Running title: Enhanced Employment Outcomes Study

Key words: Employment outcomes, disability

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Enhanced Employment Outcomes Study
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Disability Employment Services Performance Framework

Disability Employment Service (DES) providers are currently funded by the Federal Department of Social Services with the aims of promoting and assisting people with disability to find work in open employment situations, assisting employers to employ people with disability, and supporting the ongoing employment of people with disability.

The DES performance framework was designed to facilitate a comparative performance model, and uses a Star Ratings System that measures the relative performance of DES Providers in delivering services contributing to the objectives of the DES programme, focusing on Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 1: Efficiency and KPI 2: Effectiveness. The Star Ratings are currently used by the Department as the only measure of the relative success of providers in achieving outcomes for job seekers taking part in the DES program. They do not include other enhanced outcomes often valued by people with disability and support providers such as type of industry or level of employment, greater number of hours worked, higher wages resulting in greater financial independence and self-sufficiency or other benefits.

Difficulties have been identified with this system, with criticism that it is too narrow as key performance indicators do not discriminate between part-time and full time jobs, nor account for numbers of hours worked per week, which has an impact on sustainable wages. Other outcomes not addressed are underemployment and underutilization of the skills and potential of many employees with disability, and failure to incorporate or reward person centredness and self-determination especially for persons with higher support needs. At an industry level these problems have resulted in a loss of committed skilled staff and an overemphasis on contractual compliance.

NOVA Employment is one of 224 providers in the Disability Employment Services program operating across almost 2000 sites in Australia. NOVA works exclusively with people who have a disability or significant barriers to work and provides support to people with disability to find a job of choice in the general community, at award wage, and then provides time-limited post placement support until the person is fully competent in their work role.

The aims of the study were to investigate what employment outcomes affect quality of employment for individuals with disabilities supported by the NOVA Disability Employment Service (DES) including but also over and above the Star Ratings KPIs of efficiency and effectiveness, and the key factors that contribute to attaining desired outcomes.

Method

A systems model framework was used to enable the investigation of desired outputs and outcomes and the processes that facilitate or hinder their achievement. A mixed method design allowed for the use of quantitative and qualitative data to be collected and analysed.

A Rapid Review was undertaken of key internationally and nationally recognized employment outcomes, while a Desk top review examined key external and internal documents to identify NOVA employment processes and outcomes. Other data sources included an external audit of NOVA processes, the application of an Employment Services Fidelity Scale and stakeholder interviews. Involving staff and clients with disabilities.

Results and Discussion

The rapid review of national and international literature confirmed the critical importance of community based employment among people with disability and their families and support persons. Employment is viewed as an essential element for quality of life and an effective pathway to achieving greater financial independence and participation in many aspects of economic, social and community life.
Valued employment outcomes initially involved employment placement and maintenance with wages earned, hours worked per week, employer and co-worker perceptions, and a favourable benefit-cost ratio as the key considerations. However, over the past decades there has been an increasing shift towards an understanding of the importance not only of the economic benefits of employment (including wages per hour/week; hours worked per week; additional benefits, job duration and tenure; career advancement) but also the importance of non-monetary outcomes. These comprise inclusion; improved independence and social status; increased satisfaction, self-confidence and well being; person centred goals, employment and community participation, skill acquisition and maintenance; career choice and control; creativity and variety, and being able to contribute to society.

Interestingly, programs operating according to the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model appear to have achieved a range of more effective outcomes in both the mental health and intellectual disability fields than other models of operation. Furthermore, the use of the IPS Fidelity Scale emerged as a key method of examining and assessing the fidelity with which a service operates its program and achieves desired outcomes according to evidence-based practices.

The NOVA ESS model was found to operate according to specified and standardised phases, depicted graphically below. Desk top review documents, external audit data and interviews with stakeholders all identified these processes were effective in supporting jobseekers to move through the process from registration to employment by progressing through job preparation and job search to job placement with ongoing job coaching, mentoring and support.

Correspondingly, assessment using the Employment Services Fidelity Scale indicated NOVA is operating a competitive employment program using evidence based practices across the various stages of program intake (referral and registration), engagement, asset based assessment, job preparation and job matching (skill development) job search and placement, job coaching and follow along support. The Employment Services Fidelity Scale Total score obtained was 82/85 or 96.5%, indicating exemplary fidelity. All three subscales were also in the exemplary range: Staffing achieved a fidelity rating of 100%; Organisation achieved a 92% fidelity rating and Services a 98% fidelity rating.

Additional processes also contributed to these results. There is a clear commitment to professional development for all staff (involving accredited training and internally run courses and support). A bonus incentive scheme operates to encourage staff to “Aim High” and to reward staff performance aligned to achieving the Department KPIs employment outcomes and to secure job placements with additional
hours. Also NOVA Employment promotes employment outcomes and community and employer engagement and support through various highly successful publicity and media events.

NOVA promotes quality employment outcomes including access to a wide range of employment positions matched to jobseeker interests and preferences. NOVA’s Star Rating Outcomes were identified as consistently high and improving over time. NOVA has three contracts with the Department involving 14 sites in the Macarthur NSW, Nepean NSW and St George Sutherland NSW service areas. All three areas had excellent performance in comparison to National DES star performance ratings. In December 2014, NOVA gained an average star rating of 3.6 across the 3 areas. In December 2015, one five star and two four star ratings were achieved in the three service areas, and in March 2016, each of the 3 service areas achieved a full 5 star rating meaning performance is 40% or more above the average.

NOVA intentionally encourages staff to secure jobs that provide increased hours of work for jobseekers that can improve financial independence. These hours are above the minimum eight hours required by the Federal Department in the DES contract, and therefore not included in the Star Rating System.

An analysis of internal NOVA job placement data indicated that the majority of jobseekers (approx. 85%) placed in employment by NOVA in the past few years were indeed working in jobs in excess of 15 hours per week. For individuals in their first job, 85.7% were placed in jobs working 15 hours or more per week. Overall, approximately 36-41% of jobseekers were in jobs working 15 hours per week, while approximately 22% were in jobs where they were working 36 to 41 hours per week. This was despite the fact that NOVA jobseekers live in greater western and south western Sydney- a geographical area where unemployment tends to be consistently high.

Thirteen consenting individuals with disability participated in interviews or focus groups where they shared their views about employment. There were nine males (69%) and four females (31%). Ages ranged from 21 to 55 years, with the average age 38.5 years. The majority of participants had an intellectual disability (9), and other disabilities involved mental health (2) physical disability (1) and epilepsy (1) as the primary disability. Participants were all employed at time of interview, and number of hours worked per week ranged from 8 hours to 38 hours, and the average hours worked being 19 hours. Individuals were employed in a range of job types although they were predominantly in service industries. Employment outcomes endorsed as important by all participants with disabilities involved both economic and noneconomic outcomes. The semi structured interview format was complemented by the use of a four point rating scale to identify the importance of key items. Twelve participants completed these ratings. Having a job and also knowing that support from NOVA staff was available if and when needed were rated of highest importance overall [very important n=11, 91.7%; important n=1, 8.3%] Mean (M=1.08). The number of hours worked, and consequently the pay received was also a major consideration [very important n=10, 83.3%; important n=2, 16.7% M=1.16]. Making choices and getting along with other people in the workplace were also rated highly [very important n=8, 66.7%; or important (n=4, 33.3%; M=1.33]. The average satisfaction rating rate of pay was positive at M=1.75, but there was variability with marked differences ranging from 50% very satisfied, 33.3% satisfied, 8.3% not very satisfied, and 8.3% not satisfied at all.

Nine individuals with disability who participated in the focus groups were asked to select their own top five outcomes most important to them. Although a variety of responses and individual patterns were evident, priority rankings in order were: 1. earning money; 2. keeping the job; 3. Feeling proud to be working; 4. being more independent; 5. making friends and socialising at work; 6. having work extras such as sick pay and holiday pay; equal 6. feeling more confident personally because of being a worker; 8. working hours; 9. Getting along with people at work; and 10 learning new skills. Additional outcomes valued were the actual job tasks undertaken on the job, having the chance of promotion and having flexible working hours.

Staff interviews involved 18 Managers, Employment Consultants [ECs] and Job Coaches [JC]. Interviews revealed general dissatisfaction with reliance on the two Departmental KPIs alone. Instead, staff valued outcomes involving long term sustainable employment, not just the 13, 26 and 52 week milestones;
greater hours over and above the 8 hour minimum; relationships with clients including ongoing contact even after successful placement; Being safe and independent; clients feeling needed, contributing to society (through sustained employment) and feeling appreciated and wanted at the workplace; financial outcomes; work suited to the individual; work that suits the disability; jobs where individuals with disability fit into the workplace culture; improved confidence and self-esteem; a sense of achievement; job satisfaction; and the opportunity to develop and to be part of the community; travel skills; Quality of life and independence; inclusion and social interaction.

Staff also provided ratings for their perceptions of the importance of 21 key processes and strategies identified from evaluation sources as relevant to achieving desired employment outcomes for jobseekers with disabilities. All 21 processes were endorsed as very important to important, by all 18 staff, with average ratings ranging from 3.9 to 3.3 out of a maximum of 4 points. Highest scoring processes rated at M = 3.9 involved the ability of NOVA staff to communicate with employers and to gain honest employer feedback, the provision of job coach support for jobseekers, and placement and ongoing support on the job. Person centred planning, communication between all NOVA staff regarding jobseekers, support from management for staff in their roles and professional development for NOVA staff were also highly endorsed with an average of M=3.8. Other important processes related to training jobseekers with requisite skills for employment and community living, and marketing and job matching. The provision of post placement support to jobseekers, and extensive professional development for staff were also highly valued by staff. Responses were varied regarding a staff incentive scheme that management believes contributes to better performance securing jobs for jobseekers.

Conclusions

NOVA employs a range of evidence based processes to obtain its outcomes – both the Department KPI outcomes of efficiency and effectiveness, but also other desired outcomes of additional hours of work that improve pay rates, and quality of life indices such as inclusion, increased skill and competence in a range of life areas, increased confidence and self-esteem.

A new National Disability Employment Framework is proposed that will operate alongside the NDIS. It is imperative the principles, objectives and outcomes of the two systems are aligned and do not contradict one another. This requires a person-centred approach and could result in unbundling services and personalising them. The current two KPIs upon which outlets are assessed are too narrow a focus and need to be expanded to take account of enhanced economic and non economic outcomes. Economic considerations include number of hours worked and wages earned, job tenure, career flexibility and employment status. Other non economic outcomes identified by consumers and staff and ratified by other international and national studies are also critical and include physical and social inclusion, career choice and control, ongoing education and training, individual aspirational goals, increased personal independence, increased confidence and self-esteem and contribution to society.

Employment is more than just gaining a job. For many, a career or a work life provides value and worth over and above financial gains. Paid work is not only meaningful in terms of its economic function, but it also contributes to a sense of status and identity. It can help structure time, and provide for many people opportunities for challenge, expression, contribution and social interaction.

Recommendations

1.0 It is recommended that the Department adjust the Star Rating System to include KPI 3 Quality to ensure both economic and non economic quality outcomes, that focus on the client, the service and staffing are assessed.

2.0 A modified version of the IPS Fidelity Scale be considered as an evaluation tool to assess KPI 3 Quality.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
Removing barriers that restrict employment, education and training opportunities for people with disability is essential for the creation of an equal opportunity society.

EMPLOYMENT

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE
Practices and techniques that have been consistently demonstrated to be effective, through the findings of scientific research, consistent practitioner experience or widely expressed views from the people supported.

LABOUR FORCE
The term “labour force” refers to all adults of working age who are available, capable, and working or wanting to work [23]. The “unemployed” includes people who are not employed but are available and searching for work. [Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2010]. There are different indicators for measuring the work status of people with disabilities.

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE
The proportion of the adult population which is economically active, whether employed or unemployed [ILO, 2007].

EMPLOYMENT RATE
The share of the working age population who works for pay

EMPLOYMENT RATIO
The ratio of the employment rate of people with disabilities compared to the employment rate of the general population

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
The number of unemployed people expressed as a percentage of the labour force [ILO, 2007]

OUTCOMES
The Dictionary definition of outcomes is the result or effect of an action, situation, etc.; Something that happens or exists because of something else.

In the context of programs and services, ‘outcomes’ describes the impact or result of a service or support, such as an improvement in an individual’s wellbeing. [Steering Committee for the review of Government Service Provision, 2004, p.xiii-xxiv].

‘Outcomes’ can be distinguished from ‘outputs’. Outcomes can be short-term (such as an individual being involved in service planning) through to long-term (such as an individual finding employment after completing a course). Australian Government [2013, p.6].

OUTCOME MEASURES
Tools used to assess change over time in performance, ability or function, that are intended to reflect change in meaningful areas of a person’s life. Measures can be standardised (subject to empirical analysis with well established validity), normative (allowing comparison between current results and previous results representative of a typical sample) or non-standardised (open to subjective interpretation).

OUTPUTS
Outputs describe the goods and services produced (quantity, efficiency), e.g. numbers of service recipients, types of services provided or the delivery of services or supports, such as the provision of training.

PARTICIPATION
Participation in employment leads to greater social inclusion by increasing a person’s financial independence, social networks, self-confidence and self-esteem.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>PERSON-CENTREDNESS</strong></th>
<th>A stance or approach that is characterized by primary attention being placed on ascertaining a person’s individual aspirations, preferences and needs, and then working with the person in ways that are consistent with the person’s expressed or implied priorities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROCESS</strong></td>
<td>The ways in which program services and goods are provided, e.g. degree to which services are coordinated and comprehensive (ABS, 2001; Horsch, 2005; Wilson et al 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROCESS MEASURES</strong></td>
<td>Tools used to assess change over time within the organisational systems and performance that are intended to reveal the performance, productivity and efficiency of the practices in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QUALITY OF LIFE (QOL)</strong></td>
<td>A theoretical construct used to assess and describe how people experience their everyday lives and anticipated future prospects. QOL can be considered in terms of both objective and subjective factors. Objective factors are measured through culturally relevant indices (e.g. health, housing, education, employment, income, relationships). Subjective factors are measured through questions of personal satisfaction or personal well-being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT</strong></td>
<td>Supported Employment (SE) was first defined in US Public Law 99-506 as: “competitive work in an integrated work setting for individuals who, because of their handicaps, need ongoing support services to perform that work” [Federal Register, 1987, p.30546]. Internationally, supported employment is recognized as integrated jobs in community settings where persons with disabilities have the opportunity to work alongside people without disabilities and are provided with individualized supports to facilitate long term success at full or pro rata wages. In the mental health field supported employment is defined as employment in integrated settings where workers receive at least minimum wage (Mueser et al., 2004; Bond, Drake &amp; Becker, 2008; Schonebaum, Boyd &amp; Dudek, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT</strong></td>
<td>Employment must be more than churning people through short-term jobs. To enable social and economic inclusion, jobs for people with disability need to be sustainable, which may require additional support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 1: AUSTRALIAN DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS SECTION

- About the Disability Employment Services (DES) system
- The DES Performance Framework
- Difficulties with the Current Star Rating System
- The DES program at NOVA Employment
- The aims of this research project

Disability Employment Services (DES) are a national network of community and private organisations currently funded by the Australian Department of Social Services (previously the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations [DEEWR]). Disability Employment Services are dedicated to helping people with disability find and keep a job in the open labour market. New Disability Employment Services contracts commenced in March 2013, following organizational and funding changes to previous programmes that resulted in disability employment assistance moving to a fully demand-driven programme that is outcome oriented. There are currently two program streams:

1. The Disability Management Service (DMS) provides assistance to people with disability, injury or health condition who need the assistance of Disability Employment Services and who might need irregular or occasional support to keep a job.
2. The Employment Support Service (DSS) provides assistance to people with permanent disability and who require regular, ongoing support to keep a job.

According to the Disability Employment Service Deed (2013) the Objective for the delivery of Disability Employment Services is to improve the nation’s productive capacity by employment participation of people with disability, thereby fostering social inclusion [DEEWR, 2013, p.5.] The specific objective of the Program Services (Disability Management Service Disability Employment Services and Employment Support Service) is:

- to help individuals with disability, injury or health condition to secure and maintain sustainable employment in the open labour market. The Program Services will increase the focus on the needs of the most disadvantaged job seekers and will achieve greater social inclusion. The Program Services will boost employment participation and the productive capacity of the workforce, address Skills Shortage areas and better meet the needs of employers. (DEEWR, 2013, p.53)

The DES Deed makes reference to performing in accordance with the Disability Services [Rehabilitation Services] Guidelines 2007, which stipulates conditions for holding a DES contract. Specifically, it states within section two; “the ability of the provider to provide services that:

(i) enable people with an injury, disability or other health condition to achieve sustainable employment to maximise use of their capabilities;
(ii) promote the capabilities of the target group, leading to improved employment opportunities for them; and
demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement in the provision of employment services to the target group.

The DES system can only be accessed by people with a disability who have a deemed work capacity of more than eight (8) hours per week. A range of supports is offered to meet individual needs, including:

- help to prepare for work including training in specific job skills
- job search support such as resume development, interview skills training and help to look for suitable jobs
- support when initially placed into a job, including on-the-job training and co-worker and employer support
- ongoing support in a job if required
- purchase of vocational training and other employment-related assistance
- access to help for an employer if required, such as workplace modifications, support services and Auslan interpreting in the workplace. (Department Social Services, 2016).

1.1 The DES Performance Framework

A Quality Strategy for disability employment services to improve the quality of services and achieve better employment outcomes for people with a disability was announced in the 1999-2000 Budget and took effect from 1 July 2002. The move to individual outcomes based funding arrangements and case based funding was also announced in the 1999-2000 Budget, trialed from 1999-2001, and an evaluation informed the implementation of the funding model announced in the 2003-04 Budget. Under the case based funding model, payments to service providers were to be based on the relative needs of job seekers and the workers they assist. The Quality Strategy included the introduction of quality assurance standards and key performance indicators (KPIs) in the Disability Services Standards. Under Standard 9 Employment conditions, disability employment services were required to place people with a disability in open or supported employment where they receive pro-rata award based wages, determined through a transparent assessment tool or process. A range of tools was used for determining pro-rata wages according to productive capacity for those workers who could not meet full productive capacity. For people working in open employment the Supported Wage System (SWS) was used.

A number of objectives for the DES performance framework were designed to facilitate a comparative performance model, including:

- assisting clients (both job seekers and employers) to choose services that will best meet their needs
- enabling oversight of purchased services, promoting continuous improvement and developing a sound evidence base for future purchasing arrangements, and
- performance information that enables providers to reasonably assess how they are tracking in comparison to “like” organisations and in comparison, to the program as a whole and to support continuous improvement.

A Star Rating System was first introduced in 2004, when responsibility for Open Employment Services for people with a disability was transferred from one Commonwealth Department (FaCSIA) to the then Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). The case based funding model and “star ratings” performance framework for disability open employment services has continued to be refined and implemented since 2004. The DES Performance Framework is ostensibly designed to drive performance and continuous improvement in the delivery of quality services to all participants. The Star Rating System measures the relative performance of DES Providers in delivering services contributing to the objectives of the DES programme, by focusing on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The Star Rating System is the only measure of the relative success of providers in achieving outcomes for job seekers taking part in the DES program.
Under the Performance Framework Guidelines (DEEWR, 2011), providers receive star ratings and star percentages for each program, for each contract and site in which the provider operates. DEEWR conducts six-monthly performance reviews to make more detailed information available to providers about how they are tracking relative to their peers, including the department’s views on where performance is good and where it can be improved. Where a provider is not performing well, the guidelines state that DEEWR will work with the provider to improve performance, including sharing best practice. In practice, poor performance means loss of funding.

In developing and implementing the star rating system, the Department acknowledged the fact that employment outcome rates are sensitive to a number of environmental factors including local labour market conditions and job seeker characteristics which are external factors outside the control of the provider. Consequently, a regression methodology is used to calculate individual provider performance (provider effect). This statistical technique adjusts raw performance scores to take account of these environmental factors, thereby producing a comparable score.

The star ratings are designed to reflect a provider’s success in meeting two specific key performance indicators - KPI 1 Efficiency and KPI 2 Effectiveness (as defined below). Star ratings range from one to five stars in whole star steps with no half star increments and are based on six monthly milestone periods. The DES Star Ratings are published on the Department’s website and can be accessed by providers on a quarterly basis. They are also available to job seekers and the general public. A site performing at a level that is better than the majority of other sites receives a high rating (4 or 5 stars). A site that is performing at around the average receives a good rating (3 stars). A site performing at a level that is not as good as the majority receives a lower rating (2 stars or less). Performance on Star ratings affects procurement of future services.

KPI 1 – Efficiency: The proportion of referrals made to a provider that subsequently commence in the program; and the average time that the provider takes, compared to the time taken by other providers to assist participants into employment.

This KPI measures proportion of referrals who commence in the programme and the time taken to achieve a full 13 week employment outcome, allegedly reflecting concern for a strong emphasis on outcomes and new incentives to consider skills development prior to job placement. The Objective is to ensure participants find sustainable work as quickly as possible at their assessed work capacity, and that some participants are not “parked” or under serviced for a period of time.

The Department considers Efficiency “an important measure for both Purchaser and client. It is in the interests of eligible job seekers that they gain access to assistance and achieve sustainable employment as early as possible. This KPI and its weighting is designed to be assessed alongside those which respond to the importance of sustainability and quality of placements, particularly following education or training”.

KPI 2 – Effectiveness: This KPI measures the proportion of commencements that are placed in employment, and the proportions that achieve a 13 week Full Outcome, a 13 week Full Pathway Outcome, a 13 week Bonus Outcome, a 26 week Full Outcome, a 26 week Full Pathway Outcome, or a 26 week Bonus Outcome and the proportion who remain in employment with ongoing support or exit ongoing support as an independent worker. It purportedly measures the proportion of participants for whom job placements and outcomes are achieved and the proportion of participants receiving ongoing support who remain in employment. Consequently, the Department considers KPI 2 Effectiveness reflects an ongoing support measure, designated by the achievement of sustainable employment through the measurement of 13 and 26 week full outcomes.

KPI 3 – Quality: In addition to the measurement of efficiency and effectiveness, KPI 3 Quality - the delivery of quality services, is managed through the DES quality framework. KPI 3 does not form part of the numerical star rating.
1.2 Difficulties the Current Star Rating System

The indicators that drive the calculation of star ratings and funding are far narrower and more specific than the objectives of DES. The Australian Public Service Commission (2007) noted that pre-set narrow measures can distort or constrict the services delivered and even undermine the responsiveness of the system. Yet the current system focuses on a very narrow set of indicators, as the star ratings make a comparative assessment of a providers’ relative performance against explicit, narrowly defined outputs. While thirteen and twenty-six weeks of work are indicative of employability, they are not the same as it.

Nor does rewarding the twenty-six week throughput necessarily build long-term capacity.

A 2009 Industry reference group report (Industry Reference Group, 2009) returned certain feedback that focused on the disincentives created by some Key Performance Indicators, for example that the previous Disability Employment Network (DEN) key performance indicators did not discriminate between part-time and full time jobs, or in the case of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), the speed to placement measure sometimes meant providers felt pressured to place job seekers in the first job available, rather than take time to build skills necessary to achieve a better or best job placement. Unfortunately, despite changes to the system, providers claim these problems still exist and are perpetuated by the use of the current KPIs. Indeed, there is no difference in star ratings according to number of hours worked per week, which means that placing several people in jobs with minimum hours and minimum pay is rewarded more than placing one person in a job that provides the person maximum working hours with a sustainable living wage.

Rigorous performance management that has focused solely on narrow employment outcomes is perceived to have had an adverse impact on participation of people with high support needs in open employment services and on the quality of employment outcomes. This has also resulted in resources being diverted away from supporting job seekers with disabilities and their employers towards undue compliance, and is further encouraging placement for many jobseekers in part time jobs working minimal hours. In 2015, Disability Employment Australia (DEA) representing DES providers argued that "root problems associated with the current program stem from systemic bureaucratic compliance and performance drivers. These drivers have redirected the programme’s origins in a strengths-based approach responding to the Disability Services Act 1986 and its corresponding service standards, into a labour market programme rewarding throughput. Providers are forced to place as much emphasis on managing a contract as they do supporting individuals into meaningful, sustainable employment” (DEA submission 2015).

According to DEA, the result is that contractual compliance by many DES providers has become the primary job focus at the expense of participants (based on member survey data). Indeed, DEA reported nearly a ten-fold increase in staff identifying contractual compliance as their primary job function, and 66% of consultants identified contractual compliance as their biggest training need. This was no doubt an unintended consequence of the performance framework, but as Nevile and Lohmann, [2011] noted “When unintended consequences arise, the response from the bureaucratic system has been another layer of scrutiny and regulation. Instead, we should consider the involvement, commitment and coordination of multiple stakeholders. Complex problems require co-produced solutions”.

These narrow indicators also work against the traditional competencies required for individualised service. Wright, Marston & McDonald (2011, p 313), for example, claim: The processes used to achieve successful employment outcomes are lost in the drive to meet unrealistic performance targets. The demand for service, expressed in terms of large caseloads works against the possibility of establishing ongoing rapport and tailored, individualized service delivery for clients. In short, the competencies of traditional human service case management are not conducive to the output imperative demands of the system. DEA considers the way the current system drives efficiencies comes at the expense of the time required for high-quality job matching and discounts the value of collaboration in continuous improvement.

Additionally, at present, DES does not address underemployment or underutilization of placed employees who have a disability. Increasingly, many DES services are rewarded for placing jobseekers in a job providing as little as eight hours per week and therefore poor financial return, but there is no incentive to
find jobs that offer significantly more hours or pay. Practices such as job sharing allow a provider to gain placement outcomes for two people who work few hours each at less than satisfactory pay rates instead of placing one jobseeker in one full time job that provides significantly more income and satisfaction. This practice is in stark contrast to the situation in the USA where in 2014 the Workforce InNOVAtion and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was passed into legislation. The US Act includes, among other improvements for people with disability seeking employment, the requirement that, for an individual under the age of twenty-four, the first job placement cannot be in a job paying less than minimum wage. Schools are also prohibited from contracting with sub-minimum wage providers. Yet in Australia, individuals with disabilities often find themselves underemployed, in jobs with no career path, in jobs that do not use their skills – or they may find themselves back on income support – all fundamental problems if the objective is sustainable employment and increased participation (DEA 2015). Significantly, the return to service rate of independent workers is three times higher in DES than it was the previous Disability Employment Network (DEN) iteration [DEEWR, 2014]. While DEN had short-term thirteen and twenty-six week outcomes, it also had incentives for hours and wages growth.

There is high attrition of skilled workers, many of whom have left the industry because of reported dissatisfaction over the compliance emphasis at the expense of time with jobseekers for quality growth and employment placement and support. Nevile and Lohmann (2011, p46.) reported skilled consultants have left the industry because of pressures to divert time and resources away from those less likely to meet the requirements of a payable outcome. The problems of administrative load, a lack of capacity to spend enough time with participants and pressure to achieve inflexible key performance indicators were all placing pressure on staff, making it harder for them to be retained.

Significant change is occurring in the disability sector through the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which is premised on self-determination (choice, voice and control) through individualised funding. NDIS recognises that people are best placed to make decisions about their own lives, and consequently, the NDIS is a momentous move towards a system that is person-centred and self-directed. A new National Disability Employment Framework is proposed that will operate alongside the NDIS. It is imperative the principles, objective and outcomes of the two systems are aligned and do not contradict one another. This requires a person centred approach and could result in unbundling services and personalising them.

However, despite acceptance of the principle of person-centredness, the perception of many in the disability sector is that policy reforms in the employment arena have shifted focus away from the values-base previously held, and towards a more economic aspirational rationale, which has sidelined broader objectives of employment services such as social participation for people with a disability and replaced them with a single objective - narrowly defined employment outcomes (Cocks and Harvey, 2008, DEA 2015).

Policy imperatives do require value for money, and there is no dispute about promoting funding that is outcomes driven. There is also agreement that commissioning must drive procurement to achieve the best outcomes for service users. However, there is disagreement over what are, in fact, the best outcomes and for whom. Stakeholders can and often do value different outcomes and indices. With regard to employment, there is a broad range of stakeholders: persons with disability, families and carers, service providers, the service sector as a whole, the wider community and Government.

We live in a world in which one size does not fit all, and where the public reform agenda focuses on disability rights and empowerment, person centredness and personalization, citizen-centred services, and choice and control. Respecting choice and control means that outcomes that include choice, flexibility and inNOVAtion, as well as economic outcomes (i.e. salaries and wages) that enhance the lives of the individuals served must be valued. Although these values are espoused by all stakeholders, the star rating system appears to only serve the economic imperatives for cost efficiency and business practices that can be in direct competition to the values of persons with disability, their families and carers, and the service providers who support them. Consequently, DEA (2015) recommended the
performance framework would be better based on diagnosis and learning, with long term goals taking account of hours/wages growth, lower unemployment rates, higher participation rates, increased satisfaction, skills utilization and career advancement.

1.3 Project Aims and Objectives

The aims of the study were to investigate what employment outcomes affect quality of employment for individuals with disabilities supported by the NOVA Disability Employment Service (DES) over and above the Star Ratings KPIs of efficiency and effectiveness, and the key factors that contribute to attaining these outcomes.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives of the Project:

1. Evaluate NOVA employment outcomes against internationally accepted best evidence-based practices over and above the Star Rating System of two KPIs used to meet the Federal Government’s DES contract.

2. Investigate the value and contribution of various outcomes to key stakeholders and the internal processes used at NOVA to achieve outcomes.

3. Investigate the relationship between NOVA processes and procedures and any enhanced outcomes including the use of a staff incentive payment scheme for securing employment positions providing work hours above 15 hours per week and use of the supported employment Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Fidelity Scale.

1.4 NOVA Employment DES Program

NOVA Employment is one of 224 providers of the Disability Employment Services program operating across almost 2000 sites in Australia. NOVA works exclusively with people who have a disability or significant barriers to work. NOVA Employment provides support to participants to find a job of choice in the general community, at award wage, and then provides time-limited post placement support until the person is fully competent in their work role. There are currently 17 NOVA sites operating in the greater Sydney basin, 14 of which received star ratings in the December 2014 reporting period, ranging from 2 through 5, with the average being 3.6 (above average) (Disability Employment Services, 2013).

This research examined outcomes achieved by NOVA DES sites over and above the two KPIs measured and accorded by the Department of Human Services, and their importance to workers with disability, staff and the organization as a whole.
2.0: METHOD

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS SECTION

- The systems model as framework for the evaluation
- Ethics approval for the study
- Key strategies and procedures
  - Rapid review of literature
  - Desk Top review
  - NOVA model of operation
  - Use of the Employment Services Fidelity Scale
  - Key stakeholder interview
- Data analyses for quantitative and qualitative data

2.1 Systems Model Framework

The systems model (Figure 1) was chosen as a framework for the evaluation as it depicts the relationship between various aspects of a system (in this case the employment system) and enables the identification and examination of processes that are related to obtaining (or not) desired outputs and outcomes. It also allows those features to be recognized that act as either barriers or facilitators to the processes and the achievement of the desired outcomes.

Inputs comprise funding, personnel, buildings, equipment, furnishings and materials for a program.

Processes include policies, procedures, strategies, activities and resource allocation (staff, funding, and equipment) and management. The primary aim of a process evaluation is to identify whether the program is operating as intended. It informs which aspects of a program are most critical to its success and which aspects might be improved. In situations where programs are not achieving their outcomes, process evaluations can also inform whether this is due to failure of implementation or failure of policy.

Outputs are the production or the results of organisational processes and are directly determined by the program’s stated aims and objectives. These include numbers of participants at various sites who completed training, numbers gaining certification etc.

Outcomes are the results or consequences, and the impact of the program upon the person. In this evaluation, outcomes are the enhanced employment outcomes including, but not limited to the two KPIs of efficiency and effectiveness as measured by the Department of Social Services.

External Factors include the political and economic climate at the time as well as social and geographic factors that can positively or negatively influence a program’s outcomes and employment rates more broadly.
A mixed method design was chosen for this research as it allows for the use of quantitative and qualitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis and inference techniques that can provide a breadth of understanding and corroboration (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007).

2.2 Ethics

Ethics approval was gained from the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in September 2015, in compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving humans.

2.3 Key Strategies and Procedures

Key strategies:

- Rapid Review of key internationally and nationally recognized employment outcomes
- Desk top review of key documents to identify NOVA employment processes and outcomes
- Identification of key processes and procedures used at NOVA to achieve outcomes
- Stakeholder interviews

2.3.1 Rapid Review

Rapid reviews provide brief syntheses and assessments of available research evidence using existing sources, and are often undertaken in health research (http://www.health.vic.gov.au/prevention/evidence/rapid-reviews.htm).

A Rapid Review was undertaken of key internationally and nationally recognized employment outcomes among adults with disability aged 18-65 years in open and/or supported employment\(^1\). Exclusion criteria were Sheltered Employment or Business Services (Australia). The review focused on outcomes which included but were not limited to efficiency and effectiveness but also sought information regarding evidence based processes, practices and factors contributing to quality employment outcomes.

Rapid review questions are:

- Based on available evidence, what are key internationally and nationally recognized employment outcomes, including, but not limited to efficiency and effectiveness.
- Are specific outcomes more valued than others by people with disability and their families (identify where possible listed in order of importance)

\(^1\) Internationally accepted definition of Supported Employment (SE) used here
• Critical processes, practices or factors recognized as contributing to quality employment outcomes

Systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses for review are identified through searching databases: PsychInfo, Medline, Scopus, Science Direct, Cochrane Library, ProQuest Central, Web of Science, Sociological Abstracts, and Pub Med. Key searches used combinations of the words employment outcomes, supported employment, disability.

• Inclusion criteria for the rapid review - participants adults (18-65 years old)
• Exclusion criteria: Sheltered Employment- Business Services.

2.3.2 Desk Top Review

A new DES Employment Contract between NOVA Employment and The Department was developed in 2011 that commenced in 2012. Consequently, the data set analysed for this evaluation covers the three year period under the new contract from 2012 – 2014 and beyond to the time of evaluation.

(i) Department data freely available to all employment services and the public comprise Quarterly Star Ratings results by Employment Service areas [e.g. Macarthur, Nepean, and St George Sutherland, NSW], by Programme (Employment Support Service (ESS)), by Disability Employment Provider (NOVA), by site location [Camden, Katoomba, Windsor etc.] and specialisation [all client types]. NOVA Star Rating outcomes comprising the two KPI indicators used by The Department were therefore examined for NOVA outlets and sites.

(ii) Access was provided to an Assessment Report of an independent audit of NOVA Employment & Training Inc.’s compliance with the National Standards for Disability Services. The audit was undertaken by a Business Standards Company (bsi.) between 01/04/2015 and 12/05/2015 and the report completed by a Consumer Technical Expert (CTE) Malcolm Cameron (bsi, 2015). This audit report details the findings obtained during nine (9) visits across seven (7) NOVA sites selected using a multi-site sampling methodology. The audit examined service delivery and management systems; and conducted face to face interviews with 42 consumers as well as 4 Focus groups with a total of 14 consumers.

(iii) NOVA Employment has its own data available for 14 DES Outlets in the Greater Sydney Area, with specific detailed monthly data also available for 2014-2015. These data were reviewed.

(iv) A number of internal documents were examined that relate to key processes and procedures. These included: clearly set out information for staff e.g. around core activities for employment consultants, outlet managers and job coaches; calculating and recording placement outcomes and setting their own monthly goals for ensuring good performance; methods for tracking contacts and job planning as well as caseload numbers and delivery of KPI outcomes; preparing staff for productive and time efficient face to face employer contacts and meetings; and various reporting forms and checklists regarding assessment, training and coaching practices.

2.3.3 NOVA Model of Operation and Key Processes and Procedures

NOVA Employment has instituted a number of processes it presumes contribute to quality employment outcomes. NOVA employs a Business model of operation, evidence-based practices and procedures in job search, job matching and post placement support, professional development/staff training across a range of areas including Social Role Valorisation (SRV) etc., person centred planning procedures, setting achievable, realistic, suitable and sustainable goals (ARSS goals), and specific communication and marketing
procedures among others. A staff incentive payments scheme for staff placing individuals in jobs providing in excess of 15 hours employment per week also features; and the use of a supported employment Fidelity Scale.

The significance of these key processes was investigated through various methodologies comprising the desktop review (accessing internal and external documentation), application of an Employment Services Fidelity Scale, observation and stakeholder interviews and focus groups. Additionally, staff were asked to complete a four point rating scale indicating their assessment of the importance of various processes.

2.3.4 Employment Services Fidelity Scale
A fidelity scale is an assessment procedure used to measure the extent to which an intervention or practice is implemented as intended. Fidelity measures are now widely recognized as important tools for both research and quality improvement purposes (Bond et al., 2000; Mowbray, Holder, Teague, & Bybee, 2003) and are used to investigate adherence to evidence based practices (EBP) in supported employment on the basis that high fidelity implementation of EBP leads to improved consumer outcomes (Bond, McHugo, Becker, Rapp & Whiteley, 2008). Fidelity can be measured at the system, organization, program, practitioner, or client level.

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Fidelity Scales used in supported employment were developed for use with people who had severe mental illness. NOVA uses a version of Employment Services Fidelity Scale based on and adapted from the Dartmouth IPS Model Fidelity Scale (Bond, Becker & Drake & Vogler, 1997), and applies this scale for their service users who have a range of disabilities, including many with mental illness.

The Employment Service Fidelity Scale consists of 17 items or criterion divided into three major sections – Staffing, Organisation and Services. Each criterion is measured according to clearly defined rating scales using a 1-5 point rating and only one anchor point is chosen per item/criterion, based on specified data sources. Data sources can comprise the Management Information System (MIS); Document review – clinical records, agency policy and procedures (DOC); Interviews with stakeholders (INT); Observation (OBS); or Individualised Service Plans (ISPs). The total scale score can range from 17 to 85.

- A score of 39 or below = Not recovery oriented employment
- Scores between 40-54 = Fair Fidelity
- Scores between 55-69 = Good Fidelity
- Scores between 70-85 = Exemplary Fidelity.

CDS researchers independently completed the NOVA Employment Service Fidelity Scale based on (a) Available documentation (DOC) provided by NOVA for desk top review (b) Observation (OBS) of operations during visits to the various outlets principally St Marys and Campbelltown, and (c) Interviews (INT) with NOVA managers from various sites across western and south western Sydney.

2.3.5 Stakeholder Interviews
Stakeholder interviews were undertaken to discover the most important outcomes for stakeholders and to examine the extent to which they attributed the processes and procedures instituted by NOVA as contributing to valued employment outcomes.

NOVA Staff interviews
A stratified sample of NOVA Employment staff was selected for interview. The sample consisted of a range of staff representing:
1. The 17 outlets now operating across the Nepean, Macarthur and the St George-Sutherland regions in the Sydney basin;
2. The different role positions, including the senior executive team (CEO and General Manager), outlet managers, employment consultants (EC) and job coaches (JC);
3. The stratification ensured some staff respondents were included who had received incentive payments.

A semi-structured interview format was used, that enabled staff to explore and discuss NOVA processes and procedures contributing to outcomes. Additionally, staff were asked to complete a rating scale of the importance of 25 procedures identified through desk top investigation and initial discussion with key staff used at NOVA in the DES and Transition to Work programs, that were additional although aligned with evidence based practices included in the Employment Fidelity Scale.

Each staff participant was asked to rate the importance of each of these 25 procedures in relation to achieving valued employment outcomes for program participants (from 1 = not important at all, 2= not very important, 3= important and 4= very important). There was provision to volunteer and rate additional procedures not listed.

Program participant interviews and focus groups

NOVA staff sent out ethics approved invitations information sheets and consent forms to NOVA program participants i.e. job-seekers/employees who participated in a NOVA program between 2012 and 2015, inviting individuals to participate in a focus group or an individual interview according to their preference. These participants had a range of disabilities and came from across the various Sydney regions and NOVA outlets. Suitable times and venues were then arranged for consenting individuals to meet with the CDS researchers.

A range of methods was used to elicit valid information from participants as the use of a mixture of methodologies is recommended when seeking information from people with intellectual disability. A combination of semi-structured interviews, visual representations, rating scales and rankings has been found to improve communication and interpretation challenges (Ottmann & Crosbie, 2012).

A semi-structured format was used for the program participant interviews and Focus Groups. The Focus groups used “Rounds”2 to enable individuals to meet and greet one another, followed by semi-structured questions that ensured each participant was provided time and opportunity to present their own views before open discussion occurred on key questions.

Visual aides were used with a rankings task and with all ratings questions. Ratings consisted of four point scales for (a) importance and (b) satisfaction on an item, and individuals could either point to or check the rating they chose using prepared sheets.

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<th>4.</th>
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<td>Not important at all</td>
<td>Not very important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
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<th>4.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Not satisfied at all</td>
<td>Not very satisfied</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
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2 A Round is a procedure where individuals sit in a circle and for any given question or discussion point, each person takes turns around the circle to have their say without anyone else commenting or interrupting.
Ranking Task: Each participant was supported to individually and privately select five (5) things about working, in order of priority, that were most important to them personally. A visual format was used where each of 15 items presented using papers bags for each item with easy English written labels and a visual graphic. All items were displayed at once, and each item was explained and discussed for clarity before each participant was given five (5) slips of paper each numbered 1 [highest importance] through 5 [lowest importance], so they could choose their top five in order of priority. All then left the room and participants were invited back one by one to post their “votes” in the five paper bags of their choice.

For the interviews and focus group, researchers made hand written notes, and digital audio recordings were made for consenting individuals to ensure accuracy. These were later transcribed and used for qualitative analyses.

2.4 Data Analyses

All quantitative data obtained from interview schedules and rating scales were entered into excel spreadsheets and then transferred into SPSS 20 for statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics were calculated using non-parametric statistics for small sample sizes. The amount of missing data was minimal. Chi square statistics and univariate analyses with a significance level of 0.05 were used to test for differences on some variables.

Qualitative data was collected via hand written notes during interviews and then entered into word documents for analysis. Transcripts were examined line by line and then thematically analysed using a grounded theory approach. Emerging issues and themes were then grouped into broad categories and sub categories for reporting purposes.
SECTION 3: NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS SECTION

• The legislative and policy context for employment of people with disabilities
• Global Disability employment outcomes
• Historical changes in selection of key employment outcomes
• Economic employment outcomes
• Non-economic employment outcomes
• Employment Outcomes among those with mental health challenges
• The importance of satisfaction and career choice
• Quality of life implications
• The role of self-determination and person-centredness
• Summary of valued employment outcomes

3.1 The Legislative and Policy Context

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring their policies are consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). By ratifying the UN Convention in 2008, Australia joined other countries in a global effort to promote the equal and active participation of all people with disability. The stated purpose of the Convention (Article 1) is:

"to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

The Convention stresses the need for states to take measures to improve the capacity of individuals to fully participate in society on an equal basis with others. Article 26, habilitation and rehabilitation and Article 27, work and employment are relevant to any review of assistance (United Nations, 2006). Further, the UNCRPD emphasises the rights of people to have a say in how services are delivered.

The Australian National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (Australian Government, Department of Social Services, 2011) established by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) also emphasises the importance of people with disability participating in decisions that affect their lives along with family, friends, carers and advocates. The National Disability Strategy promotes active participation in decision making to safeguard and advance human rights, wellbeing and the interests of people with disability.
The Strategy covers six policy areas, one of which, Economic security includes jobs, business opportunities, financial independence, adequate income support for those not able to work, and housing. It also advocates:

A sustainable disability support system which is person-centred and self-directed, and which maximises opportunities for independence and participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the community (Australian Government, 2011).

Additionally, the National Standards for Disability Services (Australian Government, 2013) promotes opportunities for meaningful participation and active inclusion in society and individual outcomes that are person centred and goal directed.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) recognized the need for an outcomes framework (NDIS Act 2013). It supports the independence and social and economic participation of people with disability, and refers to Australia’s obligations under various other instruments, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Section 4 sets out 17 general principles guiding actions under the Act. For example, the first principle is: “People with disability have the same right as other members of Australian society to realise their potential for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development.”

Notwithstanding Australia’s commitment to the UN Convention and legislation and policy advocating for the right to work and providing some support for people with disability to do so, the current situation is problematic. In the global context, Australia ranks 21 of 29 OECD countries on disability employment rates and last on the relative poverty risk facing people with disability (OECD, 2010; Productivity Commission 2011). Australia’s low employment rate goes some way to explaining the alarming finding that Australia has the highest relative poverty risk for people with disability of any OECD country (OECD 2010).

According to Ford (2016), despite legislative and policy changes, dramatic improvements in service configurations and implementation practices and support from many highly dedicated skilled employment specialists, the difference between the “ideal and the real” between what is possible in employment and what, in effect, is occurring in the lives of people especially those with significant disabilities has grown rather than diminished over recent years. Employment difficulties were identified by people with disability as one of the main barriers to their social and economic participation (National People with Disabilities and Carer Council 2009).

3.2 Disability Employment Outcomes

Globally, employment outcomes in competitive and/or supportive employment are considered extremely important for people who have a diverse range of disabilities including intellectual disability (Parmenter, 2011) and mental health challenges (Becker, Flack & Wickham. 2012; Cook & Pickett, 1995; Crowther, Marshall, & Hurley, 2001; Mueser, Salyers, & Mueser, 2001).

Historically, supported employment for people with intellectual disability in the US was justified on the basis of two rationales: its positive socioeconomic impact on individuals and on its economic benefit to society (Federal Register, 1987; Johnson & Lewis, 1994). As integrated employment was secured for people with disabilities who were previously identified as only able to participate in segregated programs in sheltered workshops or activity centres, employment success was measured in terms of and understanding of the economic and non (Rusch, Chadsey-Rusch & Johnson, 1991).

Supported employment was defined in the US by the Developmental Disabilities Act of 1984 as “… paid employment which (i) is for persons with developmental disabilities for whom competitive employment at or above the minimum wage is unlikely and who, because of their disabilities, need ongoing support to perform in a work setting; (ii) is conducted in a variety of settings, particularly work sites in which persons without disabilities are employed; and (iii) is supported by any activity needed to sustain paid work by persons with disabilities, including
supervision, training and transportation”.

Outcome studies consequently focused on social cost benefit models calculating the monetary and non-monetary outcomes of employment to examine program efficiency and equity (Conley & Noble, 1990; Johnston, 1987; Kregel, Wehman Revell & Hill, 1990; Lewis, Johnson et al 1991; Tuckerman, Smith & Borlan, 1999). However, according to Johnson & Lewis (1994) many of these studies resulted in insufficient understanding of the full economic and social impact of rehabilitation services on individuals with disabilities, employers, taxpayers and society.

Typically, outcomes for people with mental health challenges were measured by employment rates, days to the first job, annualised weeks worked and job tenure in the longest job held during a follow-up period of time (Mueser et al., 2004), or by on job placement rates, weeks worked, total jobs worked, job duration, hours and wages (Schonebaum et al. 2006; Macias et al., 2006).

Across different disability types there was recognition that job placement itself was not the only outcome to be considered. Kiernan’s pathway model (Kiernan & Stark, 1986), for example, presented a framework within which the individual is faced with a number of choices, all of which lead to an outcome of enhancing the degree of economic self-sufficiency realised through employment. Such an outcome looks not at individual job placements, but rather at the effect of moving the individual into an employment status. Employment status in this model is viewed as a series of jobs. It acknowledges that job turnover may not represent failure, but in many cases, is a sign of occupational growth and development. The measure of effectiveness or success in such a design is not job placement but a measure of earnings in relationship to level of financial independence realised by the individual (Kiernan & Stark, 1986).

Additional to an economic rationale, The Handicapped Programs Review, New Directions (1986) and the Disability Services Act (1986) recognised the importance society places on vocational activity and income in determining an individual’s status, and the critical role given to this area by people with disabilities themselves. These changes reflected the belief that, for people with disabilities as for other community members, the work one does not only defines one’s place in society, it largely determines one’s quality of life, and it also encroaches upon one’s sense of competence and self-esteem. There was broad agreement that social status in the community is very often determined by employment, which is important for self-worth.

Consequently, legislative and administrative changes to enhance integrated employment opportunities for people with disabilities resulted in funding arrangements for a new range of service options to maximise employment, accommodation and community integration in the least restrictive settings. The Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) had responsibility for employment services (sheltered, supported and open) prior to 2004. In policy and practice there was commitment to supporting the rights of persons with disabilities, and encouraging potential across a range of life areas including education, employment and social and community life, and supporting aspirational goals.

3.2.1 Differences in employment outcomes for people with and without disability

Economic and cost benefit outcomes for people with disability have consistently demonstrated that people with disability are capable of working but significant problems persist and may be increasing rather than decreasing over time.

- In industrialized countries, the unemployment rate among people with disabilities of working age is 50 to 70 per cent, which is at least twice the rate of those without a disability (International Disability Rights Monitor, 2004). In developing countries, the situation is somewhat worse: it is estimated that 80 to 90 per cent of people of working age with disabilities are unemployed (Zarocostas, 2005).
• In 2003, 53.2 per cent of people with disabilities participated in the Australian labour force as compared to 80.6 per cent of those without a disability (See Table 1) [ABS, 2003; Productivity Commission].

Table 1: Labour force participation and unemployment rates of people with and without disabilities

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>People with disabilities</th>
<th>People without disabilities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Labour force</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participation rate</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
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• The result of a lower labour force participation rate, when combined with a higher unemployment rate, is that people with disabilities are less likely to be employed than others.
  › In 1993, a person with a disability was 23 per cent less likely than a person without a disability to be in employment, and in 1998 they were 26 per cent less likely to be employed. ABS, 2003, pp3-4.
  › A downward trend was evident in the proportion of younger people with a disability in open employment (20%) although there was an increase in numbers (33%), according to The Australian Government Disability Services Census [AGDSC] databases in the period 1999-2000 to 2005-06 (Cocks & Harvey, 2008).
• This discrepancy has increased in Australia rather than deceased in recent years (Table 1).
  › Since 1993, the labour force participation rate of people with disabilities has fallen, while the rate for people without disabilities has risen.
  › The participation rate for people with a disability in Australia actually declined from the mid-1990s from 54.9 per cent to 53.2 per cent (ABS, 2003).
• The National Disability Insurance scheme (NDIS) identified work as one of the desired outcomes in their outcomes framework. In 2015, NDIS participants aged 25-55 were surveyed in trial sites under the Outcome Domain 7: Work. Only 35% of respondents had a paid job (27% Intellectual, Down syndrome, autism; 33% Cerebral palsy, other neurological conditions; and 50% in MS, sensory, other physical, mental health disability groups respectively). (Johnson, 2015).
• In June 2013, Disability Support Pension (DSP) recipients numbered 821,738 at an annual cost of about $15b (The Department of Social Services, 2014), and the exclusion of people with disability from the workforce, particularly as full time employees, was considerable (Welsby & Horsfall, 2011).
• Unemployment rates are higher for young people, and this situation worsened with the recent global financial instability [Foundation for Young Australians 2010; International Institute for Labour Studies 2010].
  › Young people have higher rates of part-time employment, which is often less stable, and are more than twice as likely as other working-age adults to be underemployed, working fewer hours than desired (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011).
  › Not only are young people with disability less likely to be employed at a particular time point, especially full time, but those who are employed are less likely to remain employed (Honey, Kariuki, Emerson & Llewellyn, 2014).

• The nature and severity of the disability that a person has affects both the level of labour force participation and the unemployment rate.
  › A systematic review of the literature found that people with intellectual disabilities (ID) were three to four times less likely to be employed than people without intellectual disabilities [Verdonschot, et al. 2009].
  › People with intellectual disabilities represented 27 per cent of all participants with disabilities in open employment in Australia in 2010, but 73 per cent of those in segregated business enterprises, formerly called sheltered workshops. [Parmenter, 2011].
  › The workplace participation rate for people with a psychiatric disability receiving disability support payments as reported in 2004 was only 29% [Mental Health Council of Australia, 2004, p.6].
  › People with Autism Spectrum Disorder [ASD] and people with ID were found to have significantly lower odds of being employed in the community compared to those without ASD, after controlling for age, health, mobility, gender, level of ID, and challenging behavior. Furthermore, the odds of people with ASD having community employment were 30% lower than people without ASD, a statistically significant difference (p = .002). [Nord, Stancliffe, Nye-Lengerman, & Hewitt, 2016].

• Despite poorer employment rates for people with significant disabilities, Tuckerman, Smith and Borland (1999) found that the placement of people with high support needs in an Australian context was a cost-effective option for government. As the programme grew in size, the costs per client stabilized, together with a reduction in disability pension costs. The study revealed that a supported open employment programme was significantly less costly than a day activity programme catering for a similar population.

• Women with disabilities are less likely to be in the workforce than men with disabilities. In addition, the unemployment rate of women with disabilities has increased in the last five years while that for women without disabilities has decreased significantly [Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2005].

• When employed, people with disabilities typically earn lower wages, on average, than workers without disabilities [WHO, 2011].
  › Having a disability reduced the average gross weekly wages of females by $110 (24 per cent) and males by $105 (17 per cent) in 1998, compared with people without disabilities [Productivity Commission, Volume 2: Appendices, pA.12].
  › Women with disabilities commonly earn less than men with disabilities. The wage gaps between men and women with and without disabilities are thus as important as the difference in employment rates [WHO, 2011].
  › The overall levels of income earned by people with disabilities are also lower than those without disabilities [WHO, 2011]. In 2003, the median gross personal income per week of people of working age with a disability was $255, compared to $501 for those without a disability [ABS 2003, p3. Persons aged 15-64 years living in households].

• People with disabilities are more likely to be in part time or casual work, some by choice but the majority by default. For those who need flexibility in the scheduling and other aspects of their work – to give them proper time to prepare for work, to travel to and from work, and to deal with health concerns, part time work can be attractive. However, contingent and part-time work arrangements, which can provide flexibility, also provides lower pay and fewer benefits [Bardasi & Gornick 2000; Wilkins 2013], work is less stable [Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004], and provides fewer opportunities for advancement [Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland 2010].
USA research has shown that 44% of workers with disabilities are in some contingent or part-time employment arrangement, compared with 22% of those without disabilities (Schur, 2003).

In Australia in 2003, people with disabilities were more likely to work part-time (37%) than those who did not have a disability (29%). (ABS, 2003, p5).

Data from 1999-2000 to 2005-06 indicated clear shifts over time in the basis upon which people with a disability were employed. Evidence was towards a casualisation of employment and increased proportions working in temporary employment (Cocks and Harvey, 2008).

Underemployment is another common problem. An increasing number of jobseekers on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) receiving formal services remain unemployed, but for those with employment, underemployment has been reported as common (Hendricks, 2010; Nord, Stancliffe, Nye-Lengerman, and Hewitt, 2016)

On the supply side, people with disabilities may experience a higher cost of working, because more effort may be required to reach the workplace and to perform the work, and in countries with more generous disability allowances, employment may result in a loss of benefits and health care coverage, whose value is greater than the wages that could be earned (Stapleton, et al. 2009).

Education and training are central to good and productive work for a reasonable income but access to education and training can be limited:

O’Brien and Dempsey (2004), in their comparative analysis of employment services for people with intellectual disabilities in Australia, Finland and Sweden, emphasized the necessity for education and training as a key factor in improving the participation of people with intellectual disabilities in the general labour force.

Young people with disabilities often lack access to formal education or to opportunities to develop their skills – particularly in the increasingly important field of information technology (Burchardt, 2004; WHO, 2011). The gap in educational attainment between those with a disability and those without is thus an ever-increasing obstacle (World Bank, 2009).

3.2.2 Valued Outcomes for people with disability

Not surprisingly, the rise of open and supported employment in Australia as elsewhere was linked to increasing recognition that people with disability wanted to work for a range of reasons, and the development and application of instructional technologies. New employment placement and support models and methodologies proved that people with disability were able to be productive and exceed employment expectations.

In addition to earnings and other related monetary benefits, the efficacy of open/supported employment was judged on its capacity to achieve employment integration for individuals served. Integrated supported employment outcomes were broadly defined to include physical and social integration in the workplace (involvement at work sites where persons without disabilities are employed) relating to quality of life as well as paid work (at or above the minimum wage), and provision of support services (as such services relate to maintaining adequate levels of work performance and ensure job retention over time [Black, 1984; Calkins & Walker, 1989; Gold, 1975; Grimes, 1985; Knox & Hickson, 2001; Johnson & Lewis, 1994; Lewis, Dempster, Lawn, & Robertson, 1986; Parent & Wehman, 1989; Parmenter, Riches & Hauritz, 1981; Riches, 1993; Rusch, 1986; Stokes, & Baer, 1977; Ward, Parmenter, Debenham, & Miller, 1977; Ward, Parmenter, Riches, & Hauritz, 1978 Wehman et al., 2006].) While recognising that non-monetized outcomes are more difficult to operationalize and quantify than economic benefit data, Goode
(1989) stated that their relevance to job success, family involvement and the philosophical mission of supported employment was unquestionable.

Consequently, while outcome data regarding numbers of persons with disability employed, hours worked, and wages earned are important outcomes, internationally there was a move away from looking at these solely, to focusing on social as well as physical integration and inclusion, as well as career advancement and quality of life. There was also recognition that different stakeholders value different outcomes, and that there is need to identify what are the contributors to these desired outcomes.

Initially, attention shifted from minimum wages in lieu of government pension and low pay to physical and social integration and the production of valued goods and services (Kiernan & Schalock, 1989; Kiernan, Schalock, & Sailor, 1992; Riches & Green, 2003; Rusch, 1986; 1990; Wehman & Moon, 1988). Consequently, measures of acquisition and maintenance of job specific skills (Rusch & Mithaug, 1980, Wehman, 1981) and adaptive behaviour and community living skills associated with employment were applied (Johnson & Lewis, 1994; Lewis, Johnson, et. al, 1991; McGrew, Johnson & Bruininks, 1992).

The steady increase in jobs secured in retail, health and community services, hospitality and personal and other services required appropriate social interactions in the workplace (Anderson, 1999; Riches & Green, 2003). Increased emphasis was also placed by people with disability themselves on social integration and social inclusion, friendship and quality of life issues including greater community integration and participation; adult status and active participation in society; increased self-esteem and self-worth; and enhanced satisfaction from accomplishments (CERI, 1988; Edgerton, 1979; Grimes, 1985; Halpern, 1985, Kiernan & Schalock, 1989; Kiernan, Schalock, & Sailor, 1992; Parmenter, 1993; Riches & Green, 2003; Riches, 2000; Rusch, 1986; 1990; Taylor & Bogdan, 1990; Wehman & Moon, 1988). Moreover, individuals with disabilities reported that they valued interactions with others as one of the most important aspects of their lives (Disability Services, Victoria., 2000; Higgenbottom & Yoder,1982; Knox & Hickson, 2001, McVilly, Parmenter, Stancliffe, Burton-Smith, 2004; McVilly, Stancliffe, Parmenter, & Burton-Smith, 2006).

Knox, Mok and Parmenter (2000) found that people working in an inclusive work setting developed a strong positive self-image, claiming they no longer felt ‘disabled’; a finding also reported by Koistinen (2008) in her research in Zambia. This highlights how the label of ‘disabled’, and especially ‘intellectually disabled’ and other derogatory terms, influence the self-concept of people with intellectual disabilities.

Moore & Schelling (2015) interviewed 34 graduates of post-secondary education programs for individuals with intellectual disability and identified their desired goals and outcomes as: earn a competitive job after graduation (75% and 87%, respectively, for the integrated and specialized programs); improve social skills (100%; 87%, respectively); gain more independence (92%; 100%); make new friends (100%; 93%), and improve basic academic skills (66%; 87%). Ford (2016) identified quality outcomes for socially inclusive, meaningful, integrated, nontrivial community-based employment of people with significant disabilities involved wages, skill development, job tenure, social relationships, career flexibility and advancement.

Of special significance to the principle of inclusive communities and the acceptance of diversity was the finding by Graffam, Smith Shinkfield & Polzin (2002) that employers experience both material and non-material benefits to their organisations from employing a person with a disability, with those benefits being financially cost-neutral or cost-beneficial in a large proportion of cases. In terms of non-material benefits, the presence of people with disabilities in the workforce highlights the need for overall attention to
training and supervisory practices, basic work practices, health and safety issues and an improvement of organisational performance. Graffam et al. (2002) also suggested that their findings provided some evidence of employers acknowledging and accepting diversity in the workplace. Overall, they concluded that, “…an employee with a disability can be seen as a catalyst for positive change, a catalyst for improved organization performance” (p260).

3.2.3 Employment outcomes among people within mental health challenges

Using the most stringent requirements for level of evidence, supported employment (SE) is acknowledged as an evidence-based practice in the mental health field contributing to positive employment outcomes and the recovery of people with severe mental illness (Bond, 2004; Drake & Bond, 2008; Cook and O’Day, 2006).

In identifying work as a goal, consumers usually mean competitive employment, defined as community jobs that any person can apply for, in regular places of business, paying at least minimum wage, with mostly non-disabled workers. (Bond, 2004; Bedell, Draving, Parrish, Gervey & Guastadisegni, 1998; Bond, Dietzin, McGrew & Miller, 1995; Rogers et al, 1991).

There is strong evidence confirming work is generally good for physical health, wellbeing and mental health, and can reverse the adverse health effects of unemployment. However, Aylward (2014) found the beneficial effects of work are dependent on the nature and quality of work and its social context. Further, unemployment and economic inactivity have been found to be associated with worse mental health than being in employment, with the effect size being greater among those with disabilities (Milner, LaMontagne, Aitken, Bentley & Kavanagh, 2014).

Recovery is seen as a complex process that can lead to associated outcomes of: (a) improved management and reduction of psychiatric symptoms, (b) decreased hospitalizations, (c) improvement in global functioning and (d) more meaningful participation in activities (Barbic, Krupa & Armstrong, 2009). Bond (2004) reported consumers who held jobs for a sustained period of time showed benefits of improved self-esteem and better symptom control.

The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment has emerged as the predominant program achieving better work outcomes for people with severe mental illness (Becker, Flack, & Wickham, 2012). Outcomes of these programs have been gauged by the use of a range of measures including the IPS Fidelity scale which was developed and used to assess evidence based practices, and their effectiveness in employment programs (Bond, McHugo, Becker, Rapp & Whitley, 2008; Cocks & Boaden, 2009; Resnick and Rosenheck, 2007). The IPS Fidelity Scale measures items involving focus on competitive employment; zero exclusion criteria for participants as eligibility is based on consumer choice; rapid job search with individualised job search, job matching and support, and diversity of jobs developed; integration of vocational and mental health services with provision of specialist services as distinct from general employment services; attention to consumer preferences; time unlimited and individual support, and benefits counselling.

Campbell, Bond & Drake (2011) used meta-analysis to identify the benefits of evidence-based practices on competitive employment outcomes for people with severe mental illness. The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model produced better results with large effect sizes across all employment outcomes (job acquisition, total weeks work and job tenure) than alternative vocational programs, regardless of background demographic, clinical or employment characteristics. Use of the IPS model for service delivery and the IPS Fidelity Scale for measuring effectiveness continue to gain traction.
Additional outcome measures across employment programs supporting people with mental illness have included:

- The IPS Fidelity scale and job tenure (Lucca et al., 2004)
- IPS Fidelity scale and competitive employment rate (Becker, Lynde, & Swanson, 2008)
- Employment rates, days to the first job, annualized weeks worked and job tenure in the longest job held during a follow-up period of time (Mueser et al., 2004)
- Job placement rates, weeks worked, total jobs worked, job duration, hours and wages (Schonebaum et al. 2006; Macias et al., 2006)
- Job acquisition, total weeks worked, and job tenure (Campbell, Bond & Drake, 2009)
- Worked at least one day, number hours worked, job tenure (days), drop out from service, Admission hospital, percentage time spent in hospital (Burns, Catty, Becker, et al., 2007)
- The working alliance (Kulka & Bond, 2009)

3.2.4 Self-determination, person centredness and career planning

The rise of self-determination and person centred thinking with emphasis on choice and self-directed employment models has also resulted in a broadening of goals and desired outcomes for individuals. A broad array of outcomes are now desired by consumers including: wages, economic self-sufficiency, independence, security, competence, achievement, accomplishment, personal growth, self-identity, self-esteem, contribution to society, creativity, variety, relationships, socialisation, developing friendships, community participation, and a more fulfilled life.

Person centered thinking and planning is not new to employment support for people with disability, as exemplified by the following quote from 1988: "Rather than working with a person to identify a specific type of job he or she wants to find, the employment specialist focuses on determining what employment outcomes are most important in the person’s life. These employment outcomes are the life enhancing characteristics that can be gained through a job [Powell, et al, 1988]. However, person centredness has gained greater traction in recent years and is now recognised as key to improving outcomes and satisfaction.

Anderson (2009) claimed that the most effective and efficient employment outcomes are obtained by aligning inputs (candidate preparation and job development) with an appropriate job matched to the person’s skills and competencies and the employer’s needs. Key components to this requires ensuring a candidate’s employability status - as defined by being motivated, reliable and dependable; ensuring effective job development and support to overcome barriers and limitations based on disability, age etc. and job market placement based on the candidate’s job profile, matched to the employers needs and the minimum employment requirements. Misalignment factors that can result in dissatisfaction and complaints from job seekers, and/or frustration and underperformance from job development staff when candidates are unprepared to work, include jobs candidates cannot do, or organisations and staff do not have the skills to deliver assisted job development.

Surveys of satisfaction from the perspective of people receiving supported employment (SE) services have found that the majority of consumers like their jobs. However, face-to-face interviews with people with high-support needs receiving SE services in Virginia, USA found that many would like to change some aspect of their job to make it better. More than half indicated that their current job was not the career they would like to have permanently. The study concluded that there was a need to increase consumer involvement in all phases of the SE service delivery (Parent, Kregel & Johnson, 1996).
Lack of career choice was also highlighted in a study of attitudes towards SE of parents and primary caregivers of people with high support needs (Ford et al., 1995). This study also emphasized the need for greater communication between the service providers and families.

With the rise of person-centred thinking and practice, open employment for people with a disability has moved from the “get a job, any job” phase, and the job match approach to the **self-directed employment model**. In this model, a job seeker moves through a process of CHOOSE, MANAGE, EVALUATE and ADJUST (Martin, Mithaug, Oliphant et al. 2002). Such a model promotes self-determination, increased satisfaction and career planning and execution, as a self-directed person is involved in evaluation of their job and their own performance at every stage of the process.

### 3.2.5 Quality of Life

Quality of Life (QoL) has been a concept of great importance in the evaluation of employment outcomes for people with disability over time, although difficulties have been evident in the operationalization of agreed indicators of success. Measures have included satisfaction level, increases in personal independence, mobility, social networks, degree of environmental control, psychological well-being.

Quality of life in the mental health field is positively impacted by improvements in psychosocial health and well being, which also positively impacts the community by decreasing the financial burden on mental health systems and reducing poverty (Barron, 2000; Becker, Flack & Wickham, 2012; Lucca, Henry, Banks, Simon, & Page, 2004).

Kober and Eggleton (2009) argued that Quality of Life can be used as an outcome measure as part of a comprehensive stakeholder analysis of the performance of service providers working with people with intellectual disability. Eggleton’s 1991 basic performance measurement framework was modified and used to illustrate how different outcome measures can be calculated, relevant to the various stakeholders involved in employment.

As illustrated in Figure 2, key outcomes for employees with intellectual disability may include length of job tenure, wages or take home pay, self esteem, job satisfaction and QOL.

Outcomes for employers of people with intellectual disability may include a more diverse workforce, and associated benefits in terms of higher productivity levels, lower absenteeism rates, and customer satisfaction (related to the fact that employees are better able to interact with a more diverse population set). Co-worker outcome measures may include greater acceptance of people with disability, tolerance of others and level of workforce integration. Families of employees with a disability may experience outcomes related to more time for respite, greater access to part time employment, lower levels of stress and better Family QOL.
3.2.6 Summary National and International Employment Outcomes

The Australian Government is committed legally and morally to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights. It also advocates

A sustainable disability support system which is person-centred and self-directed, and which maximises opportunities for independence and participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the community (Australian Government, 2011).

For persons with a disability, work continues to be viewed as an essential element of quality of life, and often as the most effective pathway to achieving greater financial independence and participation in many aspects of economic, social and community life. Yet difficulties with gaining an employment status let alone a job at any one point in time have been identified by people with a disability as one of the main barriers to their social and economic participation (National People with Disabilities and Carer Council 2009).

Varying employment patterns and outcomes can be seen across different disability types, age groups, gender, and national and international research demonstrates that employment involves a number of economic and non-economic outcomes over and above placement and maintenance in a job at 13 and 26 weeks, as summarised in Table 2.
### Table 2: Summary key valued employment outcomes

**INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES SUMMARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Non-Economic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wages per hour/week</td>
<td>Physical and social integration and inclusion in the workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fringe benefits (health insurance, sick leave.)</td>
<td>Quality of Life indices:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• satisfaction,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• independence,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net annual earnings</td>
<td>• well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours worked per week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job tenure</td>
<td>Skill acquisition/ competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status – involving occupational growth and development</td>
<td>Skill maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career flexibility and career advancement</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost benefit ratio</td>
<td>Career choice and control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment rate/ unemployment rate</td>
<td>Individual aspirational goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days to first job, job placement rate</td>
<td>Active participation in work and community life, community living skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job duration</td>
<td>Enhanced satisfaction from accomplishments/ achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced DSP recipients</td>
<td>Increased personal independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time/part time rates</td>
<td>Improved social status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic self sufficiency</td>
<td>Social interactions and friendships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic security</td>
<td>Adult status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-determination – voice, choice and control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employment is more than just gaining a job. For many, a career or a work life provides value and worth over and above financial gains. Paid work is not only meaningful in terms of its economic function, but it also contributes to a sense of status and identity, it can help structure time, and provide for many people, opportunities for challenge, expression, contribution and social interaction.

It is noteworthy that programs operating according to the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model achieved a range of more effective outcomes in both the mental health and intellectual disability fields than other models of operation. Furthermore,
the use of IPS Fidelity Scales is one method of examining and assessing the fidelity with which a service operates its program according to evidence-based practices and identifying via regression analyses the impact of these practices against various outcomes.

Recognition of the ability and the rights of people with disability to engage in competitive employment, and to exercise choice and control has been an ongoing battle, and one that is likely to continue in the changing employment scene. Selection of the most effective and enhancing outcomes for inclusion in any performance framework for organisations that support people with disabilities to realise employment status is critical.

SECTION 4: NOVA EMPLOYMENT INC. INPUTS, PROCESSES AND OUTPUTS

4.1 About NOVA Employment Inc.

NOVA Employment was established in 1990 with state funding from the then NSW Department of Industrial Relations, with the aim to assist youth with disabilities living in the western area of Sydney, a traditionally high youth unemployment area, to transition into competitive employment. By 2015 the organisation has grown to be a flourishing, federally funded Disability Employment Service (DES) operating Employment Support Services (ESS) across 14 sites in three DES Sydney regions: Macarthur region which includes offices in Camden, Campbelltown and Ingleburn; Nepean region – with offices in Katoomba, Penrith, Richmond Springwood St Marys, Rouse Hill and Windsor; and St George- Sutherland region – with Caringbah, Engadine, Hurstville, Rockdale outlets.
ESS programs serve people with a permanent disability and with an assessed need for longer term, ongoing support in the workplace. NOVA ESS participants have a range of disabilities, including intellectual disability, autism, hearing impairment, physical disabilities and mental illness.

Since 2006 NOVA has also been running Transition to Work (TTW) programs for school leavers not ready to immediately access other programs when they leave school due to additional support needs, funded by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS). These programs are co-located with the DES programs, with various Job Clubs run by NOVA TTW staff in local feeder schools in western and south western Sydney. Additionally, 2015, NOVA ran a FACS funded Employment Enablement Program (EEP) for 40 people with an intellectual disability aged 30 to 55 years old, who had not been eligible for TTW programs or equivalents and were not currently accessing a DEN. To date NOVA has placed in excess of 15,000 people with disability into employment from across their various programs.

NOVA Employment has established its own Registered Training Organisation (RTO). RTO’s are training providers registered by Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) to deliver vocational education and training (VET) services. RTOs are recognised as providers of quality-assured and nationally recognised training and qualifications. Through its RTO, NOVA Employment offers deliver Certificate 1 in Work Education 22128VIC. Participants who competently complete all parts of the Certificate are accredited the Qualification, while those who work towards the certificate but are unable to complete fully, graduate with a Statement of Attainment. The curriculum is designed for people with disabilities and involves learning underpinning work skills and social skills that prepare participants for all types of jobs, as well as job search training and work placements.

Additionally, the Focus on Ability Annual Film Festival was launched in 2009 at the CEO’s initiative. This is a direct strategy to promote the value, dignity and abilities of people with disability and change attitudes, especially among school students who will be the leaders and employers of the future. This widely acclaimed short Film Festival is now in its 7th year and has become an international event with over $140,000 cash and prizes to be won – contributed by Corporate and individual sponsors including KIA, Hawaiian Airlines, Smeg, Harvey Norman, NAB, Sony Foundation, Clubs NSW and Ernst & Young. Films were viewed by over 2 million people in 2015, and NOVA owned films have been used around the world to promote inclusion, and screenings are now occurring internationally.

Other initiatives include the 2015 Focus on Ability Campaign: 100 jobs in 100 Days for people with a disability. Not only did this help place people with disability into jobs, significant media coverage contributed to community education and raised awareness of the abilities of people with disability.

4.2 NOVA Employment Business Model of Operation

NOVA operates in the Human Services field and complies with and supports the National Standards for Disability, and key principles of Normalisation, Social Role Valorisation (SRV) and person centredness. However, it also functions according to a business model and recognises that employers work in business models across various industries, which have their own markets, customers, products and structures. NOVA has an established Information Management System (MIS) to monitor and gain feedback on performance across the company as a whole, and management is committed to ongoing performance improvement.

The NOVA ESS model operates according to specified and standardised phases, which have been detailed in section 4.4 below and depicted graphically in Figure 3. Relevant NOVA documents that were examined as part of the Desk Top review and that were utilised in these various phases are listed in Appendix 2. Evidence was that the NOVA has a well organised system and documents to assist staff to maintain focus on jobseeker and worker contact, job preparation and job matching, skills training, job search and marketing as well as excellent processes for staff communication ongoing professional development. Management ensure smooth operations and monitor ongoing performance review and performance improvement of these processes and procedures. The processes are modelled off EBP and link to the ES Fidelity Scale and audit results.
4.3 External audit report

An external audit was undertaken by a Business Standards Company (bsi.) in April-May 2015 to check compliance of NOVA Employment against the new National Disability Service Standards. The Assessment Report completed in May 2015 stated that the service delivery and management system reviewed was found to be compliant, with no non-compliances being identified. The six standards verified comprised: Standard 1 - Rights; Standard 2- Participation and Inclusion; Standard 3 - Individual Outcomes; Standard 4 - Feedback and Complaints; Standard 5 – Service Access; and Standard 6 - Service Management [Cameron, 2015]. Substantial positive findings were reported for each Standard, and a number of relevant findings have been cited in section 4.2 that detail the NOVA Business Model of operation and its various processes and procedures that contribute to enhanced employment outcomes. The report stated “Exceptional outcomes were evident in... the DES Employment's Service activities .... In the DES area, great importance is placed upon ‘job matching’ to ensure not only placement but sustained employment” [Cameron, 2015, p3].

The audit concluded NOVA had stable and implemented systems, and that conforming systems effectively contributed to the achievement of organizational objectives (p. 31).

4.4 Findings relating to NOVA ESS stages and processes

4.4.1 Registration

Following referral from a range of sources (Centrelink, self, parents, schools, community providers etc.) the registration process begins. Staff complete the eligibility assessments and Departmental registration processes, and ensure registrants are familiar with contact details; the National Standards of Disability; Complaints policy and procedures; the aim of the program (A job is the goal); program participant obligations and agreements; and NOVA obligations and agreements. Registrants receive a Participant Handbook containing relevant information and staff complete a Registration Checklist and Contact Report form that tracks data on the process.

Additional data from the Audit Assessment Report (Cameron 2015) stated:

- The service collaborates with other relevant organisations and community members to establish and maintain a referral network (3.5, p. 28).
- The service systematically seeks and uses input from people with disability, their families, friends and carers to ensure access is fair, equal and transparent (5.1, p.29).
- The service provides accessible information in a range of formats about the types and quality of services available (5.3, p.29).
- The service develops, applies and reviews policies and practices related to eligibility criteria, priority of access and waiting lists (5.4, p.29).
- The service monitors and addresses potential barriers to access (5.5, p.29).
- The service provides clear explanations when a service is not available along with information and referral support for alternative access (5.6, p.29).
- The NOVA Employment Participant Handbook was commendable because it was clearly written and laid out, detailed, utilised a ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ type format with questions likely to be asked by participants, references to authoritative sources, positive quotes from previous audit reports and quoted the Standard for service element of each Standard (p.9).

4.4.2 Job Preparation and Job Matching

During the job preparation and job matching stage, program participants are supported in exploring job choices that are achievable, realistic, suitable and sustainable.
An asset based assessment incorporates work histories, skills, experience, information from professionals as needed, self-knowledge, ability to travel independently to work, manage self-care and medication, presentation and grooming skills and any barriers to employment. Job preparation includes setting individual goals that are achievable, realistic, suitable and sustainable. Employability skills address individual areas of need, basic IT skills for work, workplace health and safety issues, linking to supports to address barriers, assisting with interview preparation, meeting employer expectations and developing a working lifestyle. ECs complete the Job Seeker Contact Report form fortnightly that tracks progress and helps monitor goal attainment and problem solve blockages.

Additional data from the Audit Assessment report (Cameron 2015):

- It is evident through observation and individual interviews, that individuals are treated with dignity and respect [1.1, p.23].
- Strategies for the development of individual goals are in place, and were representative of minimal restrictive options. Goals are established and job search and successful matching are effectively linked to those goals. Goals are reviewed as necessary. Individuals felt that their goals were established with their control and input. Individuals stated that the service is flexible, if goals changed [1.4, p.8].
- Planning of service delivery includes reviewing individual needs and goals. The supporting documentation which is gathered in order to successfully attain an individual’s goals, identifies strengths, needs and life goals. Many Employment Pathway Plans (EPP’s)5 reflect short and long term goals, with life goals, such as learning to drive, saving money, and continuing medical treatments being included. An individual’s support network is considered in employment planning and individuals indicated they were free to involve others, as needed.
- All individuals go through a process of planning their goals and ambitions with the help of NOVA, and with the involvement of advocates and others, where necessary. At all times, individual choice is upheld. Documents such as the Job Match Profile gain crucial information, such as skills and considerations, such as how disability will affect employment. Job Match Activities include review for things such as reliability and punctuality. Individuals felt that the service consults them on their goals and is flexible to changing needs. Individual job choices were upheld, and there were several very good examples of individual choice leading to the ideal employment outcome for individuals [Standard 3, p.12].
- Job planning documentation is developed to gain an insight into individual needs and ambitions [St. 3, p.13].
- EPPs are reviewed regularly, and demonstrate when changes to goals take place. Individuals also indicated that their plans are reviewed [St. 3, p.13].
- Life goals are included in plans. [St. 3, p.13.]
- Documents such as the Job Match Profile gain crucial information, such as skills and considerations, such as how disability will affect employment. Job Match Activities include review for things such as reliability and punctuality [St. 3, p.12.].
- Individuals gave feedback on how the service allowed them the space and time to undertake steps toward fulfilling, paid employment – and at a pace that suited them [St. 2, p.26].

5 Employment Pathway Plans (EPPs) are now called Job Plans
4.4.3 Job Search

The Job search phase occurs concurrently with job preparation and job matching. Jobseekers prepare and adjust resumes and portfolios, prepare job applications and apply for advertised positions. They also attend job interviews and once employment is found, are assisted to prepare for the actual job. Staff during this phase search for and make contact with suitable businesses and set up employer appointments. Each week staff focus on several (2-5) specific job seekers and their job choice industries for targeted job search, at the same time ensuring they rotate through all their job seekers over time. During a weekly Power Hour, Employment Consultants contact employers to identify leads and set up specific meetings with employers. A Power Hour Map and Checklist summarises the process for staff.

Once face to face interviews are scheduled, the EC prepares for each employer meeting, taking account of the job match profile, advises employers of NOVA support provisions such as post placement coaching, on-boarding and training; and requirements for their service (e.g. Employment Agreement), and seeks placement for a specific job seeker based on the job match profile, and the value they will bring to the employer. A Face to face Employer Meetings MAP documents the process for staff. ECs complete the Job Seeker Contact Report forms fortnightly that helps monitor goal attainment and problem solving blockages, and records participant feedback and any follow up requirements.

4.4.4 Job Placement

The Employment Consultant negotiates with the employer and the employee the conditions of employment including role of worker (duty statement), hours of work per week, wages and benefits and productivity requirements. In some cases, this can require job customisation. A Support Plan is developed in partnership with the employer and new employee that guides all the essential information needed to facilitate a successful placement for both the employer and the participant. This details the roles and responsibilities of each party and type and frequency of support to be provided by NOVA. Additional considerations include the use of traineeships and apprenticeships, workplace modifications and adaptive equipment, and access to the Employment Assistance Fund if costs are required by the employer to carry out workplace modification, and incentives to maintain employment. An Employer Contact Report form is completed monthly to monitor compliance, service delivery and quality assurance and gain honest employer feedback and any follow up requirements.

Relevant data from the Audit Assessment Report (Cameron 2015) stated:

- NOVA respects and values cultural diversity and seeks to incorporate individual cultural and lifestyle choices in providing employment services and adopts a holistic approach to service delivery that facilitates integration into the wider community through well matched employment opportunities (St. 2, p.11.)
- Individual job choices were upheld, and there were several very good examples of individual choice leading to the ideal employment outcome for individuals (St. 3, p.12).
4.4.5 Post Placement Support (1-26 weeks) and On-going Support (26 weeks plus)

The aim of post placement support and on-going support is long term job retention. Training and coaching continues until the usual workplace standards are achieved and training problems or challenges are solved, and to facilitate workers achieving personal goals and as well as key milestones aligned to the claimable outcomes of 13, 26 and 52 weeks employment.

JCs use standardised documents in the Post Placement Support (PPS) and On-going Support (OS) Assessment Bundle to record:

1. Job descriptions
2. Tasks Breakdowns
3. At Work Assessments: completed multiple times to assess the person’s need for worksite support
4. Worksite Coaching Checklists: Used to assess the level of assistance the worker needs to retain employment.
5. Worker Self Knowledge: to help the worker self-assess the support they require to retain employment
6. Independent or on Ongoing Support Checklist: completed regularly to check or decide whether to Exit as independent or requiring ongoing support

Once workers meet acceptable performance and productivity requirements the intensity of support reduces to supervision and maintenance. These continue to occur to ensure competence is maintained and performance problems are solved. Job Coaches complete weekly Worker Contact Report forms to record and monitor progress. A One Month Worksite Visit and Job Placement Tracker for Ongoing Support is also completed to track frequency and timing of worker contacts.

Site Managers also complete Participant Contact Report Forms on a regular basis throughout the placement and support process, identifying the type of contact, reason for
contact, and client feedback, follow up requirements etc.

Relevant data from the audit Assessment Report (Cameron 2015) found:

- The service develops, applies, reviews and communicates commencement and leaving a service processes
  - The NOVA Employment Participant Handbook Section 5 describes the commencement of service process.
  - The NOVA Employment Participant Handbook Section 11 describes the leaving a service process
  - Exit files clearly communicated the reasons for exit to the individual leaving the service (Standard 5, p.16).

- File reviews showed that files were well ordered, methodical and thorough. Checklists were used extensively to ensure that core processes such as developing participant profiles, strengths, barriers, preferences and goals effectively contributed to successful outcomes for individuals (Cameron, 2015, p.22).

- Additionally, observation across sites occurred and it was concluded that, from a consumer perspective, the quality of service delivery across the six sites visited was consistently high, delivering quality outcomes for participants. It was noted that some sites had a distinctive 'flavour' or style of service (p.23)

- At one site, there was evidence of multi-cultural services being referred to the individual. ... NOVA has also advocated on behalf of individuals, to agencies, such as the Department of Housing [St. 1, p. 8].

- Individuals interviewed face to face and those involved in Focus groups felt the service revolved around them and were clearly happy with how staff “went the extra mile” to provide additional support. Examples included accompanying them to job interviews, driving them to and from work, and in one outstanding example, a NOVA staff member worked alongside a newly employed individual for a whole week baking bread on long shifts - starting at 3am (Cameron, 2015, p.22).

- Individuals often stated how important it was to them that their Employment Consultants believed in them, which in turn helped them to believe in themselves and thus find employment (p.22).

- Confidence building strategies were used throughout service delivery with the service clearly recognising that low confidence was a significant barrier for most people with a disability (p. 22).

- Feedback from individuals about their social connection confirmed that the service was aware of the danger of social isolation for some individuals and took appropriate steps to ensure they were connected, and remained connected to family, friends and their chosen communities (St.2, p.26).

- During conversations individuals often mentioned their families, friends and community affiliations such as sporting clubs, churches and volunteering roles (St. 2, p.26).

- The service works with aboriginal services agencies to ensure that community and cultural connections are maintained and/or strengthened. Sites displayed information on specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events and initiatives, such as Aboriginal Apprenticeships [St.3, p.27].

- The service develops a culture of continuous improvement using compliments, feedback and complaints to plan, deliver and review services for individuals and the community [4.5, p.29].
4.4.6 Job Coaching and Mentoring

Once a job is gained, Job Coaches provide post placement to individuals to attend usual workplace training orientation or induction programs and provide additional training and support to reach acceptable performance and productivity requirements. Job descriptions are used to identify priority tasks and productivity timings and Task Breakdowns (Task analysis) are developed to identify workplace standards, quality, timings and expectations, so relevant supports/ training can be provided. Job coaches support workers to adjust to the workplace and communicate with co-workers and become valued team members. Workers are also supported to ensure they manage their disability, travel independently, present appropriately and adhere to workplace health and safety.

Good relationships with employers are developed and job customisation can occur although it is not identified by this terminology. Job coaches are encouraged to be creative and to normalise the job and the provisions as much as possible. They can work with employers and supervisors to swap some tasks around if necessary, barter off certain tasks, introduce specific tools for training, or arrange for job modifications using the Employer Assistance Fund or NOVA funds, and are being encouraged to use visuals and video for training purposes. Where possible supervisors are supported to customise the job so they learn to bring a solution focussed approach to difficulties and again normalise the job and any support arrangements for the person with disability and the workplace.

Relevant data from the Audit Assessment Report [Cameron 2015]:

- The individual support delivered by the job coaches in the DES area and the close level of care and of individual support provided by the Support Carer at Cafe 64 was delightful to see (St.3, p.13).

4.5 Additional NOVA Employment processes and procedures

4.5.1 Bonus Incentive Payments Scheme

An Incentive bonus scheme was developed by NOVA to reward staff performance aligned to achieving the Department KPIs employment outcomes, as funding payments are tied to these.

Staff are supported to set goals and activities to achieve “good performance” as similar to program participants, staff are encouraged to “aim high”. Monthly goal setting sessions are held on the last Friday of every month with managers and information on how to prepare for these sessions is provided in a How 2 Prepare for Monthly Goals Setting Sessions with your Manager PowerPoint. This includes a one page Goal Setting Session form to assist in preparation and review.

A How 2 Placement Calculator provides all staff with information on how to calculate and claim bonus payments for achieving performance targets linked to the Star Rating system. Information and specific performance targets and requirements are provided according to position (Manager, EC or JC) and taking account of caseloads. Another document provides information on Methods of achieving placement KPIs. Again, specific details are provided by position (EC, Outlet managers, JCs).

4.5.2 Professional Development

Total staffing in 2015 for NOVA Employment was 126.2 staff across all three programs (ESS, TTW and EEP). Across the DES outlets there were 27.3 Job Coaches/Worsksite Support personnel and 33 Employment Consultants in 2015.

There are no specific entry qualifications required by staff although certain values and
attitudes are required. Criteria for staff selection include: prior experience with people with disabilities; empathy; belief in the rights of people with disabilities including social role valorisation (SRV); belief in the value of employment and the employability of people with disabilities; behavioural style interviewing; good computer skills; some exposure or understanding of sales concepts; understanding of caseload management; and time management.

4.5.2.1 Internal Training

NOVA Employment is committed to Professional Development (PD) for its staff and heavily invests in a range of training options to upskill staff. All staff undergo induction and a number of internal training provisions occur each year including various forums and SuperNOVAs that address specific employment services topics e.g. values training - Social Role Valorisation; Job match skills; Job Coaching and mentoring; behavioural style interviewing, The ESS system, training related to Compliance matters etc. NOVA also partners with a performance organisation to co-deliver training in sales and marketing skills and has developed its own marketing tools for working with employers.

At various times NOVA management have engaged international experts to provide staff training through conferences and special events, including Temple Grandin, Dale DiLeo and Carol Schall (Virginia Commonwealth University’s Autism Centre of Excellence) and commissioned specialist training programs to support staff working with people who have significant mental illness.

Outlet managers provide regular weekly 30-minute training sessions in core skills in service delivery; coaching in employer contact during Power Hour, and can accompany staff in face to face employer interviews to provide coaching.

Relevant data from the Audit Assessment Report (Cameron 2015) stated:

- The staff induction process is performed over a full week and includes modules on NOVA’s values and Mission and Social Valorisation [Cameron, 2015, P8.]
- The staff induction process is performed over a full week and is followed by a three month probation period where both performance and “fit” with NOVA values is assessed [Cameron, 2105, p.18].

4.5.2.2 Accredited Training

NOVA Training is an officially Recognised Training Authority (RTO) that offers and provides nationally recognised and accredited training. All staff enrol within six to nine months of commencing with NOVA to undertake the Certificate IV in Disability or Certificate IV in Employment Services with NOVA Training.

Program participants in the Transition to Work (TTW) and Employment Enablement Program (EEP) undertake the Certificate 1 in Work Education 22128VIC offered by NOVA Training also.

4.5.3 Media to Educate and Enhance Employment Options for People with Disability

NOVA CEO Martin Wren instigated the Focus on Ability Film festival in 2009 with the explicit aim of changing attitudes to disability among school children because they will be the leaders and employers in the days ahead. Focus on Ability Annual Film Festival is now in its 7th year has become an international event with over $140,000 cash and prizes to be won – contributed by Corporate and individual sponsors including KIA, Hawaiian Airlines, Smeg, Harvey Norman, NAB, Sony Foundation, Clubs NSW, Ernst & Young. The film festival continues to grow and change attitudes in schools and society and is now
internationally recognised with significant international entries. Additional screenings
have been held in New York and throughout Australian embassies around the world. NOVA
owned films are publicly available over the internet and have been used around the world
to promote inclusion.

NOVA's generalist advertising reached more than 4 million people - in 2015. NOVA
Employment was featured in a one hour SBS special, a documentary on the progress of a
person with disability and subsequently repeated in an 8 episode series on Aurora TV.

Relevant data from the Audit Assessment Report (Cameron 2015):

- NOVA publicises the theme of “Focus on Ability” by their International short film
  competition, providing “pie bags” to take-away & lunch shops, Bi-monthly Australia
  Post mail-outs to businesses, TV advertising, Radio advertising, Hoarding advertising in
  railway stations and motorways, podcasts on NOVA websites (Cameron, 2015, p. 11).

4.6 Employment Services Fidelity Scale Results

Many features in the NOVA DES ESS model are similar to those employed in the individualised
placement and support models (IPS) that operate for people with mental illness. Consequently, use
of the Employment Services Fidelity Scale was considered valid. The Employment Services Fidelity Scale
items assess structural elements of program implementation in the domains of staffing, organisation
and services. Each of the 17 items are rated on a 5 point behaviourally anchored scale from 1 (low
implementation) to 5 (full implementation). The scale was assessed for the overall NOVA DES as
frequent staff training and quality improvement systems and techniques have been instituted to ensure
all sites operate the same way. According to the NOVA leadership team, the Fidelity Scale has been used
internally for several years as a formative evaluation tool that has resulted in structural changes being
made over time to improve performance.

The Employment Services Fidelity Scale Total Score results are presented in Table 3. The Total Score
obtained was 82/85 or 96.5%, indicating exemplary fidelity to employment service evidence-based
practices. Of the three subscales – Staffing, Organisation and Services, all were in the exemplary
range. Staffing achieved 100% fidelity rating, Organisation achieved 92% and Services 98% fidelity. On
the individual items, fifteen of the 17 items achieved high fidelity with the maximum score of 5, while
one item gained a rating of 4 (work incentives planning). The lowest rating of 3 was obtained on the item
zero exclusion. This was because, although NOVA supports zero exclusion for all people with disability
interested in working, (a) the DES contract with NOVA excludes underage youth from working and clients
with Drug and Alcohol problems (D & A) who are served by specific programs; and (b) NOVA does exclude
individuals who exhibit violence or are who are behaviourally unsafe or unpredictable, and people with a
known history of paedophilia because of easy access to youth in the their offices (For details see Table 3).

The ratings indicate that NOVA is operating a competitive employment program using evidence based
practices across the various stages of program intake (referral and registration), engagement, asset
based assessment, job preparation and job matching (skill development) job search and placement,
job coaching and follow along support. Staff are supported by management and leadership systems to
engage with program participants using a strength based approach, and to engage regularly in rapid
individualised job search with frequent and quality employer and community service provider contact.

Employment Services Fidelity Scale Data Sources:

- DOC = Document review,
- NT = interview with clients, designated staff, others
- OBS = Observation
- ISP = Individualised Service Plan

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6 Scores of 70-85 indicate exemplary fidelity
Table 3: Employment Services Fidelity Scale Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Anchor</th>
<th>Rating Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STAFFING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Designated staff who address and document employment services</td>
<td>DOC INT</td>
<td>Designated staff address and document employment services 96% or more of the time</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Coordination of employment services</td>
<td>DOC INT OBS</td>
<td>Designated staff carries out all six phases of employment service (e.g., program intake, engagement, assessment, job development/job placement, job coaching, and follow along supports).</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ORGANISATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Integration of employment services with treatment through frequent team member contact</td>
<td>MIS DOC INT</td>
<td>Designated staff attend weekly team meetings; actively discuss in team meetings individual clients and their employment goals with shared decision-making; Documentation of treatment and employment services are integrated in a single client chart; and designated staff help the team think about employment for people who haven’t yet been referred to (supported employment services)/jobs.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Collaboration between designated staff and community service providers (IBRS, CCAR, ULA, APT, ROES, CT Works/one stop)</td>
<td>DOC INT</td>
<td>Designated staff and community service providers have scheduled face-to-face meetings at least monthly, and have client related contacts (phone, e-mail, in person) weekly to discuss shared clients and referrals</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Zero exclusion criteria</td>
<td>INT</td>
<td>Contract provisions mean some clients are unable to access NOVA employment services - underage, D &amp; A While NOVA aims for zero exclusion for people with disability willing to work, several specific exclusions do apply – Violence/ history of violence/ unpredictable violence, and known paedophilia – due to access to young people in office</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Agency focus on competitive employment</td>
<td>DOC INT OBS</td>
<td>Agency promotes competitive work through multiple strategies: Intake, treatment &amp;/or discharge plan includes questions about employment, has focus on employment training as part of provision of services, displays written postings (brochures, bulletin boards, posters, photos) about working and employment services, in lobby and other waiting areas, Agency supports ways for clients to share work stories with other clients and staff (e.g., agency-wide employment recognition events, in-service training, peer support groups, agency newsletter articles, invited speakers at client treatment groups, etc.) at least twice a year, Agency measures rate of competitive employment on at least a quarterly basis and shares outcomes with agency leadership and staff.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion</td>
<td>Data source</td>
<td>Anchor</td>
<td>Rating Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5. Executive team support for employment services | MIS INT     | Executive team members assist with employment implementation and sustainability through:  
- demonstrating knowledge regarding principles of evidence-based employment practices  
- QA process includes explicit review of the employment program, or components at least every 6 months through use of ES Fidelity scale or until achieving high fidelity and at least yearly thereafter. Agency QA process uses the results of the fidelity assessment to improve employment services implementation & sustainability  
- At least 1 member of exec team participates at leadership team meetings that occur at least every 6 months  
- CEO communicates how ES support the mission of the agency and articulates clear and specific goals for ES and competitive employment to all staff during first 6 months and at least annually  
- ES program leader shares information about EBP barriers and facilitators with the executive team (including CEO) at least twice each year. The executive team helps program leader identify and implement solutions to barriers. | 5            |
| ORGANISATION                                  |             |                                                                        |              |
| 1. Work incentives planning                    | DOC INT     | Staff or other practitioner offer clients assistance in obtaining comprehensive, individualised work incentives planning by a person trained in work incentives planning prior to client starting a job. (Staff also explain why clients are better off without pension if benefits are less than $40,000). Staff do assist consumers to attend Centrelink, apply for assistance e.g. Housing and work related supports NB staff vary in knowledge and ability to explain incentives but no designated staff position | 4            |
| 2. Disclosure                                  | INT         | Designated staff discuss disclosure and presence of disability is disclosed to all employers  
- Staff offer to discuss with clients possible costs and benefits (pro and cons) of disclosure at the work site in advance of clients disclosing at the worksite. - Designated staff describe how disclosure relates to requesting accommodations and the designated staff’s role communicating with the employer  
- They discuss specific information to be disclosed (e.g., disclose receiving treatment, or presence of a disability, or difficulty with anxiety, or being unemployed for a period of time, etc.) and offers examples of what could be said to employers. However, NOVA does not require all clients to disclose certain history or details at the work site in order to receive services (e.g. mental illness)  
- Disclosure is discussed on more than one occasion (e.g., if clients have not found employment after two months or if clients report difficulties on the job.) | 5            |
<p>| 3. Ongoing, work-based vocational assessment   | DOC INT ISP | Initial vocational assessment/profile form (NOVA asset based inventory of skills) includes preferences, experiences, skills, current adjustment, strengths, personal contacts, etc. The vocational profile form is used to identify job types and work environments. It is updated with each new job experience (TTW). Aims at problem solving using environmental assessments and consideration of reasonable accommodations. Sources of information include the client, treatment team, clinical records, and with the client’s permission, from family members and previous employers. Designated staff help clients learn from each job experience and also work with the treatment team to analyse job loss, job challenges and job successes | 5            |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Anchor</th>
<th>Rating Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Rapid search for competitive job</td>
<td>DOC, INT, ISP</td>
<td>The program tracks employer contacts and the first face-to-face contact with an employer by the client or the designated staff about a competitive job is on average within 30 days (one month) after program entry.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Individualised job search</td>
<td>INT</td>
<td>90-100% of the time, designated staff assists with search/plan based on job choices which reflect client’s preferences, strengths, symptoms, lessons learned from previous jobs etc., and the job market</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Job development-Frequent employer contact</td>
<td>INT, DOC</td>
<td>Employment specialist makes 6 or more face-to-face employer contacts (generally 12) per week that are client specific, or 2 employer contacts times the number of people looking for work when there are less than 3 people looking for work on their caseload (e.g., new program). In addition, employment specialist uses a tracking form that is reviewed by the SE supervisor on a weekly basis</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Job development - Quality of employer contact</td>
<td>DOC, INT, OBS</td>
<td>Employment specialist builds relationships with employers through multiple visits in person that are planned to learn the needs of the employer, convey what the SE program offers to the employer, describe client strengths that are a good match for the employer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Individualised follow-along supports</td>
<td>DOC, INT</td>
<td>Clients receive different types of support for working a job that are based on the job, client preferences, work history, needs, etc. Designated staff also provides employer support (e.g., educational information, job accommodations) at client’s request. The designated staff helps people move onto more preferable jobs and also helps people with certified training programs. The site provides examples of different types of support including enhanced supports by treatment team members</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Time un-limited follow-along support (until independence)</td>
<td>DOC, INT, ISP</td>
<td>Designated staff has face-to-face contact within 1 week before starting a job, within 3 days after starting a job, weekly for the first month, and at least monthly for a year or more, on average, after working steadily and desired by clients. Clients are transitioned to step down job supports, from designated staff following steady employment. Designated staff contacts clients within 3 days of hearing about the job loss</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Community based services</td>
<td>DOC, INT, OBS</td>
<td>Designated staff spends 65% or more of total scheduled work hours in the community</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>82/85</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>96.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.0 NOVA EMPLOYMENT QUANTITATIVE OUTCOMES

NOVA promotes quality employment outcomes including access to a wide range of employment positions matched to jobseeker interests and preferences, as well as wages and durability of employment. NOVA also encourages staff to secure jobs that provide jobseekers increased hours of work that can assist in improving their financial independence. These hours are above the minimum eight hours required by the Federal Department in the DES contract, and therefore are not included in the Star Rating System. To further encourage this practice, NOVA has instituted internal processes that encourage staff to ‘Aim High’ by providing staff incentive payments for job placements that provide additional hours.

5.1 NOVA KPI Data Results

NOVA has three contracts with the Department involving 14 sites in the Macarthur NSW, Nepean NSW and St George Sutherland NSW areas. At June 2015, published Departmental Star Ratings data showed both KPIs 1 and 2 were above the national averages of KPI 1 =35.1% and KPI 2 = 36.7%. Indeed, NOVA was performing in the top 14% of DES providers across Australia and ranked 20th out of 146, based on the 13 week outcome (NOVA KPI 1 = 44.3%) and the 26 week outcome (NOVA KPI 2 = 43.4%) as can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: KPI Outcome Data for NOVA and all ESS Providers, June 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Started</th>
<th>Got a Job</th>
<th>Job Placement %</th>
<th>Assisted for at least 13 weeks</th>
<th>Job lasting at least 13 weeks</th>
<th>13 Week Outcome %</th>
<th>Assisted for at least 26 weeks</th>
<th>Job lasting at least 26 weeks</th>
<th>26 Week Outcome %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>6103</td>
<td>2685</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>5033</td>
<td>2069</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td>4175</td>
<td>1658</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Totals</td>
<td>476,672</td>
<td>143,327</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>356,884</td>
<td>115,242</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>281,659</td>
<td>91,532</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: NOVA Employment Star Ratings and Percentages Dec 2015 and March 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DES Provider</th>
<th>Employment Service Area</th>
<th>Site Description</th>
<th>Specialisation</th>
<th>Star Rating Dec 2015</th>
<th>*Star %</th>
<th>Star Rating Mar 2016</th>
<th>*Star %</th>
<th>Change Star rating</th>
<th>Change Star %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>Macarthur NSW</td>
<td>Contract</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>Macarthur NSW</td>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>Macarthur NSW</td>
<td>Campbell’n</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+53</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+46</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>Macarthur NSW</td>
<td>Ingleburn</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+38</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+58</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>Nepean NSW</td>
<td>Contract</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+37</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+41</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>Nepean NSW</td>
<td>Katoomba</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+29</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>Nepean NSW</td>
<td>Penrith</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>Nepean NSW</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+70</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+73</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>Nepean NSW</td>
<td>Rouse Hill</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+52</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+66</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>Nepean NSW</td>
<td>Springwood</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>Nepean NSW</td>
<td>St Marys</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+48</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>Nepean NSW</td>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+42</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>St George Sutherland</td>
<td>Contract</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+40</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>St George Sutherland</td>
<td>Caringbah</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>St George Sutherland</td>
<td>Engadine</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+38</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>St George Sutherland</td>
<td>Hurstville</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Employment</td>
<td>St George Sutherland</td>
<td>Rockdale</td>
<td>All client types</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Describes how far above or below the national average performance is, in percentage form. Tells proximity to threshold point to move up or down a Star Rating.
Table 5 reports the most recent star ratings data published for December 2015 and March 2016. Performance measured by the Star Ratings has climbed consistently across the 14 NOVA sites located in the three service regions. In Dec 2015, one five star and two four star ratings were achieved in these service areas, and in March 2016, each of the 3 service areas achieved a full 5 star rating.

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**Figure 4: Department Star Rating distribution representation**

**Figure 5: NOVA trend data comparative to DES Job Placements trend data 2011-2016**

Figure 5 shows NOVA Employment job placement performance by calendar quarter from 2011 through 2016 comparative to the Employment Services Areas (ESAs) in which NOVA operates, Sydney as a whole and the DES-ESS National Job Placement trend. The Sydney Labour Market Region (LMR) for DES-ESS is trending above DES-ESS Job Placements per quarter, the three ESAs in which Nova operates have been doing better still, while NOVA has continued to improve performance in 4 of the last 5 quarters and especially in the last 3.
5.2 Job Hours Per Week

Over and above Star Ratings outcomes, NOVA Employment believes number of hours worked is important, on the grounds that many jobseekers, staff and management consider increased hours results in more sustainable wages. Consequently, it is an explicit policy of NOVA that Employment Consultants seek employment for and with jobseekers above the minimum hours, on the basis that additional hours provide better monetary outcomes and potentially better employment security and conditions. Accordingly, staff strive to place jobseekers in jobs that offer in excess of 15 hours per week wherever possible. An incentive payment scheme operates to reward Employment Consultants (ECs) who make placements providing 15 hours or more per week.

An analysis of internal NOVA job placement data indicated that the majority of jobseekers (approx. 85%) placed in employment by NOVA in the past few years were indeed working in jobs in excess of 15 hours per week. As detailed in Table 6, only 14.3% of first jobs involved less than 15 hours per week while 85.7% involved 15 hours or more per week. Similar figures were found at 13 weeks (17.2% = less than 15 hours; 82.8% =15 hours or more), 26 weeks (16.9% = less than 15 hours; 83.1% =15 hours or more) and for subsequent job placements (2nd and 3rd job placements) as well as jobs providing ongoing support (14.6% = less than 15 hours; 85.4% =15 hours or more).

Overall, approximately 36-41% of jobseekers were in jobs working 15 hours per week, while approximately 22% were in jobs where they were working 36 to 41 hours per week. This was despite the fact that NOVA jobseekers live in greater western and south western Sydney - a geographical area where unemployment tends to be consistently high.

Table 6: Summary hours per week for employees placed and supported by NOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours per week</th>
<th>Anchor Job (1st job)</th>
<th>13 weeks</th>
<th>26 weeks</th>
<th>Job Placement (2nd, 3rd job and ongoing support)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;15</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36+</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>1116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Post Subsidy Employment

NOVA also supports on going placement following the subsidy period. This is a time when some providers can gain more money by replacing individuals who have not sustained employment as they may be taken on as new placements that continue to earn outcome payments for the organisation.
SECTION 6: STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS SECTION

- Client interviews and focus group results
- Views about importance of employment
- Priority reasons for working
- Satisfaction with rate of pay
- Staff interview results
- Importance of NOVA processes
- Staff knowledge of KPIs

6.1 Client Interview and Focus Group Results

6.1.1- Client Characteristics

A total of 13 former clients who were working in employment positions with on-going support from NOVA participated in focus groups or interviews. They came from eight of the 14 NOVA sites across the western and SW Sydney metropolitan area. There were nine males (69%) and four females (31%). Ages ranged from 21 to 55 years, and the average age was 38.5 years. The majority of participants had an intellectual disability (9), and other disabilities involved mental health (2) physical disability (1) and epilepsy (1) as the primary disability. Three of the clients had attended the Employment Enablement Program (EEP), before being placed by a DES consultant. The EEP is a program specifically designed for long term unemployed adults with disability who were too old for the Transition to Work Program (TTW).

Clients were employed in a range of job types although they were predominantly working in service industries. Number of hours worked per week ranged from 8 hours to 38 hours, and the average hours worked was 19 hours (Table 7 summarises demographic details).
Table 7: Demographics of clients with disabilities interviewed or attending Focus groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability Type</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Outlet</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Job Type</th>
<th>Days/ Hours worked per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual and developmental disability</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>St Marys</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Admin Office assistant</td>
<td>5 days 30+ hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Penrith</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>General labourer</td>
<td>5 days 38 hrs/wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Penrith</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>RSL Club employee (Grounds)</td>
<td>3 days 10 hrs/wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>St Marys</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Process packer</td>
<td>2 days 15 hrs/wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Springwood</td>
<td>TTW &amp; DES</td>
<td>Fast food cleaner and occasional cook</td>
<td>2 days 8 hrs/wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Katoomba</td>
<td>EEP DES</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>2 days 8 hrs/wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Katoomba</td>
<td>EEP DES</td>
<td>Cleaner/all rounder</td>
<td>3 days 10 hrs/wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Campbelltown</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Machine operator</td>
<td>5 days 15 hrs/wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Campbelltown</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Warehouse assistant Supported wage</td>
<td>3 days 18 hrs/wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Physical disabilities</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Ingleburn</td>
<td>EEP DES</td>
<td>Delivery driver</td>
<td>3 days 15 hrs/wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health – anxiety and depression</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Ingleburn</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Night packer</td>
<td>3 days 15 hrs/wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilepsy</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Team member Home improvement store</td>
<td>5 days 38 hrs/wk rotating roster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health - anxiety</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Delivery driver</td>
<td>4 days 29 hrs/wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19.2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10.8 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15.0 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>21-55</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>8-38 hrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nine of the 13 client participants attended one of three separate focus groups in various locations across Sydney while the other four individuals were interviewed separately, one at their request and three due to the time and travel constraints faced by participants who were working. Two of these individual interviews were completed over the telephone. One of the participants interviewed face to face provided qualitative data but did not have sufficient time to complete the rating scales due to having to leave the interview to attend work. Consequently, valid ratings were received for 12 participants. As previously indicated, care was taken to ensure that responses from those involved in the Focus groups were not influenced by the opinions of others.
6.1.2 Client Views about Importance of Employment

Employment outcomes endorsed as important by all participants with disabilities involved both economic and noneconomic outcomes. Five items were rated by participants for their importance using a 4-point scale (with 1= very important through 4 = not at all important). Numbers, percentages and means for each item are reported in Table 8. The lower the average or mean (M), the more important the item.

**Table 8: Program Participant responses on importance ratings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1. Very Important</th>
<th>2. Important</th>
<th>3. Not very important</th>
<th>4. Not important at all</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How important is it to you personally to have a job?</td>
<td>11/97.7%</td>
<td>1/8.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important is it to you to make your own choices about your work?</td>
<td>8/83.3%</td>
<td>4/33.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important to you are the number of hours per week you work?</td>
<td>10/83.3%</td>
<td>2/16.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important to you is it to get on with other people in the workplace?</td>
<td>8/66.7%</td>
<td>4/33.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important is it to you to know you can get support if and when you need it?</td>
<td>11/91.7%</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6 depicts the results graphically. Significantly, highest ratings related to having a job [Very important n=11, 91.7%; or Important n=1, 8.3%; Mean =1.08] and also knowing that support from NOVA staff was available if and when needed. One response was missing on this item, but all other clients (n=11, 91.7%) rated support as Very important, resulting in a mean of 1.0 for these 11 clients.

The number of hours worked, and consequently the pay received was a major consideration [very important n=10, 83.3%; and important n=2, 16.7%; M=1.16]. Both items Making choices and getting along with other people in the workplace were also rated very highly [Very important n=8, 66.7%; and Important n=4, 33.3%; M=1.33].
6.1.3 Satisfaction with Rate of Pay

Participants with disabilities were also asked to rate their satisfaction with their rate of pay. Satisfaction rates varied widely, as illustrated in Figure 6. Only 6/12 participants or 50% were very satisfied, 4/12 or 33.3% were satisfied, one person (8.3%) was not very satisfied, and one (8.3%) was not satisfied at all. The average satisfaction rating was $M=1.75$, which was still in the satisfied to very satisfied range.

![Importance Rating](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To have a job</th>
<th>Make own choices about your work</th>
<th>Numbers of hours work per week</th>
<th>Get on with other people in the workplace</th>
<th>Know you can get support if and when needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not important at all</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Rating by employees with disability

![Satisfaction with Rate of Pay](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Not very satisfied</th>
<th>Not satisfied at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: Satisfaction with rate of pay
The small number of respondents made statistical analyses difficult, although responses were examined for differences according to gender, age and number of hours worked. There was a greater satisfaction range among the males, as of the four females interviewed, one was very satisfied and three were satisfied. In contrast, 5 males were very satisfied, one was satisfied, one was not very satisfied and one was very dissatisfied. No statistical difference was found (Chi Sq = 0.18, df=3). No differences were found according to age (Chi Sq = 0.5, df=10).

Hours worked and satisfaction with pay: For the two individuals who worked the minimum 8 hours per week, there was general satisfaction with pay. Similarly, there was overall satisfaction with pay among those working between 9 to 15 hours per week. Employment outcomes other than wages appeared to be more significant for these individuals. Variation was evident in satisfaction with pay however among clients employed from between 16 to 38 hours per week, and it is likely these individuals were more desirous of earning a living wage yet generally jobs were entry level jobs that pay minimum ages (see Table 9). One person interviewed who was working 38 hours per week indicated he was always keen to pick up extra shifts when he could to earn more money. There were no significant statistical differences in satisfaction by hours worked for the nine individuals who completed rankings (Chi Square=0.46, df 10). However, the most dissatisfied with pay was a person who was interviewed face to face and did not have time to complete the rankings exercise due to work commitments.

Table 9: Satisfaction with pay by number hours worked (n=12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours worked/week</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Not very Satisfied</th>
<th>Not at all Satisfied</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 hours/week</td>
<td>1  17%</td>
<td>1  25%</td>
<td>0  0%</td>
<td>0  0%</td>
<td>2  17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-15 hours/week</td>
<td>2  33%</td>
<td>3  75%</td>
<td>0  0%</td>
<td>0  0%</td>
<td>5  42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-38 hours/week</td>
<td>3  50%</td>
<td>0  0%</td>
<td>1  100%</td>
<td>1  100%</td>
<td>5  42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6  100%</td>
<td>4  100%</td>
<td>1  100%</td>
<td>1  100%</td>
<td>12  100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Getting the balance right with number of hours appeared important. One client who was working 15 hours per week explained “if I work too much I’m too tired. And if I worked to little-… with the anxiety, I have to do something”. However, pay for this person was very important as they were the main breadwinner in the family, as their partner also had a disability.

Another employee who was not satisfied with rate of pay stated pay was important “cause I have a family, pay rent like everyone else. Look after family”. For this individual “it’s the rate of pay I should be going but it’s not enough to make ends meet. No increase at all.”

6.1.3 Priority Ratings

Individuals who attended the various Focus groups were asked to select their own top five reasons for working i.e. the most important things for them about work or the outcomes most important to them. These nine individuals chose their top five outcomes, in order of priority from 1 through 5. Table 10 shows the number and percentage of respondents choosing each item. For calculation of top priority rankings across all nine individuals, the priority score for each item chosen was reversed so that a number one priority gained a score of 5, second priority = 4, third priority = 3, fourth priority = 2 and fifth priority = 1 point each). Scores were then totalled for each outcome, and total scores and the priority ranking for the total group are reported in Table 10.
Although a variety of responses and individual patterns were evident, earning money was chosen by the majority of respondents as their most important outcome (n=7, 77.8%). It gained a priority total score of 24, placing it as the top priority ranking at #1. Keeping the job gained second highest priority ranking overall with a score of 19. Third highest ranking was “Feeling proud to be working”. This was selected by over half the respondents (n=5, 55.6%) and gained a total score of 16. Also highly rated with a total score of 13 and 4th highest ranking was being more independent, as well as making friends and socialising at work’ (#5); having work extras such as sick pay and holiday pay; and feeling more confident personally because of being a worker (Total score =9 and priority #6 each).

Table 10: Most important outcomes from working (n=9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most important outcome</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Priority Total Score</th>
<th>Priority Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earning Money</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping the job</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling proud that I am working</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being more independent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making friends and socialising</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Extras (sick pay, holiday pay...)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling more confident</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working hours</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting along with people at job</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning new skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other [...]</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I do in my job</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance for promotion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible work hours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Working hours gained a total score of 8 and ranking at #8. This item related to actual hours people reported for work not as number of hours per week worked. Other outcomes valued by individuals were: getting along with people at work, learning new skills, the actual job tasks undertaken on the job, having the chance of promotion and having flexible working hours.

Support from NOVA was considered critical. One participant who was referred to NOVA by Centrelink and whose main goal was to keep the job to keep the pay coming in, stated “if I didn’t have NOVA I didn’t have the job”. Another person who had taken over a year to find a job with support from NOVA explained that post placement “NOVA are doing a lot for me...... Sometimes I like to ask NOVA, sometimes I like to do things by myself.”

6.2 Staff Participant Results

A total of 18 NOVA staff were interviewed, comprising six (6) Managers, nine (9) Employment Consultants and three (3) Job Coaches. Individual interviews were conducted at several different NOVA sites.
Among the nine Employment Consultants (ECs), length in time as an Employment Consultant (ECs) with NOVA varied from as little as 3 months to 5 years. One EC who had also only worked 3 months at NOVA had worked with another DES provider, while another who had only been in the EC role for 3 months had previously worked in another role position with NOVA. Most ECs (78%) had prior experience with disability and/or programs for people seeking employment. Two ECs had undergone career changes and had no prior experience with disability, having come from unrelated professional backgrounds (See details Table 11).

Employment Consultants play a key role in preparing and placing jobseekers with disability in sustainable employment positions suited to the individual. The eight NOVA ECs who were interviewed about their role indicated the importance of guiding jobseekers to gain sustainable long term employment. All indicated the importance of getting to know each client well, through regular face to face meetings (minimum fortnightly). A number of ECS mentioned their client loads were around 20 to 30 at any one time, although these could vary when clients gained employment positions. Two ECs indicated some clients were lacking motivation and this made employment targets difficult to achieve in these cases.

Client centred activities generally involved building rapport, getting to know the client, their work goals, interests and capabilities, working towards the client’s goals, training clients in presentation skills, and arranging for and preparing clients for job interviews. Some ECs were involved in running job clubs to teach job search interview techniques, dressing for and preparing for interviews etc., while other ECS indicated the Job Coach ran the job club at their site. ECs also marketed to employers using a range of strategies including personal visits, telephone calls, leaflet distribution, repeat business strategies and reverse marketing. The aim of finding suitable jobs for clients was summed up by one EC who stated, “my goal is to change lives. Employment is the main facet of changing lives”.

When discussing their role, several ECs voluntarily commented on NOVA’s commitment to professionalism and to high standards. One EC stated “NOVA is more professional and client focused in its efficiency and the way we see clients” and from a different EC “NOVA has ethical values and (does) post placement support. There are high standards of post placement support, it is a big thing in the clients’ job.”

An EC commented “Would benefit with more job coaches as this is a key part of employment – I recently placed 4 people at one hit and it was difficult to provide full support at the same time … Job Coaches do prepare clients well … Job Coaches provide support and step in …”

### 6.3 Valued outcomes

#### 6.3.1 Staff Knowledge of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Staff were questioned around their knowledge of the KPI indicators as outcomes. Many of the Managers, Employment Consultants and Job Coaches stated that they were aware that NOVA had to meet the Department KPI’s in order to renew their outlet’s contract. Many ECs (n=7/9 or 78%) also understood that this entailed gaining a certain number of placements for job seekers. Four employment consultants stated that the KPI’s did not affect their job whilst the star ratings were high, but were aware they needed to stay high.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time as EC</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 12 months</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 3 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the respondents, only four stated that the two Department KPI outcomes were sufficient, with comments such as “I can’t see a better solution” and “a good indicator for sustainability”. The majority of the respondents, however, reported negative attitudes toward the KPI’s with comments such as “if it takes longer to find the right job, it shouldn’t be penalised” and “I don’t think that the department have measurable outcomes [in regards to] job satisfaction, inclusion, staff development, minimal hours”. Five ECs stated that NOVA looks at long term outcomes greater than 52 weeks and not just the 13, 26 and 52 week milestones, and two staff stated that KPIs do not take account of individual differences between jobseekers with disability. One participant also gave input on the effect of closures of other organisations’ outlets stating “there is a big influx coming as under new contract we are inheriting clients from other sites that lost their contract business (because of failure to perform on star ratings) and these clients will be passed on to us – that may cause a drop in our outcomes and means hard work to keep us performing okay.”

When asked if there were additional employment outcomes other than the Department KPIs they had to meet, the majority of the ECs nominated internal NOVA monthly targets, although there were discrepancies around this. ‘KPI is 4.5 a month’, ‘1.5 to meet with NOVA’ whilst one participant stated ‘60 hours work in 38 weeks, this can never be fulfilled, it’s unachievable’, and that there are ‘factors out of our control that get people to lose their job’. Monthly goal setting sessions, working closely with jobseekers on individual jobseeker objectives and job search and matching were all identified as NOVA strategies designed to assist clients gain and maintain sustainable employment.

### 6.3.2 Employment Outcomes Valued by Staff

Employment outcomes that staff considered were most important for job seekers with disability included gaining sustainable long term employment and a ‘career’ (n=7). Sustainable employment included number of hours worked and job stability. One EC stated “Hours - I always strive for more hours per week for clients (above basic Centrelink grading) but (it) takes time e.g., a lady was on an 8 hours goal but we arranged 10 hours... she is now employed and has agreed to do an extra shift. This means extra money in her take home pay and more involvement in the community”.

Relationships with clients were considered crucial (n=5), including ongoing contact even after successful placement. Being safe and independent (n=5), as well as clients feeling needed, contributing to society (through sustained employment) and feeling appreciated and wanted at the workplace were considered more important than the actual job for some (n=8).

Staff also nominated financial outcomes, especially among clients who have mental health challenges, including financial security; work that is financially rewarding; and work that provides value for money; as well as work suited to the individual; work that suits the disability; jobs where individuals with disability fit into the workplace culture; improved confidence in selves and self-esteem; a sense of achievement; job satisfaction; and the opportunity to develop and to be part of the community.

When asked about job seeker outcomes specifically relating to life skills and community living, the most consistent response was the ability to travel to and from work, and the greater independence related to this. Jobs within reasonable travel distance (30-40 minutes versus 4 hours travel) were also considered important. Quality of life and independence, along with inclusion and social interaction were also rated highly, as was autonomy and control.
6.3.3 Outcomes Staff considered important to NOVA Clients and their Families

When staff were asked what outcomes NOVA clients value as important to them, the major theme identified was a sense of self-worth that comes from having a job. Within this, two sub themes emerged, the first being a sense of self-worth, confidence and acceptance from others (n=8), including the status clients felt once employed and being proud to be able to pay taxes “I’ve got a job”, “working”, “paying tax”. The other sub theme was earning money and the financial stability and independence that comes with that. Just having a job, or having a job the person wants and values or that is right for them (n=10) and having support when needed were also mentioned. Several indicated a job increased feeling of social acceptance and inclusion, and some indicated the importance of matching the person to job they enjoyed or wanted to do as much as possible.

When asked what they believe families wanted, the idea of ‘having a job’, having a purpose, and being considered ‘normal’ was a major theme. One participant stated ‘For the parent to know their child has some experiences to be “normal”’. Parents were also perceived to value outcomes of greater independence and confidence gained by their sons and daughters; as well as the ability to earn money; to travel independently; to achieve; and to be safe and happy.

When there are differences between what the family want and what the jobseeker wants, the majority (n=9) of staff participants stated that negotiation is the best way to resolve issues. Many (n=6) said that the clients they work with are over 18, so they can make their own decisions, however these decisions must be realistic.

6.4 Key Processes for Achieving Valued Employment Outcomes

6.4.1 Staff Ratings on Importance of Key Processes to Outcomes

A number of employment processes (n=25) were identified from the Desk Top review and other NOVA data as relevant to the service achieving valued employment outcomes for jobseekers. Staff were asked to rate the importance of each of these 25 procedures using a four point rating scale with 1 = not at all important through to 4 = very important. Four procedures that related to prior work experience training and work experience/job trial hours were found to be specific to the separately funded Transition to Work (TTW) Program but not the DES program, so these items were omitted from final analyses, leaving a total of 21 items to be rated. Seventeen staff completed the rating form. Average or mean scores (M) were computed and results are displayed in Table 12.

All procedures were considered either very important or important, with average or mean ratings ranging from M = 3.9 out of a possible 4 points maximum to M = 3.3 (a rating above important) No identified processes were rated as not important or not at all important.

Highest scoring processes rated at M = 3.9 involved the ability of NOVA staff to communicate with employers and to gain honest employer feedback, the provision of Job Coach support for jobseekers, and placement and ongoing support on the job. Client support includes on site and off site support. Support types can vary widely, and has included financial support to ensure the client has the correct shoes and clothing for the job, or money to pay for courses jobseekers need to do e.g. one employer wanted the client in a warehousing job to have a forklift licence so NOVA paid for a 2 day course and the employee got a pay rise.

This cluster was closely followed by person centred planning, communication between all NOVA staff regarding the jobseeker, support from management for staff in their roles and professional development for NOVA staff (M=3.8). Staff-client relationships were seen as very important. In their stakeholder interviews, staff often stated they used a person...
centred approach, taking time to build rapport with the client/s, and being friendly and approachable.

Table 12: Staff ratings of importance of NOVA processes to employment outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Placement in jobseekers choosing</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family support post placement</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job interview skills training with employers</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel training</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life skills training</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to public transport</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication training</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination training/support</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placing in jobs of jobseekers interest</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVA Marketing jobseeker/s to employers</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff communication processes</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff conditions of employment</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear goals and expectations for staff</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development for staff</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management support for staff</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication between all staff re jobseeker</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person centred planning</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest employer feedback</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement and ongoing support on the job</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job coach support</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with employer/s</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This also assisted in improving worker self-knowledge. According to staff, person centred planning tools were imperative to the success of the placement and continued engagement of the client in their workplace. All three sub-groups interviewed, managers, employment consultants and job coaches, described the positive impact of person centred planning tools in their comments additional to the rating scale. Similarly, the value and importance of ongoing relevant professional development was highly acclaimed during the interviews.

Not surprisingly, staff highly endorsed the processes of having clear goals and expectations for staff, and the importance of staff conditions of employment, as well as general staff communication processes (M = 3.7). Interview data revealed that good communication among and between staff and management was highly valued. Several staff commented they operate as a team and team work was considered essential. Regular events that bring the team together were mentioned, and one staff commented “The Team want to help people and change lives. Even staff that can’t meet their KPI’s and leave, everyone is here for the right reason.” Another commented, “We are professionals doing a professional job, without professional pay.”

Effective and supportive leadership was also recognised as pivotal to the organisation operating well as a team highly committed to the success of the people with disability it serves. One staff commented “Teamwork I suppose. I think they just work well together. Teamwork, and passion, everyone wants the same outcome... You do get praise for getting extra people in work. Martin says well done on the Nova Net. For me, seeing the CEO so much and being so involved. He phones all the time, you see him at every event, he pops into the offices and he is always on
ground level. He is always involved. He has that heart and passion, I think it’s infectious... Because he is so passionate and wants them to succeed. He is important to the success.

NOVA processes for marketing jobseekers to employers and placing jobseekers in jobs of their interest were also considered very important (M = 3.6). Eight respondents specifically mentioned the use of job profiling and job matching during their interviews about key processes. Of these, one respondent mentioned that it is ‘like a red flag for us to remind us what the person wants’. All mentions of job profiling were positive, with Employment Consultants and Managers both stating the importance of its function.

Several mentioned specific strategies that make up part of job matching and profiling, such as the development of effective resumes and career portfolios. One employment consultant mentioned that whilst they use the assessment checklist, they use it not how NOVA would like. Instead of the Employment Consultant completing it, they hand the assessment to the person they are supporting and have them complete it. They ask the person to tick the things that they can do, and in the second week use a different colour and tick. The consultant said ‘I use it as a resource of what they [the clients] think of themselves over time.’

Job seekers with disabilities often require explicit and contextualised training, so it was not surprising that staff recognised the importance of self-determination training and support for jobseekers ensuring they had greater choice and control, communication training especially for workplace and with supervisors and colleagues and life skills training, while placement in jobs that are accessible by public transport was also seen as very important as many clients do not drive (M = 3.5). Processes around travel training for employment and job interview skills training with employers were also highly valued processes (M = 3.4).

There were numerous mentions throughout the interviews of the quality of training and how staff found it to be one of the key ingredients for NOVA employees to help job seekers find and keep a job. The training was at two levels, training for NOVA staff, and training for their clients. Staff discussed how NOVA provides high quality training for jobseekers to get them prepared for work (n=5).

Staff also mentioned how NOVA staff really work with their clients in relation to development of their career portfolios, interview preparation, resumes, cover letter and other ‘back of house’ information. One manager described how this type of training then sets up the jobseekers with the best possible chance of a placement that is relevant to their interests, strengths and abilities.

Although lowest in comparison to the other processes, the last cluster of processes was also considered important to very important by all staff (M = 3.3). These processes related to family involvement as well as support once the jobseeker was placed and placement in a job of the jobseekers choosing were considered important or (See Table 12).

6.4.2 Additional Processes, Procedures and Strategies related to Outcomes

Post placement Support

Additional information provided in the staff interviews indicated that the fact that NOVA Employment provides ongoing post placement support was considered by staff to be a key process to a client’s success. Staff mentioned that after the person is placed, the employment consultant and/or the job coach will regularly check in, either by phone or visit, and that this is ongoing, although it may decrease with time. Staff also mentioned that they believed this set NOVA apart from other providers. As one manager stated ‘[it’s about] speaking with the employer who is employing our client, that continued engagement. Additionally, the continued support, if that is what is agreed between the employer and client.’
Three Job Choices
Several ECs identified the three job choices strategy (rather than one job choice) as important. Having three job choices can also be helpful when needing to steer clients away from unrealistic job choices.

Use of DES Subsidised Wage
Only one respondent mentioned the use of DES subsidised wage as a strategy to gain employment for their client. The employment consultant stated ‘It sometimes works; it’s a last resort. If you have to reimburse an employer, then there is no assurance for ongoing employment’.

Professional Training for Staff
Regular professional training provided by NOVA across a range of skills and competencies was highly valued. With regards to the workshops provided to NOVA staff, My Outlet Rules was specifically mentioned throughout the interviews. One manager mentioned that it is a fun way to assess whether staff have met their KPI’s, whilst another commented ‘My Outlet Rules reminds [us] how to conduct ourselves with [the] client, employer, and [during] teamwork. [I like] learning from training and keeps reminding us to share ideas, [and] improve. [We do this] two times a year.’

Power Hour
Seven staff members stated that “Power Hour” is a key process. However, while many commented on the application of Power Hour, there were discrepancies between staff as to whether or not they thought it was effective. Whilst one staff said it worked, other participants were more negative. However, one person stated that other staff lie about the target they reached, that it has a negative impact on staff and this can affect staff turnover.

Events
Several comments related to the perceived value of events NOVA conducts to build community and employer awareness:

- Creating relationships – being social with the public – attending charity events etc.
- NOVA often advertises success stories from employers and job seekers perspectives to highlight the positives of hiring people with disabilities and how NOVA has assisted with this.

6.4.3 The NOVA Staff Incentive Scheme
NOVA has its own staff incentive scheme. All respondents stated that they knew the staff incentive scheme included a bonus payment and that the scheme is based on the long-term outcome of their clients. Participants described that it involves a variety of incentives including money, gift cards, concert tickets, and free petrol. Staff acknowledged that the incentive scheme was to reward and retain staff, and depended on the number of placements, as well as bonuses for the winner of Power Hour.

Some respondents [n=5] stated that the scheme recognises those who go above and beyond, and motivates staff to stay ahead of their KPI’s. Staff understood that the star rating scale had risen to four or five stars with the implementation of the staff incentive scheme. They believed that it was a good thing for NOVA to be successful, and motivates the staff to try harder.

Numerous staff mentioned that the staff incentive scheme was too hard to achieve and was unrealistic. Some staff members [n=4] believed that the paperwork involved was too difficult and lengthy, which was a deterrent.
In regards to incentives for staff who place clients in a position for a minimum of 15 hours a week, some staff (n=4) did not believe that amount of weekly hours would suit a proportion of the clients. Two respondents mentioned that the incentive should honour those clients who can only work 8 hours as well as those who could work 15 hours. Other comments were that the staff should not be made responsible if clients loose their job. Suggestions for improvement were that staff should instead receive an increase in pay after 12 months if you reach your KPI’s. The delayed receipt of the incentive payment was viewed by some staff as negative, and staff were unsure as to why they had to wait so long to receive their bonus.

For those bonuses that related to ‘Power Hour’, some staff mentioned that it is too hard to reach 15 appointments during power hour, and that it would be better to spend the time building rapport with employers instead (n=5).

Effectiveness and importance of staff incentive scheme
When asked about the effectiveness of the Staff Incentive scheme, 11 interview participants stated it was effective, with comments such as ‘it’s good to motivate staff’, ‘it works because it is very incentive driven’ and ‘makes you go the extra mile’. One respondent added ‘it’s nice to know it is there, but it is better to know that my work helps in finding people jobs’. Three participants stated it was not effective, with comments such as ‘the application form is too difficult to fill out’ and ‘the bonus is too difficult to achieve’. There were three participants who did not respond to this topic.

When the importance of the staff incentive scheme to the staff was discussed, there were varying results. Six participants felt it was important, with comments such as ‘it is very important as extra money is always number one, but I’m not placing people just to get the bonus’ and ‘it’s an appreciation of [our] hard work’. Seven participants stated that it was not important, with a particular emphasis on the fuel card, e.g., ‘I would prefer money rather than free petrol’, whilst another participant mentioned how it is of no use to him as it only allows for free petrol for a company car and he doesn’t use the company car. Five participants were more neutral, with comments such as ‘it’s nice to know it’s there’, however ‘it’s a bonus but not the main focus’.

6.5 Summary Stakeholder Interviews
Overall, stakeholder interviews confirmed the importance of both economic and noneconomic employment outcomes for people with a range of disabilities. People with disabilities themselves confirmed having a job and getting the support from NOVA staff when and if needed were most important. Additionally, the number of hours worked per week was also critical. For many, this was to ensure they gained a living wage, while for others it was more about getting the right amount of hours to suit their income needs balanced against their disability requirements. Staff also endorsed additional employment outcomes over and above the two KPIs, including the importance of number of hours worked to ensure a sustainable wage, person centred career planning, job matching to suit the individual, job satisfaction, and quality of life indices.

Staff also confirmed that a range of processes and procedures instituted by NOVA were all critical for success. These related to job search, job matching, person centred career planning, skill development and support, as well as team work, their own professional development and managerial support.
SECTION 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation confirmed the excellent performance of NOVA Employment in meeting their goals of assisting people with disability to gain and maintain valued and sustainable employment. Actual number of jobs obtained continues to rise and there was high satisfaction among consumers regarding the service they receive through support from NOVA to gain and maintain sustainable employment.

The NOVA results concerning jobseeker priorities and the skills and competence required by support staff confirm Anderson’s (2009) claim that the most effective and efficient employment outcomes are obtained by aligning inputs (job seeker preparation and job development) with an appropriate job that is matched to the person’s skills and competencies and the employer’s needs. A key component to this requires ensuring the job seeker’s employability status - as defined by being motivated, reliable and dependable; and ensuring staff provide effective job development and support to overcome barriers and limitations based on disability, age etc. Job market placement is then based on the job seeker’s profile (including interests, strengths and experiences) matched to the employer’s needs and the minimum employment requirements.

NOVA employs a range of evidence based processes to obtain its outcomes – both the Department KPI outcomes of efficiency and effectiveness, but also other desired outcomes of additional hours of work that improve pay rates, and quality of life indices such as inclusion, increased skill and competence in a range of life areas, increased confidence and self-esteem.

A new National Disability Employment Framework is proposed that will operate alongside the NDIS. It is imperative the principles, objective and outcomes of the two systems are aligned and do not contradict one another. This requires a person centred approach and could result in unbundling services and personalising them. The current two KPIs upon which outlets are assessed are too narrow a focus and need to be expanded to take account of enhanced economic and non economic outcomes. Economic considerations include number of hours worked and wages earned, job tenure, career flexibility and employment status. Other non economic outcomes identified by consumers and staff and ratified by other international and national studies are also critical and include physical and social inclusion, career choice and control, ongoing education and training, individual aspirational goals, increased personal independence, increased confidence and self esteem and contribution to society.

Employment is more than just gaining a job. For many, a career or a work life provides value and worth over and above financial gains. Paid work is not only meaningful in terms of its economic function, but it also contributes to a sense of status and identity. It can help structure time, and provide for many people opportunities for challenge, expression, contribution and social interaction.

The Departmental quality strategy for disability employment services was designed to improve the quality of services and achieve better outcomes for people with disability. The DES performance framework therefore consists of three key performance indicators embedded in the system: KPI 1 Efficiency, KPI 2 Effectiveness and KPI 3 Quality.
The Star Rating system used to facilitate comparative performance, however, currently only uses two of these KPIs in its six monthly performance reviews, namely KPI 1 Efficiency and KPI 2 Effectiveness, and ignores KPI 3 Quality. Yet it is this very KPI that focusses on quality that would enable a broader array of valued outcomes to be factored into the evaluation of successful performance. This could be done by assessing the various evidence based practices that have been found to contribute to quality outcomes, that focus on the client, the service and staffing. These include person centred career planning, job search and job matching to suit the individual’s goals and abilities, job and skill development, ongoing support as needed, job satisfaction, and quality of life indices.

The Dartmouth IPS Fidelity Scale was developed specifically for programs assisting people with mental illness and a slight modification of the IPS Fidelity Scale could be used to assess quality employment processes and procedures that contribute to desired quality outcomes, and that have been identified in this research from local and international evidence.

Recommendations

1.0 It is recommended that the Department adjust the Star Rating System to include KPI 3 Quality to ensure both economic and non economic quality outcomes, that focus on the client, the service and staffing are assessed.

2.0 A modified version of the IPS Fidelity Scale be considered as an evaluation tool to assess KPI 3 Quality.
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Neville A., &. Lohmann, R [2011]. It is like they just don’t trust us”: Balancing trust and control in the provision of disability employment services. Canberra: Australian National University.
APPENDIX 1: DES EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES (DEPARTMENT SOCIAL SERVICES)

13 Week Period’ means a period of:

(a) 13 Consecutive Weeks from the Anchor Date for an employment related activity which satisfies the requirements for an Outcome; or

(b) one Semester starting on the Anchor Date for an education or training related activity which satisfies the requirements for an Outcome, and which period does not overlap with any other 13 Week Period.

’26 Week Period’ means a period of:

(a) 13 Consecutive Weeks for an employment related activity which satisfies the requirements for an Outcome; or

(b) one Semester for an education or training related activity which satisfies the requirements for an Outcome, and which period:

(c) immediately follows the completion of a 13 Week Period; and

(d) does not overlap with any other 13 Week Period or 26 Week Period.

’26 Week Employment Outcome’ means:

(a) a Full Outcome for a 26 Week Period as specified in paragraphs [a], [b] and [c] (ii) of the definition of Full Outcome; or

(b) a Pathway Outcome for a 26 Week Period as specified in paragraph (a) of the definition of Pathway Outcome.
Australian Disability Enterprises’ means a FaHCSIA funded network of business service outlets across Australia which provide supported employment assistance to people with moderate to severe disability who need substantial ongoing support to maintain their employment.

‘Break in Employment’ means where a Participant:

(a) loses their Employment as a result of redundancy or other job loss circumstances as specified by DEEWR in any Guidelines; and
(b) subsequently commences in alternative Employment, and the relevant break or breaks (if applicable) do not exceed 20 Business Days in total in a:
(c) 13 Week Period; or
(d) 26 Week Period.

‘Employment Outcome’ means the Outcomes specified in:

(a) paragraph [a] of the definition of Pathway Outcome; and
(b) paragraphs [a], [b], [c][iii], [f] and [h] of the definition of Full Outcome.

‘Employment Pathway Plan’ means the Employment Pathway Plan under the Social Security Act 1991 (Cth) and as described in clause 96 [General requirements for an Employment Pathway Plan], or, if the Social Security Act 1991 (Cth) is amended, any other such agreements.

‘Full Outcome’ means for the duration of a 13 Week Period or a 26 Week Period:

(a) a Participant remains each fortnight in Employment or Unsubsidised Self-Employment or an Apprenticeship or Traineeship that generates sufficient income to have caused the Participant’s Basic Rate of any Income Support Payment to cease; or
(b) a Participant remains each week in Employment or Unsubsidised Self-Employment or an Apprenticeship or a Traineeship and, after Commencement:
   (i) works a minimum of 104 hours in 13 Consecutive Weeks or 208 hours in 26 Consecutive Weeks where that Participant has an 8 Hour Employment Benchmark;
   (ii) works a minimum of 195 hours in 13 Consecutive Weeks or 390 hours in 26 Consecutive Weeks where that Participant has a 15 Hour Employment Benchmark;
   (iii) works a minimum of 390 hours in 13 Consecutive Weeks or 780 hours in 26 Consecutive Weeks where that Participant has a 30 Hour Employment Benchmark;
(c) a Participant who has not completed year 12 or equivalent and who is either 15 to 21 years of age or is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person and completes one Semester of a single qualification course of two or more Semesters duration:
   (i) transfers to Youth Allowance (Student), Abstudy or Austudy or where the Participant does not transfer to Youth Allowance (Student), Abstudy or Austudy, meets the requirements of a Qualifying Education Course; or
   (ii) on a part-time basis (as defined by the training institution) during which time a Participant remains each week in Employment (or Unsubsidised Self-Employment or an Apprenticeship or a Traineeship):
      (A) for an average of at least 8 hours each week averaged over the Semester; or
      (B) that would satisfy items [a][i] or [a][ii] of the definition of Pathway Outcome; whichever is the greater; or
(d) any other event that DEEWR may notify the Provider from time to time as being a Full Outcome;
(e) a Participant who is in receipt of Parenting Payment, Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance (other) or Special Benefit and who is identified and recorded on DEEWR’s...
IT Systems as a Principal Carer with part-time participation requirements completes one Semester of a course that satisfies the requirements of paragraphs (a) and (b) of the definition of Qualifying Education Course and undertakes study of not less than 30 hours in each fortnight (counting any contact and any non-contact hours of study);

(f) a Participant who is in receipt of Parenting Payment, Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance (other) or Special Benefit and who is identified and recorded on DEEWR’s IT Systems as a Principal Carer with part-time participation requirements:
   (i) completes one Semester of a course that satisfies the requirements of paragraphs (a) and (b) of the definition of Qualifying Education Course; and
   (ii) undertakes paid Employment of at least 20 hours in each fortnight, and the total amount of time spent by the Participant in paid Employment and study (counting any contact and any non-contact hours of study) is not less than 30 hours in each fortnight;

(g) a Participant who is recorded on DEEWR’s IT Systems as a Principal Carer and is in receipt of Parenting Payment without participation requirements completes one Semester of a course that satisfies the requirements of paragraphs (a) and (b) of the definition of Qualifying Education Course and undertakes study of not less than 30 hours in each fortnight (counting any contact and any non-contact hours of study);

(h) a Participant who is recorded on DEEWR’s IT Systems as a Principal Carer and is in receipt of Parenting Payment without participation requirements:
   (i) completes one Semester of a course that satisfies the requirements of paragraphs (a) and (b) of the definition of Qualifying Education Course; and
   (ii) undertakes paid Employment of at least 20 hours in each fortnight, and the total amount of time spent by the Participant in paid Employment and study (counting any contact and any non-contact hours of study) is not less than 30 hours in each fortnight.
APPENDIX 2: NOVA DOCUMENTS

Contract and Job Plan Tracker
Registration Checklist
Job Seeker Contact Report
Participant Contact Report
Face to face Employer Meetings MAP
Employer Contact Report
Worker Contact Report
One Month Worksite Visit
Job Placement Tracker for Ongoing Support
Post Placement Support (PPS)
On-going Support (OS) Assessment Bundle
How 2 prepare for Monthly Goals
JC Goal Setting Session
How 2 Placement Calculator
Methods of achieving placement KPIs
Power Hour Map and Checklist