not having a formal focus on employment participation for humanitarian settlement services
- limited options for learning English (e.g. for people who aren't suited to learning outside a formal classroom environment)
- lack of integration between settlement and employment services sectors.

The intention of EPRI was to provide an innovative response to these issues, in line with the program's interest in testing different settings to better meet the needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants.

EPRI aims to facilitate the social and economic integration of refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or English language proficiency through improving their rates of employment and reducing dependency and long-term unemployment. The objectives of EPRI are to:

- develop skills, qualifications and experience in the labour market and increase English language skills related to economic participation for refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or English language proficiency
- increase economic participation, and the number and type of pathways to economic participation and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the pathways to economic participation available to refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or English language proficiency.

EPRI is being delivered through grants to social enterprises between February 2023 and 30 June 2025 in service delivery regions with high numbers of refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English language proficiency. The original grant opportunity prioritised applications from employment regions identified as having a high number of refugee and humanitarian entrant jobseekers with low skills and/or low English language proficiency, including Sydney South West, Sydney Greater West, Western Melbourne, South East Melbourne and Peninsula, North Western Melbourne, Brisbane South East, Perth North, Perth South and Adelaide North<sup>2</sup>. The providers, their funded projects, and project amounts, are summarised in the table below.

**Table 2: Overview of EPRI-funded organisations and projects**

Organisation	Short description of EPRI-funded project	Funding (inc. GST)
<b>Brotherhood of St Laurence</b>	Provides pre-work readiness training and then brokers ongoing supported employment opportunities with key partners. Employer support is a key part of their model.	\$548,758
<b>CERES Earth (CERES Fair Wood)</b>	Creates jobs in the timber and construction industry, creating jobs for apprentice carpenters, cabinetmakers, machinery operators, labourers and drivers. Jobs and training support participants to advance within this social enterprise or secure outside employment or self-employment.	\$715,000

<sup>2</sup> Service delivery regions for the EPRI program are employment regions as defined by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Organisation	Short description of EPRI-funded project	Funding (inc. GST)
<b>Civik People<sup>3</sup></b>	Creates sustainable employment opportunities across a range of sectors. Their wraparound support continues for a further 6 months post-transition to help ensure employment is sustained.	\$2,416,150
<b>Community Corporate Pty Ltd</b>	Increases economic participation pathways, and is integrated into Community Corporate's social enterprise employment model.	\$1,650,000
<b>Dismantle Inc</b>	Trains, employs and transitions young refugee jobseekers aged 16-26 in Perth North and South employment regions. Each participant completes an average 1,200 hours of award wage work at Dismantle's social enterprise ReNew Property Maintenance.	\$751,298
<b>Green Connect</b>	Trains, support and employ refugees in Sydney South West, Sydney Greater West and the Illawarra in jobs that help the community and the environment, such as growing food and reducing waste.	\$1,298,876
<b>Green Collect, Dragonfly Collective and Value Nation</b>	Delivers direct job creation with a tailored business incubator program. The latter have partnered with Value Nation to deliver self-employment services.	\$649,902
<b>Multicultural Youth South Australia Inc (MYSA)</b>	Expands Miss MYSA Events (MME) to directly support refugee young people aged 18-35 into guaranteed employment.	\$369,588
<b>Nundah Community Enterprises Cooperative (NCEC) Ltd</b>	Aims to leverage NCEC's existing suite of businesses and experienced staff to create a multilayered range of opportunities for people with low skills and/or low English language proficiency to access employment opportunities.	\$766,407
<b>Parliament on King Pty Ltd</b>	Addresses barriers to employment for newly arrived female refugees with low levels of English proficiency. The project provides each participant with 26 weeks of employment and vocational training in hospitality, food safety and customer service from a social catering cafe and kitchen in Sydney, equipping them to successfully transition into secure employment in the local hospitality sector.	\$613,446
<b>Paws Fulfilment (Social Engine)</b>	Matches participants with a coach mentor and work supervisor who journey with them until 6 months of employment is achieved.	\$1,166,870
<b>Plate It Forward Ltd</b>	Addresses the economic participation needs of refugees and asylum seekers from South Western Sydney with low English skills and no hospitality experience. I	\$555,500
<b>Space2b Social Design Inc</b>	Empowers, supports and trains refugees and humanitarian entrants for job-readiness via on-the-job training and by providing business mentoring and enterprise development for those with creative skills to secure pathways to self-employment.	\$226,767
<b>St Vincent de Paul Society NSW</b>	Addresses economic participation support needs by providing a combination of nine interventions or targeted approaches that will facilitate the transition into the labour market of refugees and humanitarian entrants living in South West Sydney.	\$1,034,837
<b>STREAT Ltd</b>	Provides case management, work-readiness training, work experience across their 12 enterprises (cafes, bakery, catering, farms, gardens) and transition into a real job.	\$1,700,071
<b>The Bread and Butter Project</b>	Trains refugees to be qualified artisan bakers so they have sustainable careers in Australia's baking and hospitality industry. The project focuses on refugees who have completed secondary school and/or have less than vocational level English skills to improve their settlement outcomes.	\$990,011
<b>The Social Outfit Inc</b>	Delivers employment and training pathways for refugee women to transition to ongoing external employment with their industry partners.	\$259,100

<sup>3</sup> Civik People were previously called Hotel Housekeeping, and this is the organisational name that they were awarded grant the EPRI grant.

Organisation	Short description of EPRI-funded project	Funding (inc. GST)
<b>The Social Studio Inc</b>	Creates pathways to long-term and fulfilling employment for marginalised refugee youth who face barriers to economic participation. Since their foundation in 2009, they have supported over 820 refugee participants with their work-focused programs.	\$198,000
<b>Thrive Refugee Enterprise Ltd</b>	Assists refugees and other humanitarian migrants to become economically independent by facilitating their pathway to small business ownership/self-employment. Thrive will also provide financing, which has been identified by various research reports as a barrier in the pathway to small businesses.	\$2,200,000
<b>Whittlesea Community Connections Inc</b>	Provides participants with employment pathway planning, foundational skills training, job-specific skills and English as an additional language training, supported work experiences and on-the-job training, paid internships and other wraparound support.	\$1,373,900

# 3. Evaluation requirement and methodology

## 3.1 Scope of evaluation

The evaluation aimed to assess the effectiveness of the EPRI program and the extent to which this reflects value for money. This involves advice on optimal program settings for the development of a consolidated labour market program for refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English language proficiency.

The evaluation was conducted in four phases - evaluation planning, data collection, analysis, and reporting.

## 3.2 Program logic development

The program logic was developed to represent the objectives, inputs, activities, outputs and intended outcomes of the EPRI program. The insights discussed in the evaluation planning workshop with a representative from the department and one representative from Social Enterprise Australia informed the development of the program logic presented in Appendix 1.

The outcomes identified in the program logic (Appendix 1) provided a range of short-, medium- and long-term outcomes. Given the short timeframe in which this evaluation was conducted, the focus was on the outcomes during participation in the EPRI program (short-term), with findings related to early to mid-term outcomes (6 months after exiting EPRI) identified where possible, noting limitations on data and timeframes.

## 3.3 Evaluation questions

This evaluation addressed four overarching key evaluation questions that reflected the evaluation objectives, underpinned by a series of sub-questions. These questions are outlined in Table 3 **Error! Reference source not found.** The proposed evaluation questions were designed in collaboration with the Department to address the scope of the evaluation.

**Table 3: Evaluation questions**

Area	Key evaluation questions	Sub-questions
<b>Outcomes</b>	Does the program – at program level and service delivery model level– adequately develop the skills, language capabilities, qualification achievements and workplace literacy/experience to support program participants increase employability outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent do participants have employment or economic pathway outcomes?</li> <li>To what extent do participants have improved employability?</li> <li>To what extents do participants have improved vocational skills, soft skills, English language skills and literacy skills?</li> <li>To what extent can outcomes be attributed to EPRI vs other settlement supports generally?</li> <li>Were outcomes different depending on the EPRI model or participant characteristics?</li> <li>What factors were important in achieving outcomes?</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Is the program effective or on target to be effective to improving the employment rate of refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English language proficiency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What participants have been supported through the EPRI program?</li> <li>What supports did participants receive?</li> <li>How effective was the support in achieving economic participation outcomes for participants?</li> <li>How have Work Integration Social Enterprises' (WISE<sup>4</sup>) ability to deliver support to refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English language proficiency improved?</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> WISE: Work Integration Social Enterprise

Area	Key evaluation questions	Sub-questions
<b>Value for money</b>	To what extent do the services provided under the EPRI program represent value for money for the Australian Government?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the cost of different programs delivered by service providers?</li> </ul> What additional investment or resources have WISE provided to the EPRI program? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does the cost of EPRI-funded activities compare to similar programs?</li> <li>How cost-effective is the EPRI program?</li> </ul> How could EPRI be made more cost-effective? Could this be achieved by increasing outputs and outcomes, or by operating at less cost? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent is the current funding for grants appropriate (i.e. size, envelope, number of grants)?</li> </ul>
<b>Future program design</b>	What would be the parameters for a program that represents value for money for the Australian Government look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What components of service delivery models are effective to achieving program aims?</li> <li>What characteristics of the EPRI program could be improved?</li> <li>To what extent does the program demonstrate effectiveness and feasibility for extension in the future?</li> <li>What are the parameters for optimal future program design and delivery?</li> <li>What is needed to ensure the evaluability of future iterations of the EPRI program?</li> </ul>

### 3.4 Data collection methods

#### Program data and documentation review

The evaluation included a comprehensive review of existing program data and documentation, including:

- grant opportunity guidelines
- discussion paper on grants to social enterprises to lift refugee employment rate
- EPRI provider business plans
- activity work plans
- progress reports from February 2024<sup>5</sup>
- provider data via the Department of Social Services' Data Exchange (DEX) system.<sup>6</sup>

This also included review of other documentation or evaluation reports, including:

- review of additional documents provided by Social Enterprise Australia
- review of additional documents for understanding of comparator programs, including the Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP) and Workforce Australia
- short literature review to ensure understanding of best practice.

#### A note on participant data

The focus of data provided to the evaluation has been on short-term outcomes, and medium-term outcomes where data has been made available. Data gaps are partly attributable to delays in program establishment, however, also

<sup>5</sup>These were the only and most current progress reports available at the time of the evaluation because reports are provided on an annual basis

<sup>6</sup>Of note, EPRI providers record participant demographic and outcome data in DEX, with DEX reports extracted through the Qlik reporting system (both systems are hosted by the Department of Social Services).

reflect limited program reporting templates and inconsistency in reporting between providers. Where outcomes exist, they haven't always been captured – to illustrate, we consistently heard of outcomes at the individual participant level that weren't reflected in the overall data. With respect to measurement of participant numbers, high-level data was drawn from DEX via a Qlik report in October 2024. Information was also drawn from the February 2024 activity work plan progress reports, and interviews and email exchanges with EPRI providers. Given reliability issues with DEX, and the aged information provided in activity work plans, we have preferred to use information from providers where this was made available.

Access to reliable data on program participation has been a key issue for the evaluation. Program providers are required to report into the DEX system. Many were unused to reporting to government and into the system, and reported challenges with the usability of the system, and the time-consuming nature of this. There also appears to have been a lack of clarity about how to report on key items. For instance, DEX includes an 'employment' measure which doesn't clearly correlate to short- or medium-term outcomes. In addition, there were differences in provider-reported program numbers and numbers included in DEX.

### A note on measuring low skill

In the EPRI grant opportunity guidelines, low skill is defined as those who have completed secondary education or lower. This is based on the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO), which classifies the completion of secondary education as the lowest of the 5 skill levels for occupations and jobs undertaken for profit in the Australian and New Zealand labour markets. Further information on ANZSCO can be found at: [www.abs.gov.au/articles/how-anzsco-works](http://www.abs.gov.au/articles/how-anzsco-works)

### Primary data collection

All EPRI providers engaged in one or two qualitative interviews or mini-group discussions. The evaluation engaged a range of other stakeholders in qualitative semi-structured interviews or mini-group discussions, including government, Humanitarian Settlement Program service providers, Department of Education and Workplace Relations employment facilitators and other sector stakeholders and peak bodies. The stakeholder sample is presented in the table below.

**Table 4: Stakeholder engagement sample frame**

Stakeholder cohort	Sample and qualitative approach	Total participants
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>n=8 qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews</li> <li>1 x mini-group with 3 participants</li> <li>1x group discussion with 6 participants</li> </ul>	17
EPRI providers (multiple internal stakeholders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>n=21 initial semi-structured interviews with EPRI providers</li> <li>n=15 follow up interviews with EPRI providers</li> </ul>	36
Humanitarian Settlement program service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>n=4 qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews</li> </ul>	4
DEWR employment facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>n=8 qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews</li> </ul>	8
Immigration and employment services sector, peak bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>n=13 qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews</li> </ul>	13
Program participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>n=4 impact stories for participants completed EPRI program</li> <li>n=1 participant advocacy group discussion with 7 participants</li> </ul>	11
<b>Total participants</b>		<b>89</b>

### **Participant ‘impact stories’**

The evaluation obtained ethics approval for 5 participant ‘impact stories’. These stories aimed to bring to life outcomes from the participant point of view. They involved the conduct of semi-structured interviews lasting up to 1 hour with participants that were referred by selected EPRI providers. Moderators adopted a trauma-informed and strengths-based approach that paid attention to how the consultation takes place and prioritised emotional as well as physical safety, choice, trustworthiness, collaboration and empowerment (e.g., participants were able to bring a support person or interpreter).

## **3.5 Limitations**

The program data and secondary data review has been limited by the quality, reliability and availability of data. The evaluation process has been limited by data that is incomplete, outdated, or inconsistently recorded. We have been careful to reflect limitations in the data in the findings and recommendations section. Despite these limitations, the evaluation has carefully interpreted the data, acknowledging existing data gaps and other evaluability constraints. This evaluation report ensures conclusions are grounded in the evidence and remains transparent about areas of uncertainty due to data limitations. Specific limitations include:

- Minimal pre- and post-outcome measurement, which presented challenges in effectively assessing provider performance and overall program impact.
- The evaluation only included 5 interviews with participants to develop ‘participant impact stories’, with further research with participants required to understand their needs and experiences in relation to EPRI. The limited number of participant interviews was the result of limited funding for the evaluation.
- Program data is self-reported by EPRI providers, with a risk of bias given this is not a participant-led assessment. EPRI providers are not required to conduct GOAL SCORE assessments for all participants, and the data is only available for a portion of their total EPRI participants. Limited program data was made available to the evaluation at a late stage.
- Data for the case review component was predominantly assessed from qualitative interviews with EPRI providers, with the risk of self-reporting also evident. To mitigate these risks, the Department imposed a requirement that EPRI providers report SCORE data for 95% of their participants.

### **Program evaluability**

EPRI is limited in the extent to which it is evaluable. Minimal data has been collected, including for pre- and post-outcome measurement, and providers have inconsistently collected and reported activity data. The delayed program roll out has limited potential for medium-term outcomes to exist. Findings from this evaluation, and the recommendation for an ongoing learning model, reflect these limits.

# 4. Findings in detail

## 4.1 Outcomes



**KEQ: Does the program adequately develop skills, language capabilities, and workplace**

**literacy/experience to support increased employment outcomes for program participants?**

### Summary assessment

Both providers and participants pointed to instances where EPRI has made all the difference in supporting individuals into sustainable work. However, providers have differed in their ability to attract and support participants and demonstrate evidence of outcomes at scale and post-program.

EPRI better equipped most participating social enterprises to support refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and low English. The program was less successful in achieving broader collaboration aims with respect to connecting the settlement and employment participation sectors.

### Outcomes – summary of findings

Findings relating to outcomes are summarised in the tables below and then outlined in more detail. This includes with respect to the:

- supports delivered through EPRI
- participants supported through EPRI
- achievement of short- and medium-term outcomes.

**Table 5: Summary findings related to outcomes – What supports were delivered through EPRI?**

Output/ outcomes	Indicators	Measures	Assessment
<b>What activities were delivered</b>	EPRI provider organisational and employment models support high-quality service delivery	Sessions per participant  Organisational and employment model provide an explanation for effective service delivery	The program tested different delivery models for supporting refugees and humanitarian entrants to participate in employment, with the aim of reducing long-term reliance on income support payments.  The support offered to participants differed according to provider organisational profile and employment model. These models typically reflected the evidence for 'what works': person-centred supports that address the specific barriers to employment for refugees with low skills and low English. Reported outcomes varied depending on the model used and participant need.
<b>Recruitment</b>	High rates of effective recruitment	Extent to which EPRI providers report developing recruitment pathways  Extent to which EPRI providers report ability to effectively recruit participants	Recruitment was a focus of activity and a challenge for EPRI providers. Providers came to EPRI with mixed capacity with respect to the networks of trust required to effectively attract refugees and humanitarian entrants to their services. Organisations with good existing networks typically strengthened these throughout their EPRI participation. Other organisations adopted a range of strategies to build networks, including community engagement and partnership strategies with refugee and ethno-specific organisations.

**Table 6: Summary findings related to outcomes – What participants have been supported through EPRI?**

Output/ outcomes	Indicators	Measures	Assessment
<b>Participants engaged</b>	High rates of participant engagement	<p>Number of participants engaged in program reflects KPIs</p> <p>Characteristics of participants engaged in the program</p> <p>Number of ineligible participants contacted EPRI providers /Extent to which this cohort is supported</p>	<p>With approximately 6 months to project close, most providers have yet to achieve 50% of short-term employment targets (during program employment participation).</p> <p>Lower than expected participant outcomes appear to reflect a combination of factors – providers who were unused to supporting refugees and humanitarian entrants, lack of an effective ‘connective’ mechanism, lack of flexibility in program design, and possibly lack of demand.</p>

**Table 7: Summary findings related to outcomes – To what extent did EPRI providers achieve short- and medium-term outcomes**

Output/ outcomes	Indicators	Measures	Assessment
<b>Participants engaged in pathways to economic participation<sup>7</sup></b>	Increased participant engagement in formal or informal training	<p>Number of participants that gained a qualification</p> <p>Number of participants that participated in informal training (in-house training delivered by the EPRI provider)</p>	<p>503 EPRI participants had enrolled in or completed a vocational qualification at the time of the evaluation. 1,148 EPRI participants had completed informal training, ranging from short-term to 6 months in duration, at the time of the evaluation.</p> <p>Examples of qualifications included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short courses: white cards, forklift licence, First Aid, CPR, Working with Asbestos.</li> <li>• VET qualifications: Commercial cookery; Baking; IT; Hospitality; Hospitality Management; Clothing Production; Retail; Logistics.</li> <li>• University qualifications: Bachelor of Nursing.</li> </ul>
<b>Participants engaged in pathways to economic participation<sup>8</sup></b>	Increased participant employment	<p>Proportion of participants employed during program</p> <p>Proportion of participants in employment post-completion</p>	<p>1,754 EPRI participants had completed supported, brokered and self-employment placements, ranging in duration from 4 to 26 weeks at the time of the evaluation.</p> <p>637 EPRI participants were in post-program employment at the time of the evaluation.</p>
<b>Participants develop English language skills</b>	Increased English language skills	Number of participants involved in English language training	1,031 EPRI participants had been enrolled in English language activities at the time of the evaluation. We found that there typically wasn’t a sufficient focus by providers on recruiting people with low English or improving English language skills, and that this should be a strengthened focus in the future.

<sup>7</sup>There isn’t sufficient evidence to solely attribute employment outcomes solely to EPRI, however, findings from consultations with EPRI providers suggests that without EPRI participants would have been less likely to achieve employment outcomes.

<sup>8</sup>There isn’t sufficient evidence to solely attribute employment outcomes cannot be solely attributed to EPRI, however, the evidence suggests that without EPRI participants would have been less likely to achieve employment, or found this more difficult to achieve.

Output/outcomes	Indicators	Measures	Assessment
<b>Participants have improved non-vocational skills</b>	Increased non-vocational skills	Extent to which providers report improved skills	Improving work readiness has been identified as an important role for programs such as EPRI, providing a bridge between refugee and humanitarian entrant circumstances and employer needs. The supportive environment offered by social enterprises appears conducive to fostering self-esteem and confidence, as do programs with a focus on education and familiarisation with Australian workplace norms and rights.
<b>Participants have improved community/professional connections that support employment</b>	Increased community/professional connections that support employment	Extent to which EPRI providers report increased participant professional and social and community connections that support employment	Improved connections were typically believed to be critical to achieving employment participation outcomes. This included through providing opportunities to practise English and interact with Australians in an employment context, and through supporting wellbeing. Social connection was a strong feature of supported employment environments and also brokered employment placements.
<b>There is increased capacity at the provider sector level</b>	There is an improved evidence base for what works, delivery and increased capacity of EPRI providers, settlement and employment services	Extent to which EPRI providers and stakeholders report improved capacity	Most providers have increased their capacity to support refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English language proficiency. This knowledge has been shared in the community of practice but not yet promulgated more broadly. There is no evidence of capacity improvement for settlement and mainstream employment services.

## What supports were delivered through EPRI?



### Key messages

- 12,256 EPRI sessions were recorded as of 27 November 2024. The program data suggest a focus for delivery has been on employment pathways, and to a lesser extent on training and employer engagement, English language and business planning.
- The supports offered by EPRI providers have been shaped by organisational profile and employment model, both of which vary significantly across providers.
- The literature identifies gaps in employment participation supports for refugee and humanitarian entrants. The intention of EPRI was to provide an innovative response to this evidence and test different support models by funding a range of social enterprises. Models that appeared more effective included support for employers, strong recruitment mechanisms embedded in the settlement sector, opportunity to support variation in participant need, offered career planning and case management or emotional support and paid participants for work performed.
- Models typically didn't have an intentional focus on English language acquisition and took an implicit approach to soft skills acquisition. This reflected lack of formal documentation and an experimental approach on the part of some EPRI providers who were adapting existing programs to meet the needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and low English. We suspect that a stronger focus on these elements would support more effective outcomes for people with low skills and/or low English language proficiency.

### Number of sessions

10,983 EPRI sessions were recorded as of 1.00pm on 27 November 2024. The administrative data suggest a focus for delivery has been on employment pathways, and to a lesser extent on training and employer engagement, English

language and business planning.<sup>9</sup> This aligns with the focus described by both providers and participants, where skills development was a great focus than English competency.

**Table 8: Sessions as of 27 November 2024**

Service type	Unique Sessions	Individual participants
Facilitate employment pathways	4,479	1,048
Education and skills training	2,712	957
Employer engagement	2,480	412
Intake/assessment	1,554	1,344
Facilitate English learning pathways	556	213
Business planning	360	88
Exit interview	115	181

### How were sessions delivered?

The grant opportunity guidelines allowed for applications from social enterprises with an economic participation focus that were either certified by Social Traders or 'have a defined primary social, cultural or environmental purpose consistent with a public or community benefit, derive a substantial portion of their income from trade; and invest efforts and resources into their purpose such that public/community benefit outweighs private benefit.' As this definition suggests, the organisational profile of funded social enterprises varied substantially. This included with respect to:

- size
- sector and whether derive income from trade
- location
- refugee leadership.

We also observed significant variation in the employment models adopted by EPRI providers, including for:

- whether supports were provided to employers
- whether wages were paid
- whether effective recruitment pathways were in place
- use of assessment and career planning
- use of case management and mentoring
- type and mode of training
- type of employment offered
- post-program placement and support
- whether programs were ethno-specific.

<sup>9</sup>There appear to be issues with data quality, and hence cautions on reliance on DEX data at the granular level. For instance, DEX records that 1,344 participants had an intake/assessment session, that 1,554 intake/assessment sessions were held. If this is true at least some participants had multiple intake/assessment sessions, and not all participants had intake/assessment sessions.

<sup>10</sup>Shergold P, Benson, K and Piper, M 2019. 'Investing in refugees. Investing in Australia.' Viewed on 29 November 2024 at <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/review-integration-employment-settlement-outcomes-refugees-humanitarian-entrants.pdf>

These factors shaped what supports are being offered through EPRI, as discussed below.

**Table 9. Provider profile – size**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPRI providers varied in size from micro (less than 5 employees) to social enterprises nested within larger charities or aligned with social enterprise networks.</li> <li>• All providers drew on in-kind resources to deliver EPRI, with the scope of this reflecting capacity and capability, including existing trade infrastructure. For larger providers, this could involve access to corporate functions such as human resources and maturity with respect to measurement, as well as existing networks in the settlement and employment sectors and in-house volunteers. Smaller organisations were typically prepared to provide significant in-kind resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-kind resources were not systematically captured in EPRI reporting and were typically not able to be quantified by social enterprises. Yet, we suspect that they were significant. Better measurement would help provide evidence for arguments that covering impact costs for social enterprises will support value for money service delivery alternatives for government.</li> </ul>

**Table 10. Provider profile – sector/trade focus**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five of the EPRI providers worked across sectors to place participants in competitive employment with a range of employers or supported participants to start small businesses. These providers typically had good relationships with large employers.</li> <li>• Other providers focused on filling supported employment roles, reflecting the trade specialisation of their social enterprise. The different trade focus included carpentry/construction (1 provider), property maintenance/landscaping (2 providers), retail (5 providers), fashion (2 providers), horticulture (3 providers), resource recovery/waste management (2 providers), hospitality (7 providers), and logistics/warehousing/transport (1 provider).</li> <li>• We note that some, but not all, social enterprises generated income through trade rather than through government and philanthropic funding. Those providers that relied on trade were able to offer ‘in house’ employment. Others were connecting participants with external employment, either through self-employment or Australian employers in the quasi-competitive market. Both models have strengths and weaknesses with respect to sustainability, opportunities to scale and benefits to participants. Work-integrated social enterprises appeared to have greater capacity to provide holistic and wrap around support to the most vulnerable, and provide ongoing supported employment. However, they were often limited in terms of geographic scope, and type of work offered – this could reduce their potential to offer a good ‘fit’ for participants. Social enterprises that offered connection, either to the skills and capital needed for self-employment or work placement with Australian employers offered more scale and flexibility, however typically appeared better suited to more work-ready participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The grant opportunity guidelines intended EPRI to align with workforce shortages in agriculture, health, aged, veterans and disability care, and freight and supply chain. In practice, this wasn’t a focus for EPRI providers. Given the issues of ‘matching’ the program offer to refugee and humanitarian entrant needs, this appears wise. If sectors facing skills shortages are to be a focus for future program design then additional thought should be given to location (e.g. the EPRI program was largely targeted to metro locations, making agriculture an unlikely focus). In addition, there is a need to consider whether these fields are culturally safe and appropriate for people with low English language proficiency.</li> <li>• Funding different social enterprise models (including those that rely solely or mostly on trade for income and those that do not) will likely be required to meet the range of participant needs.</li> </ul>

**Table 11. Provider profile – location**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders report the benefits of a place-based approach and close relationships between organisations and communities likely to support refugees and humanitarian entrants.</li> <li>The EPRI experience supports this, suggesting that strong, local connections are important to achieving participant KPIs. However, this was not the only predictor of success. For instance, providers with a larger geographic service footprint also had more flexibility to attract a variety of employers and meet the needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants in regional areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If funds are limited, thought will need to be put into balancing resource-intensive place-based approaches with considerations of equity and geographic spread.</li> </ul>

**Table 12. Provider profile – refugee leadership**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders suggested that having lived experience leadership is best practice for social enterprises. EPRI providers with refugee leadership report that this supports tailoring of activities and provides an additional benefit for participants in that it is empowering to look up to someone who has successfully negotiated settlement and is living a life with purpose and enjoyment. Refugee leadership can be a positive role model that inspires change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lived experience leadership can valuably be explored as a future grant criteria.</li> </ul>

**Table 13. Employment models – employer support (supply side)**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The literature suggests that a critical barrier to employment of migrants is employer bias and lack of capacity to support a diverse workforce. Support for employers was a focus for most, but not all, EPRI providers offering a formal brokerage model.</li> <li>Varied relationships with employers included helping to develop a formal refugee employment plan, developing formal partnerships with larger employers, important because this offers a variety of roles in a variety of sectors, and developing informal connections with local employers.</li> <li>Support for employers included providing cultural responsiveness training, coaching managers in how to support people with refugee and humanitarian experiences and providing onboarding support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Given the importance of supply side interventions in helping employers offer meaningful and appropriate work, this should be considered as a greater focus for future, similar programs. This includes specifying outcomes for employers as well as participants and providers.</li> </ul>

**Table 14. Employment models – wages paid**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants earning a wage has emerged as critical to program success. Benefits include attracting and retaining participants, but also as a sign of respect to participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paying a wage is recommended as good practice.</li> </ul>

**Table 15. Employment models - recruitment pathways**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both providers and settlement stakeholders report that the EPRI target cohort – refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English language proficiency – is typically recruited through networks of trust. It is not surprising then, that recruitment pathways have been strongly shaped by the extent of provider organisational resourcing and capacity prior to EPRI. This includes specific experience with the participant cohorts, as well as networks in the settlement sector and with ethno-specific organisations. Organisations with good existing networks typically strengthened these throughout their EPRI participation. The experiences of other organisations varied. Initially, recruitment was a challenge for these organisations. Those organisations that needed to build networks adopted different strategies to ‘solving’ this. Of note, on-ground settlement and employment services stakeholders and multicultural community organisations interviewed for this evaluation tended not to be aware of EPRI.</li> <li>• EPRI providers’ cohort focus prior to the program included:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– None had a specific focus on the EPRI cohort (refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English) prior to taking part in the program</li> <li>– 13 had at least some experience supporting refugees and humanitarian entrants</li> <li>– 12 had strong existing networks in the settlement sector and good connections with ethno-specific organisations (two are SETS providers).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• EPRI providers sought to strengthen their networks:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 2 partnered with existing refugee and ethno-specific organisations in order to be able to more effectively access the target cohort</li> <li>– 2 attempted to partner with other social enterprises supporting refugees and humanitarian entrants but had not established a formal partnership at the time of the evaluation</li> <li>– 1 relied on its parent organisation, which does support refugees and humanitarian entrants, to make appropriate connections</li> <li>– Others attempted to develop networks within the settlement and ethno-specific organisations; this was reportedly very time-consuming (requiring organisations to go beyond what they had been funded to do by government); and reportedly difficult to do successfully within EPRI timeframes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce Australia services were typically not part of the existing networks of EPRI providers, or targeted to source participants. An inference for future program design is to consider how to more holistically integrate EPRI into the mainstream employment services sector, including with specialist culturally and linguistically diverse services.</li> <li>• If organisations without trusted networks are tasked with delivering services, then an establishment period and resourcing needs to be dedicated to this.</li> <li>• We observed little cross-referral between EPRI providers. This is also an opportunity for improvement in future design.</li> </ul>

**Table 16. Employment models – assessment and career planning**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<p>Assessment and career planning are crucial first steps in a tailored, person-centred approach that supports sustainable employment outcomes. This is critical in understanding participants’ needs, preferences, goals and career history and whether EPRI is a suitable pathway. This isn’t necessarily clear cut. A key issue for refugees and humanitarian entrants can be the tension between short- and long-term goals. For instance, people might wish to trade off formal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of assessment and career planning will likely benefit future models.</li> </ul>

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
learning (English language, tertiary study) in favour of short-term employment and income. Ensuring that people are making informed decisions on their options is critical. We also heard stories of where people had become 'stuck' in low skills and/or low English pathways, inferring that it is important that people also know their options for changing direction when this need arises.	

**Table 17. Employment models –case management and mentoring**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
Whilst often not a focus of accountability mechanisms, case management and reporting were reported to be key to achieving outcomes. Having a responsive, caring support makes all the difference for wellbeing, and day-to-day problem solving (with respect to vocational and other life issues).	Inclusion of case management and mentoring will likely benefit future models.

**Table 18. Employment models –type and mode of training – English language skills**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<p>A distinguishing feature of EPRI is that it caters to refugees and humanitarian entrants with low English skills. Most providers have argued that this group falls outside their ability to service with usual resources, and that EPRI resourcing made all the difference in their ability to support low English cohorts. However, a theme for the evaluation is the lack of focus on reporting on English language activities. DEX records 556 sessions to 'facilitate English learning pathways', a little less than 5% of all sessions. 'Communication and language support' was listed as a low intensity activity by half of EPRI providers in the provider community of practice heat map (Appendix 2). Providers observe that the English offerings require significant resources, and this is often not planned for in activity work plans and budgets. As a result, there is a tendency to depend on external programs and informal learning opportunities because of limited capacity to upscale.</p> <p>Provider strategies for English language development included: 1) new or continuing access to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP); 2) participants to access 1:1 volunteer tutors through EPRI provider networks; 3) participants to access immersive English language learning environments through work placements, with a focus on learning vocational English (e.g. the terminology required for a particular profession); 4) informal learning occurring through work experience and social interaction.</p>	<p>A hypothesised benefit of the EPRI approach is that it provides an alternative to formal classroom learning environments, which the stakeholders report is not always appropriate for people with low levels of education. This is because such environments don't always suit people who haven't 'learnt how to learn' and who can feel intimidated by more formal environments. EPRI providers and participants report the value of contextual language learning. This includes through providing an alternative to classroom learning environments as well as a focus on vocational language.</p> <p>Unfortunately, because pre- and post-outcome measurement was either not undertaken or undertaken poorly, this benefit was unable to be substantiated. This analysis suggests that additional clarity on what is meant by low English, how this is measured, and the extent to which English supports are core to program participation is required.</p> <p>Whilst AMEP could be tailored to offer additional supports provided through EPRI (e.g. 1:1 tutoring and possibly non-classroom environments), it is not well placed to offer vocational tailoring. It is likely that both a continued focus on English skills through EPRI and greater coordination between language and employment supports are warranted in the future.</p>

**Table 19. Employment models –type and mode of training – Access to vocational and non-vocational training**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The focus of EPRI provider vocational skills training varied depending on sector and provider. In brokered employment</li> </ul>	The very mixed nature of the experience and expertise bought to EPRI by participants again reinforced the

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<p>settings, vocational training tended to be delivered as pre-employment training. In supported employment, training was typically delivered via employment placements in-house. Some providers focused more on soft skills, such as communication with customers and team members, with others providing formal qualifications via vocational certificates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocational skills training provided through EPRI included 1) aligning with vocational certificates and trades assessments to ensure EPRI training supports a continuous pathway; 2) short-term qualifications that support entry level jobs (e.g. white card, forklift licence); 3) familiarisation with Australian workplace norms and rights; 4) translating existing skills (e.g. cooking or sewing) to the workplace; 5) skills specific to a role or sector (e.g. point of sale technology in retail); 6) business planning and 7) job-readiness skills, such as communication, dependability, punctuality, reliability and flexibility. Providers offering certificates for people with low skills and low English typically had to adapt either the courses or the support they offered to achieve this.</li> <li>The grant opportunity guidelines define non-vocational skills as: 'Skills and capabilities that are not directly related or required for a job, includes psychological work-readiness (self-esteem, motivation, confidence sense of agency etc.) and work-readiness soft skills, such as communication skills, leadership skills, conflict resolution skills, time management skills and teamwork skills, Australian workplace culture literacy'. All of these were an implicit focus for EPRI providers.</li> </ul>	<p>need to tailor support to address skills gaps whilst supporting building self-esteem and confidence.</p>

**Table 20. Employment models –type of employment offered**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A focus of EPRI was access to employment during the program – counted as a short-term outcome in the program logic. EPRI providers offered different employment types, ranging from 12-week paid work experience to longer supported and competitive employment options to support to start a small business. Some providers, but not all, focused on supporting a transition to open employment post-participation in EPRI.</li> <li>Variation in length: 11 providers – at least 26-week program; 4 providers – 12-16-week programs; 3 providers – 4-10-week programs.</li> </ul> <p>Variation in offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 providers – brokered competitive employment opportunities, including via labour hire and with ongoing support to both participant and employer</li> </ul> <p>11 providers – time-limited supported employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 provider – ongoing supported employment</li> <li>2 providers – supported participants to start small businesses, including via access to finance.</li> <li>The roles offered by EPRI providers were typically low skilled and could require a significant time commitment. They often weren't appropriate for people: with ambitions to enrol in university or work that reflected their previous qualifications and professional experience; who wanted to study English full-time (reportedly this can be a daytime only option depending on</li> </ul>	<p>Findings have highlighted the importance of offering different role types, as supporting different benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hospitality allowing people with home cooking experience to parlay this into a skilled trade</li> <li>carpentry/construction as offering an entry level route to a skilled trade</li> <li>horticulture work as healing, and suitable to people who have lived and worked in regional areas overseas</li> </ul> <p>Customer-facing roles suiting people with higher levels of English (e.g. retail suiting people having high levels of English)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shorter programs allowing for a 'taste' of a particular role for more work-ready participants</li> <li>longer and supported employment offering benefits for those with higher needs (emotional and work readiness)</li> </ul>

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<p>location, clashing with regular employment hours); who had competing caring obligations; who had significant healing needs; who didn't have access to transport.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Of note, providers reported tailoring the models they had offered prior to EPRI, including decreasing hours to better meet the needs of participants. One provider also reported adjusting their model to a lighter touch offer to be able to meet participant numbers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>casual and part-time roles suiting those with greater healing needs and with caring obligations, or who wish to balance learning English or other study and working.</li> </ul>

**Table 21. Employment models – post-program placement and support**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not all providers have a formal focus on supporting employment transitions post-EPRI. This partly reflects different models, but also that many providers offered extensive informal supports, reportedly staying on good terms with participants for years after program involvement. This in-kind support is not reflected in the data. Not all EPRI participants were suited to or wanted competitive employment roles following their EPRI participation. This included people with ongoing communication barriers, and often trauma experience. Sometimes there were ongoing entry level supported employment roles at EPRI providers, or opportunities for promotion, but this wasn't always the case.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusion of post-program placement and support will likely benefit future models.</li> </ul>

**Table 22. Employment models – ethnic community addressed**

Observed variation	Implications for future program design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPRI models included ethno-specific programs, programs that skewed to particular ethnic groups because of their recruitment catchment, and mixed programs. There appeared to be advantages to both options, with additional cultural safety for ethno-specific programs and greater opportunities for community connection and English language acquisition in mixed programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No specific implication.</li> </ul>

## What participants have been supported through EPRI?



### Key messages

- In their activity work plans, EPRI providers outlined ambitions to support 3,354 people in education activities and 1,754 people in employment activities. At the time of the evaluation, 2,016 people had been supported in education activities and 1,074 in short-term employment activities.
- The extent to which all providers fully adhered to the eligibility criteria is not clear. The program data suggests that EPRI has attracted cohorts that have previously been flagged as difficult to support into employment – early arrivals, people without post-school qualifications and women.
- Most providers reported challenges in meeting participant numbers. The extent to which challenges were experienced appeared to depend on a number of factors, including provider access to effective networks to support recruitment, impact of delays in program establishment, whether providers were impacted by fit between EPRI offers and refugee/humanitarian entrant need, and the additional resources required to support people with low English proficiency.

## Numbers of participants supported and intended to be supported

In activity work plans, EPRI providers outlined ambitions to support 3,354 people in education activities and 1,754 people in employment activities. At the time of the evaluation, 2,016 people had been supported in education activities and 1,074 in short-term employment activities. At the time of the evaluation and considering short-term employment outcomes (participation in employment during the program):

- 2 providers have already exceeded KPIs
- 3 had achieved between 75 and 100%
- 7 had achieved between 50 and 75%
- 7 had achieved between 25 and 50%<sup>11</sup>
- 1 had achieved below 25%.

Of note, participant target numbers don't reflect where EPRI providers put effort into developing employer networks (supply side) and delivered flexibly to participant need. The latter included supporting worthy EPRI-adjacent visa holders (i.e. one provider supported large numbers of young people, mainly orphans from Afghanistan on Orphan Relative (subclass 117) visas); and EPRI-eligible participants on alternative pathways (i.e. one provider offered 'stabilisation' support where more work-ready applicants who didn't require supported employment had access to paid work experience which helped to confirm their ability to undertake competitive work, increasing confidence and access to a reference from an Australian employer).

## Demographic characteristics of participants supported by EPRI

An analysis of demographic characteristics of participants supported in DEX (extracted 1pm on 27 November 2024) is summarised overleaf, noting *time in Australia* and *Visa type* data is provided from an earlier extract, as it was not available in the November extract.

This analysis suggests that the program has supported cohorts that have previously been flagged as difficult to support into employment – early arrivals, people without post-school qualifications and women.

DEX data show a significant number of people with post-school education; only half of EPRI participants can be designated as low skills according to the grant opportunity guidelines. There is no record of English language ability, and hence it is not clear whether the latter cohort had low English and hence were eligible.

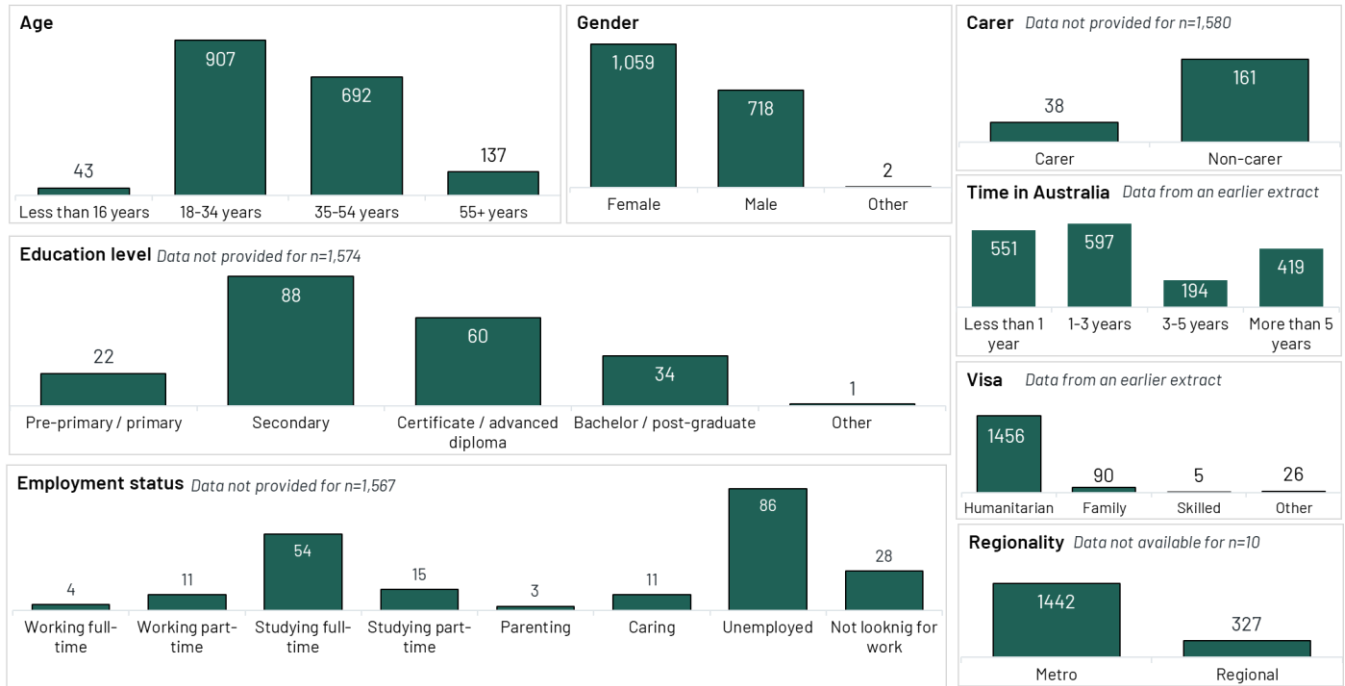
Interviews with providers revealed this may be a result of providers applying a broader interpretation of EPRI guidelines, where they focused on the overall goal of enhancing employment outcomes for marginalised migrants and new arrivals, rather than rigidly adhering to the eligibility criteria. This, for example, could be acknowledging that, while a potential participant might have a higher educational attainment in their home country, if this is not recognised in Australia, they effectively have a much lower educational attainment. Many providers we spoke to felt compelled to help people struggling to find work but not meeting the criteria. However, whether support was provided within or outside the EPRI scheme did differ across providers.

Another tension for eligibility has been location. EPRI was limited to employment regions with a high proportion of refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English language proficiency at the time of program design. However, providers reported that this restriction constrained their ability to support eligible participants who might live just a few suburbs from them. Settlement stakeholders noted that this approach didn't support service delivery in regional areas of real need or in jurisdictions where EPRI had not been offered.

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<sup>11</sup>Note for two of these providers we are relying on February figures.

Figure 2: Participant demographics (sourced from DEX extracts)



Refer to Table 28 to Table 35 in Appendix 3. Full data for figures for a full breakdown of this figure.

### What factors affected achieving participant KPIs?

Most providers reported challenges in meeting participant KPIs (number of participants taking part in the program). The extent to which challenges were experienced appeared to depend on a number of factors:

- provider access to effective networks to support recruitment
- impact of delays in program establishment
- whether providers were impacted by (what they interpreted as) changing eligibility criteria for EPRI
- fit between what EPRI offers and refugee/humanitarian entrant need
- additional resources required to support people with low English
- targets set in activity work plans and length of program.

These factors are addressed in further detail below.

Table 23: Factors that impact achieving participant KPIs

Factors	Detailed explanation
Access to effective networks to support recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment appeared most efficient and effective where providers had strong networks in both settlement and employment services sectors and a primary focus on refugees and humanitarian entrants prior to beginning their EPRI contract.</li> <li>• EPRI providers reported that networks of trust take time to build – for those that didn't have existing networks this effort has represented a significant focus for their activity.</li> <li>• This begs the question about the circumstances in which government funds should be used to support social enterprises to build networks, and whether an approach that encourages building networks is sustainable over time. For instance, providers who had significantly changed their operating model to deliver EPRI typically reported that building networks would cease with EPRI funding in mid-2025. A number of settlement sector stakeholders also questioned the appropriateness of EPRI providers relying on the donated goodwill and time of services that already support refugees and humanitarian entrants to achieve their</li> </ul>

Factors	Detailed explanation
	aims.
<b>Impact of delays in establishing the program on establishment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lower participant numbers partly reflect the delay in establishing EPRI, and that building an appropriate recruitment pipeline takes time to build momentum. Providers have effectively had to deliver in 2 rather than 3 years. A minority of providers have been able to adjust to the timeframes and look very likely to deliver against KPIs.</li> </ul>
<b>Eligibility criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The grant opportunity guidelines and provider contracts define eligibility in terms of people who are refugees and humanitarian entrants. For most providers, there has been uncertainty for the eligibility criteria, with the visa categories identified by the Department not matching providers' original interpretation of eligibility. This has not been a barrier to achieving KPIs for some providers, who have been able to adjust. For others, this has proved a practical barrier.</li> </ul>
<b>Fit between what social enterprises can offer and refugee/ humanitarian entrant need</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provider difficulties in meeting participant KPIs have highlighted that what individual social enterprises have to offer may not necessarily be a good match for the specific needs of individual refugees and humanitarian entrants living in a particular location at a particular point in time. EPRI providers offer inconsistent coverage with respect to level and type of work, sector and location. Whilst providers that use a brokerage/labour hire model can offer more choice, social enterprises offering one type of supported employment are more limited.</li> <li>However, based on the data available to this evaluation, it is not clear whether a program design that enabled more flexibility to match refugees and humanitarian migrants to employment participation options would address the issues experienced by EPRI in recruiting sufficient numbers of participants. That is, it is not clear if the issue is lack of demand for the EPRI model, or overall lack of demand from the target cohort.</li> </ul>
<b>Targets set in activity work plans and program length</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providers that set more realistic participant targets in their activity work plans and had shorter programs (e.g. 4-16 weeks in duration) appeared more likely to meet KPIs.</li> </ul>



### Implication for future program design – factors affecting achievement of participant KPIs

Future program design should consider:

- adequate timeframes for program establishment and to test outcomes
- sustainable investment approaches that support social enterprises to provide ongoing services for refugees and humanitarian entrants when funding ends
- ensuring flexible 'recruitment' and 'matching' mechanisms sitting outside individual providers to place participants with enterprises
- that an EPRI-type program can valuably support people holding other visa types with low English
- the need for and consistency in defining and applying program eligibility to support providers to accurately predict targets and manage resources
- research with the target cohort to ascertain demand/level of interest in EPRI-type offers.

### To what extent were ineligible participants interested in the program and provided with or directed to alternative supports?

Providers reported initial and ongoing lack of clarity about eligibility criteria. The grant opportunity guidelines advertised EPRI as a program targeted to refugees and humanitarian entrants; this was later clarified to be people who hold specific permanent and temporary visa subclasses for refugee and humanitarian entrants. Other areas of program eligibility that were reported to be flexibly applied were the location and English language requirements.

Some EPRI providers that had difficulty in achieving target numbers said that this would not have been the case if they

had been able to support asylum seekers holding bridging visas and additional permanent and temporary visa subclasses for refugee and humanitarian entrants that were not specified under the EPRI criteria. The latter were often family members of refugees and humanitarian entrants, for example, young people on Subclass 117 visas, which supports orphans to reunite with a family member in Australia. Providers also noted that flexibility on location and English language eligibility criteria would have supported them to achieve higher participant numbers. Of note, providers took a very different approach to supporting people who had approached them but were found to be ineligible. A proportion supported all who sought help, whether or not within the eligibility criteria. (The extent to which EPRI cross-subsidised this activity is not clear.) Other providers supported participants only if they met EPRI eligibility criteria.

## To what extent did EPRI achieve short- and medium-term outcomes?

### Key messages

If extenuating circumstances are taken into account (including delays in implementation and recruitment barriers), EPRI providers are typically making appropriate progress towards achieving participant numbers. The data suggest that EPRI providers are achieving good participation in education and employment during programs and there are early indications that during program participation translates into medium-term education and employment outcomes. However, poor quality program data means that definitive assessments cannot be made about outcomes.

- Providers have typically built capacity to support refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and low English, and the EPRI community of practice run by Social Enterprise Australia facilitates collaboration between EPRI providers. However, EPRI has not supported further collaboration between settlement and employment services sectors as was intended.

The overall objective of EPRI is to support refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skill level and/or English language proficiency to improve employability, job-readiness and economic participation. The program logic articulates a number of short- (during program), medium- (6–24 months), and long-term (3–5 years post-program participation) outcomes at the level of sector, program and participant.

**Table 24: Outcomes for participants, provider/program and sector**

Participants	Provider/program	Sector
<p><b>Short-term</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement in economic participation pathways during the program:</li> <li>• English language, vocational and non-vocational skills development</li> <li>• Paid and unpaid employment.<sup>12</sup></li> </ul> <p><b>Medium-term</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants have improved economic participation.</li> <li>• Participants develop English language skills.</li> <li>• Participants have increased employability.</li> <li>• Participants have improved community/professional connections</li> </ul>	<p><b>Short-term</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased provider capacity to deliver effective supports for refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and low English, including partnerships with sector and employers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Medium-term</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per above.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Short-term</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased opportunity for refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English language proficiency to access economic pathways.</li> <li>• Improved evidence for what works.</li> <li>• Increased capacity of settlement and mainstream employment services.</li> </ul> <p><b>Medium-term</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per above.</li> </ul>

<sup>12</sup>Skills and capabilities that are not directly related or required for a job, includes psychological work readiness – self-esteem, motivation, confidence sense of agency etc., work-readiness soft skills, such as communication skills, leadership skills, conflict resolution skills, time management skills and teamwork skills, Australian workplace culture literacy.

that support employment.

The following sections discuss measurement of outcomes.

**Table 25: Outcomes**

Outcomes	Measurement of outcomes
<p><b>Participants improve English language skills</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low English language proficiency was defined in the grant opportunity guidelines as lower than vocational level English. That is, Level 3 proficiency under the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) and/or a standard average of 5.5 in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the equivalent standard in alternate language tests.</li> <li>• Most providers used qualitative assessments (rules of thumb based on observation and conversations held as part of the intake process) and participant self-report to assess English language skills. Two providers referenced formal assessment standards such as the ACSF, others had developed their own assessment methodologies. Three providers were able to supply benchmark data to the evaluation. One provider was able to supply benchmark and post-participation data on improvement in English language skills. A fourth provider reported that they record this data but were unable to supply this to the evaluation. Because of the lack of pre- and post-measures, we have reported on participation in English language activity, rather than change in skills in assessing outcomes and value for money.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participants improve vocational skills</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apart from the 'low skills' eligibility criteria, providers typically didn't conduct benchmark assessments of vocational skills. Improvement in vocational skills has been measured by providers through participation in training activity, achievement of vocational certificates, the evidence of participants still being employed (i.e. the assumption that they must be competent). With the exception of vocational certificates which require objective testing, we note that these are either proxy measures or outputs. We have reported on participants' vocational skills in this evaluation, using the available data.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participants improve non-vocational skills</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three providers reported on pre- and post-measures for non-vocational skills as part of their activity work plan reporting. In qualitative interviews, other providers reported observed improvements in confidence in worker identity and understanding of Australian workplace culture, and associated benefits in self-esteem, however, this typically was not formally assessed or reported across the participant cohort. Improvements in participants' non-vocational skills are reported in this evaluation where this information is available.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participants engage in employment (supporting post-program employability and economic participation)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A core measurement focus for EPRI providers has been on during program employment. During program employment has varied substantially with respect to intensity, duration and focus, with the inference that comparisons between providers should be made with caution. Post-program employability and economic participation has also varied by provider and not been a focus for measurement. A number of providers give ongoing support to participants following the formal EPRI timeframes, blurring the line between 'during' and 'post'-program. Where EPRI providers place participants in competitive employment, this is typically intended to be a long-term outcome.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Providers improve provider capacity to deliver effective projects for participants</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved provider capacity to deliver effective education and employment supports for refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English language proficiency has been captured through the community of practice. This data was not available to the evaluation, which has instead relied on provider and sector stakeholder interviews.</li> </ul>
<p><b>There is an improved evidence base for what works, delivery and increased settlement and employment services capacity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The improved evidence base for what works has been captured through the community of practice. This data was not available to the evaluation, which has instead relied on provider and sector stakeholder interviews.</li> <li>• There is no evidence of improved capacity among settlement and mainstream</li> </ul>

Outcomes	Measurement of outcomes
to deliver effective supports	employment services in relation to understanding and ability to provide support for refugee and humanitarian entrants.

The program data shows a range of outcomes, with variation by provider.

- **Short-term education outcomes:** These varied from very few (less than two) to up to 740 or more across providers, with an average of 100. Short-term educational outcomes were classified as either informal or formal, with providers tending to exclusively focus on one format. For example, seven providers exclusively achieved informal outcomes, nine exclusively achieved formal outcomes. A greater number of informal educational pathways were achieved, echoing what we heard during interviews with providers.
- **Short-term employment outcomes:** These varied from very few to upward of 180, with an average of 53. Providers tended to achieve a greater number of supported employment outcomes, again reflecting what we heard during interviews with providers as a strategy which supports the needs of EPRI participants. Beyond supported employment, a few providers focused on achieving brokered and self-employment outcomes. There were some notable successes here, one provider achieving 110+ brokered outcomes, and another achieving 180+ supported employment outcomes. Providers tended to focus on part-time employment, which caters to participants' immediate needs for work while balancing their other needs.
- **Medium-term education outcomes:** Seven providers achieved medium term employment outcomes, highlighting this was less of a focus across the program. There were, however, some successes here, with outcomes ranging from 1 to upward of 80. These were a mix of VET or University outcomes, with notable more outcomes achieved for VET courses, understandably.
- **Medium-term employment outcomes:** Most providers managed to achieved medium-term employment outcomes, with a maximum of around 180+ and an average of 41. Compared with short-term employment outcomes, there is a notable shift away from supported to competitive employment, with fifteen providers achieving competitive employment outcomes, and five reporting supported employment outcomes. Two providers in particular appeared to have success at scale, achieving greater than 110 competitive employment outcomes. Four providers achieved self-employment outcomes, ranging from five to 180+.

This data reflect diversity in numbers achieved as well as outcome types, including informal and formal education, and supported, brokered, competitive and self-employment. Importantly, high outcome numbers cannot simply be interpreted as 'success' – EPRI has illustrated that different participant needs are met in very different ways. A wraparound program that has the capacity to support people with no English or functional literacy in their first language is as important to the ecosystem as providers who can quickly move large numbers of people through short-term stabilisation programs or brokered employment.



### Implication for future program design – matching participant with program

Future program design should consider:

- Diverse outcome patterns highlight the importance of matching program and participant for fit via assessment and career planning. A more work-ready participant may only require short-term support or training, whereas someone very far from employment will require more long-term interventions to be job ready. Fit of participant and provider matters.



### Case study: Asa and Prosper (Nundah Community Enterprises Cooperative)

Asa and Prosper entered Australia as refugees in 2015. As they spoke very little English, they felt disconnected upon arrival in Australia, and struggled to understand Australian culture and integrate into the community. They also didn't have driver licences, which created a barrier to finding or maintaining a job. Despite these early challenges, Asa and Prosper remained optimistic about their future in Australia, which was mainly attributed to their faith. They currently lead a local church, which has enabled them to understand the needs of their community and increase their sense of connection to others.

A speaker at a church conference suggested they speak to Nundah Community Enterprises Cooperative (NCEC) for training and support services. After meeting with NCEC, Asa and Prosper felt heard, and believed they were provided an opportunity to develop new skills as well as support their community. NCEC suggested taking part in their EPRI program, to learn English and the necessary sewing skills to get a job in Australia. Leveraging on the influence that Asa and Prosper have on the wider Congolese community, NCEC empowered Asa and Prosper to coordinate, recruit and facilitate the program for the Congolese community. The program has provided a pathway for the Congolese community to learn new skills, increase their English language proficiency and set them on a path to secure employment in the open job market.

*"I ask, why has Australia helped me and my family? They have supported me so much so now I want to help others too."*

*"Nundah came at the right time – everyone who has come into the program really enjoys it."*

Since participating in the program, Asa and Prosper have experienced significant improvement in their conversational English. They have learned sewing skills, which were unattainable without the EPRI program. The program has also built their confidence to obtain their drivers licences, allowing them to drive to the sewing classes. As a result of the program, Asa and Prosper have a more positive outlook on life and feel as though they are making a meaningful contribution to society. Asa is passionate about inspiring women to learn new skills and find a job and cites the program as the catalyst to her heightened dedication to support women (and men) in the program to believe in their skills and live out their dreams.

*"Helping is not about money, it is love. Doing what you're able to do to help others."*

#### Key outcomes:

- Support to learn sewing skills
- Increased confidence to obtain driver's licence
- Improved English language proficiency
- Increased sense of connection to community and Australia



### Case study: Maria (The Social Outfit)

Born in Afghanistan, Maria moved to Australia in search of a better life. Adjusting to her new environment, she faced challenges in finding employment due to limited confidence in her English-speaking abilities and confusion over Australia's job market. Despite having prior experience in her home country, Maria struggled to secure a job in Australia, leading to feelings of frustration and uncertainty about her future.

*"I was suffering from depression, health issues, my English wasn't great. I didn't know what I was doing."*

A friend informed Maria about The Social Outfit, and Maria decided to join, hoping to gain local work experience, improve her English and build confidence. Signing up for the program was straightforward—Maria filled out an online form, attended an interview, and was accepted.

As part of the program, Maria participated in a 12-week course that combined mentoring and practical experience. She received 1 hour of weekly mentoring from Sonya, a dedicated advisor who helped with career planning, resume writing, and interview preparation. Maria also spent 1 day a week working in The Social Outfit shop, where she practised her retail skills and improved her English through real-life interactions. The program also provided online resources, such as videos and tips, which helped Maria further enhance her language and work skills. Through the program, Maria also pursued Certificates 2 and 3 in English. She later transitioned into Certificate 3 in Multiple Design and Certificate 4 in Graphic Design, aligning with her passion for creativity. These achievements marked significant progress for Maria, who had previously felt isolated and unsure about her direction in life.

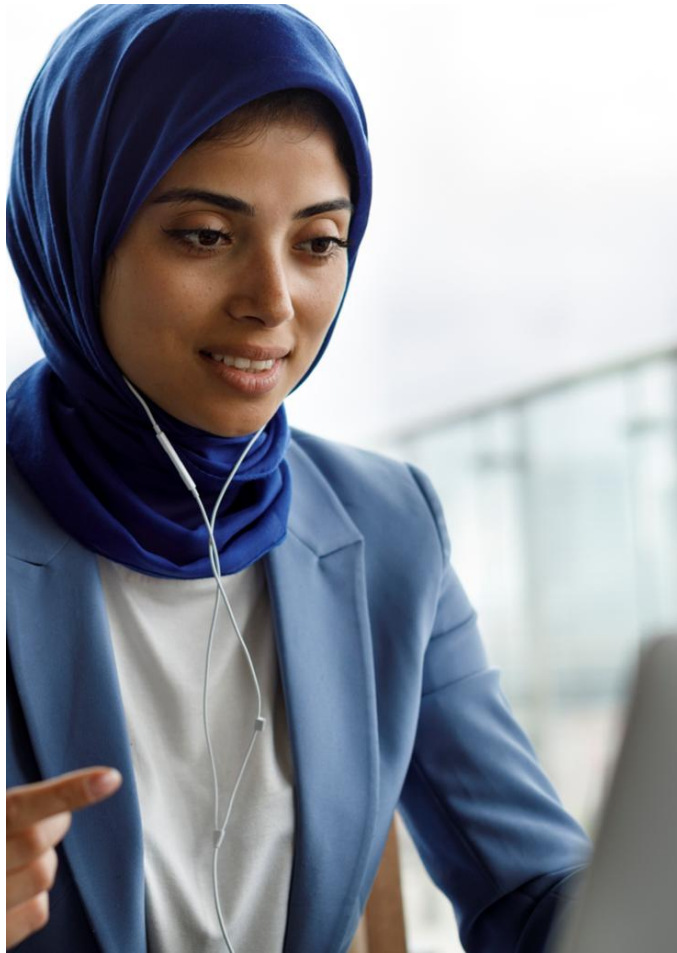
Today, Maria has two jobs – one in retail and another in hospitality. She is optimistic about her future, balancing her studies and work while continuing to build her skills. She remains grateful for the support and encouragement she received, which has transformed her life and empowered her to move forward confidently.

*"If I wasn't on this program, I would still be feeling scared, trying to learn English... It's the best and most important thing I've done here."*

*"It's given me friends and connection. That's really important and I've got some really good friends now. I'm going to keep going from here."*

#### Key outcomes:

- Support to find her first job
- Skills in retail and design
- Working casually for more than a year, while studying
- Enrolled in further study



### Case study: Sarah (Social Engine Partnership)

Born in Afghanistan, Sarah and her family fled to another country before they eventually moved to Australia. As a 19-year-old, Sarah had to integrate into Australia, as well as take on responsibility for supporting her parents and younger siblings. She and her siblings were the only family members who spoke English, making it difficult for her parents to find work. Despite having no previous employment experience, Sarah was determined to find work to help support her family. A family friend suggested she take part in an EPRI program run by the Social Engine Partnership. This program allowed her to gain work experience, learn new skills, and receive support from a volunteer mentor about life and culture in Australia. As part of the program, Sarah chose between work experience at a café or a warehouse. After visiting both locations, she opted for the warehouse, believing it would lead to employment more quickly. During her 12-week experience, her supervisor helped her apply for jobs, offering guidance on resume writing and interview preparation. When she was invited to interview for a warehouse position, she felt nervous, but the program's staff reassured her.

*"If the program wasn't there, I couldn't have applied for any job because they need Australian work experience. If you don't have that, they won't hire you. So, I'm very thankful that I got into this program and got a job."*

Before arriving in Australia, Sarah had strong conversational and written English skills. Her comprehension of the Australian accent has improved, and she feels more confident in workplace conversations with her mentor. Her mentor provided guidance on educational pathways suited to her goals of attending university while working casually to support her family. As a fellow migrant, her mentor also offered advice on settling into Australia and understanding cultural differences. Additionally, the program covered driving lessons and the driving test, allowing Sarah to obtain her licence and drive to her new job.

Over the past year, Sarah has worked casually while studying part-time. She is enrolled in a Level 4 certificate program for next year, with the dream to pursue a bachelor's degree in the future. The flexibility of her job allows her to balance work and study, and she is generally satisfied with her hours. Despite feeling uncertain about her future due to financial concerns and the need to find a new home for her family, Sarah remains optimistic about her education and is committed to helping her family settle in Australia.

*"I can understand the way that the system works here... I know that I can apply for a scholarship, and I can also get help from my mentor on how to apply for a scholarship and other things that can help me with study."*

#### Key outcomes:

- Support to find her first job
- Practical and financial support to obtain driver's licence
- Working casually for more than a year, while studying
- Enrolled in further study



### Case study: Andrew (Community Corporate)

Since arriving in 2022, Andrew had been struggling to find his footing in Australia. Though Andrew had studied English in the past, he was not a very confident English speaker, and he struggled to read longer documents written in English. Without extended family or a connection to his local community, Andrew felt isolated from society. He couldn't find work and was starting to worry about his ability to provide for his family. Eventually, someone at AMES suggested he contact Community Corporate. He was told they would be able to give him some training, and perhaps even put him in contact with companies that might be looking for new employees. Although Andrew didn't really know what to expect and was a little confused about what Community Corporate would be doing, he remained positive and reached out with a hopeful and open mind.

*"I really did not know what would happen. All I wanted was the chance of getting a job so that I could finally start my new life."*

Community Corporate identified Andrew as eligible for their EPRI program. Over several weeks, Andrew worked with Community Corporate to train for a specific role and gain broader information about Australia's job market and workplace cultures, and financial literacy. Andrew also completed English for Work training via Community Corporate's EPRI program. After a few weeks in the program, Andrew realised that learning English was easier than he thought. Regularly conversing in English helped him build up his confidence and he felt that all the things he had previously learnt came back to him. His confidence soared, and each week his rate of learning increased. Soon both he and Community Corporate felt he was ready to enter the workforce.

*"I'm more confident. I started the first step, and it gave me the opportunity to change my life. It is life changing."*

Andrew was set up with a job at IKEA. He now reflects on how important the job-specific training provided through EPRI was. He was able to enter the workforce with most of the skills needed to be a successful employee. This has clearly been a transformative experience for Andrew, who now has the tools and skills required to support his family for the foreseeable future. Community Corporate remain in touch with Andrew, and he feels he can always call on them for any additional advice or support.

*"I will continue with this job and save money so I can buy a house for my family."*

#### Key outcomes:

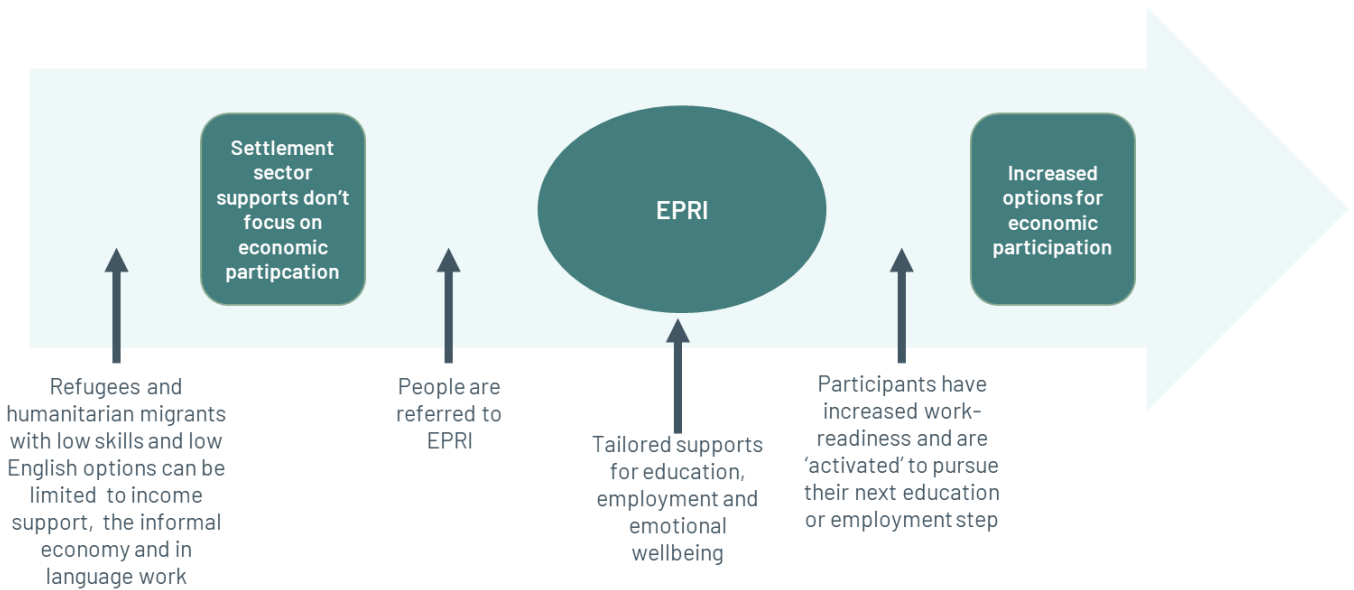
- Retail skills
- Able to provide for family
- Improved English language proficiency

Increased sense of connection to community and Australia

## Beyond numbers, the overarching benefit of EPRI for participants appears to be that it provides people with options

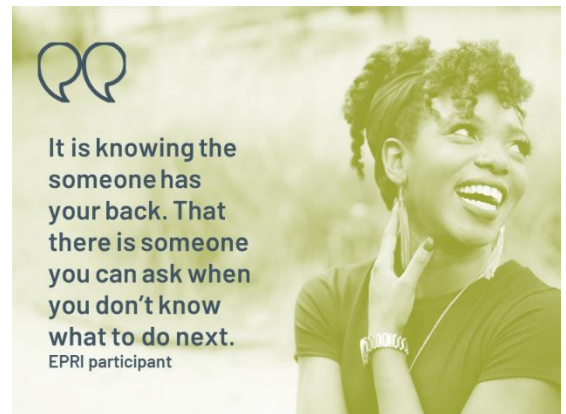
Importantly, a program such as EPRI provides participants with options – people commented that without this investment in their pathways and capability their choices narrow. This might mean limiting opportunities to income support, the informal economy, or in language work available through community networks, or not having the knowledge required to start a business. Following participation in EPRI, participants commonly have increased work-readiness and ‘activated’ to pursue a broader range of options related to education or employment (as shown in the diagram below).

Figure 3: EPRI increases options for economic participation



## Pathways: Activation is the key benefit of EPRI education and employment outcomes

Based on provider testimony and a small number of interviews with participants, it appears that the key role of EPRI for refugees and humanitarian entrants is activation. People told us stories of being frustrated at the early focus of settlement services on learning to catch public transport or enrol in Centrelink, where instead they were interested in contributing their skills to Australia and achieving wealth creation. Newly arrived refugees reported being horrified by stories of people still enrolled in English classes and not working at 3, 5 and even 20 years after arrival. Where people have struggled with skills and qualification recognition, they could feel disrespected and their worth unseen by a system that seemingly doesn't want to recognise their experience and abilities. As refugees and humanitarian entrants tell it, it is not necessarily easy to pursue economic opportunities.



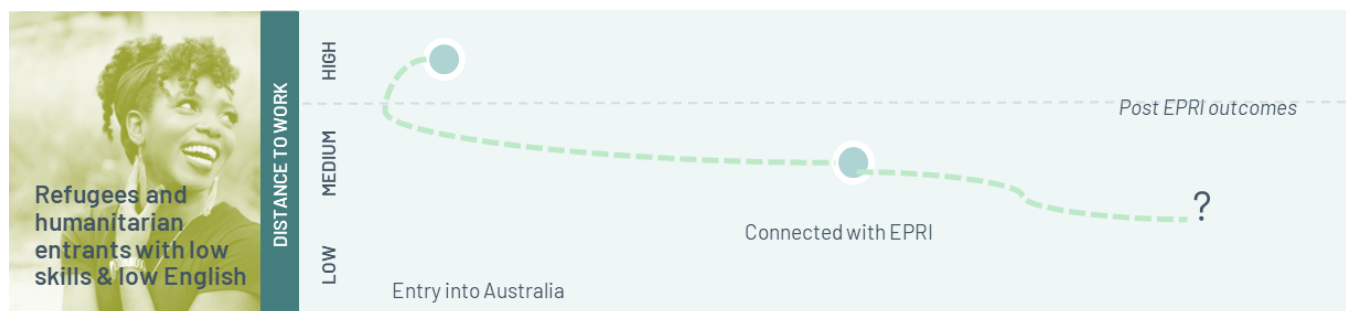
When EPRI worked well, it appeared to provide an opportunity for people to ‘activate’ where there were otherwise few options. In practice, activation involves developing an understanding of the unique circumstances, abilities and ambitions of each individual, and tailoring interventions to meet their needs.

Participant ‘activation’ can look very different for different refugees and humanitarian entrants. For instance, for those who are more work-ready and with smaller English gaps, the role of a program such as EPRI is to provide a confidence boost. In consultations with EPRI providers and refugees, we heard about people who had skills and English language proficiency but hesitated to seek competitive employment because they doubted themselves. For this group, even a short period of work experience that increased social connection with migrant peers and the

Australian community and validated skills and abilities could be enough to launch them into competitive employment or further study. However, for people with significant torture and trauma experiences, with high English gaps and little work experience, this process might take months or even longer.

Figure 4 depicts an example of an activation journey for an EPRI participant with high work readiness. This summarises support, feelings, pain points and complicating factors at three main time points – entry into Australia, the participant’s connection with EPRI and post-EPRI outcomes.

**Figure 4: Example participant activation journey (high work readiness)**



**Journey map**

**Support:** Focussed on practical early settlement – housing, income support, public transport  
**Feel:** Resilient, motivated, want to contribute and create wealth  
**Pain point:** Not being offered advice on how to achieve financial goals  
**Complicating factors:** Systemic barriers to employment, especially for people with low skills and low English

**Support:** People are empowered to translate their skills and strengths into the Australian content, learn about workplace norms and rights, problem solve issues as they occur and access practical support such as achieving qualifications and licenses  
**Feel:** People feel backed, empowered, growing in confidence and self-esteem  
**Pain point:** There may be feelings of grief over loss of professional identity, impacts of trauma experiences and ongoing settlement issues  
**Complicating factors:** Having to make trade offs between short- and long-term employment outcomes

**Support:** Many providers give ongoing support on a formal or informal basis, to both participants and employers  
**Feel:** People feel proud of their contribution, and seek to expand and help others in their community  
**Pain point:** There isn't a mechanism that allows people to change paths if they 'get stuck'  
**Complicating factors:** There isn't evidence for medium-long term outcomes from EPRI or Workforce Australia. This can be a focus for future measurement

Refer to 'Example participant activation journey (high work readiness)' in Appendix 3 to see the full breakdown for this figure.

**Capability: Work readiness as a 'bridge' between refugees and humanitarian entrant and employer needs**

Stakeholders noted a number of potential work readiness gaps for refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and low English, including self-esteem and confidence, familiarisation with Australian workplaces and systems, and technical skills acquisition. We observed outcomes for EPRI for each.

- Where participants had been given opportunities through EPRI, they reported gratitude not only at the opportunity to learn skills, earn or start a business, but also an increased sense of self-esteem that comes with a worker/earner identity and confidence that comes with knowing that governments, EPRI providers and others think they are worth investing in. They safety of the environment provided by EPRI providers, with staff who were genuinely caring and non-judgemental, appeared important in supporting these outcomes.
- A uniform benefit of EPRI is the way in which it 'translates' Australian systems, whether this is familiarisation with workplace expectations, norms and rights, negotiating the administrative requirements of starting a small business, or getting a driver's licence in a new country. Where providers also support employers, this translation is 'two-way', upskilling the latter to better support refugees and humanitarian entrants.
- Learning technical skills to support work in different sectors also supports work readiness and was a key feature of provider models.



*[Timeframes are] where the challenges lie within the model. In the timeframe that actually it takes for a human being to go on this journey. It's also having a key understanding and validations of all the critical little steps along that journey are actually what makes that possible. So, the kind of broad framework of you get someone a mentor, you get them doing some training stuff when you get them a job... the reality of the value we've seen is actually in all the unique and much smaller steps that people grow in confidence, growing skills, growing communication, growing, just understanding basics around everyday life... So, not underselling that in 5 or 10 years' time, arguably even though we didn't get that person a job in a 12-month window, we would argue that in 5 or 10 years' time the evidence will be that that person has made a far better kind of inroads into their participation in Australia because of those experiences, so not under selling how important those sort of seeds ... the government wants to see the big outcomes, but making sure that we don't undervalue, that's actually foundational to get the big outcomes for someone's life... EPRI provider*

## Provider (program) outcomes

The EPRI eligibility criteria required an immediate prompt for providers to adjust recruitment practices and their employment model. Providers typically reported that the impact cost to deliver to participants with low English language proficiency is beyond what their organisations can support with usual resourcing, and EPRI was required to consider and achieve this change. As a result, providers reported improved capacity with respect to:

- extending their recruitment networks into the settlement sector and with ethno-specific organisations
- improving their ability to support participants with low English and sometimes with low literacy – this included tailoring programs to suit additional needs as well as additional resources required to support people with low English in the workplace
- improving their ability to support participants from different cultural backgrounds, including through partnerships with ethno-specific organisations and tailoring employment models to support varied expectations of appropriate and respectful supports
- improving their infrastructure – for instance, buying equipment or developing IP such as impact measurement frameworks.

When it came to infrastructure, the evidence suggests that funding certainty through EPRI meant that organisations 'backed themselves' and had the confidence to invest in their business.

## Sector outcomes

There has been missed opportunity at the sector level. This was because:

- there aren't systemic connections between EPRI and settlement and employment services
- longitudinal data or data on comparative outcomes is needed to fully understand the EPRI value proposition.



### Implication for future program design – measuring provider co-contribution and cross-sector collaboration

- Future program design should consider a focus on measuring cross-sector collaboration and impacts.

## What factors were important in achieving outcomes?

The evaluation tested a number of delivery models to support refugees and humanitarian entrants to participate in employment, with the aim of reducing long-term reliance on income support payments. The different models have provided an opportunity to observe strengths and weaknesses for provider organisational profile and employment model. Whilst definitive judgements cannot be made because of lack of firm outcomes data, as the below discussion illustrates, findings suggest that participant, provider and model attributes are important to achieving outcomes.

## Program settings

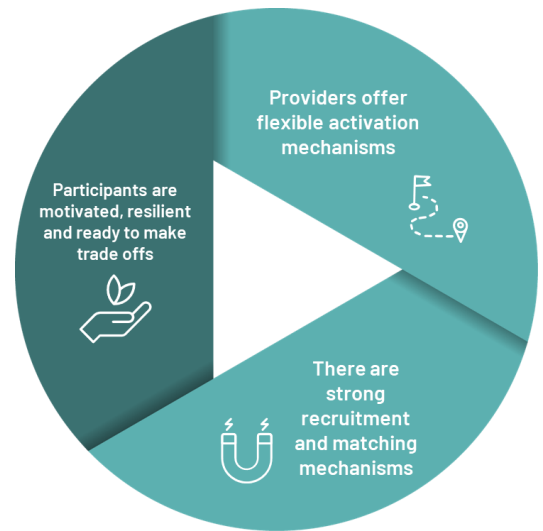
EPRI has demonstrated the importance of:

- effective recruitment and matching mechanisms in achieving outcomes for participants (partly in place for EPRI)
- clearly articulating program goals with respect to short- and medium-term outcomes for participants and provider capacity building and putting in place impact measurement (not in place for EPRI).

Participants who achieve short-term outcomes with EPRI are reported to:

- be resilient, and motivated to work and ready to establish themselves financially in Australia
- be at an appropriate stage in their physical and psychological healing journey
- be willing to make a trade-off for a 'right now' job over more highly paid and professional positions for which they might be qualified or investing in full-time English language or vocational training
- not have access to other employment channels (e.g. via community or informal networks) and prefer not to access these.

Of note, these characteristics do not seem to be correlated with English language ability, level of education or prior paid work experience.



## Implication for future program design – participant targeting

Future program design should consider:

- The resilience and motivation participants brought to EPRI suggests that these should reflect recruitment criteria, rather than solely viewed as soft skills to develop during the program.

### Providers that appear better positioned to support participants have:

- relevant participant/sector expertise and networks prior to commencing EPRI
- lived experience leadership
- a strong commitment to tailoring outcomes to meet the needs of participants (passion)
- access to appropriate resources to support participants.

### Employment models that appear better positioned to support participants:


- are strengths-based and support agency and empowerment as well as use of the skills and expertise participants bring to Australia and employment
- reflect the evidence for 'what works' – and provide holistic, person-centred (caring, non-judgemental) supports that address building confidence and self-esteem
- are based on an implicit/formally documented theory of change with respect to achieving English language, skills and employability outcomes
- 'translate' Australian norms and systems, including via workplace expectations and rights education as well as practical support
- have a focus on career planning and are tailored to 'activation' need and level of English, work readiness, healing and ambition
- facilitate social connection for wellbeing and to practise English

- effectively 'match' participant and employment opportunity
- have a focus on transition to post-program employment
- incorporate social connections to support wellbeing and also opportunities to practise English language and worker identity
- consider 'supply' (e.g. improving employer capacity)
- provide access to capital where people don't have a financial history in Australia
- address healing.

**System features which were lacking for EPRI, but which would provide a more fertile ground for program delivery include:**

- ongoing supports that mean refugees and humanitarian entrants don't get 'stuck' in short-term roles
- collaboration between sectors
- more universal access to appropriate employment support for refugees and humanitarian entrants
- medium- and long-term tracking of outcomes of comparative interventions.

## 4.2 Effectiveness



**KEQ: Is the program effective or on target to be effective in improving the employment rate of refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English language proficiency?**

### Summary assessment

Early evidence suggests that with appropriate 'recruitment' and 'matching' mechanisms, use of social enterprises to activate refugees and humanitarian entrants and build work readiness is a valuable additional option to current settlement supports.

Further evidence is required to understand medium- and long-term outcomes for program participants with respect to English language acquisition, skills development and employment participation. Additionally, more evidence is needed to better understand whether early investment in social enterprises provides a long-term 'lift' in the sector's ability to deliver for refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English language proficiency, and to define impact costs.

## Effectiveness – summary of findings

Table 26: Summary of findings for effectiveness

Output or outcomes	Indicator	Measure	Assessment
Increased pathways to economic participation for participants	Increased number of pathways to economic participation for participants	Extent to which EPRI has provided alternative options for refugees and humanitarian entrants to increase their employability or enter into employment	<p>EPRI has increased economic pathways for refugees and humanitarian entrants who can't or won't access the patchwork of existing alternative options.</p> <p>EPRI appears to have been a particularly important option for refugees and humanitarian entrants in their first year in Australia, for those with low English, who have substantial healing and emotional support requirements, who do not have a supportive community to access alternative work arrangements and are without access to finance to start a small business.</p> <p>The elements of EPRI that have been important in developing economic pathways include effective recruitment mechanisms (alerting potential participants to the option of</p>

Output or outcomes	Indicator	Measure	Assessment
			EPRI via existing networks) and tailored, person-centred support matched to participant needs. EPRI has also addressed 'supply side' factors, supporting employer cultural change and hence structural barriers in workplaces.
<b>EPRI provider capacity to deliver effective services for participants</b>	Increased capacity for providers to deliver services for participants	Extent to which EPRI providers report improved ability to support refugees and humanitarian migrants	EPRI providers universally reported an improved ability to support refugees and humanitarian migrants. However, for the most part, increases in capacity will be limited to the duration of EPRI funding. Gains in capacity, to do with scaling, number and type of participants supported, are not sustainable.
<b>Improved understanding about effective service design and delivery</b>	Increased understanding of 'what works' with respect to delivering programs for refugees and humanitarian migrants	Proportion of EPRI providers and partners that report improved understanding of participant needs	EPRI has demonstrated learnings with respect to the type of employment participation services and sector change most likely to deliver benefits against the range of needs held by refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and low English. However, these learnings have been limited to the provider community of practice.

## How effectively did EPRI increase pathways to economic participation for participants?



### Key messages

- This early evidence suggests that EPRI has been effective in increasing short-term options available to refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and low English. However, there is a need to better establish medium- and long-term outcomes for EPRI and its comparator programs, including Workforce Australia.
- For the most part, EPRI has provided a short-term boost to social enterprise capacity to support refugees and humanitarian entrants – to sustain outcomes, funding will need to be continued.
- Our knowledge of 'what works' has improved with respect to the value of a flexible activation mechanism that specifically aims to meet the employment needs of refugees and humanitarian migrants, and of social enterprises in delivering this; the impact cost of delivering an EPRI-type program through social enterprises; required program settings, including the need for effective recruitment and matching mechanisms; and the participant, provider, employment model and system settings that support success.

EPRI providers typically reported that the participants they supported had few options outside EPRI for employment participation. Stakeholders from employment services and the settlement sector reported a mixed picture with respect to refugee and humanitarian entrant access to pathways to employment. There are reportedly some good supports available through humanitarian settlement providers, ethno-specific organisations and informal networks, however these opportunities are varied, and not available to all. There is evidence to suggest that refugees (including those with low skills and/or low English) are accessing support at scale through programs such as Workforce Australia.<sup>13</sup>

Stakeholders suggested that refugees and humanitarian entrants who are part of activated communities and/or more work-ready may well be able to navigate alternative pathways. However, lack of formal pathways for people who are

<sup>13</sup> Workforce Australia employment services are formally made available after refugees have been in Australia for 12 months and as an option before this. There are currently approximately 30,000 self-reported refugees on the Workforce Australia caseload, 13,310 of which have been in Australia less than 5 years, and 12,045 who are designated as having low skills and low English, suggesting that at least some of the potential EPRI cohort are accessing Workforce Australia.

less work-ready reportedly limits options to reliance on income support, or employment through the informal or in language economies. Findings from this evaluation suggest that an EPRI-type program provides a good alternative model for participants with low English, and those who require more holistic supports tailored to address healing and emotional needs, build soft as well as vocational skills, and support access to finance to start a small business.

The elements of EPRI that have been important in developing economic pathways include effective recruitment mechanisms (alerting potential participants to the option of EPRI via existing networks of trust), and tailored, person-centred support that activates latent ambitions and skills, enabling people to start an economic journey to fulfilling their potential. By supporting participants to learn about Australian workplace culture and rights and build networks, EPRI also offers a further protective mechanism.

This analysis has suggested that the effectiveness of EPRI could be improved if there were deeper and wider recruitment options, and better opportunities to match provider to participant need. Even where EPRI providers had good networks, these tended to be limited either by number or type of partner organisations. We observed variation across EPRI providers in employment models, however most providers typically offered more limited variation in learning opportunities and employment type within their model.

In addition to monitoring employment in the medium-term, experience of programs supporting refugees and humanitarian migrants suggests that considering outcomes over time will be important. This reflects evidence that shows that programs that steer migrants and jobseekers towards employment over study can have good short-term outcomes but be less effective over 5-10- year timeframes.

Whilst providers reported generally increased employability for EPRI participants, we observed limited evidence for medium-term effectiveness of EPRI – that is, employment and education participation post-program. Not observing these outcomes is partly a function of lack of good reporting, but also reflects that delayed program establishment and the short timeframe for delivering the program have also delayed achievement of medium-term outcomes.

## Implication for future program design – measurement

Future program design should consider:

- There isn't good evidence for post-program employability and employment participation for EPRI. This should be a focus for future program design, as should improved transparency for Workforce Australia outcomes for refugees.
- Lack of data highlights opportunities to strengthen the design and delivery of EPRI, including increasing an emphasis on achieving English language outcomes and clarity about whether and how English language as well as employment outcomes might be achieved. However, it also highlights the importance of developing and implementing comparable, accessible and effective measures of English language ability across government. (For instance, the Workforce Australia Job Seeker Snapshot uses a self-report measure that aligns with confidence rather than objective assessment of English.)
- Watch out for setting outcomes. This evaluation has highlighted the difficulty in establishing a 'one size fits all' outcomes measurement. This circumstance arises because of the very varied needs and wants for refugees and humanitarian entrants. Unlike people who are selected to come to Australia on the basis of their ability to study and work, refugees and humanitarian entrants may come with very different levels of work readiness. This reflects previous education and employment experiences as well as the potential for significant torture and trauma experiences. For one person, success might be an employment outcome achieved in a few weeks. For another, part-time supported employment achieved in the medium- or long-term may be success. Comparative analysis, including the value for money analysis undertaken in this evaluation, should be treated with caution.

## How effectively did the program increase provider capacity to deliver services for refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English?

### Key messages

- EPRI has increased short-term provider capacity to deliver services for refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and low English, however this uplift will likely dissipate with program funding.

There are opportunities to better define service provider capacity building aims and the sustainability of this.

We observed a range of outcomes with respect to provider capacity building:

- organisations with excellent programs supporting refugees and migrants have been able to offer this to more people, and tailor delivery to people with low levels of English
- organisations that have not previously targeted refugees and migrants have shifted their approach to do so
- organisations have invested in infrastructure to support more efficient and effective delivery, including equipment and systems
- organisations without prior experience with refugees and humanitarian entrants have built a better understanding of how to support these cohorts, and new programs and networks in the sector.

Provider feedback suggests that increase in capacity with respect to numbers of participants supported, and supporting refugees and humanitarian entrants (with low skill levels and/or low English proficiency) through new programs are directly correlated with funding of social impact costs via EPRI. Once this funding is removed, organisations will likely go back to pre-EPRI levels of activity, including number and type of cohorts supported. Having said this, most providers without previous experience reported that they would be more open to supporting refugees and humanitarian entrants. In contrast, infrastructure investments appear to provide ongoing benefits.



*When we started, we had to adapt our program quite significantly. From what we first thought we'd be able to set it up and run with it to the reality of how do we do this and how do we do this well. One of the key things we started doing was we start people in either unemployment ready programs or in mentoring and encourage them to swap over and jump into the other. But it's rare that we get them to jump into both at exactly the same time... So a bit more flexibility required than we thought."*

**EPRI provider**

*It's become clear we're not going to get to that total anyway. So we're probably looking at getting closer to 200 jobs, but the positive has been that jobs that are far more aligned with people's strengths, ambitions, barriers to employment or practicalities... So, we've got a greater range of pathways and jobs now direct, you know direct, direct employment, open employment. So that's been a marvellous thing and a lot of full-time jobs... It's been a rollercoaster, but we've come out the other side, but this real career development focus with getting in wraparound supports getting people into the right type of job and quite often a full-time job... EPRI provider*



## Implication for future program design – provider capacity building

Future program design should consider:

- Social enterprise capacity building aims were not articulated in the grant opportunity guidelines or grant agreements or reflected in provider reporting requirements. This evaluation suggests that a more effective approach requires clarity and an intentional focus on social impact investing as well as participant outcomes. That is, what outcomes will be achieved, what is the theory of change, and how this can be tested.
- We note the broader interest in exploring the role of social enterprises providing in a multi-market delivery context. EPRI has certainly provided evidence of the way in which the values-orientation of social enterprises, and ability to offer supported or brokered employment in tandem with skills development and holistic support, have suited the needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or low English. However, lack of an explicit focus on how EPRI might build organisational and sector sustainability with respect to this cohort has limited learnings. An intentional focus on organisational and sector uplift in future programs is desirable.

## How effectively did EPRI improve our understanding of how to deliver employment services to newly arrived refugees and humanitarian migrants with low skills and/or low English?



### Key messages

- EPRI has demonstrated some learnings with respect to the type of employment participation services and sector change most likely to deliver benefits against the range of needs held by refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and low English.

- However, lack of an explicit focus on how EPRI might build organisational and sector sustainability with respect to this cohort has limited learnings about social impact investment. An intentional focus on organisational and sector uplift in future programs is desirable.

EPRI has effectively improved our understanding of:

- the value of flexible activation mechanisms that specifically aim to meet the employment needs of refugees and humanitarian entrants, and of social enterprises in delivering this
- the impact cost of delivering an EPRI-type program through social enterprises
- required program settings, including the need for effective recruitment and matching mechanisms
- the participant, provider, employment model and system settings that support success.

To date, these learnings have been limited to the provider community of practice. They could be more effectively shared with government and other services and sectors.

## 4.3 Value for money



**KEQ: To what extent do the services provided under EPRI represent value for money for the Australian Government?**

### Summary assessment

Providers vary widely in their cost to deliver outcomes. At the lower end, the EPRI provider cost to deliver appears to be competitive with comparable programs. If EPRI could demonstrate more sustainable outcomes for participants (as early findings suggest it might), it will represent a good value for money option for government. Further efficiency can be supported by a more efficient program delivery model (with respect to recruitment and matching mechanisms) and also a learning focus on outcomes measurement and payments tied to outcomes. Funding EPRI for up to an additional 5 years would provide an opportunity to explore both.

## Value for money – summary of findings

Findings relating to value for money are summarised in the table below and then outlined in more detail.

**Table 27: Summary of findings on value for money**

Output	Measure	Assessment
Amount of funding provided to EPRI providers	Total cost per grant Total cost per outcome/outcome by type of service	The EPRI cost to deliver per outcome has varied markedly by provider. Providers with lower EPRI costs appear competitive with like programs.
Amount of in-kind or additional funding Opportunities to increase efficiency	Amount of in-kind or additional funding reported by EPRI providers What opportunities are there to increase efficiency for EPRI?	There are a number of opportunities to realise greater efficiencies for EPRI, including with respect to the program’s recruitment and matching mechanisms.

## Did EPRI represent value for money?



### Key messages

- The EPRI cost to deliver outcomes has varied markedly by provider. This reflects that some models are more resource-intensive

and also where providers have struggled to meet target KPIs for reasons such as recruitment.

- A comparison of funding between EPRI and other programs suggests that the lower end of the EPRI provider cost to deliver outcomes is competitive, however, that a number of providers have reported a very high cost to deliver outcomes.
- If EPRI could demonstrate more sustainable outcomes for participants (as early findings suggest it might), it will represent value for money.

## What is the cost of different programs delivered by service providers?

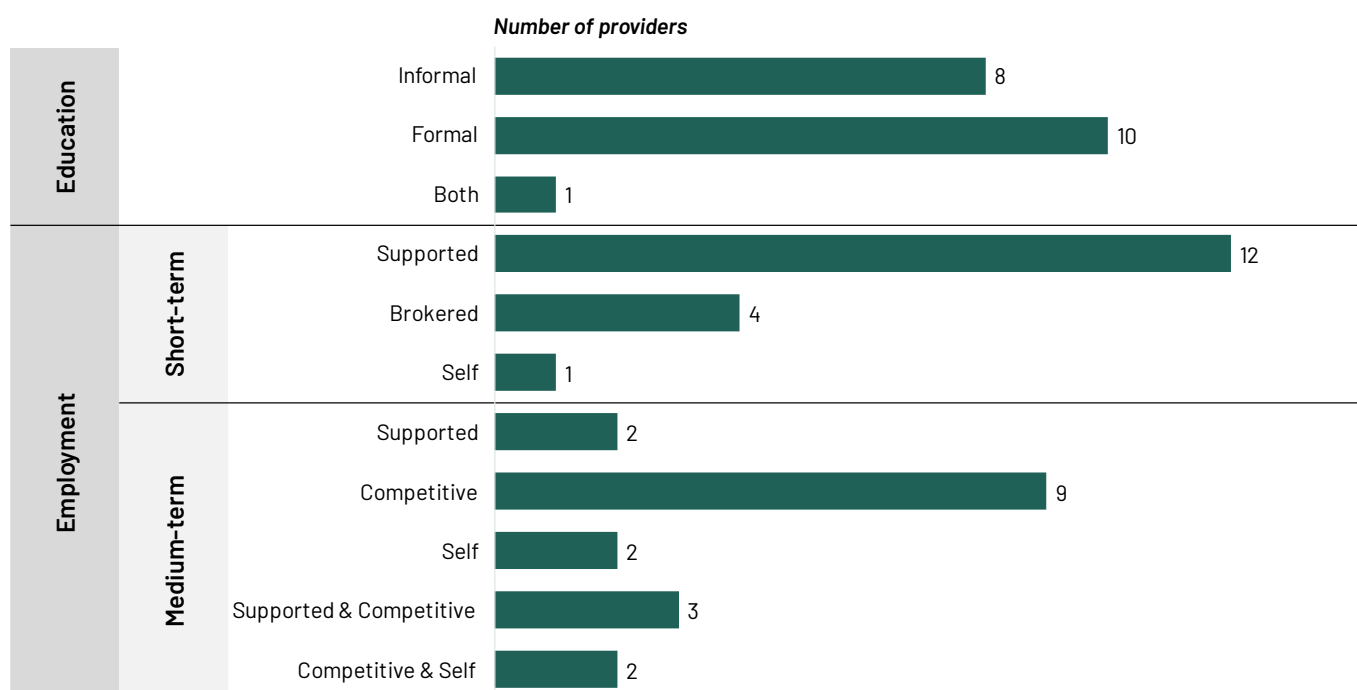
The total program funding of \$17.7 million is allocated between 20 providers, with allocations ranging between \$163,000 and \$2.2 million. The median grant is \$682,998 and the average grant is \$844,466. The difference between these values indicates that funding is focused upon larger grants. At the time of the evaluation, the total funding had not been fully dispersed, as it is being provided over the 3 financial years, 2022-23 through to 2024-25.

Although the different providers have the common objective of increasing employment among refugees and humanitarian entrants, the funded social enterprises in receipt of funding apply a diverse range of approaches and have different educational and employment outcomes. 19 of the 20 providers deliver either formal or informal education programs, including 1 provider that delivers both.

The range of short- and medium-term employment outcomes pursued by providers also varies. In the pursuit of short-term employment outcomes (up to 26 weeks), 12 providers seek to place participants in supported employment, 4 providers in brokered employment, and 1 in self-employment.

In the pursuit of medium-term employment outcomes (>26 weeks), 9 providers focus upon participants obtaining employment in the competitive labour market, with 2 providers focusing upon supported or self-employment respectively. Finally, 3 and 2 providers focus on both supported and competitive employment, and competitive and self-employment respectively.

Figure 5: Focus of provider activities



Refer to Table 36 and Table 37 in Appendix 3. Full data for figures for a full breakdown of this figure.

Reflecting the large variation in the funding received by providers, the number of outcomes also varies greatly. The provider with the highest total of individual outcomes has 1,128 individual outcomes, the majority of which comprise

748 participants achieving informal education outcomes.

The multiple and diverse range of outcomes achieved by individual providers makes it difficult to assess both provider and overall program performance. We have considered a number of options, including a weighted outcome reflecting short- and medium-term and employment and education outcomes. The table below reflects outcome ratios. Funding has been amortised to reflect 2.5 rather than 3 years of program delivery.

This data shows short-term employment average outcome costs from \$2,554 and medium-term employment outcomes from \$8,922. This reflects that some models are more resource-intensive and also where providers have struggled to meet target KPIs, as well as variations in the timeframe for which data are available. It is important to note that lowest cost to deliver does not necessarily reflect efficient or effective service delivery for participants who require more intensive support. As might be expected, social enterprises that delivered long-term supported employment outcomes were typically more resource-intensive. Other providers with a focus on competitive employment have made an early investment in building employer relationships and would be expected to become more cost-effective over time. For two providers, data was only available in February 2024 and the high cost to deliver for two providers is likely to reflect this (we would expect their cost to deliver to decrease with more recent data). In addition the higher cost to deliver for another provider is related to the revised EPRI eligibility criteria, which does not reflect the complex cohort that they support.

This analysis suggests that an EPRI impact cost of approximately \$2,500-\$15,000, depending on the intensity of participant needs, is reasonable. This includes cost to deliver per participant and provider capacity building.

## How does the cost of EPRI-funded activities compare to similar programs?

A difficulty for the comparison analysis has been identifying like programs. We have considered a number of other programs supporting employment outcomes and delivery by social enterprises. There isn't a perfect like for like comparison, with projects having different target cohorts and outcome variables. To help guide consideration of EPRI cost-effectiveness, we have included commentary on two programs below – the Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP) and Workforce Australia employment services, noting that this analysis should be read as qualitative and indicative rather than a formal cost-effectiveness comparison.

RESP was a \$34.5 million initiative funded by the NSW Government to support refugees and asylum seekers in Western Sydney and the Illawarra to gain sustainable and skilled employment. RESP commenced in July 2017 and will be finalised in June 2024. RESP provided support to refugees and asylum seekers who were unemployed or underemployed and delivered support across nine outcomes areas through a case management model. The program was delivered via an outcomes-based contracting approach, with Settlement Services International the primary contracted agency delivering the program, with subcontracting arrangements with other organisations. RESP was identified as having achieved 5,092 employment outcomes. This targeted a broader range of outcomes, including work readiness, addressing transport barriers, mentoring, developing business skills, transferability of overseas skills and qualifications, work experience, language skills, addressing education barriers, and providing post-placement support.

A cost comparison is provided by the payments from Workforce Australia to employment services providers. These comprise \$1,200 at participant engagement, followed by payments of \$1,000, \$3,000 and \$5,000 when a participant at high risk of unemployment is employed full-time for 4, 12 and 26 weeks respectively. This equates to a maximum payment of \$10,200.

Workforce Australia data shows that 2,250 26-week outcome placements were achieved for refugees with lower skills and/or low English language proficiency were made between June 2024 and October 2024. The extent to which these represent multiple outcomes for individuals, or individual outcomes, is not recorded, or whether these represent sustainable employment outcomes. The available data does not identify whether the complexity of participants supported by employment services providers differs significantly to those accessing EPRI providers.

The Workforce Australia cost to deliver is similar to the cost to deliver a number EPRI providers, but is much lower than the median EPRI cost to deliver. If social enterprises can deliver similar services to Workforce Australia AND these achieve more sustainable outcomes for this cost to deliver (as some appear likely to do), then they will prove a valuable addition to the ecosystem. To prove this hypothesis, more structured outcomes and impact data collection is

required than in the present program design. We note that most social enterprises will require capability uplift to support this level of reporting, with opportunities for upfront training for providers and adapting activity work plans to better structure data collection of outcomes.

## How could EPRI be made more efficient to deliver?



### Key messages

- The timing of this evaluation of EPRI means that efficiency gains that would be expected to be realised in later program years have yet to be realised.
- There are a number of opportunities to realise greater efficiencies for EPRI, including with respect to the program's recruitment and matching mechanisms.

### What mechanisms would need to change for EPRI to be more efficient?

We note that this evaluation of EPRI means that efficiency gains that would be expected to be realised in later program years have yet to be realised. In-kind resourcing and the passion EPRI providers bring to adapting to meet participant needs have certainly brought efficiencies, however these have not been captured in the data.

EPRI has seen a number of inefficiencies, including:

- engaging providers without previous experience to work with refugees and humanitarian entrants
- replicating recruitment and matching mechanisms for each provider
- not including a mechanism to build capacity for social enterprises that were less experienced, resulting in administrative impacts, including to achieving KPIs, adhering to eligibility criteria and data collection and reporting.

Some opportunities to achieve efficiencies include:

- having a more streamlined approach for recruitment and matching mechanisms
- introducing outcomes-based funding and greater clarity on what outcomes are expected to be achieved
- focusing funding on fewer, more equipped providers (noting caveats for funding for intensity and assuming that low cost per outcome is the defining measure of efficiency or effectiveness)
- supporting capacity building for providers to ensure adequate administrative capacity
- engaging different suppliers to act in their areas of strength.<sup>14</sup>

An unavoidable inefficiency on an ongoing basis may be the need to build sufficient capacity in social enterprises to support refugees and humanitarian entrants with low English. Organisations will require ongoing resourcing to ensure that they are ready to support this more demanding cohort, in addition to funding outcomes.

### To what extent is the current funding for grants appropriate?

We recommend that the current funding envelope is extended pro rata for up to 5 years, for a reduced number of providers (10), and a complementary focus on funding a recruitment/catchment mechanism in order to further test the cost-effectiveness and ability to achieve outcomes. The 5-year timeframe is suggested because this will allow the program to demonstrate medium-term outcomes, and also provides enough time for uncertainties in the current policy and program delivery environment (Workforce Australia and Humanitarian Settlement Program outcomes) to be resolved. We note that the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations is currently testing programs with similar settings (delivery of employment services through social enterprises) - whilst this is likely to have

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<sup>14</sup> For example, embedding the EPRI recruitment mechanism in the Humanitarian Settlement Program and other organisations that regularly support refugees and humanitarian entrants, whilst social enterprises focus on holistic supports and matching jobseekers to the most appropriate employment opportunities; including a matching mechanism that sits outside any individual social enterprise so that participants can be connected with the social enterprise option that best suits them. One option is a refugee recruitment coordinator role within the settlement sector. This is discussed further in the recommendations section below.

complementary aims rather than replacing the EPRI model, ongoing monitoring of the fit of the two programs is warranted.

The reduced number of providers is recommended because this will enable enough variety for type of model and geographic coverage to test settings and allow for equity, whilst allowing for a greater focus on efficiency and use of more effective providers. A smaller number of providers will also support a greater focus on collaboration and sector development, rather than individual organisation activity. We note that the availability of social enterprises will make it difficult to select an optimal mix of providers with respect to geographic coverage but also ensure that a mix of providers are available to meet the needs of different refugees and humanitarian migrants. For instance, selected models will ideally include small providers who can provide wraparound supports, as well as larger operations that can provide supports at scale.

## 4.4 Future program design



**KEQ: What would be the parameters for a program that represents value for money for the Australian Government look like?**

### Summary assessment

There remains an ongoing need for specific employment supports for refugees and humanitarian entrants. Without EPRI or a comparable program, there are not enough supports to enable refugees and humanitarian entrants to activate their economic potential. EPRI has not demonstrated that it is effective and feasible in the medium-term, however there are enough short-term education and employment outcomes to recommend funding EPRI as a learning model for up to 5 years. If medium- to long-term outcomes are proved, we would suggest funding EPRI (or similar) as an ongoing service as part of Workforce Australia.

Findings relating to future program design are outlined below.

### What is the program need?

Currently, Australia doesn't have a systematic model for addressing the specific employment participation needs for refugees and humanitarian entrants. There are a number of formal and informal arrangements in place, however these aren't integrated, aren't always specific to refugees and humanitarian entrants, and can lack permanency. Examples include:

- Workforce Australia has four CALD specialist providers that service ten employment regions and two refugee providers that service three employment regions (there is overlap in providers). However, stakeholder interviewees reported that they don't have sufficient funding to provide holistic or wraparound supports to refugees and humanitarian entrants.
- During their first 12 months after arrival, refugees can voluntarily participate in Workforce Australia and access the full suite of assistance. After 12 months they are incorporated into the mutual obligation framework.
- A number of programs supporting refugee and humanitarian entrant education and employment exist at the state and territory and local levels, however funding is not always ongoing or long-term.
- Humanitarian settlement providers reportedly support employment participation, however the extent to which this currently happens is unclear. Further, the extent to which economic participation will be resourced and accountable under the new Humanitarian Integration and Settlement Program (HISP) is not yet understood.
- Ethnic community organisations and informal networks support employment, however this also comes with risks for migrants becoming 'stuck' in low skill or low English language proficiency jobs, and vulnerable to exploitation.
- Social enterprises and other charities also provide supports, however they are typically not resourced to meet the employment needs of people with low levels of English.

The Shergold and Hill reports<sup>1516</sup> have identified the need for tailored employment participation programs for refugees and humanitarian entrants. These reports argue that barriers such as disrupted education and employment histories, learning English, and translating skills and experiences, trauma experiences and biases in the Australian labour market cannot be fully addressed by Workforce Australia services, and instead require a more holistic and innovative approach. In addition, labour market analysis has shown that there can be few employment opportunities for people with lower skills and/or low English language proficiency.<sup>17</sup>

Stakeholders interviewed in this study reinforced that current settings make for variable outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and low English. This is supported by the literature. For instance:

- Varela and Breunig's analysis of Multi-Agency Data Integration Project data suggests income penalties for migrants without post-school education and that family and humanitarian visa holders have weaker economic outcomes than non-migrants.<sup>18</sup>
- The Building a New Life (BNLA) in Australia dataset also suggests a correlation between refugees and humanitarian entrants with better English and post-school qualifications, and employment.<sup>19</sup>
- Tan, Rudd and Lester note that humanitarian visa holders who were employed were less likely to be in jobs that matched their skills and more likely to have lower income levels.<sup>20</sup>
- ABS statistics suggest lower workforce participation for humanitarian entrants and increased access to income support payments (although these effects do lessen over time).<sup>21</sup> Analysis of Workforce Australia and Department of Home Affairs statistics for this evaluation suggests that almost a third of the humanitarian cohort who have arrived in the last 5 years are on the former's caseload.<sup>22</sup>

In considering the data (and attempting to size the population and issues), it is important to reflect on the currency and comparability of datasets. For instance:

- Rapid changes in the size and composition of the humanitarian intake over the last 5 years brings into question the relevance of the BNLA cohort data.
- The evolving community and economic context will also shape relevance of programs such as EPRI. For instance, the evaluation heard reports of increased cultures of informal employment in some communities. We do not understand the extent to which people are earning through the informal economy, whilst still being represented as unemployed in government datasets.
- It can also be difficult to effectively interpret government administrative data with accuracy. A curiosity in the Workforce Australia data, for instance, is that in 2021 there were just over 40,000 people in the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations caseload who have self-identified as refugees. A data pull for this evaluation in November 2024 has identified approximately 30,000. This can partly be explained by a spike in jobseeker participation across the population during COVID-19 and by the removal of jobseekers with multiple barriers to employment (e.g. caring obligations or very poor mental health) from the Workforce Australia caseload after the Hill

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15 Shergold P, Benson, K and Piper, M 2019. 'Investing in refugees. Investing in Australia.' Viewed on 29 November 2024 at <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/review-integration-employment-settlement-outcomes-refugees-humanitarian-entrants.pdf>

16 Hill J, 2023. Rebuilding Employment Services report Viewed on 29 November 2024 at [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House/Former\\_Committees/Workforce\\_Australia\\_Employment\\_Services/WorkforceAustralia/Report](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Former_Committees/Workforce_Australia_Employment_Services/WorkforceAustralia/Report)

17 <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settlement-services-subsite/files/A-social-entrepreneur-guide-boosting-refugees-economic-participation.pdf>

18 Varela, P and Breunig 2024. 'TTPI Working Paper: Determinants of the Economic Outcomes of Australian Permanent Migrants'. Viewed on 29 November 2024 at <https://www.austaxpolicy.com/news/ttpi-working-paper-determinants-of-the-economic-outcomes-of-australian-permanent-migrants/>

19 Jenkinson, R, Silbert, M, De Maio, J and Edwards, B 2016. The Building a New Life in Australia 'Settlement experiences of recently arrived humanitarian migrants' Viewed on 29 November 2024 at [https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/bnla-fs1-settlement-experiences\\_0.pdf](https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/bnla-fs1-settlement-experiences_0.pdf)

20 Tan, Y, Rudd, D and Lester, L 2023. 'Employment, income, and skill alignment of humanitarian migrants in the Australian labour market: Metropolitan and regional contexts, 2000–2016' In Geographical Research. DOI:10.1111/1745-5871.12621

21 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/migrant-settlement-outcomes/latest-release#economic-participation>

22 Workforce Australia statistics show that 13,310 of the cohort identify as refugees who have arrived in Australia less than 5 years. Home Affairs statistics show that 48,742 people have been settled in Australia under the humanitarian program since June 2019. We note that these statistics should be treated with caution due to issues of comparability.

Review. Beyond this, Workforce Australia statistics aren't clear on the extent to which exits from the program can be attributed to attitudinal reasons (e.g. people aren't motivated or have lost hope) or because they have found work. This means that whilst the statistics suggest that refugees with low skills and low English language proficiency exit the caseload at similar rates to other jobseekers, we don't know the extent to which this reflects individual or long-term and meaningful employment outcomes.

- Comparability also matters. For instance, EPRI measures eligibility by the extent to which people hold humanitarian and protection visas. By definition, this doesn't include asylum seekers on bridging visas or people who have once held these visas and have since become Australian citizens. In contrast, the Workforce Australia cohort is self-identified. This further complicates our ability to size the number of people who might benefit from an EPRI-style program.

Having raised these cautions, on balance the findings of this evaluation suggest that the key opportunity – developing capital for those refugees and humanitarian entrants who face high barriers to employment in Australia – and the solution as articulated in previous reviews still stand:

- bringing together English language and employment participation supports
- helping refugee and humanitarian entrants to use the skills and business experience they bring to Australia
- creating intentional pathways to employment, including personalised plans and tailored employment supports as well as creating pathways to employment.

## **To what extent does EPRI demonstrate effectiveness and feasibility for extension in the future?**

EPRI was well placed to explore social impact and place-based approaches to support economic and social participation'. Whilst the program has performed poorly with respect to providing data to prove outcomes, findings suggest that an EPRI-type program can valuably add to the ecosystem of supports for refugees and humanitarian entrants. There are enough promising early outcomes for EPRI to suggest that social impact investing approaches supporting employment participation outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants continue to be trialled.

### **The program represents a missed opportunity because it ...**

- lacked clarity about the requirement to integrate English language as employment participation support
- did not uniformly select providers with a proven track record of supporting refugees and humanitarian entrants
- did not have a mechanism to support integration between EPRI and the settlement and employment services sectors
- did not have mechanisms for measuring impact
- contracted providers using a grant model that focused on recruitment of numbers of participants rather than on outcomes, or on innovation and self-sustainability for social enterprises.

### **In addition to the above factors, any future EPRI design will need to take into account ....**

- more efficient recruitment and matching mechanisms
- the need for a wider range of employment options in a wider range of locations, ideally through providers that can span geographic locations
- recognition that other services may be able to improve demand and supply side approaches to activating the labour market
- funding for person-centred 'activation' outcomes as well as activities
- recognition that the system is currently not resourced to support migrants with low English language proficiency on other visas, who may also benefit from an EPRI-type program
- a mechanism to ensure that people don't get 'stuck' in low skilled work in the longer-term.

## What are the parameters for optimal future program design and delivery?

This evaluation has suggested that an EPRI-type program can valuably add to the ecosystem of supports for refugees and humanitarian entrants. We recommend EPRI be funded for a longer period (up to 5 years) as a learning model to fully test possible program settings and assess medium- to long-term outcomes. The recommendations section above includes our suggested program design in full.

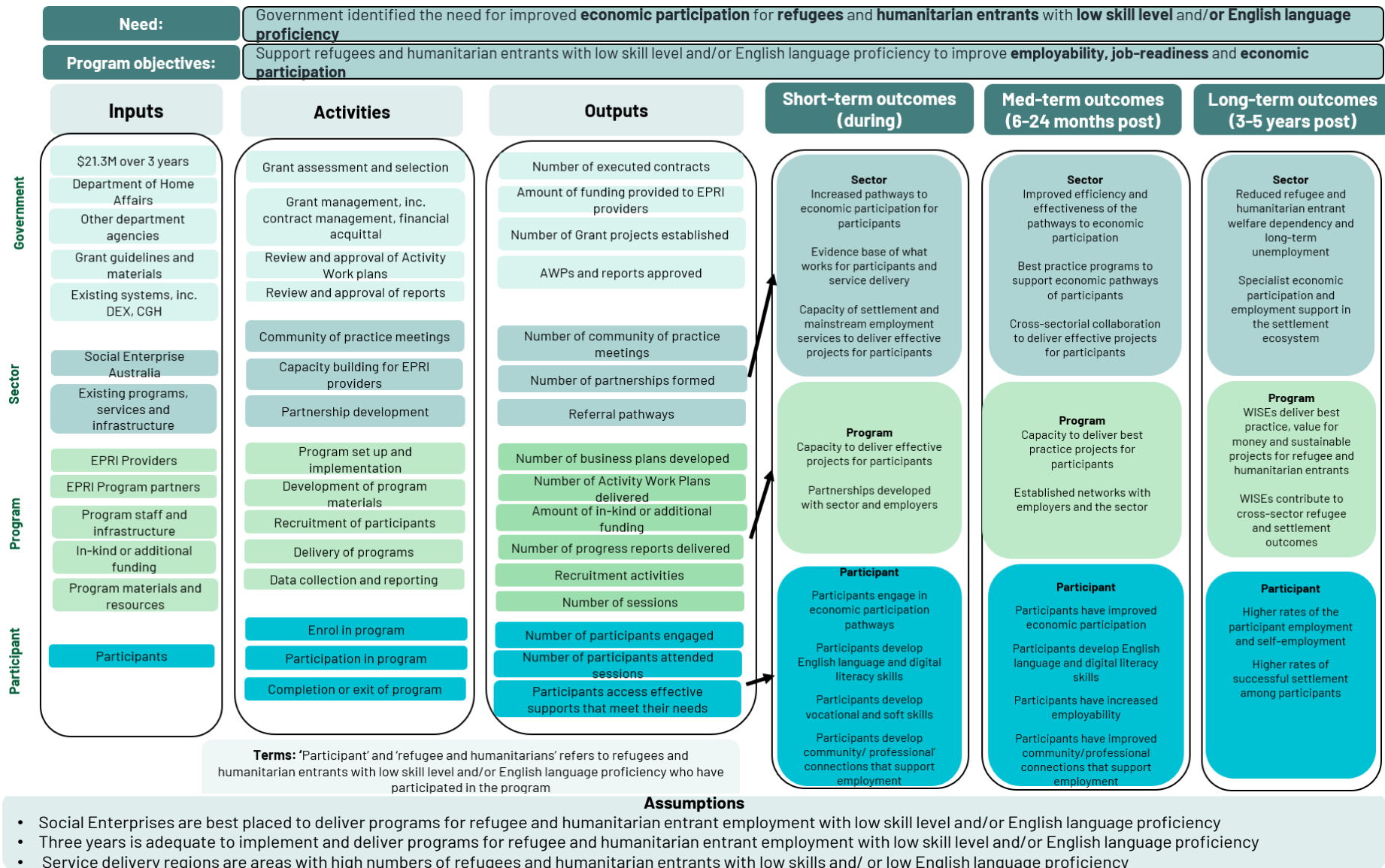
## What is needed to ensure the evaluability of future iterations of EPRI?

What is needed	Detailed explanation
<b>Setting objectives, theory of change, outcomes and a measurement strategy</b>	<p>For a learning model to be successful, the following need to be articulated in procurement materials/contractual arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear objectives (including with respect to capacity building outcomes for social enterprises)</li> <li>• expectations for individual providers to outline a theory of change (including how activities are expected to support English language proficiency, vocational and non-vocational skills improvement and employability outcomes and capacity improvement outcomes for social enterprises)</li> <li>• expectations for individual providers to articulate base resourcing (becoming ready to support people with low English) and social impact costs for specific outcomes as well as expectations for increased ability to sustain supports over time</li> <li>• clearly defining outcomes and expectations for provider involvement in supporting measurement</li> <li>• standardised assessment tools and data dictionaries.</li> </ul> <p>The aim of this approach would be to ensure a more intentional focus on achieving outcomes for participants.</p>
<b>Commonwealth data arrangements</b>	<p>The DEX system has not supported EPRI well for a number of reasons, including posing a barrier to provider reporting, not allowing the funding agency (Department of Home Affairs) easy, regular access to the level of data needed to monitor program activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition, lack of ability to understand what underpins Workforce Australia data makes for a lack of comparability – addressing this prior to funding future iterations of EPRI will be critical.</li> <li>• Finally, there is a need to capture longitudinal data for both approaches. There may be value in a recommendation that utilise integrated data sets such as <a href="#">PLIDA</a> to monitor outcomes over time.</li> </ul>
<b>Building capacity</b>	<p>Building evaluative capacity with future EPRI providers will also be crucial to achieving outcomes.</p> <p>This includes training for providers in evaluation concepts and methods (such as the difference between outputs and outcomes, and how to measure these). Agreement amongst providers on defining the program logic and common measurement tools would be helpful in building a dataset that allows assessment of outcomes. This could be supported by developing improved reporting templates that allow for assessment of program-level outcomes, whilst also offering flexibility to capture provider-specific outcomes that would better support provider capacity for evaluation. The reporting templates should allow for pre- and post-measurement of outcomes.</p> <p>The government's own evaluation capacity also requires consideration, including addressing the limits of the DEX and SCORE systems on building and making available GOOD DATA.</p>

## 4.5 Conclusions

EPRI aims to facilitate the social and economic integration of refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/or English language proficiency. The program has supported short-term education and employment outcomes for participants, however medium-term outcomes and outcomes at the provider/program and sector level are not yet proven. There is enough promising evidence to suggest continued funding of EPRI as a learning model, with a view to future integration of EPRI into the core Workforce Australia model.

# Appendix 1. Program logic



**Terms:** 'Participant' and 'refugee and humanitarians' refers to refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skill level and/or English language proficiency who have participated in the program

**Assumptions**

- Social Enterprises are best placed to deliver programs for refugee and humanitarian entrant employment with low skill level and/or English language proficiency
- Three years is adequate to implement and deliver programs for refugee and humanitarian entrant employment with low skill level and/or English language proficiency
- Service delivery regions are areas with high numbers of refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/ or low English language proficiency

Refer to 'Full breakdown for 'Program Logic' in Appendix 3. Full data for figures for a full breakdown of this figure.

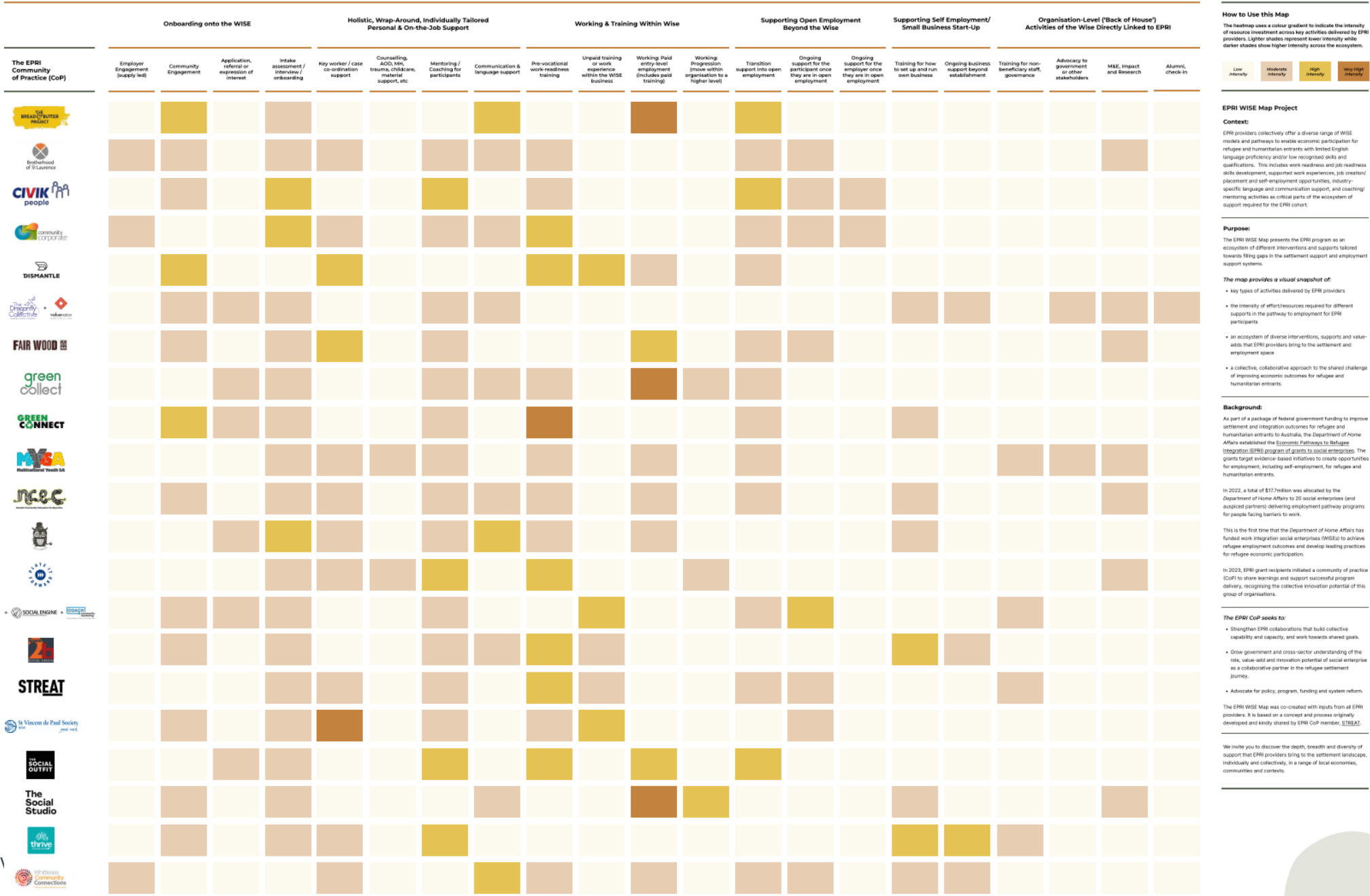


# Appendix 2. Community of practice heat map

The EPRI Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE) Pathway Map has been developed as part of the EPRI community of practice that is run by Social Enterprise Australia. This diagram is intended to provide a general snapshot of the range of services, activities and supports provided across the EPRI ecosystem. Broader context about EPRI provider service models is important if considering specific activities in isolation.

# EPRI Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE) Pathway Map

## Key types of interventions, supports & activities



**How to Use This Map**  
The heatmap uses a colour gradient to indicate the intensity of resource investment across key activities delivered by EPRI providers. Lighter shades represent lower intensity while darker shades show higher intensity across the ecosystem.



**EPRI WISE Map Project**

**Context:**  
EPRI providers collectively offer a diverse range of WISE models and pathways to enable economic participation for refugee and humanitarian entrants with limited English language proficiency and/or low recognised skills and qualifications. This includes work readiness and job readiness skills development, supported work experiences, job creation/ placement and self-employment opportunities, industry-specific language and communication support, and coaching/ mentoring activities as critical parts of the ecosystem of support required for the EPRI cohort.

**Purpose:**  
The EPRI WISE Map presents the EPRI program as an ecosystem of different interventions and supports tailored towards filling gaps in the settlement support and employment support systems.

- The map provides a visual snapshot of:**
- key types of activities delivered by EPRI providers
  - the intensity of effort/resources required for different supports in the pathway to employment for EPRI participants
  - an ecosystem of diverse interventions, supports and value-add that EPRI providers bring to the settlement and employment space
  - a collective, collaborative approach to the shared challenge of improving economic outcomes for refugee and humanitarian entrants.

**Background:**  
As part of a package of federal government funding to improve settlement and integration outcomes for refugee and humanitarian entrants to Australia, the Department of Home Affairs established the Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration (EPRI) program of grants to social enterprises. The grants target evidence-based initiatives to create opportunities for employment, including self-employment, for refugee and humanitarian entrants.

In 2022, a total of \$17.7million was allocated by the Department of Home Affairs to 20 social enterprises (and additional partners) delivering employment pathway programs for people facing barriers to work.

This is the first time that the Department of Home Affairs has funded work integration social enterprises (WISEs) to achieve refugee employment outcomes and develop leading practices for refugee economic participation.

In 2023, EPRI grant recipients initiated a community of practice (CoP) to share knowledge and support successful program delivery, recognising the collective innovation potential of this group of organisations.

- The EPRI CoP seeks to:**
- Strengthen EPRI collaborations that build collective capability and capacity, and work towards shared goals.
  - Grow government and cross-sector understanding of the role, value-add and innovation potential of social enterprise as a collaborative partner in the refugee settlement journey.
  - Advocate for policy, program, funding and system reform.

The EPRI WISE Map was co-created with inputs from all EPRI providers. It is based on a concept and process originally developed and kindly shared by EPRI CoP member, STREET.

We invite you to discover the depth, breadth and diversity of support that EPRI providers bring to the settlement landscape, individually and collectively, in a range of local economies, communities and contexts.

# Appendix 3. Full data for figures

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is an internationally recognised standard created to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities. A key design principle of WCAG is to ensure content is presented in ways users can access and understand. This report includes five figures that display information in an image. To ensure this information is accessible to those who use screen reader software, the full data breakdown for each figure is listed below.

## Full breakdown for Figure 1: Future EPRI

Core competencies

- English Language Acquisition / Work placement / Skills development

Recruitment & planning – Site in settlement sector

- Recruitment & early career planning
  - Ascertaining needs, wants and trade-offs
- Matching – connecting refugees & humanitarian entrants with appropriate pathways
  - Including EPRI as an option where this is appropriate (could also fit in aggregator model)
- A mechanism to ensure that people don't get 'stuck'
  - Recognising that short-term trade-offs may have negative impacts in the medium and long-term

Matching & holistic support – Site in social enterprise sector

- Supported, brokered and self-employment
  - Requiring specific expertise for people with low skills and low English
- Holistic case management and mentoring
  - Recognising the importance of safe spaces and social connection for outcomes
- Informal and formal skills development
  - Tailored to meet the 'activation needs of individual migrants
- Access to capital
  - Critical to successful business start ups
- Lifting employer capacity
  - Critical to sustainable employment options

## Full breakdown for Figure 3: EPRI increases options for economic participation

First arrow

- Refugees and humanitarian migrants with low skills and low English options can be limited to income support, the informal economy and in language work

First box

- Settlement sector supports don't focus on economic participation

Second arrow

- People are referred to EPRI

Third arrow (pointing to EPRI participation)

- Tailored supports for education, employment and emotional wellbeing

Fourth arrow

- Participants have increased work-readiness and are 'activated' to pursue their next education or employment step

Second box

- Increased options for economic participation

**Table 28: Full 'age' data for Figure 2: Participant demographics (sourced from DEX extracts) (1 of 9)**

Label	Count
Less than 16 years	43
18-34 years	907
45-54 years	692
55+ years	137

**Table 29: Full 'Gender' data for Figure 2: Participant demographics (sourced from DEX extracts) (2 of 9)**

Label	Count
Female	1,059
Male	718
Other	2

**Table 30: Full 'Carer' data for Figure 2: Participant demographics (sourced from DEX extracts) (3 of 9)**

Label	Count
Carer	38
Non-carer	161

**Table 31: Full 'Education level' data for Figure 2: Participant demographics (sourced from DEX extracts) (4 of 9)**

Label	Count
Pre-primary/ primary	22
Secondary	88
Certificate / advance diploma	60
Bachelor / postgraduate	34
Other	1

**Table 32: Full 'Time in Australia' data for Figure 2: Participant demographics (sourced from DEX extracts) (5 of 9)**

Label	Count
Less than 1 Year	551
1-3 years	597
3-5 years	194
More than 5 years	419

Data from an earlier extract

**Table 33: Full 'Visa' data for Figure 2: Participant demographics (sourced from DEX extracts) (7 of 9)**

Label	Count
Humanitarian	1456
Family	90
Skilled	5
Other	26

Data from an earlier extract

**Table 34: Full 'Employment status' data for Figure 2: Participant demographics (sourced from DEX extracts) (8 of 9)**

Label	Count
Working full-time	4
Working part-time	11
Studying full-time	54
Studying part-time	15
Parenting	3
Caring	11
Unemployed	86
Not looking for work	28

Data not provided for n=1,567

**Table 35: Full 'Regionality' data for Figure 2: Participant demographics (sourced from DEX extracts) (9 of 9)**

Label	Count
Metro	1442
Regional	327

Data not available for n=10

## Full breakdown for Figure 4: Example participant activation journey (high work readiness)

### 1 Entry into Australia

- Distance to work
  - High
- Support
  - Focused on practical early settlement- housing, income support, public transport
- Feel
  - Resilient, motivated, want to contribute and create wealth
- Pain point
  - Not being offered advice on how to achieve financial goals
- Complicating factors
  - Systemic barriers to employment, especially for people with low skills and low English

### 2 Connected with EPRI

- Distance to work
  - Medium
- Support
  - People are empowered to translate their skills and strengths into the Australian content, learn about workplace norms and rights, problem solve issues as they occur and access practical support such as achieving qualifications and licenses
- Feel
  - People feel backed, empowered, growing in confidence and self-esteem
- Pain point
  - There may be feelings of grief over loss of professional identity, impacts of trauma experiences and ongoing settlement issues
- Complicating factors
  - Having to make trade-offs between short and long-term employment outcomes

### 3 Post EPRI Outcomes

- Distance to work
  - Unknown
- Support
  - Many providers give ongoing support on a formal or informal basis, to both participants and employers
- Feel
  - People feel proud of their contribution, and seek to expand and help others in their community
- Pain point
  - There isn't a mechanism that allows people to change paths if they 'get stuck'
- Complicating factors
  - There isn't evidence for medium-long term outcomes from EPRI or Workforce Australia. This can be a focus for future measurement

**Table 36: Full education data for Figure 5: Focus of provider activities (1 of 2)**

Type of activity	Number of providers
Informal	22
Formal	88
Both	60

**Table 37: Full employment data for Figure 5: Focus of provider activities (2 of 2)**

Scope of outcomes	Type of activity	Number of providers
Short-term	Supported	12
Short-term	Brokered	4
Short-term	Self	1
Medium-term	Supported	2
Medium-term	Competitive	9
Medium-term	Self	2
Medium-term	Supported & Competitive	3
Medium-term	Competitive & Self	2

### Full breakdown for 'Program Logic'

**Need:** Government identified the need for improved economic participation for refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skill level and/or English language proficiency.

**Program objectives:** Support refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skill level and/or English language proficiency to improve employability, job-readiness and economic participation.

**Terms:** 'Participants' and 'refugee and humanitarians' refers to refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skill level and/or English language proficiency who have participated in the program

**Assumptions:**

- Social Enterprises are best placed to deliver programs for refugee and humanitarian entrant employment with low skill level and/or English language proficiency
- Three years is adequate to implement and deliver programs for refugee and humanitarian entrant employment with low skill level and/or English language proficiency
- Service delivery regions are areas with high numbers of refugees and humanitarian entrants with low skills and/ or low English language proficiency

**1 Inputs:**

- Government
  - \$21.3M over 3 years
  - Department of Home Affairs
  - Other department agencies
  - Grant guidelines and materials
  - Existing systems, Inc. DEX, CGH

- Sector
  - Social Enterprise Australia
  - Existing programs, services and infrastructure
- Program
  - EPRI Providers
  - EPRI Program partners
  - Program staff and infrastructure
  - In-kind or additional funding
  - Program materials and resources
- Participant
  - Participants

## 2 Activities:

- Government
  - Grant assessment and selection
  - Grant management, inc. contract management, financial acquittal
  - Review and approval of Activity Work plans
  - Review and approval of reports
- Sector
  - Community of practice meetings
  - Capacity building for EPRI providers
  - Partnership development
- Program
  - Program set up and Implementation
  - Development of program materials
  - Recruitment of participants
  - Delivery of programs
  - Data collection and reporting
- Participant
  - Enrol in program
  - Participation in program
  - Completion or exit of program

## 3 Outputs:

- Government
  - Number of executed contracts
  - Amount of funding provided to EPRI providers
  - Number of Grant projects established
  - AWP's and reports approved
- Sector
  - Number of community practice meetings
  - Number of partnerships formed
  - Referral pathways
- Program
  - Number of business plans developed

- Number of Activity Work Plans delivered
- Amount of in-kind or additional funding
- Number of progress reported delivered
- Recruitment activities
- Number of sessions
- Participant
  - Number of participants engaged
  - Number of participants attended sessions
  - Clients access effective supports that meet their needs
- 4 Short-term outcomes (during)**
- Government
  - N/A
- Sector
  - Increased pathways to economic participation for participants
  - Evidence base of what works for participants and service delivery
  - Capacity of settlement and mainstream employment services to deliver effective projects for participants
- Program
  - Capacity to deliver effective projects for participants
  - Partnerships developed with sector and employers
- Participant
  - Participants engage in economic participation pathways
  - Participants develop English language and digital literacy skills
  - Participants develop vocational and soft skills
  - Participants develop community/professional' connections that support employment
- 5 Med-term outcomes (6-24 months post)**
- Government
  - N/A
- Sector
  - Improved efficiency and effectiveness of the pathways to economic participation
  - Best practice programs to support economic pathways of participants
  - Cross-sectorial collaboration to deliver effective projects for participants
- Program
  - Capacity to deliver best practice projects for participants
  - Established networks with employers and the sector
- Participants
  - Participants have improved economic participation
  - Participants develop English language and digital literacy skills
  - Participants have increased employability
  - Participants have improved community/professional connections that support employment
- 6 Long-term outcomes (3-5 years post)**
- Government
  - N/A

- Sector
  - Reduced refugee and humanitarian entrant welfare dependency and long-term unemployment
  - Specialist economic participation and employment support in the settlement ecosystem
- Program
  - WISEs deliver best practice, value for money and sustainable projects for refugee and humanitarian entrants
  - WISEs contribute to cross-sector refugee and settlement outcomes
- t Participants
  - Higher rates of the participant employment and self-employment
  - Higher rates of successful settlement among participants.