

# PRACTICE NOTES

## Centre for Disability Employment Research & Practice

### A New Horizon

Your local jurisdiction holds more knowledge and understanding of barriers to inclusion than organisations and peak bodies acknowledge. Often the community is "spoken to" by the sector but rarely does the sector valorise community, as an authentic solution resource particularly in the field of employment.

### Power to the Consumer

Under a National Disability Insurance Scheme, the consumer will become empowered. The customer will drive expectation and will execute their right to walk, talk and spend their money with their provider of choice. DES won't be immune to this and can learn from the customer responses to the NDIS.

### Thought

Trust will continue to arrive by foot but can now leave in an instant on 4G or the NBN.



## Employment Solutions Reside in the Community

Community engagement is a process and art form. It's also been tried before with mixed responses. However under the legislative power of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Employment First (EF) initiatives, research groups in the USA, have engaged in a state by state Community Conversations(CC's) projects, to evaluate the nuances of this process, in an attempt to enhance employment outcomes for persons with disabilities.

### *An Intellectual Café'*

The framework is based around the World Café methodology, which focuses on specialised questions, strategic leadership, intricate mixing of small sub-focus groups, broad candidacy and a collective solution's based strategy - all encapsulated in the ambience of a true café.. In this unique but diverse setting, people have the opportunity to embrace the freedom of meaningful discussion, deliberate on an eclectic array of ideas and take pride in the ownership of community solutions.

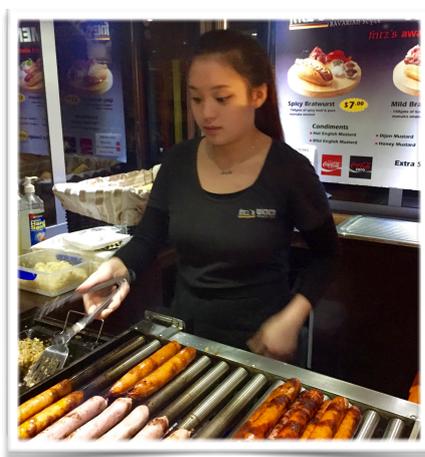


## Current Questions

Have employment organisations the vision, understanding and methodology to extract and utilise the wealth of community knowledge, that is available outside their front door, in their quest to meet increasing consumer expectations in disability employment outcomes?

Do employment service providers have the willingness to listen to the community and change their practices to “meet the market”?

Are service providers ready to recognise that real service simply isn't about job search and placement, but about adding value to the consumer and their capacity to pursue a better quality of life?



## Research Findings

Through the use of Community Conversation's, two overarching outcomes appear common to all state jurisdictions: the advancement of constructive conversation with local people participating in grounded discussions and as a result of this productive dialogue, the advancement of social capital, setting a strong platform for future practical solutions, evaluations and community engagement.

Some of the positive comments from the groups included; improved networking (breaking barriers between schools, families, providers and employers), increased sense of community responsibility in solving employment problems, taking awareness from an education to a grass roots experience, re-evaluation of hiring processes, advancing community acceptance of persons with disability working in community, advancing transition experiences, greater work experiences, greater understanding of skills and job placement requirements, greater readiness for interviews (from both parties).

In summation, early findings of CC's appear encouraging with strong scores also registered for, process approval, return events and recommendations for others to attend. Immediate benefits also included offers of work experiences and jobs offers made on the night.

## *No Shortcuts on Methodology Please!!!*

Further results and discussions from a number Community Conversations events have been published in the Journal of Disability Policy Studies 2018. Vol 28 (4). The overwhelming consensus from the papers suggest real value in pursuing this methodology however when study limitations are taken into consideration, organisations must understand the adherence to method will remain critical.

It will be easy to bias results, dissatisfy participants and undervalue certain representations, if the venue is unsuitable, the leadership is poor and the recruitment of participants is imbalanced by people of similar backgrounds, motivations or ideologies. Once again fidelity to the method will determine the value of the results. Further research is being completed to better understand the key factors which generate universal representation.