Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Good Practice in Job Services Australia

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Contents

1. Key findings

This report examines the practices used by providers of Job Services Australia (JSA) employment services to achieve high levels of performance in employment outcomes and high quality services. It does this by examining the relationships between quantifiable provider site characteristics as measured by JSA Star Ratings and Quality Framework measures, and the intrinsic factors that job seekers, employment consultants and employers speak about when describing a "quality service".

JSA employment service providers vary greatly —in their organisational details, the environment they operate in, and in how they approach the task of assisting job seekers. There is no fixed formula of characteristics or practices that mark out high performing sites. Instead, a combination of many factors tends to contribute to good practice, depending on each service provider's caseload, environment and business model.

However, high performing employment service providers do tend to differ from mid- and low-performing providers in their overall approach to providing employment assistance. High performers are more likely to have a positive, problem-solving attitude; to find innovative solutions to the problems they encounter; and to make full use of the resources available to them, such as from other Government programs and the resources available in their community.

High performing sites are more likely than mid- and low-performers to use practices that are goal-oriented and lead to individually tailored services for job seekers. They may use a range of strategies to achieve this, including:

Connecting well with job seekers:

- Emphasising the importance of building rapport with job seekers and spending time doing it, including paying attention to personal relationships and the physical comfort of the job seeker.
- Treating job seekers as individuals and with respect.
- Using job seekers' Employment Pathway Plans (EPPs) effectively, as a service planning tool and to encourage job seekers to set and achieve their goals.
- Addressing job seekers' vocational and non-vocational barriers together, rather than focusing exclusively on either non-vocational barriers or a strictly 'work first' approach.
- Using the Employment Expenditure Fund (EPF) for expenditure directly related to employment, such as wage subsidies and reverse marketing.
- Using local labour market information effectively to target training and work experience activities for job seekers.
- Using a range of strategies to encourage job seeker compliance.

Engaging well with employers:

- Being more proactive in their relationships with employers — in working to understand employers' skills needs, referring or reverse marketing job seekers to them, and supporting employers effectively after placing job seekers with them.

Building connections:

- Building strong linkages with employers, other providers, and other government, community and other services.
- Building productive working relationships with many organisations such as: community organisations, schools, training organisations, employer associations, rehabilitative and counselling services, and other JSA providers in the area.

2.   Introduction

This report outlines the strategies and practices that contribute to good practice by Job Services Australia (JSA) employment services providers. It is intended to foster improvement in the delivery of employment services, by sharing the Department's findings on the characteristics and practices commonly found in high-performing employment service providers.

This paper is not intended to be used by service providers as a set of prescriptions or directions, but as an information source to be drawn on by those seeking new and improved ways of working, according to their own unique circumstances. It should be used in addition to the service requirements specified under the Employment Services Deed 4 2009–12 (ESD4) and other information provided by the Department on specific aspects of service provision.

JSA employment service providers vary greatly in their organisational details, and in how they approach the task of assisting job seekers. The analysis conducted for this report did not find any definitive set of characteristics or practices that mark out high performing sites. Instead, a combination of many factors tends to contribute to good practice, depending on each service provider's caseload, operating environment and business model.

2.1   Identifying best practice

The Department's JSA star ratings, which measure the efficiency and effectiveness of employment services providers, were used in conjunction with participant experience measures from the KPI3 Quality Framework to identify high, medium and low performing employment services provider sites. In this way, both the outcomes and experiences of job seekers were used to evaluate performance as outlined in the research method at Appendix B. These results were then compared with data drawn from a wide range of sources, including:

- the Department's administrative data sources, known as the DEEWR Corporate Data Set, which contains information about job seekers collected through their JSA provider and Centrelink;
- the 2010 Employment Service Provider Survey, which surveyed over 1,000 sites providing employment assistance through at least one of the government's programs, including 678 providers of Job Services Australia;
- the Department's 2010 Employer Survey, which surveyed over 5,400 employers for information about their recruitment practices, use of Government employment services and other assistance, and attitudes towards hiring people in key groups of interest;
- discussions and focus groups conducted with service providers and job seekers in thirteen locations across Australia, including five metropolitan areas and eight regional areas; and
- the Department's longitudinal surveys of job seekers and income support recipients: the Employment Assistance Survey (EAS) and Dynamics of Australian Income Support & Employment Services (DAISES).

Various statistical tools including regression analysis were used to identify the links between practice and performance, using data at provider site level.

Further insights were then gained from the qualitative data gathered in the discussions and focus groups. This data was analysed using NVivo computer software to identify common themes and topics.

Tests for statistical significance where used were appropriate; however service providers emphasise that best practice comprises a range of strategies appropriate to the circumstances of each individual job seeker, and these strategies are not always amenable to statistical analysis with the data available.

More information on the research methods used is available at Appendix B: Research Method.

2.2 Further Information

The Department publishes information sheets and reports on many topics for employment services providers through the **Employment and Community Services Network Provider Portal for Stream Services**.

2.3 Acknowledgements

The Department would like to acknowledge the contributions of the JSA site staff and management and the job seekers and employers who participated in the interviews, focus groups and surveys used in the preparation of this report. Your contribution has been of great value to this and other work of the Department.

3. Assisting job seekers

3.1 Engaging with job seekers

High performing sites are more likely than mid and low performing sites to:

- Commence job seekers quickly and achieve more contacts with job seekers.
- Build rapport with job seekers, and maintain their engagement by:

  o clearly explaining their services and the job seekers' roles and responsibilities
  o having a physical environment that is comfortable, professional and allows for privacy when needed
  o where possible, matching job seekers to employment consultants with similar characteristics
  o using responses from the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) or other assessment tools to better understand the job seeker's needs
  o treating job seekers as individuals and with respect.

- Use a wide range of strategies to suit the individual needs of job seekers from diverse backgrounds and situations, such as:

  o developing the cross-cultural awareness of all staff
  o effectively using and communicating their Indigenous Employment Strategy.

- Have procedures in place for transferring job seeker information when their employment consultant changes.
- Encourage job seeker compliance using a wide variety of communication techniques, including, but not limited to, SMS messaging, email or physical visits where appropriate.

Engaging job seekers effectively with employment services is critical to ensuring that assistance is delivered to job seekers appropriately, and that they remain motivated to look for work actively throughout their period of unemployment.

Timing and frequency of contact

High performing sites connect with job seekers more quickly and engage with job seekers more frequently than lower performing providers. High performing sites are more likely to commence job seekers within eight days of referral, particularly job seekers in Streams 1 and 2. In addition, high performing sites have more contacts with job seekers than low performing sites.

Building rapport

As can be seen in Table 1, JSA providers generally report spending longer on average on initial contact and assessment tasks for job seekers in higher Streams. The relationship between the reported average time spent and task type suggests that the increasing complexity associated with job seeker disadvantage drives differences in the time and effort required (Employment Service Provider Survey, 2010).

Just under half of service providers report spending an average of 16-30 minutes on initial contact and registration for Stream 1 job seekers, and around 36 per cent report spending over 30 minutes. For Streams 2 to 4, most sites spend on average more than 30 minutes on initial

contact and registration, including preparation of Employment Pathway Plans (EPP) – 89 per cent of Stream 2-3 and 95 per cent of Stream 4 (Table 1) (Employment Service Provider Survey, 2010).

Table 1: Reported average time spent on initial contact tasks (per cent)

Stream	Up to 15 mins	16-30 mins	31-60 mins	More than 1 hour	Total
Stream 1 initial contact and registration	17	47	33	3	100
Stream 1 initial skills assessment	4	25	59	12	100
Stream 1 first EPP update	10	45	42	3	100
Stream 2-3 initial contact and registration	1	11	70	19	100
Stream 4 initial contact and registration	–	4	48	47	100

Note: Figures have been rounded and discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals.

Source: DEEWR Survey of Employment Service Providers 2010

There is no statistically significant association between provider performance and the amount of time providers report spending on initial connection and assessment tasks. While the average time spent in initial contact is not linked to site performance, however, the content and style does tend to vary with performance level.

Higher performing sites tend to regard the first appointment as a crucial time to build rapport with job seekers, particularly those in Streams 2 to 4 (discussions with service providers, 2010). Employment consultants and site managers from high performing sites report using a number of strategies to ensure that initial contacts establish a foundation for a productive servicing relationship, including:

- Maintaining a friendly and welcoming approach.
- Matching the employment consultant to the job seeker by characteristics such as age, sex and cultural background, or employing employment consultants who are able to adjust their 'style' to suit a range of job seekers.
- *Clearly* explaining the purpose and procedures around the services offered, including what they can offer job seekers, compliance requirements and procedures, and any re-assessment processes such as Job Capacity Assessments (JCA) (now Employment Services Assessments (ESAt)).
- Allowing time for job seekers to 'open up', in the first appointment or over subsequent appointments.
- Providing a physical environment that is comfortable and professional, and allows for privacy when needed.
- Using individual responses from the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) or other assessment tools to better understand the job seeker's needs, and to help structure their conversation.

- Some providers find it useful to revisit the JSCI, altering the style of questions or asking further questions to elicit more information from the job seeker that may be relevant to assist servicing.
- Some providers have developed their own assessment tool to complement the JSCI.
- Using the job seeker's Employment Pathway Plan effectively, as a tool to learn more of the job seeker's situation and to help motivate them, rather than viewing it as 'something that has to be done' (discussions with service providers, 2010).

> [Employment consultant] said hello and we introduced ourselves. They asked for a copy of my resume and any licences and certificates I had, what I'd been doing, what I wanted to do, they didn't want to waste their time finding me something I'm not going to like and stick with. They asked about my personal situation and they want to sort through all of that so that I can be stable enough to get a job and to stick with that.
>
> Job seeker, metropolitan centre, New South Wales

Maintaining engagement

According to both job seekers and employment consultants, consistently high quality service in all contacts is important for maintaining good relationships, and encouraging job seeker engagement. Job seekers report that they value employment consultants who are:

- ready for their initial appointment;
- prepared to spend time and effort with them;
- seek to understand their individual circumstances; and
- add value to their own job search efforts, for instance with detailed knowledge about the local labour market or other government programs.

> I dislike that they seem like they aren't trying. Two out of four times I went in to see my case manager, she would just give me a piece of paper to tell me when my next interview was.
>
> Job seeker, metropolitan centre, Queensland

Job seekers at high performing sites are more likely to remember their discussions with their employment consultants (PPM, 2010), indicating that they have been more engaged by them. Discussions can cover many topics, and can help to engage and motivate job seekers as well as guide the assistance provided (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Discussions with job seekers (per cent)
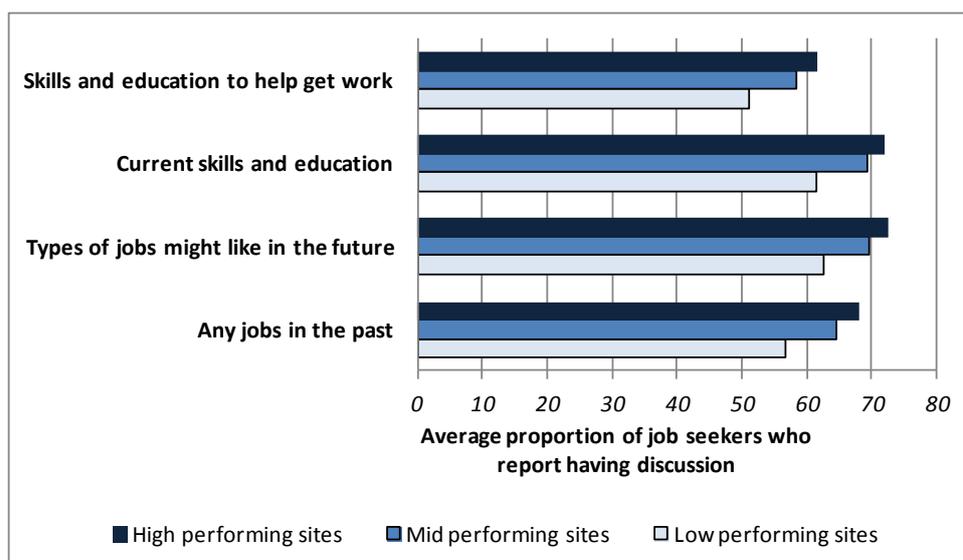
Source: DEEWR Post Program Monitoring Survey, 2009–2010

Refer to Appendix A, Table A1.1 to view the text version of Figure 1: Discussions with job seekers

Service continuity

Some staff turnover within provider sites is inevitable, meaning job seekers may need to be served by different employment consultants at different times. However job seekers report that a change of employment consultant can be discouraging and can cause them to disengage from assistance. In particular they report that they find having to 'tell their story again' both practically and emotionally difficult.

> I dislike that we see different people each time we go in. So you waste time telling them your situation and then all of a sudden the interview is over.
>
> Job seeker, metropolitan centre, Queensland

> I've seen three different people so far. You just get used to one and then they give you another one.
>
> Job seeker, metropolitan centre, Western Australia

Sites that are able to minimise disruptions to service continuity and which have procedures in place for transferring job seeker information when employment consultants do change are better able to maintain job seeker engagement.

Compliance measures

Service providers report using differing approaches to encourage job seeker compliance. Some sites encourage compliance by using multiple methods to attempt to contact job seekers prior to commencing formal compliance action, for example SMS messaging, email or personal visits. These providers report that such strategies can demonstrate good customer service and help build and maintain rapport with job seekers. Higher performing sites were found to be less likely to undertake compliance action for job seekers who did not meet minimum contact requirements than lower performing sites, with compliance actions undertaken in around 15 per cent of cases compared to around 21 per cent of cases, suggesting that high performing sites are more effective in re-establishing and maintaining job seeker engagement.

> I always give them the benefit of the doubt ... I do a Contact Request if I can't get on to anyone. I find that they will turn up if they are given a Contact Request.... But I need to follow through if I said I would issue a PR.
>
> Employment consultant, metropolitan centre, Queensland

3.2 Service planning

> High performing sites are more likely than mid and low performing sites to:
>
> • Make better use of job seekers' Employment Pathway Plans (EPPs) by using them as a framework for discussion to motivate job seekers, and revisiting them frequently.

Employment Pathway Plans (EPP) underpin the provision of services to job seekers in JSA. Under the Employment Services Deed 4 (ESD4), job seekers in Stream 1 are required to have an EPP put in place by Centrelink during their first 13 weeks of service, and service providers are required to enter into an EPP with jobseekers in Streams 2, 3 and 4 during their first appointment.

High performing sites tend to make better use of job seekers' Employment Pathway Plans (EPPs) as central documents for service planning and delivery.

> My current provider is very good. We had a discussion, we brainstormed and we filled out forms. I was very impressed with that aspect of it ... I can't think of any negatives. The previous providers filled out forms but there wasn't the same discussion about the Pathway Plan ... We need to remember it's a relationship. It's not totally up to them. It's not totally up to me.
>
> Job seeker, metropolitan centre, Western Australia

Most respondents to the Dynamics of Australian Income Support & Employment Services (DAISES) survey who remembered their EPP reported they knew what they were required to do under it (97 per cent), but only 87 per cent said that their EPP helped them understand what assistance they would get from their provider (DAISES, 2011). The majority of respondents (65 per cent) disagreed with the statement that they 'had little or no say about what was in my plan'. In addition, most respondents to the Employment Assistance Survey (EAS) (72 per cent) agreed that their EPP had helped them identify the skills they needed to learn to get a job (EAS, 2011).

Job seekers who are dissatisfied with their EPP and the process that was used to create it are at risk of disengagement (JS focus groups, 2010).

> That EPP should go both ways, they seem to expect a lot out of you but you need to get something back from them like them informing you of what you're entitled to.
>
> Yeah, they need to sign a contract saying they will help you as well.
>
> Job seekers, regional centre, Victoria

> ... they just handed it to me and told me to sign it without me having any say about what would be in it.
>
> Job seeker, metropolitan centre, New South Wales

A proportion of EPPs are assessed by the Department on an ongoing basis to ensure they meet quality assurance standards. EPPs are assessed against three criteria:

1. contains details of each job seeker's individual circumstances and obligations;
2. contains details of defined activities or assistance relating to the job seeker's goals; and
3. contains dates and milestones.

High performing sites are more likely to have EPPs that meet these standards than mid and low performing sites (76 per cent of EPPs compared with 72 and 62 per cent respectively) (DEEWR CDS, 2011).

Some strategies that high performing providers use to engage the job seeker with their EPP include:

- using the EPP as a framework for discussions;
- including a focus on a personal goal within a specified time-frame;
- encouraging job seekers to take ownership of their EPP, so they are more likely to want to revisit it, and use it to track their own progress; and
- treating the EPP as a living document, by frequently reviewing and updating it as circumstances change, such as a goal being achieved or a barrier addressed.

> We do it straight away and go back every appointment, [it is a] useful tool, can link up needs and barriers, making sure interventions are in place, and provides a good reminder to case managers. It is tailored to each job seeker, always being built on and updated with activities.
>
> Employment consultant, metropolitan centre, NSW

> We discuss it at each appointment with them. They know that we're working as a team to get to that goal. The front tab is basically their goal, what are we going to do to get to that goal.
>
> Employment consultant, metropolitan centre, Queensland

3.3 Addressing barriers to employment

> High performing sites are more likely than mid and low performing sites to use strategies such as:
>
> - Looking for ways to address non-vocational and vocational barriers at the same time.
>
> Having strong links with a range of resources such as external training and psychological services, in-house services such as life coaches, and other resources such as accommodation for homeless youth.

Many job seekers, and particularly those in Streams 3 and 4, have one or more barriers to employment. How these barriers are managed varies across service providers (Employment Service Provider Survey, 2010). Common strategies include:

- looking for ways to address non-vocational and vocational barriers at the same time;
- engaging job seekers in activities that will improve employment opportunities;
- investing more time and resources in building rapport with job seekers with higher needs.

High performing providers are more likely to have access to a range of resources to help address vocational and non-vocational barriers, such as:

- strong links with external training providers and professional services such as psychologists or counsellors; and/or
- in-house services such as life coaches or counsellors; and/or
- access to other resources, such as emergency and short-term accommodation for those who need it.

According to the 2010 Survey of Employment Service Providers, mid and high performing sites are more likely to report that "non-vocational barriers often sort themselves out when a job seeker has employment" (Table 2).

Table 2: Attitudes of employment service providers to addressing non-vocational barriers (per cent)

Proportion of providers who agree with the statement:	Low Performance Level	Medium Performance Level	High Performance Level
Non-vocational barriers often sort themselves out when a job seeker has employment (n=673)	20(a)	34(b)	34(b)
Without addressing non-vocational barriers, job seekers never achieve a sustainable job outcome (n=675)	54	50	43

 (a) Significantly different at the 95 per cent confidence level.
(b) Not significantly different at the 95 per cent confidence level.
Source: DEEWR Survey of Employment Service Providers 2010

This suggests that mid and high performing sites are more likely to address both vocational and non-vocational barriers together where possible; however the low percentages in Table 2 highlights the individualised nature of servicing job seekers, as around half of employment service providers still believe that non-vocational barriers to employment must be addressed for job seekers to achieve sustainable employment.

> Yes, welfare is important and they need care and they need development but we also need to transition them into employment because in 12 to 18 months they will be doing work experience anyway. ... A lot of them that are in a rehabilitation process, that employment is a big part of that rehabilitation, having too much spare time on their hands just puts them back perhaps to where they previously were.
>
> Employment consultant, regional centre, Victoria

Respondents to the EAS reported that the most common way in which providers helped overcome their barriers was by providing 'general support/ encouragement/ understanding'. In total, 37 per cent of respondents who felt that their provider had assisted them in overcoming barriers reported receiving this form of assistance[1] (EAS, 2011).

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[1] Provision of financial support was not offered as an option.

3.4   Using the Employment Pathway Fund (EPF)

High performing sites are more likely than mid and low performing sites to:

- Spend a higher proportion of allocated EPF, while still maintaining a sustainable balance.

Spend more of the EPF on items specific to placing job seekers in work, such as wage subsidies and reverse marketing of job seekers to employers.

High performing sites on average spend a higher proportion of allocated Employment Pathway Fund credits than do low and mid performing sites. In the 2009–10 financial year, high performing sites spent on average 58 per cent of their allocated EPF, more than half as much again as low performing sites[2] (Table 3).

Table 3: Proportion of Employment Pathway Fund spent in financial year 2009–10 (per cent)

	Low Performance level	Medium Performance level	High Performance level
Proportion of EPF allocated in 2009–10 that was spent in 2009–10	37.2	47.4	58.0

Source: DEEWR Corporate Data Set.

Discussions with staff at high performing sites reveal a focus on using the EPF in the most cost-effective way possible. This often results in a preference for using it on directly employment-related expenditure:

> My philosophy with EPF is I want to see value for money. And my value for money is using wage subsidies to secure people into work and keep them into work. That's my first priority... It's about balancing up ... how we can use it most effectively to get that person into a job.
>
> Employment consultant, regional centre, South Australia

High performing sites tend to spend a higher proportion of EPF expenditure on items such as wage subsidies and reverse marketing, but less on outreach (Figure 2).

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[2] Spending less than 100 per cent of allocated funds is normal in the first year of a new contract (DEEWR, 2007), as the 2009–10 year was for JSA. This reflects a lower level of expenditure in the transition period immediate following implementation of a new employment services contract, as well as providers 'hedging' against potentially higher assistance costs in the future as the duration in assistance of some job seekers increases.

Figure 2: Employment Pathway Fund expenditure 2009–10, average proportion of expenditure on major categories (per cent)
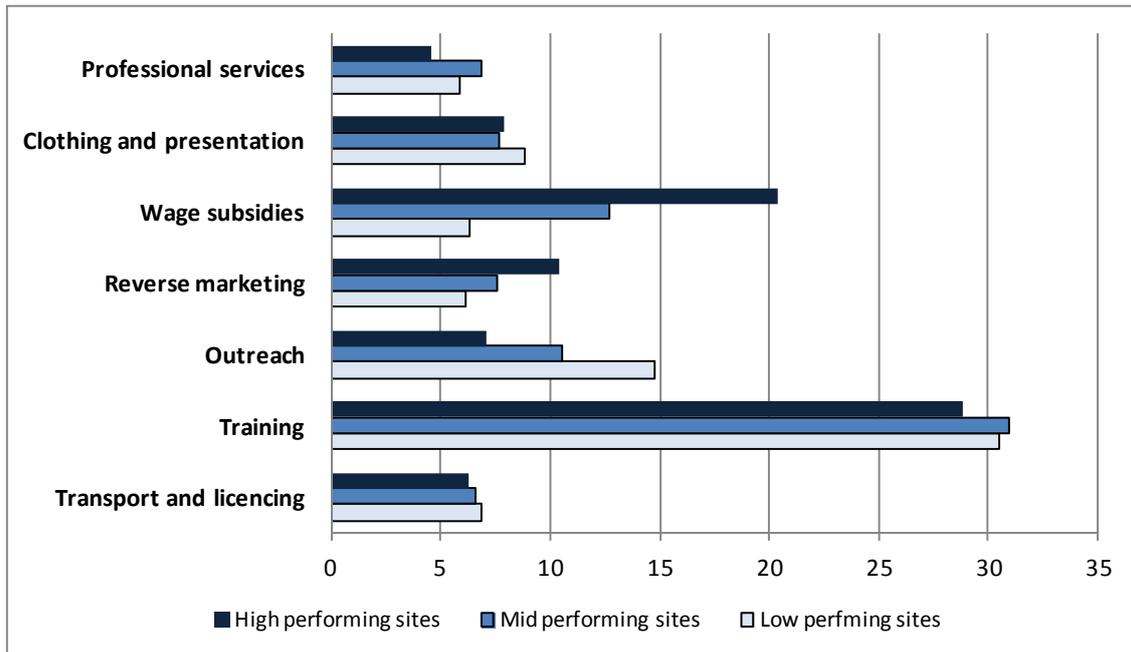
Note: Major categories include those accounting for more than 6 per cent total EPF allocation, excluding 'Other'.

Source: DEEWR Corporate Data Set.

Refer to Appendix A1.2 to view the text version of Figure 2: Employment Pathway Fund expenditure 2009–10, average proportion of expenditure on major categories (per cent)

Training accounts for the highest proportion of EPF expenditure for sites at all performance levels. However high performing sites on average spend slightly less on training activities than other sites, despite having more job seekers enrolled in training activities which is detailed in Section 3.5. This indicates that they are able to source training options that cost less on average per job seeker, or perhaps require job seekers to pay a portion of their own training.

EPF expenditure can also be examined by number of transactions in each category. In this view, training activities still account for the highest proportion of total transactions processed. Wage subsidies, on the other hand, represent less than 2 per cent of all transactions, although they account for over 12 per cent of EPF expenditure, as each transaction is on average for a much higher amount than other EPF categories.

When looked at by number of transactions, high performing sites use a higher proportion of their EPF transactions for reverse marketing and clothing and presentation than do other sites (Figure 3). This may also indicate that high performing sites engage in reverse marketing more often than low performing sites, and include wage subsidies in their reverse marketing strategies.

Figure 3: Employment Pathway Fund expenditure for financial year 2009–10, proportion of number of transactions by major category (per cent)
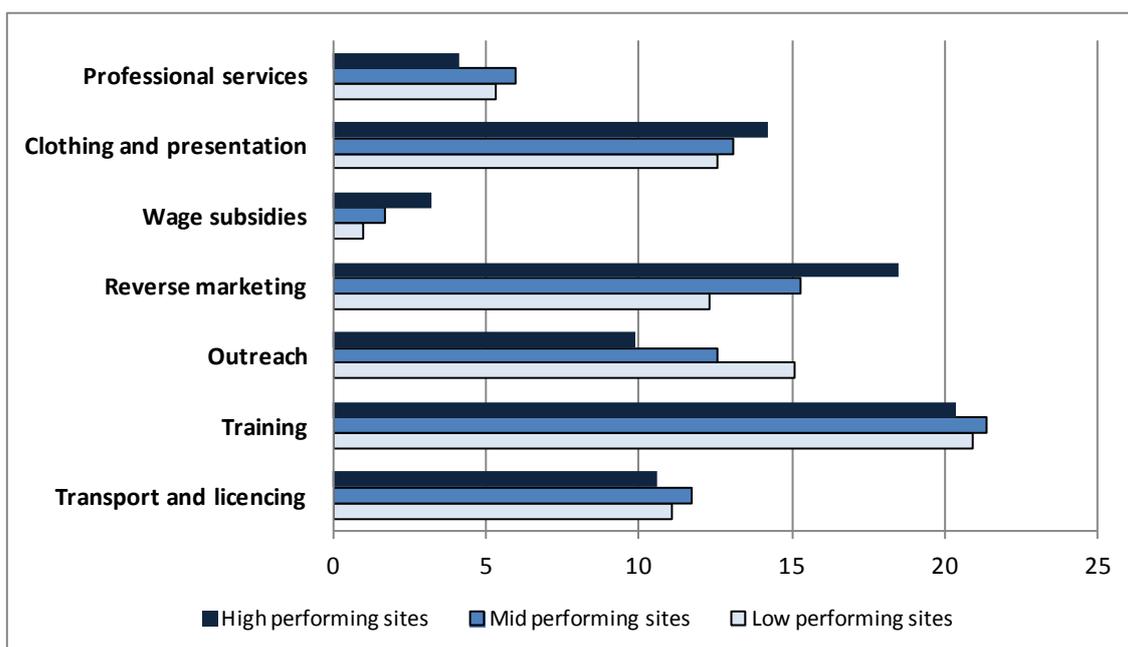
Note: Major categories include those accounting for more than 6 per cent total EPF allocation, excluding 'Other'.

Source: DEEWR Corporate Data Set.

Refer to Appendix A, Table A1.3 to view the text version of Figure 3: Employment Pathway Fund expenditure for financial year 2009–10, proportion of number of transactions by major category.

3.5   Connecting job seekers with training and work experience activities

High performing sites are more likely than mid and low performing sites to:

- Have more job seekers engaged in activities and training.
- Choose training and work experience activities that are suited to the interests and needs of individual job seekers and have employment potential, such as courses that lead to recognised, in-demand qualifications.
- Prepare, or negotiate with Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) or educational organisations to develop, training material to meet identified skills needs.
- Have a variety of contacts and sources to call on for training and work experience activities.

Take advantage of opportunities from other Government programs such as the Productivity Places Program (PPP).

Generally speaking, high performing sites have more job seekers engaged in activities across their caseloads. In each of the four Streams, high performing sites had higher proportions of job seekers engaged in activities such as training or work experience activities in 2009–10 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Proportion of job seekers participating in an activity, 2009-10 (per cent)
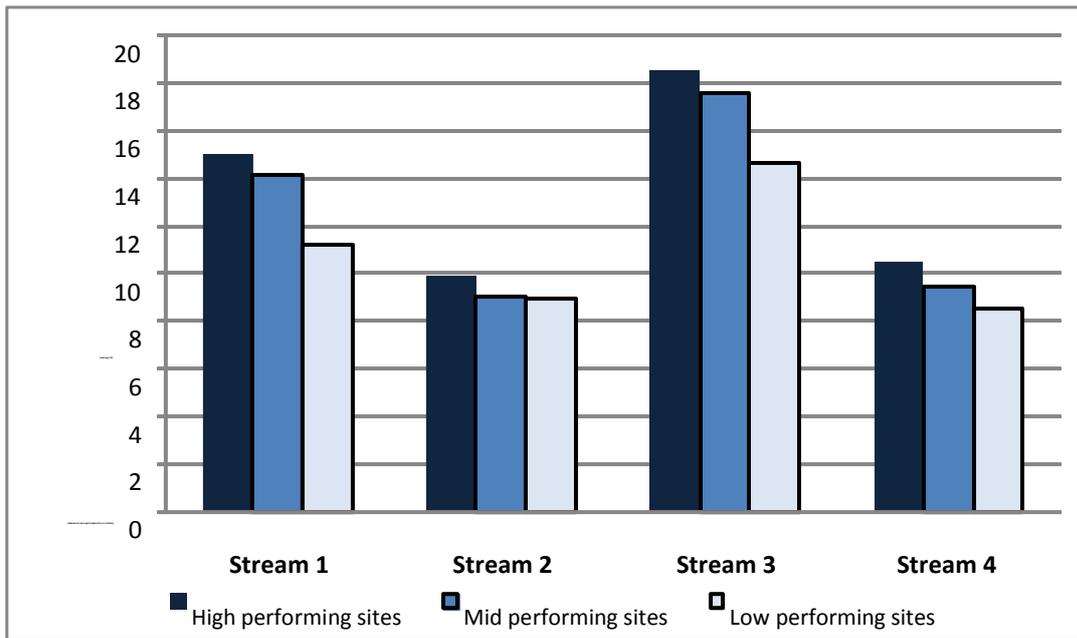
Refer to Appendix A, Table A1.4 to view the text version of Figure 4: Proportion of job seekers participating in an activity, 2009-10

High performing sites have more job seekers engaged in training across all Streams except Stream 1 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Proportion of job seekers participating in training, 2009–10 (per cent)
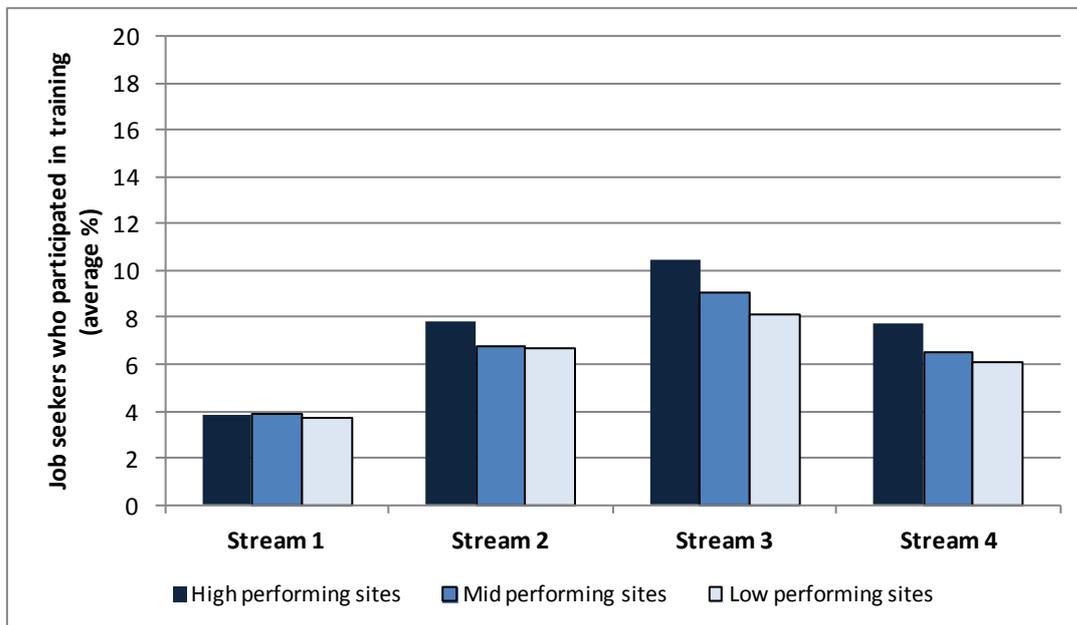
Refer to Appendix A, Table A1.5 to view the text version of Figure 5: Proportion of job seekers participating in training, 2009–10

High performing sites also report that they consider both the needs and interests of the job seeker as well as the needs of employers, local labour market conditions and the availability of training courses. Higher performing sites are more likely to report that they:

- Use local labour market information to help choose relevant activities for job seekers.
- Where necessary, prepare or negotiate with Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) or TAFEs to develop training material to meet identified skills needs.

Make use of other Government programs such as Work for the Dole or Green Corps activities.

Choose well-targeted courses with employment potential or recognised qualifications that are effective in rapidly preparing and motivating job seekers for particular roles, for example Forklift Licensing, National White Card and Responsible Service of Alcohol training (where there is local demand for the specific skills).

- Make follow-up contact with job seekers after training or employment activities, to keep them motivated, maintain rapport and encourage active job search.

High performing sites are more likely to have a broader network of sources they can call on for training and work experience activities, and to take advantage of opportunities from other government programs such as the Productivity Places Program (PPP) or the Innovation Fund.

> ... we have a dedicated work experience coordinator and she has heaps of activities going ... She is linked up with a lot of different community organisations. So we have got [a] ... retailer ... which is a community organisation, she has also got diversion therapy at an aged care facility, she's got forklift operation and warehousing, she's got a lot of different places.
>
> Employment consultant, metropolitan centre, Queensland

Registered Training Organisations

Some providers had preferred Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). Others are themselves RTOs, and can offer training and activities to job seekers in-house.

According to providers who are RTOs, the major benefits of this arrangement include:

- tailoring of content and scope of training;
- lower administration costs;
- improved convenience for job seekers by providing a range of services in a familiar location (this can be particularly important for job seekers with limited transport options); and
- more effective monitoring and encouragement of job seeker participation, as employment consultants can track the progress of job seekers more closely and enforce training participation standards.

However while training offered in-house can be convenient for some providers and job seekers, there is no evidence that having RTO status is in itself associated with better provider performance. Both job seekers and providers report that the content of any training and its relevance to employment opportunities are more important than the provider of the training course.

The delivery mode and learning style of training courses can also be important in achieving results, particularly for foundation skills courses. According to service providers, some strategies that have proved effective include:

- a hands-on approach focused on life skills for language, literacy and numeracy courses; and
- practical delivery methods and self-paced modules for job search training are preferred by many job seekers.

> Pre-vocational training, like literacy and numeracy... The lecturer meets with them one on one. Some go through pre-literacy/numeracy training if needed...The time needed in course and [in] one-on-one assistance is determined on a case-by-case basis. [It] results in a noticeable improvement in confidence and skills.
>
> Site manager, remote area, South Australia

3.6 Effective reverse marketing and employer engagement

> High performing sites are more likely than mid and low performing sites to:
>
> - Use reverse marketing as part of a broader strategy of developing and maintaining relationships with employers.
> - Focus on the job seeker, and on finding employment that suits them.

High performing sites are more likely to use reverse marketing (Employment Service Provider Survey, 2010) (DEEWR CDS, 2011; Employment Service Provider Survey, 2010) — that is, seeking employers who have no current vacancies, and marketing individual job seekers to those employers. They are also more likely to use it as part of a broader strategy to develop and maintain relationships with employers (discussions with service providers, 2010).

Service providers can be reimbursed through the EPF for reverse marketing. Most sites in the 2010 Employment Service Providers survey reported often or always using reverse marketing, however high performing sites are more likely to report that they use reverse marketing than low performing sites (Table 4).

Table 4: Attitude of employment service providers to reverse marketing (per cent)

	Low Performance level	Medium Performance level	High Performance level
Proportion of service providers often or always reverse marketing job seekers (n=674)	67(a)	82(b)	88(b)

Source: DEEWR Survey of Employment Service Providers 2010

(a) Significantly different at the 95 per cent confidence level.

(b) Not significantly different at the 95 per cent confidence level.

High performing sites spend a greater proportion of the EPF on reverse marketing (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Proportion of EPF expenditure spent on reverse marketing (per cent)
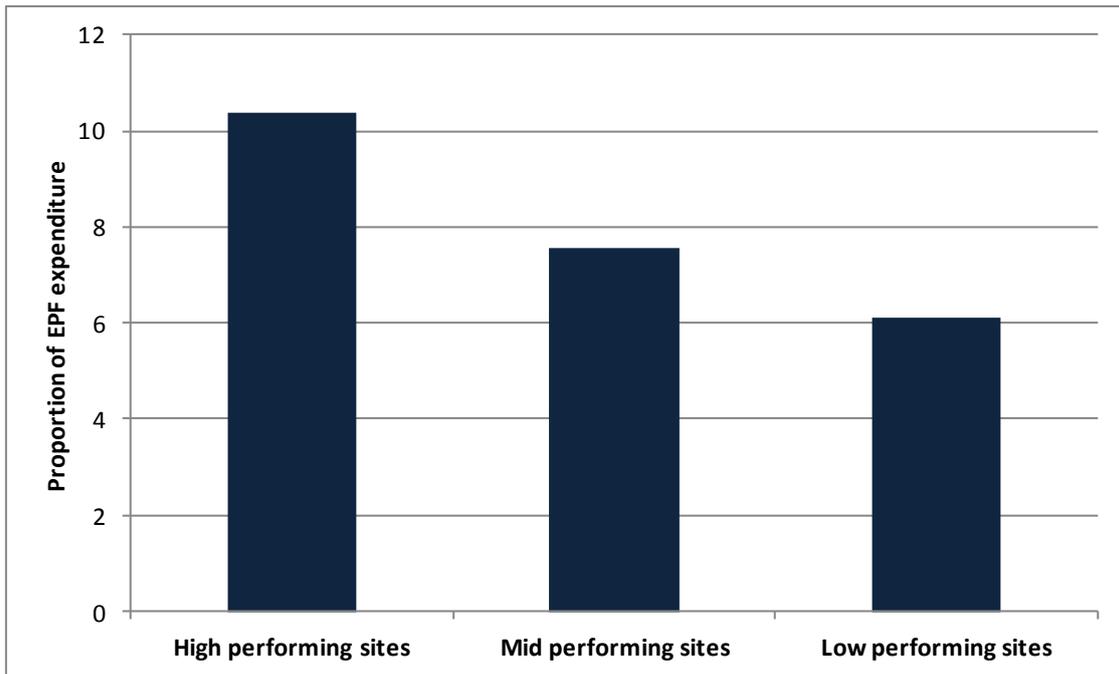
Refer to Appendix A, Table A1.6 to view the text version of Figure 6: Proportion of EPF expenditure spent on reverse marketing

Although reverse marketing is used by most service providers, sites tend to differ in *how* they use it. Discussions with staff at high performing sites reveal:

Many use reverse marketing as part of their overall relationship-building with employers, and can therefore make effective use of their knowledge of the employer, industry, local labour market and other external factors in their reverse marketing.

- Many report that they focus on the job seeker and on finding employment that is suitable to them, rather than 'over selling' the job seeker into positions that do not suit them.
- Some sites dedicate a set time each week for employment consultants to reverse marketing, while others have specialist staff dedicated to building relationships with employers, who engage in reverse marketing as part of a broader employer engagement strategy.

> We have a reverse marketer who ... has a core group of about 50 employers that she uses on a regular basis... we have many in aged care, warehouses, manufacturing, retail, child care and factories. We belong to the Chamber of Commerce and attend meetings. We are members of a few other smaller groups. We attend jobs and business expos and seminars.
>
> Site manager, metropolitan centre, Queensland

3.7 Helping job seekers look for work

High performing sites are more likely than mid and low performing sites to:

- More effectively assist job seekers with their resumes and information about the local labour market and positions available, access to computer facilities and advice on how to look for work.

There are many ways in which employment service providers help job seekers look for work, including helping them prepare their resume, providing information about local job vacancies, providing access to resources such as computers and internet access, and providing general advice and assistance.

High performing sites have higher proportions of job seekers who remember receiving help with these various aspects of job search (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Employment search assistance provided (per cent)
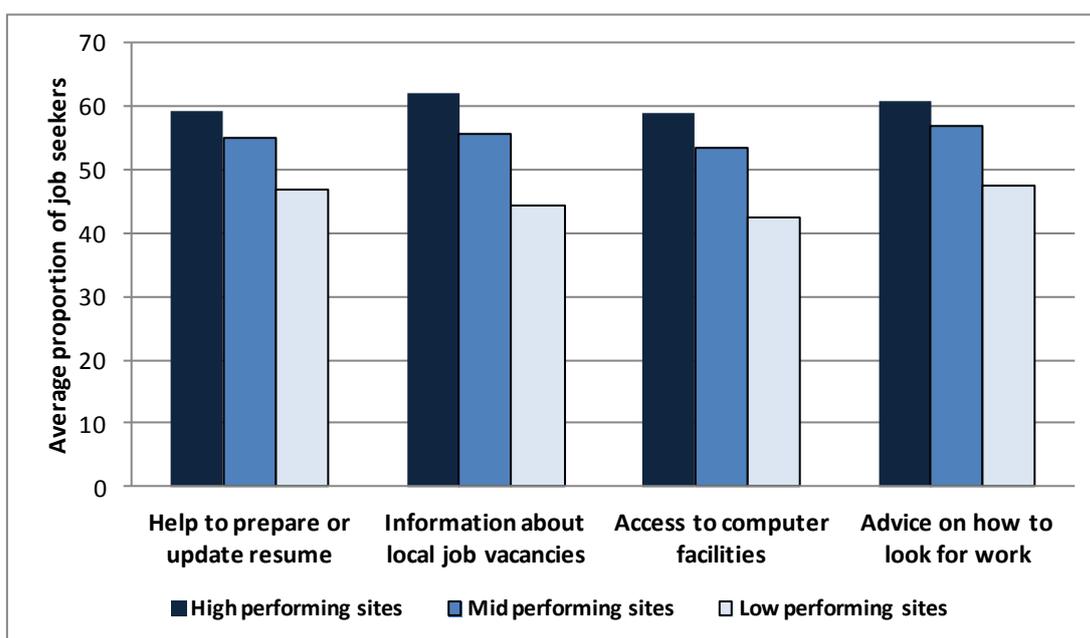
Source: DEEWR Post Program Monitoring Survey, 2009–2010

Refer to Appendix A, Table A1.7 to view the text version of Figure 7: Employment search assistance provided.

According to the EAS Survey, the main reason that job seekers gave for why their provider wasn't helpful in creating or teaching them how to write a resume was that the job seeker didn't need training or assistance (71 per cent of respondents rating their provider as not helpful). Another 13 per cent said that the resume style offered did not suit them and 6 per cent that the provider did not devote enough time (EAS, 2011).

For job seekers who have found employment, many employment service providers also assist them before the job placement starts. Employment consultants stress that seemingly minor assistance can help ensure the job seeker starts work on time and is properly prepared, for example:

- discussing appropriate workplace behaviours;
- using the EPF to buy personal protective equipment or uniforms; or
- providing job seekers with bus or train timetables, and even working out the best route and stop for them if necessary.

3.8   Placing job seekers in jobs

High performing sites are more likely than mid and low performing sites to take a goal-oriented, individually tailored attitude to job placements. They:

- Attempt to find the best match between a job and the job seeker's interests and goals.
- Work with employers to tailor the job to suit both the job seeker and the employer.
- Ensure that job seekers are job-ready and will meet the expectations of employers they are placed with.

High performing sites often spend time and resources preparing a job seeker for employment, and ensuring they are work-ready before trying to place them in a job.

> Getting somebody who is work ready and putting them into a job, not the other way around... So you're starting with a good product rather trying to jam somebody who is half ready into a job — that's not going to work.
>
> Employment consultant, metropolitan centre, Queensland

This accords with what employers say are the three most important qualities in a job applicant:

- reliability
- willingness to work
- relevant work skills (Employer survey, 2010).

High performing sites are more likely to attempt to find the best match between a job and the job seeker's interests and goals, and work hard to ensure job seekers meet the expectations of their employers. Employment consultants from these sites claim that job seekers whose skills and motivation are aligned with the job they are placed in are more likely to stay and perform well in it, while those placed in a job that they do not enjoy are less likely to achieve a sustained employment outcome.

> ...we actually go and meet [employers] first ...go through a site tour and discuss the needs of [their] business. So we get an understanding of their culture ... We can find anybody with the right skills but at the end of the day we need the person who is going to fit into that culture and have the right attitude.
> Employment consultant, regional centre, Victoria

High performing sites work with employers to get the best match between job seeker and job. According to the 2010 Employment Service Providers survey, many high performing sites educate employers about available incentives and supports such as wage subsidies, JobAccess and Workplace Modifications. They are also more likely than low performing sites to encourage employers to tailor the role to the job seeker. Low performing sites, on the other hand, are likely to be less proactive, and slightly more likely to focus on the role as described by the employer (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Employment service providers' approaches to job placements (per cent)
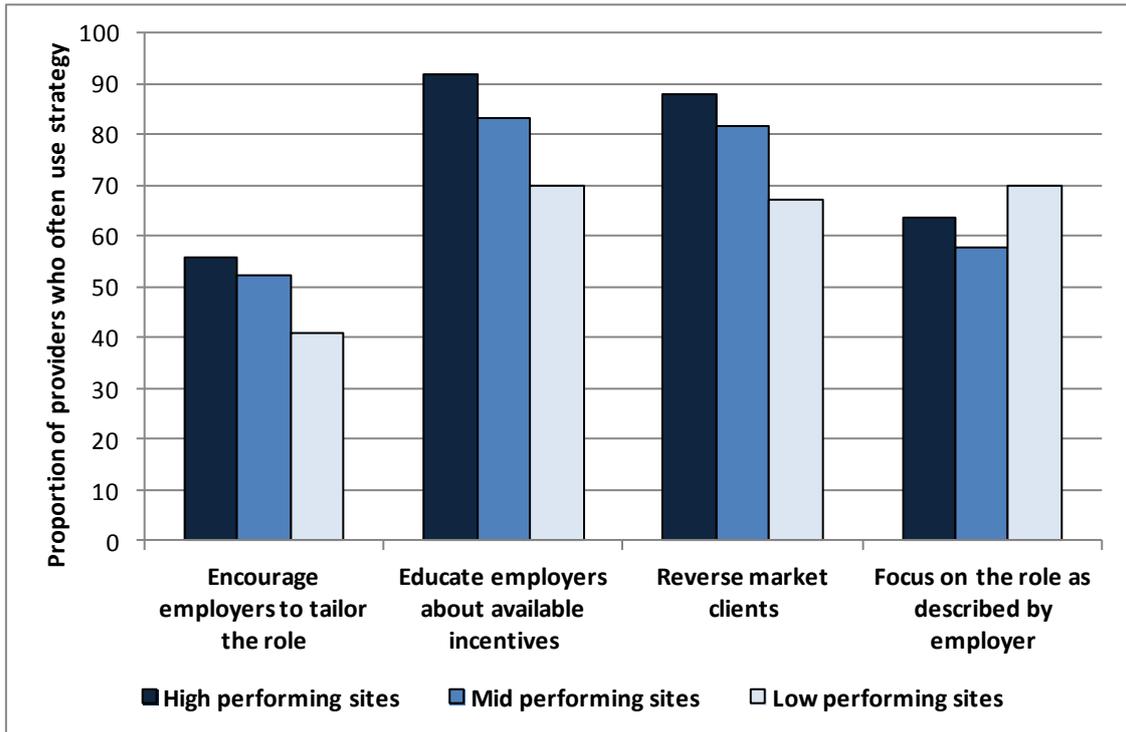
Source: DEEWR Survey of Employment Service Providers 2010
Refer to Appendix A, Table A1.8 to view the text version of Figure 8: Employment service providers' approaches to job placements.

3.9 Wage subsidies

High performing sites are more likely than mid and low performing sites to:

- Focus on selling the job seeker and use the wage subsidy to improve the deal rather than as the deal.
- Use wage subsidies to customise the job for the job seeker, for instance by negotiating for longer hours or employment duration.

While high performing sites use a higher proportion of EPF on wage subsidies than mid and low performing sites (see Section 3.4), their focus is often on selling the job seeker into the role rather than on the wage subsidy. Many high performing sites prefer to focus in conversations with employers on the suitability of a job seeker for a position, and use incentives such as wage subsidies only as a final selling point to secure the placement.

High performing sites also use wage subsidies to improve the suitability of the job for the job seeker, for instance by negotiating for longer hours and on-the-job training. They report that many employers are primarily interested in having the opportunity to find out more about the job seeker, rather than the wage subsidy itself.

> Especially with our parents or our restricted work capacity clients, we're sort of selling this to an employer, whereas an employer's point of view [is], maybe [they] don't necessarily want to hire someone school hours, 15 hours a week...
>
> Employment consultant, metropolitan centre, New South Wales

3.10 Supporting job seekers after job placement[3]

High performing sites are more likely than mid and low performing sites to:

- Provide effective support for job seekers, by providing support that is tailored to the job seeker both before and after they start employment.
- Provide good support for employers who have employed a job seeker, by: clearly explaining what support is available; ensuring contacts with employers are sensitively handed and appropriate; and monitoring the placement for problems.

High performing sites are slightly more likely to provide support for both employers and job seekers, and to monitor the placement for problems (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Service providers' approach to post placement support (per cent)
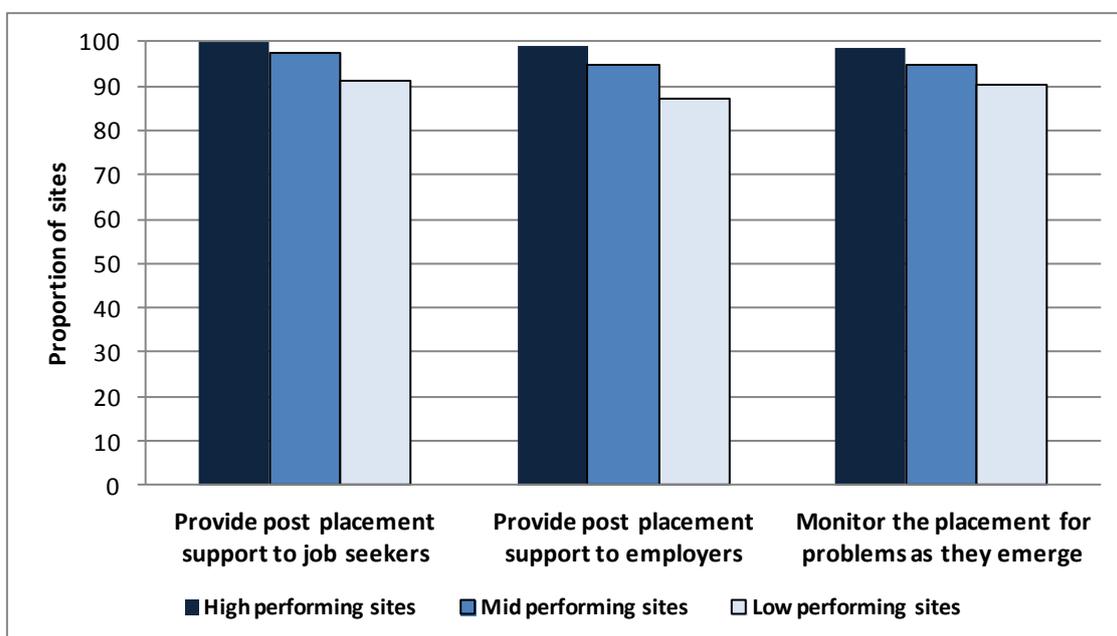
Source: DEEWR Survey of Employment Service Providers 2010

Refer to Appendix A1.9 to view the text version of Figure 9: Service providers' approach to post placement support

Many different forms of general support can be provided. Some examples include:

- practical assistance, such as providing work clothing or personal protective equipment;
- personal support, including counselling or employee training where needed (usually negotiated prior to placement as part of the deal); or
- support or training for employers and managers, where needed.

---

[3] Service providers can be reimbursed through the EPF for post placement support to assist job seekers overcome issues that are likely to impact on the job seeker's ability to continue in the placement. However many providers also provide general support to job seekers and employers that falls outside of this definition. In this Section, the term 'post placement support' includes both types of support, as for most of the data sources used the two are used interchangeably.

According to employment consultants at high performing sites, many job seekers value post placement support, and feel it to be an important part of the service, and can be crucial in maintaining job seekers in employment.

> I still hold a fortnightly appointment by phone ... People see us as part of their network, people to motivate them along. There are a lot of them out there who need to know that someone's out there... We also help them with other things to help them get on their feet, counselling, family issues, transport costs.
>
> Employment consultant, metropolitan centre, Queensland

> It is important to ring the clients at about the 6–7 week mark, just when they are finding their new routine hard, especially the long term unemployed. If we catch them at this time they will usually keep their jobs.
>
> Employment consultant, regional centre, Victoria

High performing sites are also more likely to monitor the placement for emerging problems (Figure 9).

> We ... do a risk assessment ... once we find them [a] placement, we assess the likelihood of them dropping out for various reasons, there's a check list on that and the probability of something occurring there, which gives us a good idea on what areas we need to particularly monitor.
>
> Employment consultant, metropolitan centre, New South Wales

Clarifying expectations with both the job seeker and the employer prior to placement is important. High performing sites provide effective support to employers as well as job seekers, and explain clearly in advance what support will be available to both the employer and job seeker.

> If I notify the employer prior to an arrangement, let them know the benefits, that type of thing, I get good feedback from them...and they feel more comfortable talking to me because I've got that previously formed relationship, and also with the job seeker, and I'm able to hear both sides of the story.
>
> Employment consultant, regional centre, New South Wales

> Some job seekers don't want the employer to know that they were with Centrelink. We need to explain that we are doing this for a compliance point of view, for Centrelink and DEEWR. If the job seeker requests less phone calls then we can do that...If they report and have proof then we sometimes don't have to contact [the] employer.
>
> Employment consultant, regional centre, New South Wales

There are various approaches to providing post placement support, such as specialist staff that focus on post placement support, or employment consultants dedicating time each week to post placement support. Both strategies can be effective – what many service providers say is important is to have a planned, systematic approach and consistent application of effort at the site level.

It is also important for providers to understand job seekers' and employers' perspectives on post-placement contact. Post-placement contact which is focused solely on substantiating outcomes does not constitute 'support' from the point of view of the job seeker or employer, and can be burdensome. In some extreme cases job seekers have reported that they have lost their jobs because their employer tired of repeated contact from service providers.

> Leave my employers alone. It makes it look like I'm a bum off the street, a dole bludging fruit loop that doesn't know what I'm doing.
>
> Job seeker, metropolitan centre, New South Wales

This highlights the importance of striking a balance between the preferences of job seekers and employers, and providers' need to substantiate outcomes. Ensuring that post placement contacts are appropriate and sensitive is a vital aspect of safeguarding job placements and encouraging repeat business from employers.

4.   Assisting employers

High performing sites are more likely than mid and low performing sites to:

- Use a wide range of strategies to identify employers' skills needs.
- Use knowledge of the local employment market and employers' skills needs to customise training and activities or promote relevant apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Maintain good relationships with employers by:
    - providing consistently high quality service
    - clearly explaining the services they provide
    - appreciating the value of the employers' time
    - developing an understanding of the employers' business
    - placing job seekers that are job-ready and appropriate for the job.
- Provide effective post placement support to employers.

More detail on employer serving in Job Services Australia will be presented in the forthcoming publication *Employer Servicing: Evaluation of Job Services Australia 2009–2-12*.

4.1   Identifying skills needs

Understanding where the local employment opportunities lie is critical for providers to maximise job placements and outcomes. Additionally, providers who are able to demonstrate their knowledge of the local labour market are able to add value to job seekers' job search, with flow-on benefits for job seeker engagement.

High performing sites report using a wide range of strategies to identify employer skills needs, including scanning job notices and internet job sites, and networking with employers and other providers (Figure 10). However service providers at all performance levels could be doing more in almost all of these categories.

Figure 10: How employment service providers determine employers' skills needs (per cent)
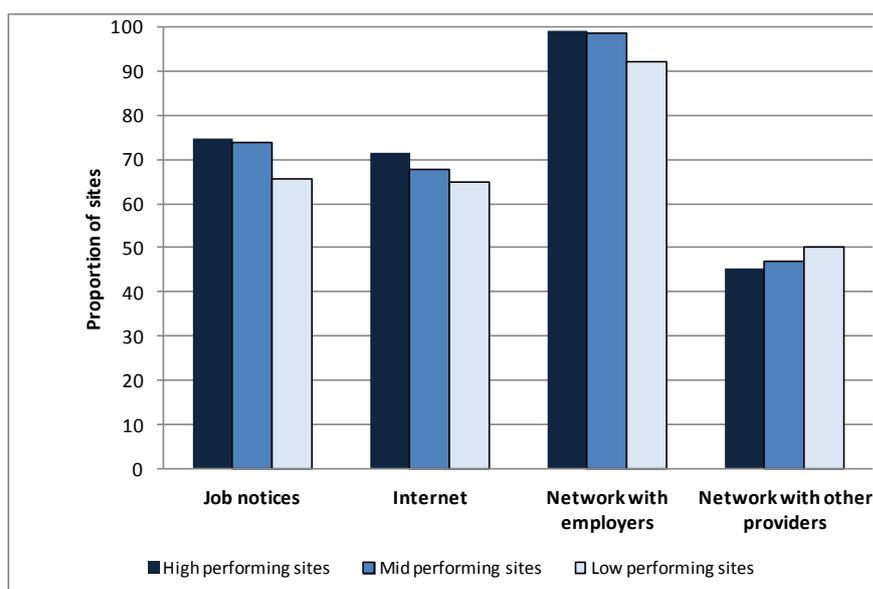
Source: DEEWR Survey of Employment Service Providers 2010

Refer to Appendix A1.10 to view the text version of Figure 10: How employment service providers determine employers' skills needs

4.2 Meeting employers' needs

High performing sites report that they use their knowledge of the local employment market and employers' skills needs to tailor training and activities and promote relevant apprenticeships and traineeships, including:

- Arrange or tailor training courses to address identified skills needs.
- Inform job seekers of needed skills and vacancies.
- Match job seekers to vacancies that suit their interests.
- Promote apprenticeships or traineeships that meet employers' requirements.

Employers report that they value service providers who:

- provide suitable applicants;
- provide a fast service and save them time;
- provide an easy and convenience service;
- provide an effective screening process; and
- listen to their needs (Employer survey, 2010).

Strategies that service providers use for dealing with employers vary. Some sites have dedicated staff focusing on employer relationships, while others allocate dedicated time for employment consultants to contact employers. Either strategy can be effective, provided there is a consistently applied plan at the site level.

4.3 Providing good service

High performing sites report that they use many means to stay in touch with employers, including attending Jobs Expos (fairs bringing together job seekers and employers with jobs on offer), meetings of local employers' associations and of the local Chamber of Commerce. Some providers cold-call employers, or call about advertised positions and then use the opportunity to discuss other upcoming employment needs or to gain information about the employer and their industry.

High performing sites work to maintain good relationships with employers by:

- Providing consistently high quality customer service.
- Clearly explaining what services they provide.
- Demonstrating that they understand the value of the employers' time
- Developing an understanding the employers' business.
- Minimising 'red tape' as much as possible, or even doing it for the employer when appropriate.
- Ensuring that employers do not have to repeat information, by either using the same staff member to contact the employer each time, or ensuring that all relevant information is passed between staff members.
- Providing good post placement support that is appropriate to the needs of the job seeker and employer.

> ...I think sometimes we have made it hard for employers when we go back to them and sign this form and tick this box and answer this question. We make it more difficult than it has to be and I think some employers go —'this is too hard, I'll put an ad it the paper and spend a day rather than have you harass me all the time.'
>
> Site manager, metropolitan centre, Queensland

Providing good service and maintaining good relationships with employers maximises the opportunity for repeat business, and encourages other employers to use the provider.

5. Overall business approach

High performing sites are more likely than mid and low performing sites to :

- Build connections within their community, with community organisations, employer organisations, and with other Government programs with other employment service providers when needed to meet employer needs or organise training courses or activities.
- Build trust within their community.

5.1 Connecting with the community

How JSA service providers present themselves in their community and to job seekers and employers varies between sites, organisations and locations. Sites that are not well recognised within their community often invest resources in promoting what they do and, where applicable, what services they specialise in, supported in some cases by formal marketing and advertising campaigns, as part of their ESD4 requirements.

High performing sites successfully work to build trust within the community. They endeavour to always provide a professional and reliable service to job seekers and employers, and try hard to avoid creating bad experiences for their clients, such as by placing unprepared or unsuitable job seekers with employers, or failing to explain and help with administrative requirements.

5.2 Making use of Government programs

Mid and high performing sites generally are more aware of, and make more use of, the employment-related Government initiatives in their area, such as the Indigenous Employment Program, the Productivity Places Program (PPP), or Jobs Expos (Figure 11).

Figures 11: Average number of Government programs aware of
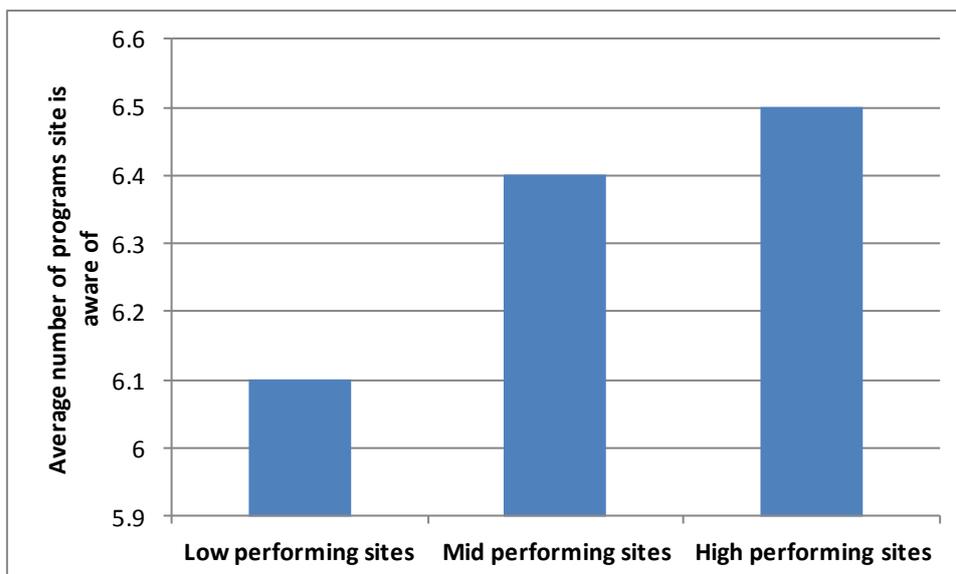
Source: DEEWR Survey of Employment Service Providers 2010

Refer to Appendix A1.11 to view the text version of Figure 11: Average number of Government programs aware of.

Awareness and understanding of local opportunities presented by Government initiatives allows providers to take advantage of cost-effective methods of accessing training and activities for their caseload, increases their credibility with job seekers, and improves their ability to network with employers and other providers in the area.

5.3   Management and staffing

Appropriate management and staffing are vital for provider sites to operate effectively. There is no one structure or approach to staffing which is associated with high performance, however there are some principles which can inform performance improvement.

Site management

Many employment consultants stress the importance of the site manager in setting the 'tone' of their site and ensuring that it runs efficiently. High performing sites are more likely to have at least one full-time equivalent (FTE) manager per site than mid and low performing sites (Employment Service Provider Survey, 2010). Organisations with smaller sites without an on-site manager may need to work hard to ensure that staff are supported and have appropriate leadership on a day to day basis.

Staffing

There are advantages in having a mix of both experienced staff and new staff, according to discussions with service providers. New staff may have different ways of thinking and innovative solutions to problems. More experienced staff can contribute knowledge of the sector and relationships with employers and other stakeholders. High staff turnover, while often unavoidable, can be highly disruptive to job seekers and employers, and impact on the smooth operation of the site. High performing sites work hard to reduce staff turnover, by motivating their staff and fostering a supportive work environment. When staff turnover does occur, high performing sites have in place strategies to manage information transfer and to avoid disrupting their clients as much as possible.

Staff roles and specialisations

Many different approaches to staff roles and specialisation are used. They vary according to the needs and characteristics of each site's caseload and local employment market, or to make best use of the skills of their staff. Sites that do not have a systematic approach to allocating work and making the most of the skills and abilities of their staff may operate less effectively.

Some models which are being used effectively include:

- Stream specialists – staff dedicated to job seekers in a particular Stream.
- Function specialists – staff dedicated to a function or co-ordination role within the site, such as work experience coordinator, activities coordinator, job placement specialist or post placement support specialist.
- Job seeker or employer specialist – staff who deal only with job seekers and staff who build relationships with employers, including reverse marketing specialists.
- Administration specialists.
- Specialists in certain groups of job seekers, such as mature age job seekers or youth.
- Specialist professional staff, such as counsellors and social workers.

No one model is always the best, and each model has advantages and disadvantages, depending on the caseload, locality and organisation. It may also be necessary to adjust the model at the site level as the staff or caseload profile changes, to support staff development, or to avoid staff burnout.

Sites benefit from having access to specialist resources such as counsellors, Occupational Health and Safety specialists and youth workers, whether through in-house resources or linkages with external organisations. Sites that do not have sufficient workload to employ their own specialist services may make arrangements to share these resources with other sites, either within or outside their organisation.

5.4 Networking with other service providers

High performing sites report that they network with other providers if they do not have sufficient caseload to meet employer needs, or to meet the minimum number of participants for training courses or activities. For example, a service provider from a small regional centre related how they were able to join with another provider in their region in an application for an Innovation Fund project to rebuild a community facility. The project involved recruiting job seekers to do much of the construction work, and providing them with apprenticeship support in order to do so. No one service provider in the town had sufficient job seekers on their books to meet the labour needs of this project; it was only by banding together that they were able to apply for funding and go ahead with the project.

Appendix A

Additional Tables

Table A1.1 – Discussions with job seekers showing average proportion of job seekers who report having discussion, by topic category (per cent)

Discussions with Job Seekers	High Performing Sites	Mid Performing Sites	Low Performing Sites
Skills and education to help get work	62	58	51
Current skills and education	72	69	61
Types of jobs might like in the future	73	70	62
Any jobs in the past	68	65	57

Source: DEEWR Post Program Monitoring Survey, 2009–2010

View Figure 1: Discussions with job seekers

Table A1.2 - Employment Pathway Fund expenditure 2009–10, average proportion of expenditure on major categories (per cent)

Major categories	High Performing Sites	Mid Performing Sites	Low Performing Sites
Professional services	4.6	6.9	5.9
Clothing and presentation	7.9	7.7	8.8
Wage subsidies	20.4	12.7	6.4
Reverse Marketing	10.4	7.6	6.1
Outreach	7.1	10.6	14.8
Training	28.9	30.9	30.5
Transport and licensing	6.3	6.6	6.8

Note: Major categories include those accounting for more than 6 per cent total EPF allocation, excluding 'Other'.
Source: DEEWR Corporate Data Set.

View Figure 2: Employment Pathway Fund expenditure

Table A1.3: Employment Pathway Fund expenditure for financial year 2009–10, proportion of number of transactions by major category (per cent)

Major categories	High Performing Sites	Mid Performing Sites	Low Performing Sites
Professional services	4.1	6.0	5.3
Clothing and presentation	14.2	13.1	12.6
Wage subsidies	3.2	1.7	1.0
Reverse marketing	18.5	15.3	12.3
Outreach	9.9	12.6	15.1
Training	20.4	21.4	20.9
Transport and licensing	10.6	11.7	11.1

Note: Major categories include those accounting for more than 6 per cent total EPF allocation, excluding 'Other'.

Source: DEEWR Corporate Data Set.

View Figure 3: Employment Pathway Fund expenditure

Table A1.4: Proportion of job seekers participating in an activity by stream, 2009-10 (per cent)

Stream	High Performing Sites	Mid Performing Sites	Low Performing Sites
Stream 1	15.0	14.2	11.2
Stream 2	9.9	9.0	9.0
Stream 3	18.5	17.6	14.6
Stream 4	10.5	9.5	8.6

Source: DEEWR Corporate Data Set.

View Figure 4: Proportion of job seekers participating in an activity

Table A1.5: Proportion of job seekers participating in training, 2009-10 (per cent)

Stream	High Performing Sites	Mid Performing Sites	Low Performing Sites
Stream 1	3.8	3.8	3.7
Stream 2	7.8	6.7	6.6
Stream 3	10.4	9.0	8.2
Stream 4	7.7	6.5	6.1

Source: DEEWR Corporate Data Set.

View Figure 5: Proportion of job seekers participating in training, 2009-10

Table A1.6: Proportion of EPF expenditure spent on reverse marketing (per cent)

	High Performing Sites	Mid Performing Sites	Low Performing Sites
Proportion of EPF expenditure	10.4	7.6	6.1

Source: DEEWR Corporate Data Set.

View Figure 6: Proportion of EPF expenditure spent on reverse marketing

Table A1.7: Employment search assistance provided (per cent)

	High Performing Sites	Mid Performing Sites	Low Performing Sites
Help to prepare or update resume	59.3	55.0	47.0
Information about local job vacancies	62.1	55.5	44.3
Access to computer facilities	58.8	53.5	42.6
Advice on how to look for work	60.8	56.8	47.5

Source: DEEWR Post Program Monitoring Survey, 2009–2010

View Figure 7: Employment search assistance provided

Table A1.8: Employment service providers' approaches to job placements (per cent)

Approach	High Performing Sites	Mid Performing Sites	Low Performing Sites
Encourage employers to tailor the role	56	52	41
Educate employers about available incentives	92	83	70
Reverse market clients	88	82	67
Focus on the role as described by employer	63	58	70

Source: DEEWR Survey of Employment Service Providers 2010

View Figure 8: Employment service providers' approaches to job placements

Table A1.9: Service providers' approach to post placement support (per cent)

Approach	High Performing Sites	Mid Performing Sites	Low Performing Sites
Provide post placement support to job seekers	100.0	97.3	91.2
Provide post placement support to employers	99.2	94.9	87.3
Monitor the placement for problems as they emerge	98.4	94.9	90.2

Source: DEEWR Survey of Employment Service Providers 2010

View Figure 9: Service providers' approach to post placement support

Table A1.10: How employment service providers determine employers' skills needs (per cent)

	High Performing Sites	Mid Performing Sites	Low Performing Sites
Job Notices	75	74	66
Internet	71	68	65
Network with employers	99	99	92
Network with other providers	45	47	50

Source: DEEWR Survey of Employment Service Providers 2010

View Figure 10: How employment service providers determine employers' skills needs

Table A.11: Average number of Government programs aware of

	Low Performing Sites	Mid Performing Sites	High Performing Sites
Average number of programs site is aware of	6.1	6.4	6.5

Source: DEEWR Survey of Employment Service Providers 2010

View Figure 11: Average number of Government programs aware of

Appendix B: Research Method

Sources of information

A range of sources were used to provide a variety of viewpoints:

The Post Program Monitoring (PPM) Survey

The PPM survey is an ongoing mail and telephone survey run by the Department that collects information from job seekers who have participated in, or are participating in, employment assistance through Job Services Australia (JSA), Disability Employment Services (DES) and Indigenous Employment Policy (IEP). The PPM survey collects data on job seekers' labour market and educational status after employment assistance, and what the job seeker thought of the assistance. Each year, approximately 400,000 job seekers are surveyed through this survey. Responses collected from July 2009 to September 2010 were used for this report.

2010 Employment Service Provider Survey

This survey included over 1,000 sites providing employment assistance through at least one of the Government's employment assistance programs. Topics included details of the site, their attitude and approach to employment assistance, awareness of government programs, and relationships with Centrelink and DEEWR. Only responses from sites that provide employment assistance through JSA were used (approximately 700 responses). The survey was conducted in mid 2010.

2010 Employer Survey

This survey is run biennially to update information about employers' recruitment practices, use of Government funded employment services and other assistance and attitudes towards hiring people in key groups of interest. It aims to measure awareness, attitudes, and behaviours of employers in order to understand the recruitment market, and how it is functioning and evolving as the population and economy changes.

The 2010 survey consisted of both qualitative and quantitative work, with telephone interviews conducted with 5,423 employers in November and December 2010. The survey unit was the primary person responsible for recruitment at a worksite.

JSA site and job seeker focus groups and interviews

The Department conducted qualitative research in 15 different locations throughout Australia in 2010. This research included focus groups with job seekers, interviews with management and staff at JSA and other employment assistance sites and interviews with employers, local councils and other local groups.

Over 55 sites were visited. The interviews covered many areas of employment assistance including, but not limited to, use of activities, availability and use of training, administration, job seeker engagement, and contact with employers.

Focus groups were also conducted with a range of job seekers from all four JSA Streams, and included some job seekers who had left assistance and some still receiving assistance.

DEEWR Administrative data (Corporate Data Set)

The Corporate Data Set (CDS) is a combination of administrative data from Centrelink and from and about employment service providers. Data from employment service providers includes information on job seekers who have received employment assistance, including data on their

income support history, type of assistance received, activity and training placements, job commencements and fees. Data about employment service provides includes information on EPF allocation and expenditure and compliance data. Centrelink data contains information about the status, history and earnings of income support recipients.

The administrative data used for the analysis in this paper is based on the period of July 2009 to September 2010.

JSA Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 3 Quality Framework measures

The JSA Quality Framework provides the framework to measure the quality of services provided by JSA providers. It includes four quality measures – JSA provider capability, service delivery, client experience and engagement. A variety of tools and data are used to calculate the various indicators of quality.

The client experience measure is calculated from data collected in the PPM survey. It relates to the services the job seeker received (such as an updated resume, information about job vacancies, access to computer facilities, advice about how to look for work, discussions about skills), and how satisfied they were with various aspects of the service (such as if the help was suited to their circumstances, staff treated them with respect and overall quality of service).

The engagement measures relate to job seekers' Employment Pathway Plans and to the Active Engagement of Participants, including information about contacts between job seekers and employment service providers and job seekers' engagement with activities.

Employment Assistance Survey

The Employment Assistance Survey is a longitudinal survey of job seekers which collected information on the type, quality and intensity of services delivered by Job Network and Job Services Australia, and sustainability of outcomes. This analysis used survey data from wave 5 as at 21 December 2010, which relates solely to Job Services Australia. The survey was telephone based, and was conducted in-house by the Department. Respondents were from a stratified random sample of:

- parents
- people with disability
- mature aged job seekers
- the very long-term unemployed
- mainstream job seekers for comparative purposes
- redundant workers (added in wave 4)
- youth (added in wave 4).

It also included people receiving:

- Job Search Training
- Intensive Support Customised Assistance -1
- Intensive Support Customised Assistance -2

Dynamics of Australian Income Support and Employment Services (DAISES)

This survey tracks jobseekers' opinions and experiences of employment services and income support over time. The survey was conducted by telephone by the Social Research Centre on behalf of the Department. Results reported in this analysis are from a stratified random sample of job seekers, who had received labour market related income support from Centrelink (excluding the Aged Pension) and/or had contact with an Employment Service/Job Network provider as of the 20th February 2009. This analysis focused on Cohort 1 wave 2 as this was

the first group where respondents had a minimum amount of 11 weeks experience under the Job Services Australia.

There were 8,781 completed interviews for Cohort 1 Wave 2. This wave commenced on the 28 September 2009 and concluded 16 December 2009. Ninety-five per cent of those contacted responded to the survey.

DAISES percentages are weighted back to the JSA sample frame. This is the JSA population after certain groups have been excluded, such as people who have recently been included in other DEEWR surveys. Statistical analysis and testing has been done using SAS software survey procedures, which take into account the stratified nature of the data.

Identifying high and low performing sites

The JSA star ratings are used to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of employment services providers. They are calculated from a range of measures relating to employment and education and training outcomes, participation in work experience, paid placement and off benefit outcomes. The star ratings take into account the impact of differences in labour market conditions and the characteristics of job seekers through the use of statistical regression techniques. Star ratings vary from a minimum of '1 Star', indicating room for improvement, to a maximum of '5 Stars', reflecting excellent performance. The five ratings bands under JSA are determined by whether a provider's performance is 40 per cent or more above the average (5 stars); between 20 per cent and less than 40 per cent above the average (4 stars); between 20 per cent above and 20 per cent below the average (3 stars); between 20 per cent and less than 50 per cent below the average (2 stars); and 50 per cent or more below the average (1 star).

For this report, the JSA star ratings were used to identify sites that perform well against efficiency and effectiveness.

To supplement this, a measure of participant experience (measure 4.1 in KPI3 Quality Framework, see above) was also examined. This measures job seekers' perceptions of assistance and the services they received, based on their responses to the Post Program Monitoring (PPM) survey.

Star rating and participant experience measures for each site were combined into a 25 level rating, with the star ratings component weighted at 10 times the participant experience measure. The combined performance rating was then divided into low, medium and high performing sites as indicated in Table B1.1

Table B1.1: Provider sites by combined performance rating

Performance rating	Number of sites
Low (combined rating value 1-5)	130
Medium (combined rating value 6-18)	1,503
High (combined rating value (19-25)	283
Total	**1,916**

Source: DEEWR Corporate Data Set, DEEWR Post Program Monitoring Survey 2009-2010

For some analyses, including some regression analyses, JSA star rating information rather than the combined performance rating was used. This enabled KPI3 data to be used as independent variables in the analysis.

Analyses

In compiling this report, information on employment assistance as seen from a number of viewpoints was examined, including from job seekers, employers, employment service providers and the Department. For example, to analyse how wage subsidies are used, the attitudes and approaches of employment service providers from the 2010 Employment Service Providers Survey was examined alongside a statistical analysis of claims for wage subsidies sourced from the Department's Corporate Data Set.

Further insights were then gained from qualitative data, including interviews with the staff and management of JSA providers. This data was analysed using NVivo computer software to identifying common themes and topics.

Caveat

Various statistical and analytical tools including regression analysis were used in this analysis. The statistical analysis underlying much of this report is based on associations which may or may not be causal. That is, high performing sites tend to have the characteristics described here, but the available data doesn't allow us to say if the characteristics directly cause the high level of performance, or are caused by some other characteristic associated with high performance. Analyses of provider, employer, and job seekers' responses in surveys, interviews, and focus groups have been used to complement the quantitative data. Where these forms of evidence converge it strengthens the conclusions (Bamberger, Rugh, & Mabry, 2006).

Statistical Procedures

A variety of regression models and other statistical analyses were used for this report. Models were constructed against a number of performance measures, including the composite performance measure described above and a variable from the construction of the JSA Star ratings. A range of selected variables at site level were considered for these models. Variables were selected on the basis of representing domains of interest, such as services that job seekers reported receiving.

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