



Evaluation of the Land and Housing Corporation Apprenticeship Program

A final report prepared by Inside Policy for the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

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Table of Contents

Terminology and acronyms	4
Executive summary	5
Introduction	9
Program overview	10
Methodology	13
Findings	16
Conclusion	31
Appendices (attached)	

Terminology and Acronyms

Terminology used

The Program

Refers to the Cadetship Project and the Apprenticeships and Traineeship Project components of the Apprenticeship Program that are the subject of this evaluation.

Industry Partner

Refers to CHIA NSW, HIA and MBA who have been funded by LAHC to deliver the Program.

Participant

Refers to cadets participating in the initiative being delivered by CHIA NSW and apprentices and trainees participating in the initiative being delivered by HIA and MBA.

Host Employer

Refers to the employers who are being supported by CHIA NSW, HIA and MBA to train and/or employ apprentices, trainees and cadets. (It is noted in practice, MBA and HIA are employing apprentices and trainees through their group training organisations, who are then assigned to 'host employers'.)

Acronyms used

ABS

Australian Bureau of Statistics

A/CHP

Aboriginal Community Housing Providers and Community Housing Providers

CHIA NSW

Community Housing Industry Association, NSW

CHP

Community Housing Providers

DCJ

Department of Communities and Justice

HIA

Housing Industry Association

LAHC

Land and Housing Corporation

MBA

Master Builders Association

NCVER

National Centre for Vocational Education Research

TAFE

Technical and Further Education

WHS

Work Health and Safety

Y-O-Y

Year-Over-Year

Executive Summary

Program overview

The NSW Government announced the NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) Apprenticeships Program (the Program) in November 2020. This Program focuses on providing jobs connected to training and was launched to support economic recovery from drought, bushfire, and COVID-19.¹

The Program's core aim is to support Host Employers to train Apprentices, Trainees and Cadets in the sectors of building and construction and property and tenancy management.

The Program is delivered through three projects that provide jobs connected to training. These three projects are:

1. the Pre-Apprenticeships Project
2. the Cadetship Project
3. the Apprenticeships and Traineeships Project.

This evaluation considers two of these projects, the Cadetship Project and the Apprenticeships and Traineeship Project.

The Program is delivered in partnership with Industry Partners. The Cadetship Project is delivered by CHIA NSW and the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project is delivered by HIA and MBA. Recruitment for the Program began from March 2021.

Evaluation methodology

The Apprenticeship Program evaluation framework specifies three evaluation stages over the life of the Program. This evaluation report outlines findings against the Stage One Evaluation.

The Stage One Evaluation is a formative evaluation aimed primarily at learning what can be improved for future Program delivery. It addressed the first year of the Program's development and implementation, and includes process, outcome and future evaluation components. The evaluation's data collection activities included program document and administrative data review and analysis. It also provides baseline data which will be used as a comparator for the stage two and stage three evaluations.

Findings

Process

The Program is being implemented through effective partnerships between LAHC and the Industry Partners. LAHC's approach to project management has enabled the Industry Partners to leverage their expertise, networks and established processes and programs to promote the Program, recruit Participants and Host Employers, and provide onboarding, support, and training to the Participant and Host Employer.

In the first year of establishing and implementing the Program, the Industry Partners focused on selecting applicants who had the skills to participate in the Program and were experiencing some form of disadvantage. CHIA NSW targeted applicants who lived in social housing or were experiencing unemployment. HIA and MBA considered experiences of disadvantage that were broader than those outlined in the project guidelines, including being a single parent, experiencing or having experienced family and domestic violence, lacking work experiences or requiring additional support for mental health and social issues.

¹ LAHC Apprenticeship Program Guidelines

Interviews with Cadets and Apprentices demonstrated that many of the Program's Participants have experienced a range of social disadvantages and barriers to the workforce. These included experiencing domestic and/or family violence, mental health issues, homelessness, and/or long-term unemployment. In addition, Apprentices had often trialled a range of careers and study options, and without the Program older adult Participants would struggle to access an apprenticeship due to their age requiring a higher salary.

The Program's first year implementation was affected by the 2021 COVID-19 Delta outbreak first in Sydney, and later regional NSW, which led to stay-at-home orders, restrictions in the construction industry and additional restrictions for residents in Sydney LGAs of concern. Greater Sydney was placed under stay-at-home orders between 26 June and 11 October 2021. Large portions of Regional NSW were placed under stay-at-home orders based on specific COVID-19 exposure locations, and during a state-wide lockdown from 14 August to 22 August 2021. There were ongoing restrictions for unvaccinated and partially vaccinated individuals across NSW from 11 October 2021.

In the construction industry in Greater Sydney, there was a pause of all construction work between 19 July and 30 July 2021, various site capacity restrictions between 31 July and 11 October, and vaccine mandate and surveillance testing of construction workers from LGAs of concern between 31 July and 11 October 2021.

The impact of stay-at-home orders, the pause on construction and restrictions were varied across the Program.

Participants of the Cadetship Project in affected areas were required to work from home and all Cadets were required to study online, which created challenges for Participants transitioning to working in an office for the first time and those who preferred studying face to face. In addition, many of the Cadetship Project Participants also had home-schooling and caring responsibilities throughout the shut-down period.

Participants of the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project were stood down during the construction pause. TAFE learning for Apprentices shifted to online, with some practical components and module assessments deferred until after face-to-face training recommences in February 2022. During the pause, a COVID-19 Disaster Payment of up to \$750 per a week was available to Apprentices, with Industry Partners supporting Apprentices to access this payment and supplementing income in some cases.

In the interviews, Cadets identified that they were not initially set up to work from home, it was difficult to manage working from home with parenting responsibilities, it was harder to stay engaged in study units and harder to understand how their study applied to their work. In addition to being supported to access the COVID-19 Disaster Payment, Apprentices reported that there were also restrictions on sites and additional safety measures as a result of the outbreak.

Workplace coordination, facilitated by the Industry Partner became more critical during the outbreak in both the Cadetship and Apprenticeship and Traineeship Projects. Workplace coordination included phone check-ins, support to access COVID-19 Disaster Payment, and assistance in readjusting work and study loads.

Outcome

The Program is broadly achieving its outputs and meeting the needs of Participants and Host Employers.

In its first year up until August 2021, 178 active Participants had commenced in the Program. When compared to baseline data, the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project is achieving positive representation of Participants aged over 35, women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Cadetship Project has high representation of women, and

when compared to baseline data, has significant representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Despite efforts in recruitment, the Program has a low representation of social housing clients, which could be targeted in future.

Interview and survey data indicates that the Program is broadly meeting the needs of Participants. All Cadets that were interviewed felt the Program had changed their lives and had improved their future prospects. All Cadets and Apprentices interviewed had aspirations to finish their training and build careers in the relevant industry.

In particular, Cadets strongly agree that the process of applying to the Program was easy, and that they were matched with the right employer.

Interviews with Cadets indicate that Cadets are accessing support to readjust their study load, organise the work to align with study, access mentoring, and receive ongoing support, such as support for mental health issues. Support is often coordinated between the Host Employer and CHIA NSW.

Interviews with Apprentices indicates the Industry Partners provide Apprentices with monthly check-ins, ad hoc support when required, and financial support through incentive payments and support in accessing loans for cars and tools. Apprentices can also receive support from their trainer and boss. The majority of Apprentices reported that they used the incentive payment to purchase tools for their trade.

Future

Overall, the Program has been implemented well in its first year and is delivering positive early outcomes. Effective processes and supports include recruiting Participants and Host Employers, and providing onboarding, support and training to the Participants and Host Employers, and supporting Participants to stay engaged with employment and training during the shutdown and restrictions.

Implications

Recommended processes and supports to be changed and adopted focus on optimising the Program's processes and outcomes. The changes include:

- adjusting timeframes for recruitment to better align with Industry Partner intake cycles
- refining recruitment strategies to continue targeting social housing tenants, with the aim of increasing the representation of social housing tenants
- streamlining reporting
- increasing and refining pre-employment and ongoing supports to Participants
- increasing information available to Host Employers
- reinstating face-to-face learning and supports that transitioned online as a result of the 2021 COVID-19 Delta outbreak.

There is also an opportunity to enhance Program outcomes by targeting Participants that experience more complex barriers to the workforce and require more targeted support. Changes that could support improved outcomes include quotas for target cohorts, targeted recruitment, reduced entry requirements with appropriate pre-employment and employment supports, and realistic outcome expectations.

Conclusion

The evaluation indicates that the Program has been successfully implemented and is delivering early outcomes for Participants and Host Employers.

Process learnings that can implemented in future stages of the Program are:

- Adjusting and staggering recruitment timeframes, so Host Employers are recruited first, followed by Participants.
- Developing recruitment strategies to increase the representation of social housing client / tenant Participants.
- Improving and streamlining reporting and data collection across the Program, to ensure data is consistent for future stages of the evaluation, includes risks, and provides a mechanism for 'story telling' and qualitative reporting.
- Industry Partners increase pre-employment supports for Participants, and continue to refine ongoing supports to Participants as needs emerge.
- Industry Partners increase the information available to Host Employers, particularly within the Cadetship Project.
- Industry Partners continue to manage the ongoing effects and impacts of COVID-19 and reinstate face-to-face as soon as possible.

Outcome learnings that can be implemented in the future stages of the Program are:

- Continue to recruit and increase representation of Participants experiencing complex barriers to the workforce and require more targeted support. Opportunities for continuing to recruit Participants experiencing complex barriers include:
 - Specific quotas for target cohorts, including social housing clients / tenants.
 - Targeted recruitment for individuals experiencing complex barriers to the workforce, including social housing clients / tenants.
 - Reduced entry requirements in terms of capability, such as literacy and numeracy, with the appropriate pre-employment and employment support.
 - Realistic expectations on outcomes, as increasing the representation of Participants experiencing complex barriers to employment may increase the rate of non-completions.

In addition to these Outcome learnings, future evaluations should continue to monitor Participant outcomes and the extent the Program is meeting the needs of Participants and Host Employers, to track changes over time.

Program outcomes can also consider the outcomes in comparison groups, including within the:

- baseline date
- the literature review at **Appendix B**
- comparison groups in HIA and MBA's mainstream apprenticeship programs.

Introduction

In June 2021 the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) engaged Inside Policy to design and implement the Stage One Evaluation of the Apprenticeship Program (the Program). The Program is delivered by the NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC), which is a self-funded Public Trading Enterprise (PTE) that is a part of the DPIE.

Inside Policy developed the evaluation framework in consultation with DPIE, Industry Partners and other key stakeholders. The evaluation framework can be found at **Appendix A**.

The evaluation framework outlines three stages of evaluation.

This report outlines findings and implications for the first stage of the evaluation.

Structure of this report

The report is structured according to the table below.

Section	Contents
Program overview	Overview of the Program, including program delivery model, theory of change and Program logic.
Methodology	Overview of the Evaluation Framework and the Stage One Evaluation methodology
Findings	Findings by process, outcome and future evaluation questions
Conclusion	Summary of the learnings and implications for the evaluation
Appendices (Attached)	Appendix A – Evaluation Framework Appendix B – Literature review Appendix C – Summary of findings by stakeholder interview group and survey Appendix D – Baseline data report

Program overview

The Apprenticeship Program

The NSW Government announced the NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) Apprenticeships Program (the Program) in November 2020. This Program provides jobs connected to training, and was launched to support economic recovery from drought, bushfire, and COVID-19.²

The Program's core aim is to support Host Employers to train Apprentices and Cadets in the sectors of building and construction and property and tenancy management.

The Program has six specific objectives which relate to this core aim:

- assist Participants in completing a vocational training course that leads to relevant employment opportunities, including employment in building social housing which contributes to economic recovery
- remove barriers and restrictions for Participants to gain training and employment
- increase the capacity of Participants to empower participation in paid employment
- build Participant confidence and independence through improving educational outcomes
- recruit a minimum of 300 Participants into the Program
- transition all Participants from the Program to long-term paid employment.

Program delivery model and funding

The Program is delivered through three projects that provide training connected to jobs. These three projects are:

1. the Pre-Apprenticeships Project
2. the Cadetship Project
3. the Apprenticeships and Traineeships Project.

This evaluation considers two of these projects - the Cadetship Project and the Apprenticeships and Traineeship Project.

The Program was developed by LAHC, funded over four financial years (but operating into a fifth year for any late-starting Participants in the Program) with a budget of \$80m. The Cadetship Project received \$10 million and Apprenticeship / Traineeships Projects received \$30m in funding over the four years. The remaining \$40m for the LAHC Pre-apprenticeship program allows Participants to try a trade while working on social housing construction projects delivered by TAFE NSW, and is out of scope for this evaluation.

The Cadetship Project

The Cadetship Project is delivered by CHIA NSW and has three delivery components:

1. vocational training (Certificate IV in Social Housing)
2. practical support, and
3. a 12 month facilitated paid work placement.

CHIA NSW delivers the training and support component and partners with CHPs to provide the facilitated paid work placement.

The Cadetship Project's priority groups are social housing tenants and clients aged 25 and over, and unemployed young people aged 15-24 years. However, due to the limited number of priority group applicants applying in one region, CHIA NSW recruited Participants more

² LAHC Apprenticeship Program Guidelines

broadly to achieve Program targets. Notably, 77% of Participants were unemployed prior to joining the program.

The Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project

The Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project is delivered by HIA and MBA. It has three components of delivery - facilitation of vocational training, practical support for Participants and paid work placements.³

HIA and MBA contract and collaborate with Host Employers to provide paid work placements and on-site training. HIA and MBA also engage training providers to deliver Participants' off-site training and create a training plan. HIA and MBA project teams provide tailored and practical support to Participants, including monitoring of training progress, mentoring and linking participants into other support services when needed.

The Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project is open to anyone, however it has an objective to diversify the workforce. It has a focus on increasing participation for young and mature aged people, social housing clients and/or tenants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women and people with disability.

Theory of change

The Program is a supply-side measure aimed at stimulating training and employment at a time when the NSW and national economies are experiencing significant shocks as a result of a series of natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the Program focuses on supporting Host Employers to train Apprentices and Cadets in the sectors of:

- building and construction
- property and tenancy management.

The support provided to Host Employers to train Apprentices and Cadets will increase the interest by employers to become Host Employers. This in turn will:

- increase demand for Apprentices and Cadets
- increase Apprenticeship and Cadetship commencement and completion rates
- result in paid employment for Participants
- over time, build a skilled workforce in the sectors of focus
- build a skilled workforce in regional areas
- provide opportunities for training and employment for individuals who are traditionally underrepresented in Apprenticeships and Cadetships (e.g. women, young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, social housing tenants and adult Apprentices).

The increased participation in training and on-the-job skill development will positively impact on Participants by increasing their self-confidence, job readiness and skill set, leading to increased economic participation and wage earning.

Ultimately, the Program aims to contribute to reducing unemployment and increasing skilled workforce across NSW.

The theory of change and outcomes to be achieved by the Program align with anticipated and realised outcomes and impacts of similar Programs identified in the literature review and stakeholder consultation completed during the project's design stage.

³ LAHC Apprenticeship Program Guidelines

Program Logic

The below Program Logic was developed by analysing feedback from key informants and literature in the discovery stage.

Need	Objective	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Intermediate outcomes	End of program outcomes
<p>Support employment and training during economic shocks created by COVID-19 and natural disasters</p> <p>Access to steady and affordable supply of trades / tenancy and property management services for build, repairs and maintenance and management of social housing</p> <p>Employers willing to train and employ apprentices / cadets</p> <p>Training and employment opportunities for underrepresented cohorts: women, Aboriginal people, young people, people with disability, social housing clients and tenants, adult apprentices</p>	<p>Increase the number of completed apprenticeships in building and construction</p> <p>Increase the number of people with Certificate IV qualifications in property and tenancy management</p>	<p>\$40m program funding (for the MBA, HIA, CHIA programs)</p> <p>Policy and program guidance</p> <p>Industry partner and employer support</p> <p>Promotion and recruitment materials</p> <p>Staffing from LAHC and Industry Partners</p> <p>Contracts / funding agreements</p> <p>Reporting mechanisms</p> <p>Ministerial support</p> <p>Wrap around support for cadets / apprentices</p> <p>Build on existing programs delivered by / research undertaken by CHIA, HIA, MBA</p>	<p>Promotion of the program</p> <p>Selection and recruitment of participants through intake rounds</p> <p>Selection of employers</p> <p>Training as relevant to Delivery Partner Projects</p> <p>Reporting: Monthly and six monthly</p> <p>In-program support for participants</p> <p>Program review and evaluation</p> <p>Provision of wrap around support</p> <p>Collection / collation of apprentice / cadet case studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of suitable employers participating • Number of applications to participate • Number of suitable participants commencing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participant completions and partial completions • Increased number of suitable employers participating in the program (increasing y-o-y) • Increased participation by women, Aboriginal people, people with disability, young people and social housing clients and tenants, adults • Diversity in qualifications / trades completed • Adequate support provided to participants and employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing employment in the industry • Increased completion of Certificate IV qualifications in property and tenancy management • Greater representation of women, Aboriginal people, people with disability, young people and social housing clients and tenants in building and construction / tenancy and housing management • Increased participant self-esteem and level of job readiness • Increase in size of NSW's trades and tenancy and housing management sector across urban, regional and remote locations • A reduction in unemployment in the target cohorts • Overall improvement in Human Services Outcomes for target cohort



Methodology

This section outlines Inside Policy's approach to the evaluation of the Program, including the overview of the evaluation framework and the first stage evaluation. The evaluation framework is included in **Appendix A**.

Evaluation framework

Overview

The Apprenticeship Program evaluation framework specifies three evaluation stages over the life of the Program. The three stages of the evaluation will serve the following objectives:

1. **Process:** understand how the Program has been implemented and what aspects of its implementation have helped or hindered the achievement of its objectives, including the appropriateness of the Program's delivery.
2. **Outcome:** assess the output change and longer-term outcomes (intermediate and long-term impacts) of the Program, both intended and unintended as well as the appropriateness of these outcomes.
3. **Impact:** assess the economic benefits (impacts) of the Program as a policy intervention.
4. **Future:** inform and contribute to the future re-design of this Program or development of new, similar programs in the future.

The three evaluation stages are:

Stage 1 – Process Evaluation: occurring in its first year, the Stage One Evaluation is a formative evaluation aimed primarily at learning what can be improved for future Program delivery. The Stage One Evaluation will also be used to collect baseline data which will be used as a comparator for the stage two and stage three evaluations.

Stage 2 – Mid-Point Evaluation: occurring in Years Two to Three of the Program's implementation, the Stage Two Evaluation will have formative and summative aspects from a process and outcome perspectives.

Stage 3 – End of Program Evaluation: occurring in the Program's fourth year, the Stage Three Evaluation will be summative in nature. This evaluation will determine how effective the Program was in achieving its stated outcomes as well as the economic impact it has created.

The three evaluation stages will:

- evaluate the Program as a whole and will not evaluate the individual initiatives (i.e. the initiatives delivered by HIA, MBA and CHIA NSW)
- be informed by a theory-based, realist evaluation approach. In this regard, the evaluation questions and related measures all align to the inputs, activities and outcomes contained in the Program Logic (see p. 10)
- focus on contribution analysis, meaning the evaluation stages will focus on assessing the contribution of the Program on impact and outcomes, rather than determining causation.

First stage evaluation

This report outlines findings against the first stage evaluation.

Evaluation overview

The first stage evaluation addresses the first year of the Program, and includes process, outcome and future evaluation components.

Evaluation questions

The first stage evaluation addresses the following questions:

Process

1. How is the Program being implemented?
 - a. What elements of implementation are successful and why?
 - b. What elements of implementation can be improved and why?
2. How are different participant cohorts being targeted?
3. How has the Program adapted to COVID-19 health orders?

Outcome

4. To what extent is the Program achieving its outputs?
 - a. How many Participants have commenced?
 - b. Who are the participant cohorts?
 - c. What support is being provided to Participants:
 - i. Pre-employment training support?
 - ii. mental health support?
 - d. What support is being provided to Host Employers?
5. To what extent is the Program design meeting the needs of Participants and Host Employers?
 - a. Should other cohorts be targeted?
 - b. Should other support be provided to Participants?
 - c. Should Host Employers be supported differently?
6. What was the baseline participation rate for similar Apprenticeships and cadetships for the target cohorts prior to the Program?

Future

7. What are the implications for the ongoing delivery of the Program?

Data collection methods

The First Stage Evaluation used a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The data collection methods are summarised below:

- Review and analysis of Program related documents and administrative data
- Semi-structured stakeholder interviews with Host Employers, Industry Partners, LAHC staff and Program Participants
- Delivery and review of an online survey targeted to Host Employers and current Program Participants
- Analysis of commencement and completion rates of Apprenticeships in building and construction and Cadetships in property and tenancy management from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and other relevant data sources.

Bellberry Human Research Ethics Committee approved this research on 14 September 2021.

Limitations

The following limitations apply to the First Stage Evaluation:

- Participants and Host Employer interview and survey data does not represent the views of all Participants and Host Employers in the Program.
- There were a number of gaps and inconsistencies in the administrative data provided. Reasons for these gaps and inconsistencies included the timing of the evaluation during the first year of Program implementation, when reporting processes were not fully established. Gaps and inconsistencies included:
 - applicant cohorts for HIA and CHIA NSW were not provided
 - MBA reported applicant and participant cohorts were inconsistent with Program guidelines
 - CHIA NSW provided minimal raw data.
- Baseline data is based on publicly available data. Baseline completion rate data was unavailable for all cohort groups, and as a result has not been included.

Findings

Process

The process component of the evaluation considered three questions:

- How is the Program being implemented?
- How are different participant cohorts being targeted?
- How has the Program adapted to COVID-19 health orders?

The key process findings are discussed in the box below.

Key findings

The Industry Partners' expertise, networks and established process and Programs have driven the successful implementation of key Program components, including recruitment, matching, on-boarding and participant supports. This approach has been facilitated by LAHC's approach to program management, which has utilised the Industry Partner's expertise and professionalism by limiting prescriptive Program requirements.

Industry Partners selected applicants who had a genuine interest and the skills to participate in the Program and were experiencing some form of disadvantage. Industry Partners selected Participants who were experiencing forms of disadvantage that were broader than those outlined in the Program guidelines, including being a single parent, experiencing or having experienced family and domestic violence, lacking work experiences, or requiring additional support for complex mental health and social issues.

The 2021 COVID-19 Delta outbreak had uneven disruptions across the Program. Cadets in affected areas were required to work from home, and all Cadets were required to study online. Apprentices in Greater Sydney were stood down from work between 19 July and 11 October, and a small number of Apprentices left as a result of vaccine mandates for those who resided in LGAs of concern.

While overall the Program has been successfully implemented, the rapid timeframes in the Program's first year led to some challenges in promoting the Program to social housing tenants and matching the location of Host Employers and Participants, as these two groups were recruited concurrently.

How is the Program being implemented?

This question was used to access how the Program is being implemented. It had two sub questions:

- What elements of implementation are successful and why?
- What elements of implementation can be improved and why?

It considers the promotion of the Program, the recruitment and selection processes, the matching of Host Employers and Participants, onboarding processes, contract management, reporting and data collection, and enablers and barriers.

Promotion of the Program and recruitment

Recruitment for the Program entailed targeted promotion, including presentations and face-to-face meetings with key organisations such as TAFEs, Industry Partner builders, trade contractor members and community housing bodies. This included Aboriginal community housing providers, who in turn informed their tenants. Industry Partners also drew on established Apprenticeship programs to recruit suitable Participants and due to the timeframe, one Industry Partner also recruited through an employment agency.

The Program was also initially promoted by the DCJ sending a SMS to social housing tenants and applicants before the Program was finalised with Industry Partners. This SMS generated a high number of enquiries and interest in the Program and resulted in a small number of social housing tenants and clients successfully applying and being accepted into the Program.

Some of the Cadets interviewed were social housing tenants or clients who first heard about the Program through the SMS. However, Industry Partners reported that most responders either mis-interpreted the SMS or were ill suited for the Program. At that stage of the Program delivery, some Industry Partners were also overwhelmed in responding to interest from the SMS, which in some cases, further slowed down the subsequent phases of Program implementation.

Interviews with the Apprentices indicate that some Apprentices heard about the Program through their social networks, or sought out opportunities with the Industry Partner directly.

Selection process – Participants

Industry Partners assessed the applicants who applied to the Program to determine their eligibility and suitability. As specified in the Program guidelines, priority cohorts for the Stage One Evaluation Program were applicants who had completed a pre-Apprenticeship, individuals aged between 16-25 or over 30, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women, and individuals living in public, community, social or Aboriginal housing or receiving private rental assistance.⁴

Industry Partners endeavoured to recruit a range of applicants to align with the ‘spirit’ of the Program. Industry Partners sought to establish concurrent eligibility or broader definitions of disadvantage, especially for overrepresented cohorts, such as youth.

‘Youth with another disadvantage. Now, what is another disadvantage, there is no strict category, and it’s not listed in the agreement, but we’re [in the] developing [stage still], so every time we take on a youth now, they’ve got something else that we can talk about, might be that they’ve got some health issue, might mean that they’ve got a literacy issue, it might mean they’ve got both parents in prison, it might mean, they’ve come from a refugee background, it might mean, and I can go on and on and on.’ Industry Partner

Other factors considered by Industry Partners included being a single parent, experiencing or having experienced domestic violence, lacking work experience, or requiring additional support. The three Industry Partners also developed targeted focuses for their delivery of the Program, for example targeting regional and remote areas, or women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In addition to eligibility, applicants were required to go through a rigorous selection process, to ensure they had the merit, interest and capability to successfully participate in the Program. The selection process included an online application process, language and numeracy assessment and interview.⁵ After completion of the literacy and numeracy tests, Industry Partners arranged participant interviews, which the Host Employers subsequently carried out.

Industry Partners identified that a rigorous selection process was essential for delivering positive outcomes, for both the Participant and the Host Employer. However, the flexibility of funding through the LAHC Program enabled Industry Partners to provide opportunities to cohorts that required some additional support to successfully engage in an Apprenticeship or Cadetship.

⁴ LAHC Apprenticeship Program Guidelines; MBA and HIA Monthly Reports for April through to August

⁵ Industry Partner websites

'And for a program like this, we need to slightly adjust our weighting so that people that would normally...not get to your top, your top selection list, can jump up into that top selection list. And now we've also got to be really careful that we don't just jump people out because they happen to be Indigenous, or happen to be female, or happen to be mature age, or happen to be whatever our target group audiences is, just so we can report back to the New South Wales government that 'Yep, we've, we've filled all these positions', because it could be setting people up for failure...we can't give our host people that aren't going to make it and we don't want to set people up for failure that aren't going to make it, so [there is a need to balance] both sides of the equation...But we need to be a little bit more flexible than normal...So we'll identify you know, weaknesses in the some of the applicants that...perhaps wouldn't normally get the opportunity...So if it happens to be a literacy issue or happens to be whatever the issue is, that's where the funding and the LAHC [Apprenticeship program] team come in...and the...team work on those weaknesses and explain it to the employers and have a good, honest open communication.' Industry Partner

During the initial referral and application process, most applicants matched to one or more of the priority groups that may benefit from the LAHC Program went through to the interview rounds. Reasons the Industry Partners declined the remaining applications included deemed not suitable, not interested in participating in the Program after finding out more and did not respond.

In the final interview stage, applicants were declined if they appeared not to be ready for such an undertaking, or were ill-informed about the level of commitment required to complete the training component (12 months for cadetships, 2 years for traineeships and 4 years for most apprenticeships). Conversely, those accepted displayed a keen interest in gaining the qualification or demonstrated previous ability to complete training.

Interviews and the survey with Participants indicate that the application process was straightforward for Participants, and that successful applicants were highly motivated to increase their skills and gain long term employment.

Selection process - Host Employers

Industry Partners recruited Host Employers through their membership base. Host Employers in the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project commonly had long term relationships with the Industry Partner, and a history in hosting MBA or HIA Apprenticeships.

Host Employers in the Cadetship Project were selected through an Expression of Interest Process (EOI) that included an information session and an EOI survey with NSW community housing providers.

Host Employers were also required to meet a series of requirements specified by LAHC.

Survey data indicates selected Host Employers joined the program to access suitable and skilled candidates and access the support provided by the Program.

Matching of Host Employers and Participants

Location was the primary criteria for matching Host Employers and Participants. Cultural/organisational fit was also taken into consideration in the matching process, as cohesion and collegiality can be critical for retaining Participants and meeting Host Employers' needs.

'So I actually needed a new apprentice anyway, so I just went to them, and then they said, we've actually got this guy through this new program, told me about it and said, we think he'd be a good fit for you. So they basically just paired us up straightaway and he ticked all the boxes for what we needed and he was in the right area. So it all worked out.'

Apprenticeship Host Employer

As Participants and Host Employers were recruited concurrently, Industry Partners reported challenges in matching Participants and Host Employers, as locations did not always match

up. Industry Partners advised this challenge can be avoided in future by recruiting Host Employers and Participants in different timeframes.

The majority of Participant and Host Employee survey respondents felt they had matched with the right employer.

Onboarding processes

Before the Apprentices and Cadets commenced in the Program, they completed a two-week intensive training course. The course involved WHS training and information on rights and responsibilities. Cadets completed the course face-to-face in Sydney. For the Apprentices, it also included various hands-on tasks designed to prepare them for their Apprenticeships. As most of the Apprentices working on site were not accustomed to environments with tools/equipment, after the training, workplace monitors were sent on site to check on work safety requirements.

Interviews with Industry Partners also revealed that during the onboarding process HIA and MBA focused on presenting the LAHC Program as a 'typical Apprenticeship'. While Participants were informed of the extra supports available to them, Industry Partners were careful not to emphasise that Participants were in a targeted Program to avoid any stigma.

Overall, Participant interview data indicates that Cadets and Apprentices had positive experiences during the two-week intensive training course.

Contract management, reporting and data collection

Data from the Industry Partner monthly reports and interviews with Industry Partners indicate CHIA NSW, HIA and MBA monitor finances, as well as document the progress and outcomes of the Participants. Monthly meetings are then conducted with LAHC to report on progress.⁶ A quarterly Program meeting is also held with all Delivery Partners to share learnings, outcomes/performance and address risks and issues.

Interviews with Industry Partners and reporting documentation indicates that the Industry Partners have systems in place to allow them to meet their data collection and reporting obligations. This includes collecting performance indicators at the participant level and financial reporting.

While the data collated is adequate in achieving contractual requirements, Industry Partners and LAHC expressed the need to streamline the reporting process, including adjusting templates and the aggregation of information such as risks.

The data focuses on outputs such as:

- candidate applications per priority group
- Apprentices & Trainees employed in the Program
- qualifications
- adult Apprenticeship/Cadetship Program commencement training
- Training Plans, Training Contract Identification Numbers (TCID) and Placement
- hours worked (totals)
- Training Employer (TE) Engagement
- finances
- case studies.⁷

Enablers and barriers

Overall, LAHC, Industry Partners and Host Employers believe the professionalism and expertise of Partners involved in the Program allowed for successful implementation despite the reported speed and urgency with which the Program was initiated. The Industry

⁶ MBA and HIA Monthly Reports

⁷ MBA and HIA Monthly Reports

Partners' knowledge, networks, existing programs and commitment to the Program objectives are reported to have driven the early positive outcomes.

'The implementation seems to be quite smooth. I think the program design had a trickiness attached to it, because...it was new, and we didn't have a lot to model on. And we had really tight timeframes. But in terms of implementation...really, it's the [Industry] partners who've done all of that work. And they've done a great job in terms of, both implementing it, but thinking about who, what the objectives of the project have been, and their desire to actually look to meet that....that focus on social housing tenants and whether there are opportunities for them in the program.' LAHC staff

Interviews with Industry Partners and LAHC indicated that the 'scatter gun' approach to the SMS promotion of the Program generated a great deal of interest from unsuitable applicants. Delivery Partners reported feeling ill-equipped to manage the correspondence generated. This had a kick-on effect of slowing down subsequent phases. There were also issues with registration (people giving their name and contact number to a third party) which necessitated complicated disclosure forms. However, the Cadets interviewed who received the SMS felt the SMS was an effective way to hear about the Program, and one Cadet felt the SMS promotion should continue into future years, as many social housing tenants would appreciate the opportunity to participate in the Program.

Tight timeframes posed various issues during implementation. As it was a new Program, LAHC and Industry Partners found it difficult to get all the processes in place quickly and would have appreciated more forewarning and planning. For example, during the two-week intensive training for Cadets, the tight timeframes for implementation resulted in there not being enough time for CHIA NSW to process meal allowance payments to Cadets. As a result, some Cadets did not initially have money for meals which CHIA NSW resolved by the Trainer accessing money so some of the Cadets could buy food.

CHPs also noted that the rapid initiation period, including compressed deadlines for recruitment and advertising, did not allow the time to effectively mount promotional campaigns, or tap into existing networks of social housing tenants. Various CHPs emphasised how they were well-positioned to offer specific cohorts a well-structured experience. After being initially attracted to the Program due to its premise of providing opportunities for social/affordable housing tenants, these CHPs expressed disappointment that their matched Participants were not best suited to the organisations' experience or mission.

Most significantly, all Partners agree that recruiting applicants before Host Employers unnecessarily complicated the matching process. As participant demand did not match that of the Host Employers, employment agencies were called in to assist. Going forward, Industry Partners intend to recruit Host Employers first so that they can provide advice on opportunities and locations during the promotional phase. This would solve the issue of recruiting the right applicants only to find there is no local CHP or builder to take them on.

How are different participant cohorts being targeted?

This question considers how the different cohorts of Participants are being targeted. It considers indicators relating to target cohorts and activities used to reach target cohorts.

Target cohorts

Profile of target cohorts

The Program has a broad range of target cohorts. The Apprenticeship and Cadetship Project targets:

- social housing clients
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- women

- young people (15-24 years old)
- adults (21+ years old)
- mature-aged (35+ years old)
- those who have completed pre-Apprenticeship programs
- people with a disability.⁸

The Cadetship Project's target cohorts are narrower and more specific and include:

- unemployed young people (15-24)
- social housing clients (25+).

'And the first thing is, everyone in our program meets the target group so we haven't put anyone into the program that doesn't meet the target.' Industry Partner

In the first year of the Program, HIA and MBA developed more nuanced factors when considering target cohorts in the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project. HIA and MBA highlighted a focus on targeting and selecting specific individuals that may be socio-economically disadvantaged and required additional support, including individuals who are:

- single parents
- experiencing/experienced domestic or family violence
- lacking work experience
- requiring additional support for complex mental health or social issues
- youth experiencing a form of disadvantage
- in regional and remote areas.

Interviews with Cadets and Apprentices demonstrated that many of the Program's Participants have experienced a range of social disadvantages and barriers to the workforce. Cadets who were interviewed had experienced domestic and/or family violence, mental health issues, homelessness, and/or long-term unemployment. Apprentices who were interviewed had often trialed a range of careers or study options and were now experiencing challenges in accessing an apprenticeship due to their age.

Profile of Program applications

The Program received a wide variety of applicants and CHIA NSW indicated that most applicant were women.

MBA data indicates that Adults are the largest applicant cohort, comprising 61%, compared to the Junior cohort at 39%. Other key applicant groups include Social Housing Tenants at 19%, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders at 9% and women at 17%.

Activities used to reach target cohorts

Interviews with Industry Partners and reporting documentation confirm LAHC targeted more than 150,000 social housing tenants and applicants through SMS text messages issued by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).

Industry Partners targeted cohorts by organising meetings with key organisations such as community housing bodies, TAFEs, Industry Partner builders, trade contractor members and community groups.⁹ Additionally, CHIA NSW exclusively promoted the Cadetship Project to the CEOs of mainstream and Aboriginal Community Housing providers (A/CHPs), who then promoted the project to their tenants.¹⁰

How has the Program adapted to COVID-19 health orders?

⁸ LAHC Apprenticeship Program Guidelines

⁹ HIA April 2021 report

¹⁰ Promotion (Website and SMS) LAHC Apprenticeship Program.

This question considered how the Program has adapted to COVID-19 health orders that came into effect as a result of the COVID-19 Delta outbreak from June 2021, when many Participants were first joining the Program, commencing employment and training. It considered indicators relating to the impact of COVID-19 on health orders.

Key COVID-19 restrictions and health orders included:

- Stay-at-home orders in Greater Sydney between 26 June and 11 October 2021.
- Stay-at-home orders in the NSW regions based on specific COVID-19 exposure and during a state-wide lockdown from 14 August to 22 August 2021.
- Ongoing restrictions for unvaccinated and partially vaccinated individuals across NSW from 11 October.
- A pause on all construction work in Greater Sydney between 19 July and 30 July.
- Various site capacity restrictions between 31 July and 11 October.
- Vaccine mandate and surveillance testing of construction workers from LGAs of concern between 31 July and 11 October.

Impact of COVID-19 health orders

The COVID-19 health orders and restrictions had different impacts for the Cadetship Project and the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project.

Cadetship Project

Cadets in regions affected by stay-at-home orders transitioned to working remotely, with the Industry Partner reporting more than 50% of its Participants were working from home. This meant many Cadets missed out on practical experience. For instance, they could not go out on site with trainers, nor could they gain office experience. It also meant that many of the Participants who were working parents, and particularly single mothers, had to balance studying/working from home with childcare and home-schooling responsibilities.

In the interviews, Cadets identified that they were not initially set up to work from home and that it was difficult to manage working with responsibilities for looking after children and teenagers. In addition, they identified that it was harder to stay engaged in study units, and understand how their study applied to their work.

Further run-on effects included a lack of connection between Participants (both with one another and with their Host Employers).

CHIA NSW also planned to deliver training for the Cadetship Project face-to-face, which was required to transition to online.

Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project

Unlike the Cadets, Apprentices in Greater Sydney were stood down during the construction pause. However, Industry Partners supported Apprentices to access the \$750 per week COVID-19 Disaster Payment and supplemented the gap between the Disaster Payment and wages.

In addition to the construction pause, Apprentices also reported that there were restricted numbers on sites and that they were required to comply with extra safety measures on site. Apprentices from LGAs of concern were also required to comply with vaccine mandates and surveillance testing.

TAFE learning shifted to online, and some practical components and assessments were delayed until face-to-face training can commence.

Commencements also decreased in June and July, which was likely the result of the COVID-19 Delta outbreak.

Program adaptations

Industry Partners introduced measures such as weekly virtual ‘catch ups’ to combat isolation for the Participants. Yet despite the long hours of online training, many Host Employers reported Participants remained engaged and focused.

Workplace coordinators became even more critical during this time. Industry Partners increased their level of supports for Participants, rearranging training and helping with issues that arose, such as adjusting study loads and supporting Apprentices to access COVID-19 Disaster Payments. Further, CHPs were also reported to have responded with flexibility and support.

Host Employers required assistance with getting the Apprentices vaccinated so that there would not be a lack of workers. Adding further complications, many Participants came from LGAs of concern. Industry Partners and LAHC provided the support and logistics to carry out the participant vaccinations and keep the Program on track.

Operations in regional areas fared better during this period, experiencing fewer and shorter lockdowns. Participants were not required to stop attending workplaces.

At the time of this evaluation in late 2021, COVID-19 restrictions continue to impact on the promotion of the Program¹¹, affecting trade exhibitions and other promotional events. While Industry Partners are attempting to carry out information sessions over video-conferencing, it is difficult to connect with target cohorts through this medium. Career advice at schools and universities has also been discontinued until 2022, with one Industry Partner concerned that this gap in the pipeline may cost them two years of Apprentices.

¹¹ Covid-19 restrictions began to ease from 8 November 2021, and are dependent on vaccination status of individuals.

Outcome

The outcome component of the evaluation considered three questions:

- To what extent is the Program achieving its outputs?
- To what extent is the Program design meeting the needs of Participants and Host Employers?
- What was the baseline participation rate for similar Apprenticeships and Cadetships for the target cohorts prior to the Program?

The key outcomes findings are discussed in the box below. Findings by each outcome question are then discussed in more detail.

Key findings

The Program is broadly achieving its outputs and meeting the needs of Participants and Host Employers.

In its first year, 186 Participants commenced in the Program. When compared to baseline data, the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project is achieving positive representation of Participants aged over 35, females and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Cadetship Project has high representation of women, and when compared to baseline data, has significant representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Despite efforts in recruitment, the Program has a low representation of social housing clients, which could be targeted in future.

Data collected indicates that the Program is broadly meeting the needs of Participants and Host Employers. All Cadets that were interviewed felt the Program had changed their lives and had improved their future prospects, and all Cadets and Apprentices interviewed anticipated they would finish their training and build careers in their chosen industry. Overall support to Cadets, Apprentices and Host Employers were meeting needs.

To what extent is the Program achieving its outputs?

This question considered the extent the Program is achieving its outputs. It has four sub-questions:

- How many Participants have commenced?
- Who are the participant cohorts?
- What support is being provided to Participants?
- What support is being provided to Host Employers?

Commencement

As of August 2021, there were 178 active Participants in the Program. The breakdown of active participant by Industry Partner is:

- 47 MBA Participants
- 109 HIA Participants
- 22 CHIA NSW Participants.

Administrative data¹² indicates that 9 HIA Participants withdrew for unknown reasons and 10 MBA Participants have been suspended for various reasons, such as career change, NSW Government COVID-19 vaccine mandate and personal reasons.

Participant cohorts

The administrative data indicates the following Participant cohorts:

Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project

- 72% of Participants are aged 15-25
- 26% are aged over 35
- 6% of Participants are women
- 10% of Participants are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- 4% of Participants are social housing clients.

Cadetship Project

- 86% of Participants are women
- 24% of Participants are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- 77% of Participants were previously unemployed.

CHIA NSW advised that Cadets who were employed prior to starting the Program were primarily in part time or insecure work, with many having lost their secure jobs in the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020.

Participant supports

The Program Guidelines, Industry Partner websites and monthly Industry Partner reports indicate that Industry Partners provide the following supports:

- tailored and practical support
- day to day and routine contact, support, encouragement and liaison
- referral of Participants to support services when required
- mentoring and education/career advocacy and guidance including recruiting
- training mentors from partner CHPs
- a Training Support Coach to provide intensive support to all Participants
- a Workplace Coordinator to support the mentor and Participants in their work placement
- an employment plan including resume and template for applying for paid employment.

Additionally, the HIA website indicates that Participants will be provided with the following:

- Apprentices that commence prior to the full course completion will be trained in white card and power tool use, with other components of this course to be delivered within a reasonable post-employment time frame.
- Participants are to be paid a \$500 per quarter progression incentive until studies are completed.
- 2 years membership, at no cost, to all Participants in the HIA Apprentice Club, which provides networking facilities and peer support and membership-based services to current and recently completed building trade Apprentices.¹³

Participant experience

Interview and survey data indicates that the Program is broadly meeting the needs of Participants. All Cadets that were interviewed felt the Program had changed their lives and

¹² HIA and MBA use different language in administrative reporting, HIA uses withdrew and MBA uses suspended.

¹³ HIA website

had improved their future prospects. In addition, they all aimed to gain long term employment with the Host Employer, and one would like to start an Aboriginal Community Housing Provider.

All Apprentices interviewed planned to finish their Apprenticeship and continue to work for the Host Employer as a fully trained carpenter in the short term. In the longer-term ambitions included starting their own construction business or moving into project management.

In particular, Cadets strongly agree that the process of applying to the Program was easy, and that they were matched with the right employer.

Training employer supports

Cadetship Project

In the Cadetship Project, the Industry Partner responded to the Program's timeframe and emerging needs to provide substantial supports to the Host Employers, including substantially supporting and facilitating the recruitment and onboarding of Cadets. The Industry Partner coordinated and supported the onboarding process, to make it as smooth and easy as possible for the Host Employers.

Given their inexperience in hosting Cadets, some Host Employers were unsure how they could support the Cadets in alignment with Program requirements. As a result, the Industry Partner developed a detailed framework and hosted an information session to outline support requirements.

In addition, the Industry Partner supported the Host Employers with setting up line managers and mentors for the Cadet, conducted monthly training sessions with the mentors and arranged a workplace coordinator.

Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project

Host Employers in the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project receive an incentive payment, ranging between \$36,000 per annum and \$50,000 per apprentice, depending on Industry Partner.

Host Employers may also access other supports through their MBA or HIA membership.

To what extent is the Program design meeting the needs of Participants and Host Employers?

This question considered the extent to which the Program design is meeting the needs of Participants and Host Employers. It has three sub-questions:

- Should other cohorts be targeted?
- Should other support be provided to Participants?
- Should Host Employers be supported differently?

Cohorts not targeted

Despite high interest from social housing tenants after receiving the SMS promotion, Industry Partners advised it was difficult to recruit social housing tenants into the Program. Reasons included social housing applicants misunderstanding the Program requirements, not maintaining communication and not meeting Program capability requirements, such as literacy.

Host Employers in the Cadetship Project also advised that they valued the unique perspective and expertise social housing tenants could bring to their organisations.

'And I think the cadets, especially given that they are coming from some form of social or affordable housing, bring a different element that they can then put insight into the way that we work with our tenants in a different kind of way. In terms of just really random stuff like, just even it might be like a letter and saying, you know, or actually, if we change the text

around, could we change it around, instead of that first and that second, if it goes the other way that will make more sense in explaining that.’ Cadetship Host Employer

Social housing tenants may benefit from more specialised targeting, in both recruitment and Program delivery, including undertaking basic reading and writing, as well as work readiness training ahead of commencement in the program. Industry Partners and Host Employers identified the need for promotional material to be targeted to different audiences, and for there to be long timeframes for promotional material and recruitment. CHIA highlighted the need for cadets to be better informed on professional workplace etiquette, as well as receiving training around office administration capabilities and digital literacy.

Participant supports

Cadetship Project

Interviews with Cadets indicate that Cadets are accessing support to readjust their study load, organise the work to align with study, access mentoring, and receive ongoing support for broader issues, such as complex mental health issues.

Support is often coordinated between the Host Employer and CHIA NSW. For example, one Cadet was having trouble with her study load, and the Host Employer line manager and CHIA NSW coordinator worked together to develop a schedule that was more manageable.

Survey data indicates that Cadetship Participants do not always have access to the right information from CHIA NSW, which may indicate that they require more support in accessing information.

In addition, Cadetship Participants have indicated that online learning as a result of COVID-19 has been difficult, and would like to return to face to face learning.

Apprenticeship Project

Interviews with Apprentices indicates Apprentices receive monthly check-ins from the Industry Partner, can access ad hoc support from the Industry Partner when required, and receive support from their trainer and boss. Apprentices also receive a range of financial support, including support in accessing loans for cars and tools, a quarterly bonus and reimbursement for fuel and travel costs. The majority of Apprentices reported that they used the incentive payment to purchase tools for their trade.

Training employer supports

Host Employers in the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project tended to have established relationships with MBA and HIA and were experienced in hosting Apprentices. Most Host Employers in the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Project identified the subsidy payment as the main support received under the Program and were satisfied with this support.

Host Employers in the Cadetship Project were less experienced in hosting Cadets, and some Host Employers reported not having all the information about the Cadets training requirements or other Program expectations.

Host Employers across both Projects reported the onboarding process as relatively easy, which indicates that Industry Partners are successfully supporting Host Employers with onboarding the Apprentices and Cadets.

‘[Industry Partner] make everything pretty easy for us, literally just signed a form and it was done pretty much, I can't imagine there's too much that would make it easier for me.’

Apprenticeship Host Employer

What was the baseline participation rate for similar Apprenticeships and Cadetships for the target cohorts prior to the Program?

This question considered the baseline participation rate for similar Apprenticeships and Cadetships for the target cohorts prior to the Program. It forms the initial evidence base for the outcome component of the Stage Two and Stage Three Evaluation. It considers indicators relating to Apprentices in building and construction and Cadets in property and tenancy management.

Apprenticeships in building and construction

The overall participation in building and construction Apprenticeships has been relatively stable between 2016 and 2020, with approximately 23,000 Participants a year. Annually, Apprenticeship completions range in the 4,000s, commencements vary between 10,000 and 11,000 and cancellations range between 7,200 and 8,900. Young people, defined as under 25 years, are consistently at least 80% of the cohort, and mature Participants, defined as over 25, account for 15-18% of Participants.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and women are underrepresented in either building and construction Apprenticeship commencements or completions, although there have been some improvements in recent years.

Annually, 4-5% of commencements identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which is comparable with the general population, which estimates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population as 3.3%. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been under-represented in completion, at 1.5% of total Apprenticeship completions in 2016. This has been progressively improving, and in 2020 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander completion rate was at 3%.

Women are also significantly underrepresented in building and construction Apprenticeships. Between 2016 and 2019 women were 2.2% and 2.9% of commencements, however there was a large increase in 2020 to 4.25% commencements.

There are very few people with disabilities who commence building and construction Apprenticeships, at approximately 18 commencements in total per a year. Of these commencements, none were women.

Cadets in real-estate Apprenticeships¹⁴

Commencements in real-estate Apprenticeships significantly increased in 2020. Between 2016 and 2019 there was a steady increase in commencements ranging from 215 (2016) to 405 (2018), which increased to 1465 in 2020. There is a high representation of mature Participants, defined as 25 years and over, who increased representation from around 50% to 70% over the five-year period with the majority of commencements women.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are significantly under-represented in real-estate Apprenticeships and are generally less than 2% of commencements. There were only 10 commencements of people identifying as living with disability, all in 2020.

¹⁴ Real-estate Apprenticeships are used as a proxy for property and tenancy management, as NCVET data does not specifically refer to Cadets in property and tenancy management.

Future

The future component of the evaluation considered one question:

- What are the implications for the ongoing delivery of the Program?

The key future findings are discussed in the box below. The findings are then discussed in more detail.

Key findings

As has been identified throughout this report, the Program has been implemented well in its first year and is delivering positive early outcomes. Effective processes and supports include those to recruit Participants and Host Employers and provide onboarding, support and training to the Participants and Host Employers.

The processes and supports to be changed or adopted focus on optimising the Program's processes and outcomes. They include adjusting timeframes for recruitment, increasing the representation of social housing tenant Participants, streamlining reporting, increasing and refining pre-employment and ongoing supports to participant, increasing information to Host Employers and reinstating face-to-face learning and supports that transitioned online as a result of the 2021 COVID-19 Delta outbreak.

There is also an opportunity to enhance outcomes by targeting Participants that experience more complex barriers to the workforce and require more targeted support. Program changes that could support increased representation of Participants experiencing complex barriers include quotas for target cohorts, targeted recruitment, reduced entry requirements with appropriate pre-employment and employment supports, and realistic outcome expectations.

What are the implications for the ongoing delivery of the Program?

This question considered the implications for the ongoing delivery of the Program. It considered indicators relating to processes and supports to be continued and processes and supports to be changed or adopted.

Processes and supports to be continued

Overall, the Program has been well implemented and is delivering positive early outcomes. Underpinning the Program's delivery is the Industry Partner's professionalism, expertise, networks, and established programs and processes. The Program should continue to utilise the expertise of the Industry Partner, which is facilitated through LAHC's approach to Program management.

In its first year, the Program has also developed effective approaches to recruit Participants and Host Employers and provide onboarding, support and training to the Participants and Host Employers. However, components of these elements can improve in the remaining years of the Program.

'Even if there are small changes, it's got great bones.' Cadetship Host Employer

Processes and supports to be changed and adopted

As the Program has been positively implemented in the first year, changing and adopting processes and supports are in the context of facilitating continuous improvement and augmenting outcomes for Participants.

The following processes and supports are recommended to be changed or adopted for future years of the Program:

- Future years of the Program would benefit from a refined timeline for promotion and recruitment. Specifically, it would be beneficial to first recruit Host Employers, and then target promotion and recruitment for Participants in the Host Employers locations.
- As a result of the short implementation timeframes, social housing tenants are underrepresented in the Program. Host Employers in the Cadetship Project specifically identified employing social housing tenants as a motivation for joining the Program, and that social housing tenants provide expertise and perspective for their organisations. Recruitment strategies could be further refined to continue targeting social housing tenants, with the aim of increasing representation, potentially by recruiting from CHP Host Employers.
- Developing consistent and streamlined reporting and data collection across the Program, including information such as risks and providing mechanisms for qualitative reporting or Program 'storytelling'.
- Industry Partners to increase pre-employment support for Participants, and continue to refine onboarding and supports for Participants, as needs are identified and change.
- Industry Partners to reinstate face-to-face learning and supports, that transitioned to online as a result of the 2021 COVID-19 Delta outbreak, as soon as practical.
- Industry Partners to facilitate processes to allow for options for Participants to 'pause' participation in the Program, when life events prevent temporary engagement in the Program.
- Industry Partners to increase the information available to Host Employers regarding the Program and consider formal ways to provide support to the Host Employers, such as the framework developed by CHIA NSW.

Overall, Participant interviews and surveys indicated that Participants are satisfied with the Program. Areas for improvement that were identified relate to the following:

- The pace of assignments in the Cadetship Project was overwhelming for some Participants, which caused some interviewees to reduce their workload and others to seek extensions on their assignments. Participants felt the workload could be better spaced out and there could be more time in between assignments.
- Apprentices would prefer more regular contact and training from TAFE, rather than two block days per month, however this may be outside of the control of Industry Partners.

In addition to the above processes and supports, the Program could enhance outcomes by continuing to target Participants experiencing complex barriers to workforce entry, and increasing representation when possible. The following Program changes may support increased representation of Participants experiencing complex barriers:

- Specific quotas for target cohorts, including social housing tenants.
- Targeted recruitment for individuals experiencing complex barriers to the workforce, including social housing tenants.
- Reduced entry requirements in terms of capability, such as literacy and numeracy, with the appropriate pre-employment and employment supports to enable the Participants to meet Registered Training Organisations (RTO) standards.
- Realistic expectations on outcomes, as increasing the representation of Participants experiencing complex barriers to employment may increase the rate of non-completions.

Conclusion

The evaluation indicates that the Program has been successfully implemented and is delivering early outcomes for Participants and Host Employers.

Process learnings that can be implemented in future stages of the Program are:

- Adjusting and staggering recruitment timeframes, so Host Employers are recruited first, followed by Participants.
- Developing recruitment strategies to increase the representation of social housing tenant Participants. Interview data indicates Cadets who live in social housing highly value the experience of Participants in the Program, and Cadetship Host Employers highly value the expertise of social housing tenants.
- Improving and streamlining reporting and data collection across the Program, to ensure data across the Industry Partners is consistent for future stages of the evaluation, includes information about risks, and provides a mechanism for 'story telling' and qualitative reporting.
- Industry Partners increase pre-employment supports for Participants, and continue to refine ongoing supports to Participants as needs emerge and change.
- Industry Partners increase the information available to Host Employers, particularly within the Cadetship Project.
- Industry Partners continue to manage the ongoing effects and impacts of COVID-19 and reinstate face-to-face learning and supports that transitioned online as a result of the 2021 COVID-19 Delta outbreak, as is possible within emerging health advice.

Outcome learnings that can be implemented in the future stages of the Program are:

- Continue to recruit and increase representation of Participants experiencing complex barriers to the workforce and require more targeted support. Opportunities for continuing to recruit Participants experiencing complex barriers include:
 - Specific quotas for target cohorts, including social housing tenants.
 - Targeted recruitment for individuals experiencing complex barriers to the workforce, including social housing tenants.
 - Reduced entry requirements in terms of capability, such as literacy and numeracy, with the appropriate pre-employment and employment support to enable the Participants to meet Registered Training Organisations (RTO) standards.
 - Realistic expectations on outcomes, as increasing the representation of Participants experiencing complex barriers to employment may increase the rate of non-completions.

In addition to these Outcome learnings, future evaluations should continue to monitor Participant outcomes and the extent the Program is meeting the needs of Participants and Host Employers, to track changes over time.

Program Outcomes can also consider the outcomes in comparison groups, including within the:

- baseline data
- the literature review at **Appendix B**
- comparison groups in HIA and MBA's mainstream apprenticeship programs.