Digital skills cadetship trial

Final evaluation report

July 2024

dandolopartners

Introduction to this report

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations commissioned dandolo to undertake an evaluation of the Digital Skills Cadetship Trial.

Background

In July 2021, the Australian Government established the Digital Skills Cadetship Trial (the DSCT). The DSCT was funded through the 2021-22 Budget and ran between July 2021 and February 2024.

The purpose of the DSCT was to support innovative approaches to cadetships for digital career pathways, in order to increase the number of Australians with digital skills.

The DSCT funded three providers to trial different 'projects', or models for rapidly upskilling people in digital roles. The projects varied in scope, scale, timelines and approach. Each of the three projects focused on different cohorts underrepresented in digital skills roles.

Report overview

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (the Department) engaged dandolopartners (dandolo) in October 2022 to independently evaluate the DSCT.

This report is our final evaluation report and has built on, validated, and filled in gaps in findings from the two interim reports submitted in March and July 2023. It specifically focuses on:

- Making findings on the design and implementation of the DSCT, the outputs it produced and assessment of it against its objectives
- Our analysis of what lessons the Australian Government can take from the trial going forward.

The findings in this report have been informed by a further stage of fieldwork undertaken between January and April 2024.

A more detailed summary of our methodology, including the fieldwork we undertook and the key inputs into our findings in this report, is available at Appendix D.

This document

This report is the final report in the long-term evaluation of the Digital Skills Cadetship Trial.

Overview of the DSCT projects

The three DSCT projects trialed different approaches to rapidly upskilling people into digital skills jobs. They varied in scope, size and cohort they served.

	Project 1	Project 2	Project 3
Provider[1]	**Community Corporate Pty Ltd**	**MEGT (Australia) Ltd**	**Goanna Solutions Education Pty Ltd**
Project name	*Digital cadetships for refugees: bridging credentials in cloud computing for refugees and humanitarian migrants*	*Digital returnship for women within the technology sector*	*Digital skills cadetship integrating nationally accredited training with vendor certifications, targeted at diverse participants*
Digital skills	• Cloud computing	• Cyber Security • Data Analytics • Cloud Computing	• Cloud computing • Web development • Data Analytics • Project Support • Salesforce
Qualifications	ServiceNow certifications, AWS, google CISCO	Microsoft Certifications and specialist micro-credentials	Accredited VET and industry recognised vendor training across various digital career pathways
Target cohort/s	A minimum of 65 participants (six cohorts of 6-12 participants) in NSW and SA, focusing on participants from refugee programs with IT skills, qualifications and/or experience acquired overseas, but not recognised in Australia.	A minimum of 200 participants (three cohorts of 65-85), focusing on women entering or returning to the workforce.	Up to 260 participants, focusing on career changers, parents returning to the IT sector, recently arrived migrants with prior qualifications and First Nations people.
High-level overview of training model	Training design included upfront job readiness training and eight weeks of ServiceNow training prior to work placement. Community Corporate has provided other training courses (in addition to, or replacement of, ServiceNow) in response to employer feedback.	Original design involved providing training in parallel to work placement. MEGT has also included three days of upfront job readiness training in response to feedback received from cadets and employers through implementation.	Training design involved upfront digital skills training prior to 12-week placement, with the length of training varying depending on the digital skill.

[1] Throughout the report, Community Corporate Pty Ltd will be referred to as 'Community Corporate', MEGT (Australia) Ltd will be referred to as 'MEGT' and Goanna Solutions Education Pty Ltd will be referred to as 'Goanna Education'.

Executive summary

Overview and key objectives of the DSCT

The DSCT was established in 2021 with the aim of supporting innovative approaches to cadetships for digital career pathways.

Context of the DSCT

The Australian Government allocated $10.745 million to the DSCT over two and a half years (July 2021 – December 2023). The DSCT was set up to support innovative approaches to cadetships for digital career pathways, in order to increase the number of Australians with digital skills. The DSCT is part of the Digital Economy Strategy, an initiative of the 2021-22 Budget.

Aims of the trial

The DSCT aimed to:

1. Generate insights into innovative approaches to developing digital skills and capabilities.
2. Support participants to obtain the skills (and qualifications) required to move into employment in digital roles, and / or into further education and training.
3. Increase the number of people with high level digital skills identified as in demand by employers.

Delivery of the trial

The Department funded three providers to deliver cadetship projects to test new and diverse approaches to address employer demand for skills in emerging and priority digital fields. For example:

- Cybersecurity,
- Data analytics, and
- Cloud computing

Cadetship projects blended formal training with on-the-job learning and mentoring, using accredited and non-accredited vocational education and training and industry recognised courses offered by global technology companies.

Provider approaches

Each provider trialled a different approach to rapidly upskill people for digital roles over a 4-6 month period, with the aim of preparing cadets to transition into employment or further training. The Department encouraged providers to facilitate these pathways for participants at cadetship completion.

Provider requirements

The Department set the following requirements for providers:

Providers must work with at least one education and training provider to design and deliver the cadetships to participants.

At least three employer partners must be involved in co-designing the cadetship projects and in the development of Digital Skills Standards for each digital skill career pathway within the project.

Providers must work with employers to place participants in on-the-job learning placements and provide mentoring support to cadets.

Providers must collect and maintain a de-identified data set for each cohort of participants, organised by digital stream.

Focus on underrepresented groups

The projects explored how underrepresented groups can be drawn upon to address skills shortages in the digital industry.

The cadetship projects had a strong focus on supporting women into the tech workforce, including women who are considering a mid-career change or are returning to the workforce after a break.

Projects also provided targeted support to First Nations people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, refugees, and humanitarian migrants.

Our approach

The evaluation commenced halfway through implementation to provide the Department with key learnings that can be applied to the broader education and training sector.

Purpose

To understand the extent to which the DSCT (which comprises of three projects) have met its intended objectives, which include:

- Generate insights into innovative approaches to developing digital skills and capabilities
- Support participants to obtain the skills (and qualifications) required to move into employment in digital roles and/or into further education and training.
- Increase the number of people with high level digital skills as identified in demand by employers.

We have done this through assessing the DSCT on the project level and trial level.

To do this we have considered four key sets of questions:

1. Design	2. Implementation	3. Outputs	4. Outcomes
Was the DSCT designed to address an identified gap? Did the DSCT procurement and management design set it up for success?	Was the procurement and management of the DSCT implemented as intended? If not, why not?	What outputs were produced across the DSCT as a whole?	Did the DSCT generate insights into innovative approaches to developing digital skills and capabilities? Do these insights provide useful learnings for the national training and education system?

See Appendix A for a copy of the full evaluation framework

Our approach has included the following activities…

Project establishment

October 2022

This stage of the evaluation project was designed to ensure that we (dandolo and the Department) have a shared understanding of scope, objectives, and priorities for this evaluation. It included a kick-off meeting, a document and data request, developing the evaluation framework, and relevant fieldwork instruments.

Reporting Cycle #1

October 2022 – March 2023

Over this phase, we analysed and verified existing data and knowledge on the DSCT and the three projects to deliver initial insights through the first interim evaluation report.

This stage consisted of seven activities:

- Desktop review
- Data analysis
- Provider report review
- Consultation: providers, employers, peak bodies, DSO, departmental staff

[Please see Appendix D for further detail on fieldwork]

Deliverable: Interim Report #1 (March 2023)

Reporting Cycle #2

March – July 2023

The second cycle of reporting included collecting and analysing new data through fieldwork activities to fill in gaps analysed for Interim Report #1 and where possible, to build on and validate findings.

This stage consisted of the following activities:

- Provider report review
- Consultation: cadets, employers, providers, industry representatives
- Survey: Cadet and employer

[Please see Appendix D for further detail on fieldwork]

Deliverable: Interim Report #2 (July 2023)

Reporting Cycle #3

November 2023 – May 2024

The final stage of the project focused on bringing two interim reports together and undertaking a final round of fieldwork to test and validate findings and fill in gaps to understand the extent to which the DSCT met its intended objectives.

This stage consisted of the following activities:

- Provider report review
- Surveys: Cadet and employer
- Consultation: cadets, employers, providers, trainers, peak bodies, departmental staff
- Case study development

[Please see Appendix D for further detail on fieldwork]

Deliverable: Final Report (May 2024)

Design and implementation of the DSCT

The DSCT was established as a trial to address an anticipated digital skills gap identified by industry and its design features set it up for success. In practice, many of the assumptions underpinning the trial did not play out as anticipated, including employer engagement and the extent to which there was demand for entry-level digital skills roles.

Was there a clear reason to establish the DSCT?

The DSCT was established to address an anticipated skills gap in the digital skills industry by testing new models of learner pathway.

The DSCT directly responded to challenges identified by industry by:

- Connecting unskilled cohorts with tech training and employment opportunities
- Linking training providers, employers and learners together in co-designing the cadetships
- Engaging diverse cohorts in projects to increase diversity in workforce.

Assumptions underpinning the DSCT and how these played out in practice

There were three key assumptions that underpinned the DSCT when it was established, which were:

- There was demand for entry-level workers in digital skills
- There was insufficient supply to meet demand for these workers
- Short training pathways would address these challenges.

These assumptions influenced the policy design decisions made, but some of these assumptions played out differently to what was anticipated. For example:

- We did not hear that employers had demand for entry level roles
- Many employers were not prepared to host cadets
- Employers told us that cadets required training and support from employers after undertaking training, indicating short training pathways were not sufficient for cadets to be 'job ready'.

Did the design features of the DSCT set it up for success as a trial?

The DSCT was designed and implemented as a trial to test innovative models and develop an evidence base to understand what does and doesn't work.

The key features of the DSCT's design reinforced its purpose as a 'trial' and set it up for success.

These included:

- Adopting an industry-led idea
- The trial being underpinned by a robust procurement process
- Upfront investment in evaluation
- Close project oversight from the Department.

Employer engagement in the cadetship projects

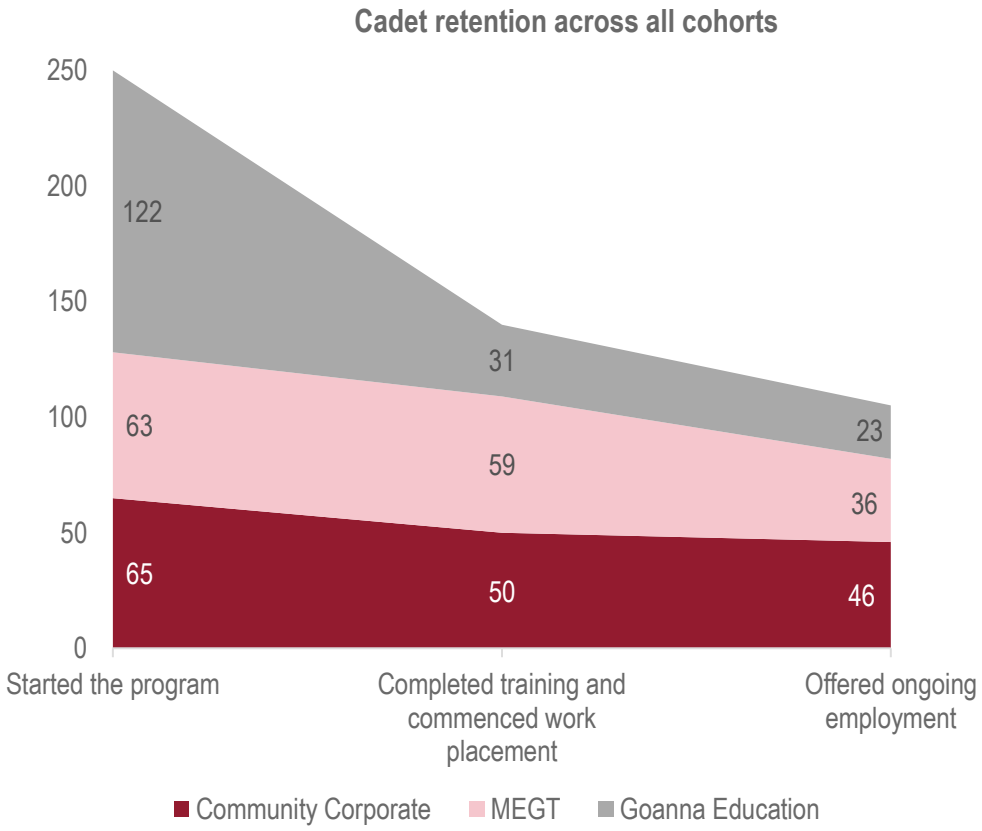
The co-design approach for the different projects was a great opportunity to inform the development of the cadetship projects and ensure an industry-led approach.

However, in practice, this was done in an ad-hoc manner and didn't result in models that vastly differed from existing off the shelf models and offering.

As projects have matured, and new cohorts have commenced training, providers worked with employers to iterate and refine their models and training to best meet their needs. This has increased the extent to which the trial is employer led and produced better outcomes for cadets and employers.

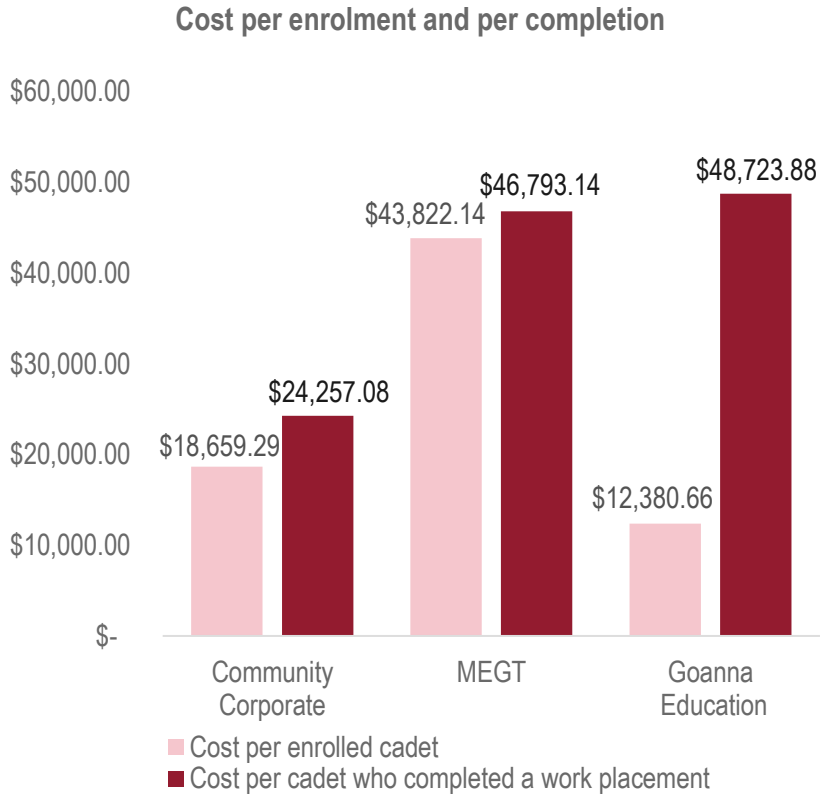
Key outputs of the DSCT

250 cadets commenced training and 140 cadets completed the cadetship. The completion rate for Goanna Education was lower than other providers.[1]



Each of the DSCT projects were funded to meet a target number of cadetship completions.

None of the DSCT projects met these targets. This led to costs per completion to vary widely across the three projects from $24,000 to $48,000.



NB: These costings detailed on this page have been designed for measuring and comparative purposes and should be used with caution. It's important to note that they do not take into account the differences between provider models and factor this into costing models.

Sources: Provider final reports, dandolo cost analysis.

[1]Up to 260 cadets were anticipated to be taken on by Goanna Education for two cohorts. However, the second cohort did not go ahead.

Overall assessment of the DSCT against its key objectives

The DSCT made well-evidenced contributions towards its objectives. Its greatest strength was as a trial that generated insights into what works and what doesn't, rather than a pilot that is immediately ready for scale.

Breakdown of DSCT objectives	Assessment based on available evidence
 **Support participants to obtain the skills and qualifications required to move into employment in digital roles, and / or into further education and training**	• The DSCT had a total of 250 cadets enrolled, with 140 cadets completing the program. • This was 48% less cadets than the maximum number of cadets the DSCT intended to support to obtain skills and qualifications to move into digital skills roles. • The DSCT supported 103 cadets (74%) to transition into employment in digital roles and 12 into further education and training (of those who completed the program). • In addition to supporting cadets to gain skills, cadets also told us they found the cadetship helpful for building connections, soft skills and using it to gain professional experience they then applied in other roles.
 **Support employers to meet their skills needs**	• Employers who took cadets for placements and helped them transition into ongoing roles told us that these participants were now highly valued members of their organisations and workforces. • Significantly fewer employers were interested in being involved in the co-design of the DSCT and taking cadets for placements than was originally expected. • As the DSCT projects matured, providers worked with employers to iterate and refine their models, which improved outcomes for employers and cadets in later cohorts.
 **Generate insights into innovative approaches to developing digital skills and capabilities**	• The DSCT trialed and generated insights into the effectiveness of three unique models. They targeted different underrepresented cohorts, focused on different digital skills and provided different approaches to training. • However, all provider projects were modified from existing 'off the shelf' models that were already offered, which demonstrated a missed opportunity to test bespoke and novel models of short, sharp and on-the-job training.

Providers | Community Corporate | Key findings

The Community Corporate cadetship targeted refugees with overseas IT qualifications. The project prioritised employer needs and tailored training accordingly. The structured digital training, coupled with training from employers, resulted in high retention and completion rates, with a significant portion of cadets securing subsequent employment post-placement.

Model and design

Community Corporate dedicated considerable effort to understanding both cadet soft skills and employer needs, leveraging pre-existing relationships to tailor training and secure work placements for cadets. Although they initially focused more on program design than employer engagement, over the life of the project they continuously sought feedback to refine their approach and better align with employer requirements.

Structured training

While the training and tailored supports provided by Community Corporate were well received by cadets, they did not always meet employer needs and often meant employers provided additional training to cadets. Employers attributed this to the nature and complexity of the roles and skills required, rather than the quality of training.

Industry placements

Community Corporate invested significant time in matching cadets to employer needs. Regular feedback channels enabled them to tailor their training to meet the needs of employers and ensure work placements were available for cadets.

Mentoring, wrap around support and training

A core component of the Community Corporate model was the mentoring, wrap around and transition support they provided to cadets. This was highly valued and well received by cadets and employers.

Cost

Community Corporate spent $1.2 million in total. A third of the costs were attributed to cadetship project design, but this is comparable to other providers.[1]

The program attracted 65 cadets, predominantly with overseas tertiary qualifications, most of whom were under-employed or unemployed. All participants came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, identifying as refugees or asylum seekers.

Across seven intakes, 50 out of the 65 cadets progressed to start work placements with 46 cadets who commenced placements being offered subsequent employment.

Notably, the program achieved a high conversion rate of placements into full-time work post-placement, indicating its effectiveness in facilitating sustainable employment opportunities.

Cost per enrolment for Community Corporate cadets was $18,659, slightly lower than the cost per cadet who completed work placements ($24,257).

NB: These costings detailed on this page have been designed for measuring and comparative purposes and should be used with caution. It's important to note that they do not take into account the differences between provider models and factor this into costing models.

[1] Of the total funding provided to Community Corporate, some of this was not directly related to the cadetships project. Funding was spent on an independent evaluation of the project by the University of Sydney and implementing data security safeguards in line with DEWR's requirements. These amounts have been removed from their final cost.

Providers | MEGT | Key findings

The MEGT cadetship project aimed to support women re-entering the workforce, drawing on an 'earn while you learn' model. Overall, six in ten cadets secured employment. MEGT faced challenges in aligning training with employer needs and despite significant investment, there was a lower than expected uptake from host employers.

Model and design

MEGT collaborated with employer organisations to co-design the cadetship. Despite employers being involved in the co-design process, some of these employers didn't continue on to take cadets in placements, which limited its effectiveness.

The majority of cadets already held a tertiary qualification and were unemployed.

Structured training

The project supported cadets to develop digital skills, however, the training they received did not always meet employer needs. This was due to the nature and complexity of the skills required for roles.

Industry placements

Employers and cadets both expressed that training needed to align more closely with the job roles, with employers suggesting that project-based learning could better align training to the placements.

Out of 63 cadets who started the cadetship and commenced the work placements, 59 completed their training and placement, and 36 of the cadets who commenced placement were subsequently offered employment.

23 cadets who completed their training and started their placements were not offered ongoing employment. Lack of employer involvement in the co-design process, as well as the limited number of roles available by employer organisations for cadets (which was not within the control of the DSCT) appears to have contributed to this.

Mentoring, wrap around support and training

MEGT's cadet mentoring received positive feedback, with suggestions for improvement including more comfortable avenues for expressing concerns and enhancing peer support networks. Other wrap-around supports and the transition support services were well-received by both cadets and employers.

Cost

MEGT spent $2.9 million in total, of which over a third of the costs were attributed to cadetship project design.

Cost per enrolment for MEGT cadets was $43,822, slightly lower than the cost per cadet who completed work placements ($46,793).

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Providers | Goanna Education | Key findings

The Goanna Education cadetship targeted diverse cohorts. The digital courses delivered included a mix of VET and vendor training. The project encountered challenges in recruiting host employers and securing work placements which led to low cadetship completions and mixed outcomes for participants.

Model and design

Goanna Education worked with employers on initial co-design of the project, but this wasn't done in a meaningful way at the start. The level of co-design and employer involvement differed by course. Goanna Education worked with employers to iterate and refine the cadetship informed by feedback over the life of the project.

The Goanna Education project provided tailored support to cadets, alongside an intensive upskilling period before entering the workplace. Employers were engaged in tailoring training content to their needs, however they largely adapted existing models.

Structured training

The project was designed to equip cadets with digital skills, but its ability to produce job-ready candidates was constrained by challenges such as limited work placements. These limitations impacted the depth of practical experience gained and the breadth of skills covered, potentially hindering cadets' readiness for employment.

Industry placements

The availability of placements for cadets was influenced by industry layoffs and recruitment freezes, as well as challenges in securing commitments from employers. Delays in placement matching and a lack of guaranteed placements caused frustration among cadets, impacting the overall program experience.

Mentoring, wrap around support and training

There was poor uptake of the structured mentoring components from ACS by Goanna Education cadets. Employers pulling out of placements and the large number of cadets that were waiting to be placed compounded the challenge for Goanna Education of supporting cadets well through transitions.

Out of the 122 cadets who started the program, 31 cadets who completed training received a work placement and a further 2 found digital-related roles independently of Goanna Education. Following the work placements, 23 were subsequently offered ongoing employment (including the 2 cadets that went straight into digital jobs).

There were significant number of cadets (63) who have not found employment in the digital skills sector after completing their training. Lack of employer involvement in the co-design process and misalignment of industry skills needs, as well as limited work placements available for cadets (which was not within the control of the DSCT) appears to have contributed to this.

Cost

Goanna Education spent $1.5 million in total, of which just over a third of the costs were attributed to delivery of education and training.

The cost per cadet who completed their work placement ($48,724) was significantly higher than the cost per enrolment for Goanna Education cadets ($12,381).

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Application of findings for the Australian Government

We identified five key lessons for the Australian Government to take forward from this trial into other areas of VET reform.

Key lesson for the Australian Government going forward	How we learnt this lesson
The Australian Government should seek to thoroughly interrogate and validate problems identified by stakeholders ahead of designing interventions to address them.	The DSCT was designed to address clear gaps and challenges identified by and advocated for by stakeholders. These gaps and challenges identified by stakeholders, however, did not play out as anticipated.
When the Australian Government is designing interventions that aim to address multiple challenges at once, it should consider the relationship between the challenges and trade offs required when addressing them together.	The DSCT aimed to address multiple challenges at once. This included: • The need to increase the supply of individuals with digital skills identified as in demand by employers and to increase pathways for underrepresented cohorts to address skills shortages in the digital and technology industries • While the DSCT aimed to address both of these challenges together but did not identify or outline a hierarchy for how they should be prioritized and addressed together.
The Australian Government should replicate key features of the approach taken for the DSCT when designing and overseeing comparable innovations and trials in the VET sector.	The DSCT included design features that set it up for success *as a trial* with the intention of learning. It ensured that the Department was able to build an understanding of what aspects were effective and what needed refinement, which supported informed decision-making across the funded period. These aspects also were key drivers in ensuring the Department achieved the third objective of the DSCT.
The Australian Government should ensure that, when engaging employers and industry in co-design processes going forward, there are clearly defined roles, responsibilities and expectations set out about what this should include.	The DSCT was designed with the intention that the projects would be co-designed with employers. In practice, providers encountered significant challenges with engaging with employers during the design process. Employers either did not engage in a meaningful way on the design of the projects, or when they were engaged, many chose not to take cadets for placements or be involved in the projects more broadly.
If considering ways to scale the model, the Australian Government should consider models that involve more diverse approaches, including engagement with more providers, employer-developed models or working with other jurisdictions and partners to implement initiatives.	The DSCT model has limited options for scalability in its current form. It delivered training and placements to 140 cadets, approximately 48% less than the maximum number of cadets intended to be involved. Smaller projects were able to respond more readily to the needs of employers on an ad hoc basis and adjust to unforeseen circumstances in the broader labour and economic market.

Context of the DSCT

The problem that the DSCT sought to address

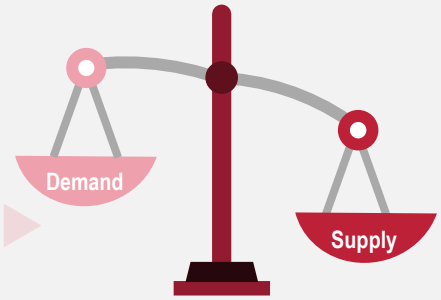
The DSCT aimed to address three primary issues: that demand for entry-level digital skills roles was increasing across the skills and labour market, there was an insufficient pipeline of digital workers and a cadetship model would meet this gap.

1. Demand for digital skills was increasing…

…but demand was not met by supply, with significant shortages expected in the near future

Key stakeholders raised persistent concerns about gaps between demand and supply of digital skills.[1]

At the time of establishing the DSCT, it was estimated around **70%** of the workforce was required to apply at least one digital skill in their work currently, and this figure was expected to grow by **10%** by 2026.[2]



Growth in demand for digital skills was projected to result in a shortage of around 500,000 workers before 2026.[3]

2. There were anticipated shortages for junior staff and entry-level roles

At the time of establishing the DSCT, the Australian Government identified that there was an insufficient pipeline of entry-level digital workers for two key reasons:

- low awareness of digital careers for school leavers, with many school leavers having low awareness of digital skills roles and understanding of the jobs available in the digital and tech sectors
- Complex and fractured training pathways, which made it difficult for learners to have clarity about skills pathways and options available.[4]

3. There were insufficient learner pathways with digital skills training

The Australian Government identified multiple, intersecting challenges with traditional digital skills pathways through universities and VET training.

These challenges included:

- Significant time and financial commitment for learners
- Some cohorts of learners are underrepresented in digital skills courses such as women, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- The time required to accredit courses means that digital skills courses do not adapt quickly enough to meet the needs of industry and fill vacant roles.

A cadetship model was expected to be a streamlined model to support prospective learners to become skilled workers.

- There is usually a trade-off to attending any full-time tertiary training including the opportunity cost of not spending that time in paid employment and the direct cost of undertaking the training.
- It was anticipated that the cadetships model would be an effective model to ameliorate these trade-offs to rapidly upskill learners with employable skills and create opportunities to engage diverse cohorts in workforce who otherwise could not access training.
- The cadetship model was an increasingly desirable model recognised across the skills sector to assist in economic recovery and increase employability.[5]

The DSCT was one of many initiatives to fill learner pathway gaps implemented by the Australian Government.

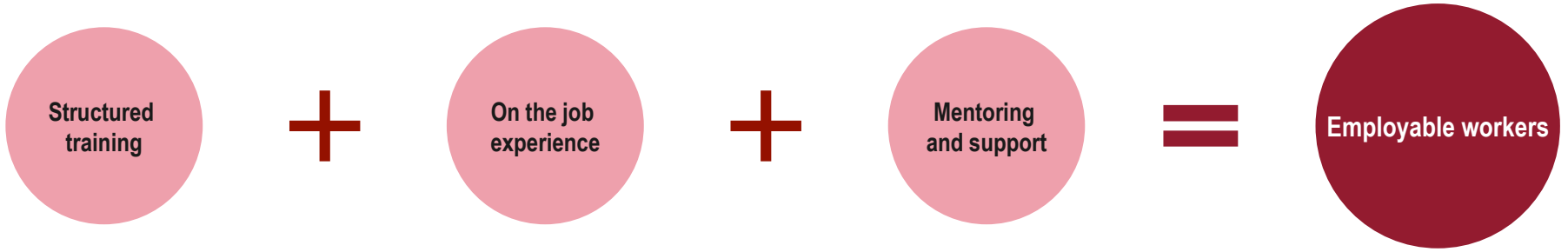
Other initiatives included the establishment of the Digital Skills Organisation and several 'earn while you learn' models to combine training and on the job experience. The DSCT was unique, however, in that it had a particular focus on testing different innovative training models (for example, accredited and non-accredited training).

[1] Business Council of Australia, Submission to the Australian Government Budget 2021-22.
[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics, Employed persons by occupation unit group, 2022.
[3] National Skills Commission, Digital Skills in the Australian and International Economies, 2022.
[4] Digital Skills Organisation, Growing Australia's digital workforce, 2023.
[5] Mitchell Institute, Proposed National Job Cadets Program, 2020; Australian Government, Expert Review of Australia's VET system, 2019.

What is a cadetship?

A cadetship is an alternative training program that combines formal training with on-the-job placements and experience. Cadetships have been trialled in a range of different contexts and industries over the past decade in Australia.

Specific programs vary, but cadetship models often include versions of the same elements to produce employable workers: structured training, on the job experience and mentoring and support.



Technical skills building prepares cadets for their career.

Structured training may involve recognised qualifications, vendor courses or other short courses that will be useful to the profession. Structured training may also include building employable or enterprise skills, which are soft skills such as communication, teamwork, professionalism, collaboration, flexibility, creativity and innovation. Building soft skills that can be transferred between industries equips workers to be able to adapt as the labour market evolves.[1]

Work-integrated learning extends skills building.

A work placement component gives cadets the opportunity to apply structured training in work environments. This component often includes remuneration for cadets. There may also be incentives for businesses to take cadets and invest in their training on the job. The opportunity to build relationships with employers also increases the cadets' future employment prospects.[2]

Mentoring and support set cadets up for success.

Mentoring and support can take the form of informal or formally structured programs. Informal arrangements include supports provided by trainers to cadets or supervisors to cadets through the cadetship. Formalised support structures and mentoring are becoming more common, particularly where programs are targeting diverse cohorts.

Employable workers enter the workforce.

The primary objective of a cadetship is to combine learning and workforce participation that meets the aims of employers, learners and supports better labour market outcomes.

[1] Global Apprenticeship Network, Digital Skills Situational Analysis 2022.
[2] The Mitchell Institute, Averting an Escalating Labour Market Crises for Young People in Australia: A Proposed National Cadet Program 2020.

Overview of the DSCT projects

The three DSCT projects trialed different approaches to rapidly upskilling people into digital skills jobs. They varied in scope, size and cohort they served.

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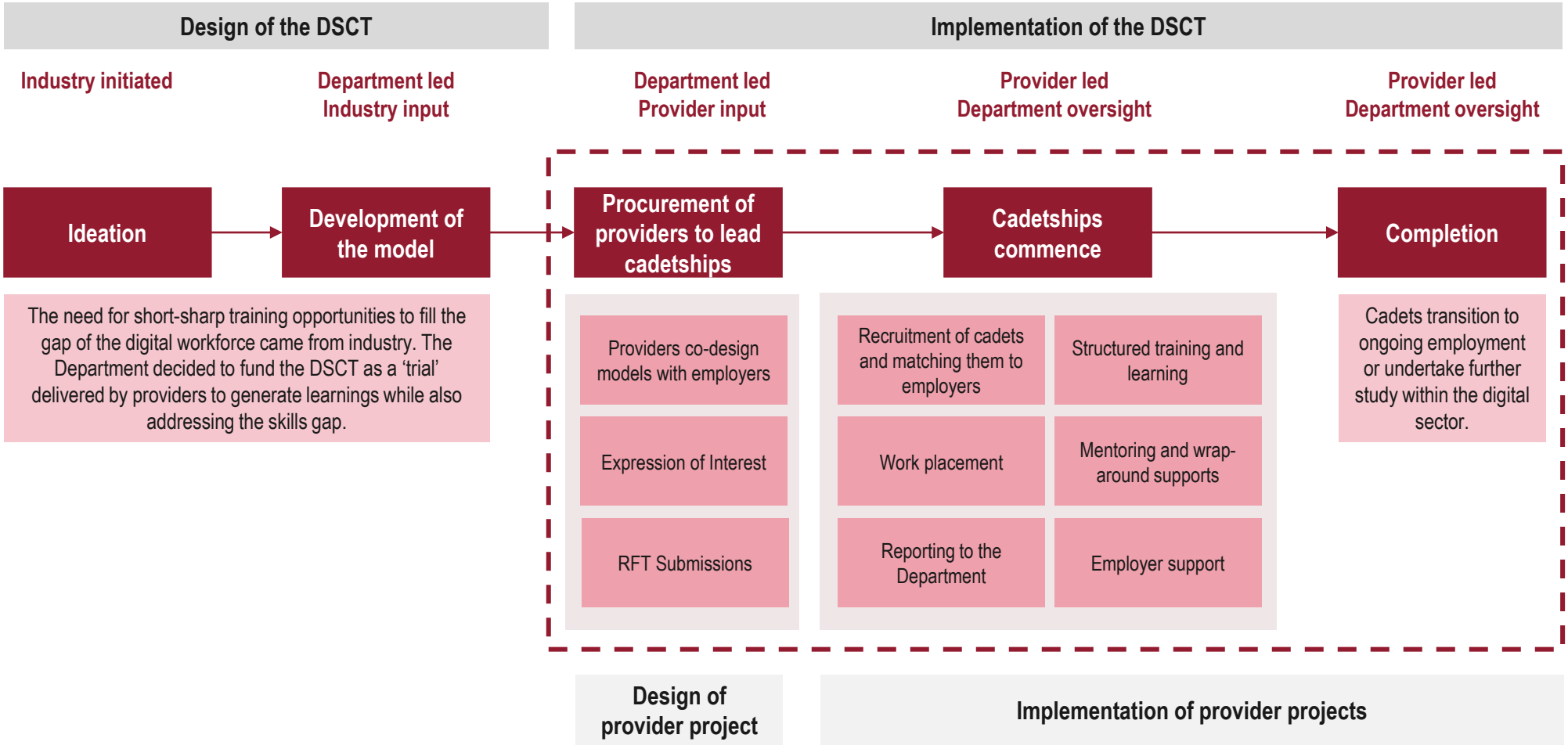
Key aspects of the DSCT's design and implementation

There were five key stages of implementation of the DSCT, including ideation, development of the model, procurement, cadet commencement and completion.



Outputs of the DSCT

Over the life of the DSCT, 205 cadets completed training. Approximately three-quarters of those who completed cadetships were successfully employed in a role using digital skills and 11% engaged in further study within the digital skills field.

Total projects commenced

3 **projects launched**

3 **projects completed**

Two projects were completed in their entirety as originally planned. The Department reduced the scope of one project to one cohort.
The digital skills cadets could focus on were:

- Salesforce
- Digital operations
- Web development
- Cloud computing
- Cyber security
- Data analytics
- ServiceNow

Two projects had multiple digital skills that cadets could pursue through different 'streams'.

Total Cadets and employers engaged

250
Cadets commenced

- Community Corporate: 65
- MEGT: 63
- Goanna Education: 122

48
Employers engaged

- Community Corporate: 11
- MEGT: 34 (including different locations of a national or international company)
- Goanna Education: 3

Total Cadets completed

205
Cadets completed training

- Community Corporate: 60
- MEGT: 59
- Goanna Education: 86

140
Cadets completed training and placement

- Community Corporate: 50
- MEGT: 59
- Goanna Education: 31

Total Cadets employed

74% (103/140)
of Cadets who completed the program are employed in a role using digital skills

- Community Corporate: 46 / 50
- MEGT: 36 / 59
- Goanna Education: 23 / 31

11% (15/140)
of cadets who completed the program engaged in further digital study post-program

Cadet demographics

73% of Cadets identify as **culturally and linguistically diverse**

31% of Cadets are from **refugee / asylum seeker backgrounds**

11% of Cadets identify as **First Nations**

64% of Cadets have a **Bachelor Degree** or higher (Australian equivalent)

47% Male

53% Female

Sources: Goanna Education, Digital Skills Cadetship Trial Final Implementation Report, 2024.
Dandolo analysis of Goanna Education, Cohort Data Report, April 2024.
Community Corporate, Digital Skills Cadetship Trial Final Implementation Report, 2024.
Dandolo analysis of Community Corporate, Attachment B - Cohort Data Report - Refugee Digital Cadetships April 2024.
MEGT, Digital Skills Cadetship Trial Final Implementation Report, April 2024.
Dandolo analysis of MEGT, Cohort Data Report, April 2024.

DSCT findings

About this section

This section explores the design, delivery, implementation, outputs and outcomes for the DSCT as a whole.

DSCT | Key findings (1)

The DSCT was established as a trial to address an anticipated digital skills gap identified by industry and its design features set it up for success. In practice, many of the assumptions underpinning the trial did not play out as anticipated, including employer engagement and the extent to which there was demand for entry-level digital skills roles.

Was there a clear reason to establish the DSCT?

The DSCT was established to address an anticipated skills gap in the digital skills industry by testing new models of learner pathway.

The DSCT directly responded to challenges identified by industry by:

- Connecting unskilled cohorts with tech training and employment opportunities
- Linking training providers, employers and learners together in co-designing the cadetships
- Engaging diverse cohorts in projects to increase diversity in workforce.

Assumptions underpinning the DSCT and how these played out in practice

There were three key assumptions that underpinned the DSCT when it was established, which were:

- There was demand for entry-level workers in digital skills
- There was insufficient supply to meet demand for these workers
- Short training pathways would address these challenges.

These assumptions influenced the policy design decisions made, but some of these assumptions played out differently to what was anticipated. For example:

- We did not hear that employers had demand for entry level roles
- Many employers were not prepared to host cadets
- Employers told us that cadets required training and support from employers after undertaking training, indicating short training pathways were not sufficient for cadets to be 'job ready'.

Did the design features of the DSCT set it up for success as a trial?

The DSCT was designed and implemented as a trial to test innovative models and develop an evidence base to understand what does and doesn't work.
The key features of the DSCT's design reinforced its purpose as a 'trial' and set it up for success.
These included:

- Adopting an industry-led idea
- The trial being underpinned by a robust procurement process
- Upfront investment in evaluation
- Close project oversight from the Department

DSCT | Key findings (2)

The DSCT was established as a trial to address an anticipated digital skills gap identified by industry and its design features set it up for success. In practice, many of the assumptions underpinning the trial did not play out as anticipated, including employer engagement and the extent to which there was demand for entry-level digital skills roles.

Governance of the DSCT

The governance structure of the DSCT provided centralised coordination and executive oversight, fostering a supportive environment for providers. It allowed providers to collaborate effectively with employers and manage various aspects of the program. However, challenges arose as the Department's oversight sometimes hindered flexibility and missed opportunities for collaborative learning. Additionally, the complexity of projects and discrepancies in stakeholder motivations increased the workload for both the Department and providers, impacting the program's ability to fully achieve its objectives.

Employer engagement in the cadetship projects

The co-design approach for the different projects was a great opportunity to inform the development of the cadetship projects and ensure an industry-led approach.

However, in practice, this was done in an ad-hoc manner and didn't result in models that vastly differed from existing off the shelf models and offerings.

As projects have matured, and new cohorts have commenced training, providers worked with employers to iterate and refine their models and training to best meet their needs. This has increased the extent to which the trial is employer led and produced better outcomes for cadets and employers.

Cost of the DSCT

The DSCT provided $5.6 million funding to the three providers to support project design and implementation. All providers spent approximately 1/3 of their funding on project design, and Goanna Education and Community Corporate spent a higher proportion on administrative costs.

The MEGT model was the most expensive model by enrolment numbers and cadets who completed work placements. Community Corporate was the most inexpensive model by cadets who completed work placements.

DSCT | Assessment against key objectives

The DSCT made well-evidenced contributions towards its objectives. Its greatest strength was as a trial that generated insights into what works and what doesn't, rather than a pilot that is immediately ready for scale.

Breakdown of DSCT objectives	Assessment based on available evidence
 **Support participants to obtain the skills and qualifications required to move into employment in digital roles, and / or into further education and training**	• The DSCT had a total of 250 cadets enrolled, with 140 cadets completing the program. • This was 48% less cadets than the maximum number of cadets the DSCT intended to support to obtain skills and qualifications to move into digital skills roles. • The DSCT supported 103 cadets (74%) to transition into employment in digital roles and 12 into further education and training (of those who completed the program). • In addition to supporting cadets to gain skills, cadets also told us they found the cadetship helpful for building connections, soft skills and using it to gain professional experience they then applied in other roles.
 **Support employers to meet their skills needs**	• Employers who took cadets for placements and helped them transition into ongoing roles told us that these participants were now highly valued members of their organisations and workforces. • Significantly fewer employers were interested in being involved in the co-design of the DSCT and taking cadets for placements than was originally expected. • As the DSCT projects matured, providers worked with employers to iterate and refine their models, which improved outcomes for employers and cadets in later cohorts.
 **Generate insights into innovative approaches to developing digital skills and capabilities**	• The DSCT trialed and generated insights into the effectiveness of three unique models. They targeted different underrepresented cohorts, focused on different digital skills and provided different approaches to training. • However, all provider projects were modified from existing 'off the shelf' models that were already offered, which demonstrated a missed opportunity to test bespoke and novel models of short, sharp and on-the-job training.

DSCT | Was there a clear reason to establish the DSCT?

The DSCT was established to address an anticipated skills gap in the digital skills industry by testing new models of learner pathway. The DSCT directly responded to challenges identified by industry.

Industry argued that there were insufficient and inadequate learner pathways for digital skills training, bringing the need for change and innovation.

The Department had heard from industry that there were challenges with traditional skills pathways through universities and VET training providers.

There appeared to be a significant time and financial commitment for learners

Some cohorts of learners are underrepresented in digital skills courses such as women, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and First Nations people.

The time required to accredit courses means that digital skills courses do not adapt quickly enough to meet the changing environment and provide job readiness.

In response to this growing need for digital skills training, the Australian Government funded the DSCT to address the challenges identified by industry.

The DSCT was established by the Australian Government in 2021. The trial was designed to specifically address gaps identified by industry in the following ways:

Gaps and issues identified that the DSCT sought to address	How the DSCT addressed these challenges
Increase awareness and understanding of job opportunities in tech	Connecting unskilled cohorts with tech training and employment opportunities
Fix gaps in education and training products and pathways	Linking training providers, employers and learners together in co-designing the cadetships
Improve diversity of the tech workforce	Engaging diverse cohorts in projects to increase diversity in workforce

The Australian Government has also mobilised in recent years in recognition of the problem and funded several reforms and initiatives.[1] The DSCT is similar in nature to some of these other reforms and initiatives. The DSCT was one of few that has a particular focus on testing different innovative training models (for example, accredited and non-accredited).

"There appeared to be a role for the Australian Government in playing a role in connecting digital skills training and education providers with industry to meet workforce and employer needs." – Departmental representative

"The Government's role is to ensure everyone can actively participate in the economy by identifying and addressing barriers to employment, such as age or language barriers." – Departmental representative

[1] Other reforms and initiatives include: the establishment of the Digital Skills Organisation (DSO); the expansion of the Cyber Security Partnership Innovation Fund; and the Next Generation Artificial Intelligence (AI) Graduates Program

DSCT | Assumptions underpinning the DSCT and how this played out in practice

There were three key assumptions that underpinned the DSCT establishment and design.

There was demand for junior staff and entry-level roles

The problem to overcome was on the supply side

Short, sharp training would meet the needs of employers

As an experimental trial, it was reasonable and necessary to make assumptions.

Reasonable and necessary nature of assumptions

- These assumptions served as fundamental building blocks upon which the DSCT was constructed.
- They provided a structured framework for decision-making, informed by stakeholder insights and available evidence, guiding the design of the DSCT.

Navigating uncertainty

- Assumptions acted as guiding principles for both the Department and providers, aiding them to navigate uncertainty.
- This allowed for the testing of strategies and interventions in a dynamic environment, facilitating adaptation based on trial outcomes.

Adapting to dynamic environments

- Assumptions fostered flexibility and adaptability in response to changes in the digital skills landscape.
- They facilitated iterative refinement of trial design and implementation, enabling effective responses to emerging challenges and opportunities

Source: Dandolo interviews with Departmental representatives, April 2024.

DSCT | Assumption 1 – There was a demand for junior staff and entry level roles

Despite expectations, the demand for junior staff and entry-level positions did not materialise as expected. This meant that providers were more focused on engaging employers than considering broader cadet and trial outcomes.

Assumption made

There was a demand for junior staff and entry-level roles

This assumption was based on:

- The perception that the skills gap within the technology sector lacked entry-level staff
- Employers were seeking fresh talent who could be trained and integrated into the digital workforce.

Extent to which the assumption was borne out

This was not where we heard demand was from employers, or what played out in the context of implementation of the DSCT. Employers reflected that while there was demand for digitally skilled workers:

- They were concentrated in mid-to-late careers levels and in specialised areas such as cyber security, rather than in entry-level positions
- There were high barriers to entry with these roles, and they continue to increasingly seek university graduates to fill these roles.

Design implication for the DSCT

- The DSCT focused on primarily filling entry-level positions and supporting employers who were trying to fill those roles with appropriately skilled candidates.

Impact on the DSCT

- Providers spent a lot of time engaging employers to participate in the DSCT, rather than considering broader cadet and trial outcomes. For example they overspent their marketing budgets by 40–60% in their efforts to boost demand.
- The lack of demand for junior staff and entry-level roles also meant that 44% that started the program did not complete a work placement.

Sources: Community Corporate DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024; MEGT DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024 and Goanna Education DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

DSCT | Assumption 2 – The problem to overcome was on the supply side

Despite industry's push for more accessible digital skills training pathways, the DSCT did not bridge the gap and employer needs. This resulted in fewer placements and mismatches between available roles and cadet training.

Assumption made

The problem to overcome was on the supply side

- Industry had argued that there were insufficient and inadequate learner pathways for digital skills training, and that there were challenges with the traditional skills pathways through universities and VET training providers.

Design implication for the DSCT

- The DSCT was designed to provide alternative training pathways to upskill cadets to fill the skills gap.
- The DSCT aimed to bridge the gap between educational outcomes and job market requirements more swiftly than traditional, longer-term educational programs.

Extent to which the assumption was borne out

- There was a discrepancy between what industry claimed it needed in terms of numbers of workers and skill-level, and what they were willing to accept in practice. This was seen through the DSCT in employers revoking agreements to take cadets and reducing the total number of cadets they were prepared to take.
- Providers were incentivised to participate in the DSCT. Employers did not receive any financial incentive and the pay-off for them was longer-term.

Impact on the DSCT

There were fewer placements that were offered across the cadetships. While this can be attributed to the changes that occurred across the broader labour market, it is also a result of the:

- The lack of entry-level roles available for cadets
- The lack of suitable roles that aligned with the training that they had completed through the cadetship

Sources: Community Corporate DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024; MEGT DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024 and Goanna Education DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

DSCT | Assumption 3 – Short, sharp training would meet the needs of employers

Employers found cadets lacked readiness for entry-level roles and signaled the need for more tailored and closer industry alignment, which posed ongoing challenges for the DSCT.

Assumption made

Short, sharp training would meet the needs of employers

- Short, sharp training aimed to provide timely and relevant training that develops technical and soft skills quickly and efficiently.
- It assumed that digital skills could be taught to cadets through a 'crash course' and could be immediately applied and used in the workplace.

Design implication for the DSCT

- The DSCT consisted of different cadetship models, that were to be co-designed and developed with employers. They were approximately 12 weeks of technical training (with varying levels of time commitment) that would provide baseline skills for entry-level roles.

Extent to which the assumption was borne out

- Employer organisations overwhelmingly told us that the level of training that cadets had received through the cadetship was not sufficient for them to be 'job ready' and they needed to provide job-specific and industry-specific training once cadets started their placements.
- This was something that wasn't necessarily considered or 'baked in' to the design of the DSCT, and as a result, created mixed outcomes for both cadets and employers.

Impact on the DSCT

- Employers expressed that in the future, they would like better alignment of the training with their industry and roles offered.
- While employers were happy to provide graduate level training, they still felt that many cadets required a high level of support and training when they commenced placements that required significant resourcing at the employer end, particularly from supervisors.
- Employers continue to still go to market to recruit to entry-level positions.

Sources: Community Corporate DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024; MEGT DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024 and Goanna Education DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

DSCT | Design features that set the DSCT up for success *as a trial*

The DSCT was designed and implemented as a trial to test innovative models and develop an evidence base to understand what does and doesn't work. The key features of the DSCT's design reinforced its purpose as a 'trial' and set it up for success.

There were four key design features of the DSCT that set it up for success as a trial with the intention of learning.

These features ensured the Department was able throughout the life of the DSCT to build an understanding of what aspects were effective and what needed refinement, which supported informed decision-making across the funded period.

1. The DSCT was an industry-led idea adopted by the Australian Government.

The original policy proposal for the trial came about in the 2021-22 Budget process, originally proposed by the Business Council of Australia. To develop the policy underpinning the trial, the Department consulted with industry peak bodies, individual employers, and other organisations with interest and experience in delivering digital cadetships. This process helped determine the key elements of the DSCT, procurement approach, design parameters and expectations for potential project providers.

2. The DSCT was underpinned by a robust procurement process.

The Department undertook a robust, two-staged procurement process to facilitate the development of tailored cadetships. It included an Expression of Interest (EOI) phase followed by a Request for Tender (RFT) stage. This aimed to optimise outcomes by expanding the supplier base and facilitating prequalification based on capability and suitability.

3. The DSCT included investment in evaluation and learning from the beginning.

Funding for the DSCT included investment into evaluation. The Department procured an external evaluator at the start of the second year of DSCT's funded period, with the intent to be able to understand the projects funded under the DSCT to produce findings that will inform future Australian Government policy in relation to Australia's national education and training system.

4. The Department provided effective oversight of the cadetship projects.

Working within the model of the DSCT, the Department has been effective at working with and providing effective oversight of providers. Providers also reflected positive feedback regarding the Department's approach to managing the DSCT.

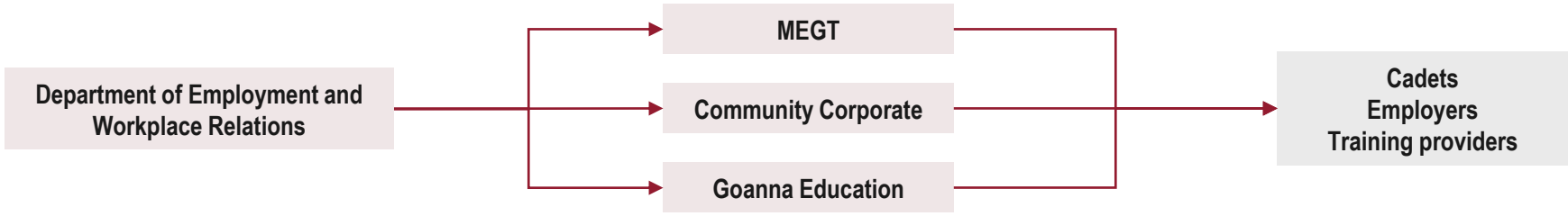
Having the Department as a central coordination point ensured appropriate oversight and troubleshooting of issues that arose in the context of the DSCT.

The Department was also able to intervene at key points to ensure the success of the project. An example of this was when the Department reduced the scope of Goanna Education's contract by not agreeing to a second cohort of cadets due to not being able to fulfil the obligations, including securing work placements, for the first cohort.

DSCT | Governance

The governance structure of the DSCT was suitable in its initial stages, but it resulted in missed opportunities for learning and collaboration, and an additional amount of work for both the Department and providers.

The DSCT was set up to provide funding and decision-making authority to providers with oversight by the Department, with regular accountability mechanisms built into the contract.



The Department provided executive oversight and received regular reporting from providers.

Following a competitive procurement process, providers received funding to design and deliver cadetships.

Cadets typically interacted with providers on a daily basis to coordinate their cadetship

	Positives of governance structure	Challenges associated with the governance structures
Department	The Department served as a central coordination point and provided executive oversight of the DSCT. This ensured appropriate oversight and troubleshooting of challenges, which fostered a supportive environment for providers to navigate complexities and uncertainties. Providers also reflected positive feedback of the Department's management of the DSCT.	The Department oversaw the contract of the providers and conducted effective monitoring and intervened when required. On a trial level, the DSCT was implemented with the intention of Department connecting industry with digitally skilled individuals and training and education providers. However, there were constraints on its ability to shape provider practices and facilitate cross-learning opportunities. The Department's central coordination role had implications for its ability to engage and influence providers, employers and cadets effectively. This might have been an opportunity if the cadetship was driven directly by the Department rather than outsourced.
Providers	Providers were given decision-making power to design and iterate their projects in conjunction with employers. They managed relationships with employers and external training providers, as well as facilitated onboarding, recruitment, and managing cadets across their experience. Providers had to also regularly report to the Department on their progress.	Providers encountered significant challenges in delivering the cadetship projects and found them to be more resource-intensive and complex than anticipated. The varied expectations between stakeholders and a mismatch in motivations and incentives, particularly for employers to participate in the DSCT, led to increased effort and resourcing from providers to engage and sustain employer participation. This, in turn, had implications on the DSCT achieving its intended objectives.

DSCT | Employer engagement in design of the projects

Employer input into provider project design in its initial stages was inconsistent and did not align with the DSCT's intention of being 'employer-led'. As the projects progressed, employers became more involved, which resulted in better outcomes.

The co-design approach for the different projects was a great opportunity to inform their development.

The provider contracts with the Department included a requirement that the projects were employer-led and co-designed with partner employers. This was done with the intention of facilitating collaboration between providers and employers to design training programs tailored to specific needs, ensuring cadets were equipped with the relevant and up-to-date skills and knowledge, which would enhance their employability – benefiting employers they were to matched with.

"Challenges with bespoke designs included accommodating the differing requirements of multiple employers, which requires upfront engagement and coordination" – Departmental representative

However, in practice, this was done in an ad-hoc manner and didn't result in models that vastly differed from existing off the shelf models and offerings.

Some providers did not involve employers in a meaningful way in the design of their projects and appear to instead have used them for compliance related activities such as endorsement of documentation.

Providers also reflected that they had difficulty sustaining engagement with employers. This may be because while there was a clear incentive for employers to participate (i.e. gaining 'work-ready' cadets with digital skill training), there were also upfront costs involved which may not pay off in the short to medium term. Employers also experienced competing priorities and lacked bandwidth to meaningfully engage in the design of training models. Providers reflected that 'what they said they needed, and what they actually needed' were very different'. Further, employers who wanted resources when the DSCT was first established, were experiencing hiring freezes by the time the first round was completed.

This led to the refinement of off-the-shelf provider models rather than bespoke solutions.

"It was a trial for disruption. There was an opportunity for innovation and to fail and learn from it. None of the projects did that – they did the safer option and comply with it" - Industry representative

"It was retro-fitting what was existing and applying it in this context" - Industry representative

Since the establishment of the trial, providers have better engaged with employers to iterate the projects to better meet their needs.

As projects have matured, and new cohorts have commenced training, providers worked with employers to iterate and refine their models and training to best meet their needs. This has increased the extent to which the trial is employer led and produced better outcomes for cadets and employers.

This demonstrates that similar projects (particularly those that are models within a trial), should be iterated, monitored, and evaluated consistently to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose for their target audience and user.

DSCT | Measuring of outputs across cadetship project

The cadetship projects who took the smallest number of cadets had higher rates of cadets finishing training and commencing work placements, and ultimately being offered ongoing employment from host organisations.

Community Corporate were most successful in meeting their KPI of cadets commencing placements. They were also anticipated to take on the smallest number of cadets.

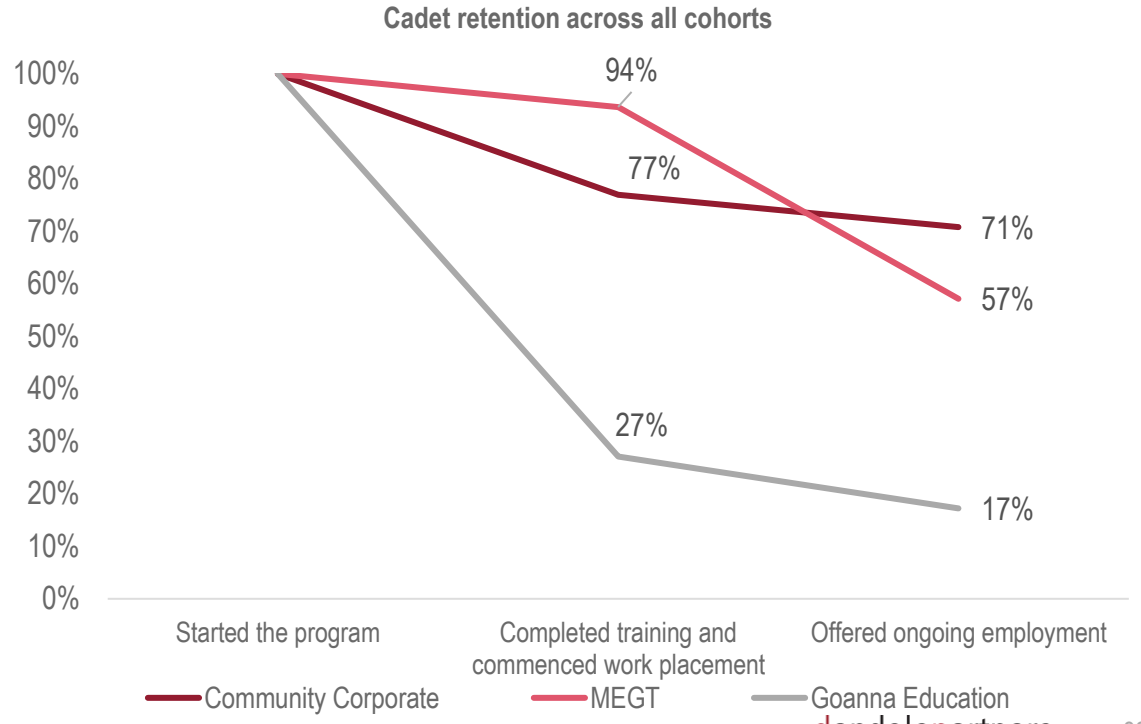
MEGT was anticipated to take up to 200 cadets but took on a much lower number (63 cadets). They attributed this to low vacancy numbers and redundancies in the IT sector, which led to the cadetship being less appealing for both cadets and employers.

Goanna Education had 122 cadets commence in the first cohort. While up to 260 cadets were anticipated to be involved in the program, the second cohort did not go ahead, which impacted on this figure.

Provider	Intended number of participants	Actual number of participants that started the program	% of target achieved
Community Corporate	65	65	100%
MEGT	200	63	32%
Goanna Education	260	122	47%*

The cadetship projects with the smallest number of cadets (MEGT and Community Corporate) had the higher rates of cadets transitioning into work placements and gaining ongoing employment after placements.

MEGT had the highest rate of cadets that completed training and commenced their work placement, and the second highest rate of cadets offered ongoing employment. Community Corporate had the second highest rate of cadets completing training and commencing work placements and a very high rate of cadets being offered ongoing employment after placements. Goanna Education had the lowest rates of cadets completing training and commencing work placements, and those who were offered ongoing employment after placement.



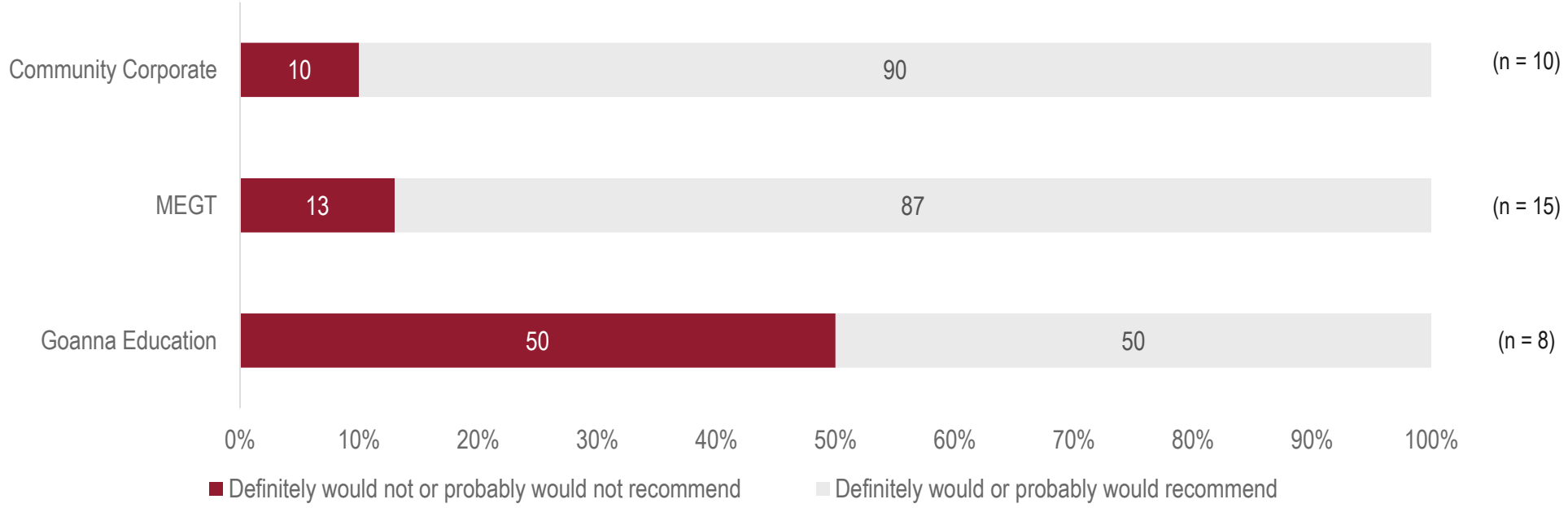
Sources: dandolo Alumni Survey results.

*Up to 260 cadets were anticipated to be taken on by Goanna Education for two cohorts. However, the second cohort did not go ahead.

DSCT | Measuring of satisfaction of cadets across cadetship projects

The overwhelming majority of cadets at MEGT and Community Corporate said they would recommend the cadetship to others. Cadets from Goanna Education, however, were far more divisive, with 50% saying they would not recommend the cadetship to others.

Alumni survey response to whether they would recommend the cadetship program to others interested in tech careers by provider



It's important to note, however, the sample sizes for this survey are very small.

"This Cadetship got my foot in the door, and I now feel confident that I would be able to secure placement in a digital role outside of my host employer." - Alumni

"Achieves the goal of having a job in an industry with incredible career prospects in less than a 12 months. Why would you ever go to university when you can get just as qualified in a 4th of the time." - Alumni

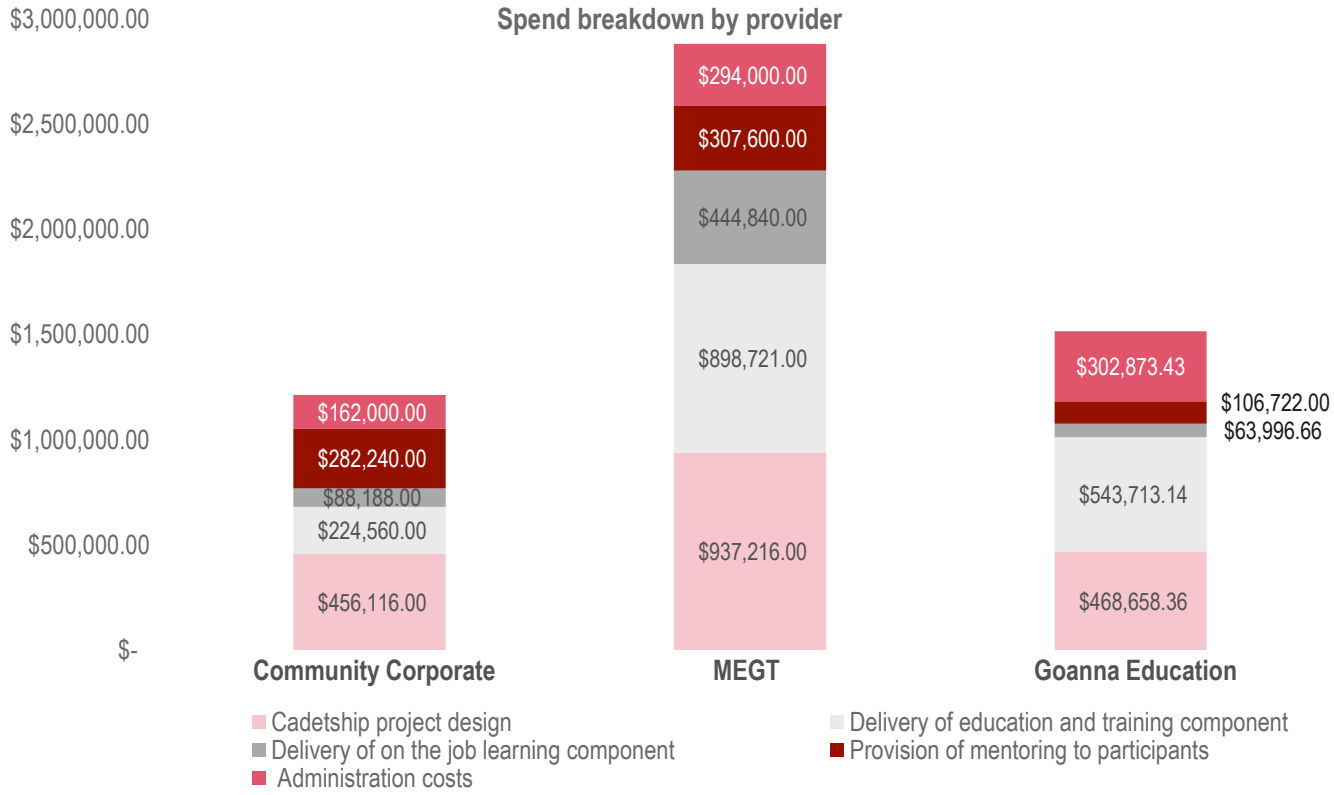
"I will definitely recommend because it is a very well designed program which helped me to get long term employment in Australia, with study and extremely valuable work experience." - Alumni

"I definitely recommend the Digital Skills Cadetship to anyone interested to pursue their career in IT. The program helped me to get back in IT and opens the opportunities to learn latest technology." - Alumni

Sources: dandolo Alumni Survey results, 2024.

DSCT | Cost of the DSCT and spending by provider

Spend on different cost categories was broadly comparable across providers. Goanna Education's low spend on mentoring is an outlier, potentially reflecting low uptake of these services.



NB: These costings detailed on this page have been designed for measuring and comparative purposes and should be used with caution. It's important to note that they do not take into account the differences between provider models and factor this into costing models.

The total value of the three provider contracts was $5.6 million, of which approximately $5.5 million went towards the cadetships project.

$1.2 m Provided to Community Corporate[1]

$2.6 m Provided to MEGT[2]

$1.7 m Provided to Goanna Education[3]

MEGT spent approximately 1/3 of their budget on project design, and the remainder on delivery of placements, education and training and mentoring.

Community Corporate spent more than 1/3 of their budget on project design, and nearly half on the delivery of placements, education and training and mentoring. Nearly $252,000 was spent on administrative costs. This is lower than the other providers because project management costs were reported in project design not administrative costs.

Goanna Education spent approximately 1/3 of their budget on project design. Over $300,000 was spent on project administrative costs.

All figures include GST. Goanna Education submitted their project expenditure excluding GST. GST has been added by dandolo to each budget item before analysis which may result in some differences between the figures in this evaluation report and final provider reports.

[1] Of the total funding provided to Community Corporate, some of this was not directly related to the cadetships project. Funding was spent on an independent evaluation of the project by the University of Sydney and on implementing data security safeguards in line with DEWR's requirements. These amounts have been removed from their final cost.

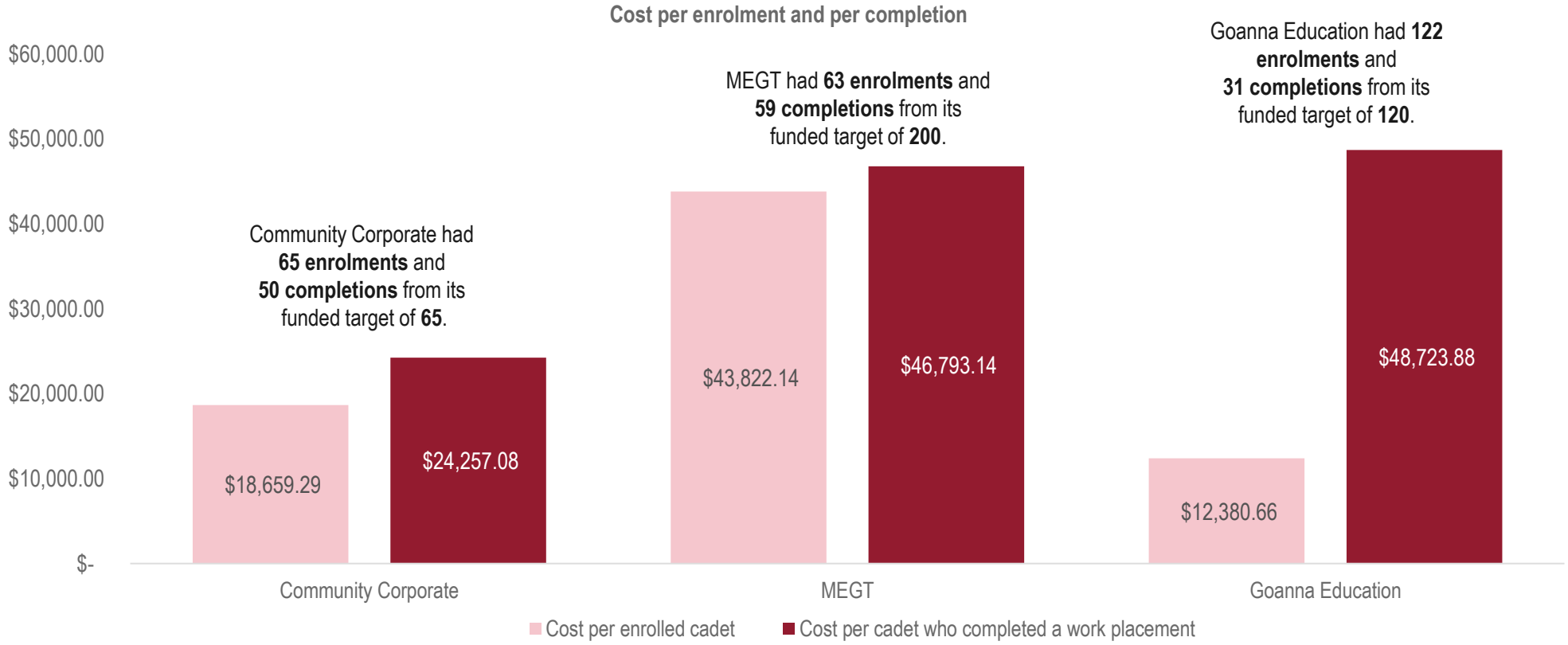
[2] MEGT also had a funding contribution from Microsoft.

[3] Goanna Education's funding was reduced when the second cohort did not go ahead.

Sources: Community Corporate DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024; MEGT DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024 and Goanna Education DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

DSCT | Cost per cadet enrolment and completion

Each of the DSCT projects were funded to meet a target number of cadetship completions. None of the DSCT projects met these targets. This led to costs per completion to vary widely across the three projects from $24,000 to $48,000.



Cost per enrolment for Community Corporate cadets was $18,659, slightly lower than the cost per cadet who completed work placements ($24,257).

Cost per enrolment for MEGT cadets was $43,822, slightly lower than the cost per cadet who completed work placements ($46,793).

Cost per enrolment for Goanna Education cadets was $12,381, significantly lower than the cost per cadet who completed work placements ($48,724).

NB: These costings detailed on this page have been designed for measuring and comparative purposes and should be used with caution. It's important to note that they do not take into account the differences between provider models and factor this into costing models.

Sources: Community Corporate DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024; MEGT DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024 and Goanna Education DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

Project level findings

About this section

This section explores the design, delivery, implementation, outputs and outcomes for the three cadetships projects, answering the key questions set out in the evaluation framework. The subsequent section of this report explores evaluation findings.

[1]Goanna Education's model included a number of sub-contractors and employer partners.

Providers | Community Corporate | Key findings

The Community Corporate cadetship targeted refugees with overseas IT qualifications. The project prioritised employer needs and tailored training accordingly. The structured digital training, coupled with training from employers, resulted in high retention and completion rates, with a significant portion of cadets securing subsequent employment post-placement.

Model and design

Community Corporate dedicated considerable effort to understanding both cadet soft skills and employer needs, leveraging pre-existing relationships to tailor training and secure work placements for cadets. Although they initially focused more on program design than employer engagement, over the life of the project they continuously sought feedback to refine their approach and better align with employer requirements.

Structured training

While the training and tailored supports provided by Community Corporate were well received by cadets, they did not always meet employer needs and often meant employers provided additional training to cadets. Employers attributed this to the nature and complexity of the roles and skills required, rather than the quality of training.

Industry placements

Community Corporate invested significant time in matching cadets to employer needs. Regular feedback channels enabled them to tailor their training to meet the needs of employers and ensure work placements were available for cadets.

Mentoring, wrap around support and training

A core component of the Community Corporate model was the mentoring, wrap around and transition support they provided to cadets. This was highly valued and well received by cadets and employers.

Cost

Community Corporate spent $1.2 million in total. A third of the costs were attributed to cadetship project design, but this is comparable to other providers.[1]

The program attracted 65 cadets, predominantly with overseas tertiary qualifications, most of whom were under-employed or unemployed. All participants came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, identifying as refugees or asylum seekers.

Across seven intakes, 50 out of the 65 cadets progressed to start work placements with 46 cadets who commenced placements being offered subsequent employment.

Notably, the program achieved a high conversion rate of placements into full-time work post-placement, indicating its effectiveness in facilitating sustainable employment opportunities.

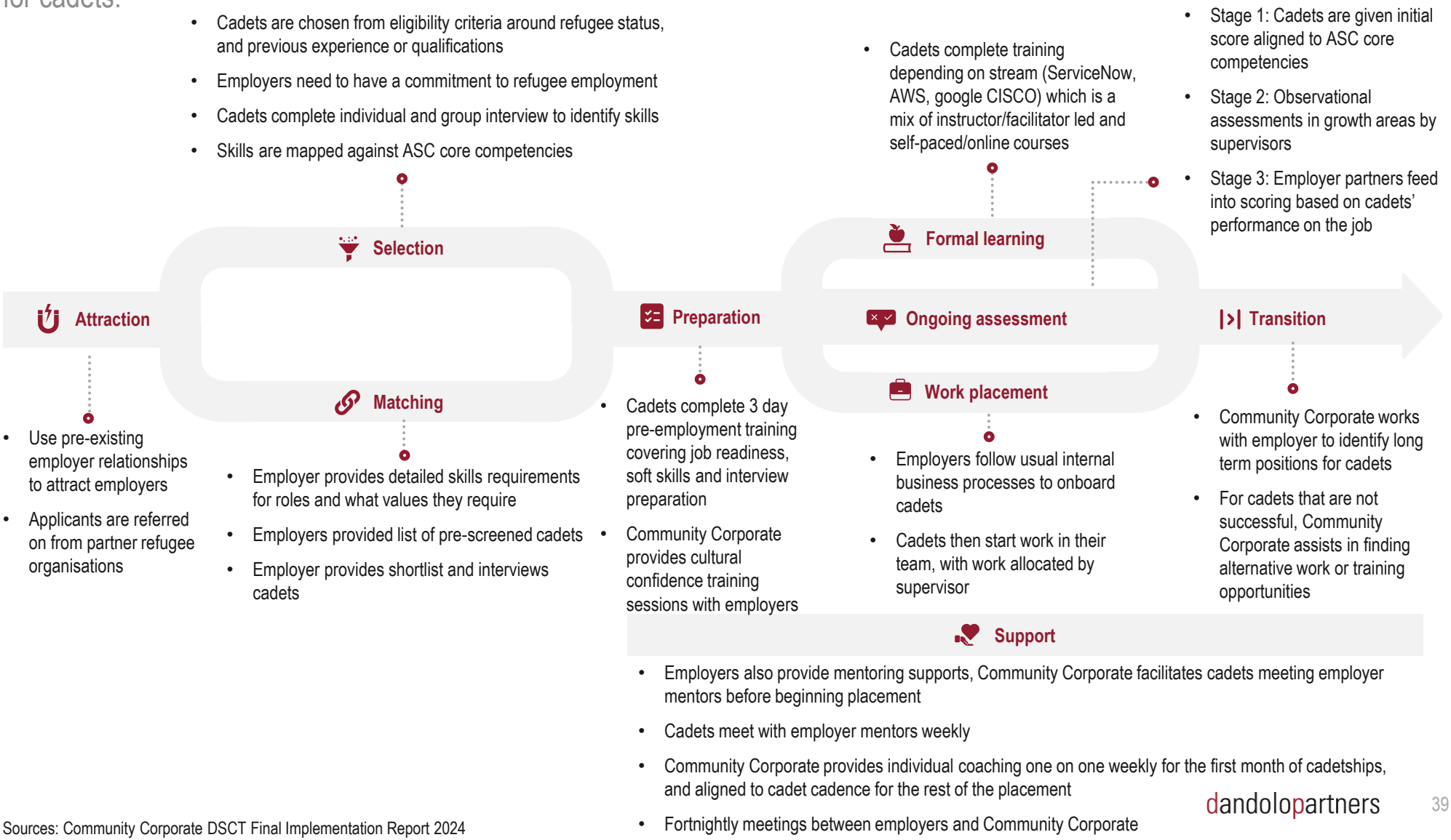
Cost per enrolment for Community Corporate cadets was $18,659, slightly lower than the cost per cadet who completed work placements ($24,257).

NB: These costings detailed on this page have been designed for measuring and comparative purposes and should be used with caution. It's important to note that they do not take into account the differences between provider models and factor this into costing models.

[1] Of the total funding provided to Community Corporate, some of this was not directly related to the cadetships project. Funding was spent on an independent evaluation of the project by the University of Sydney and implementing data security safeguards in line with DEWR's requirements. These amounts have been removed from their final cost.

Community Corporate | Overview of the model

Community Corporate invested significant time in understanding and building cadet soft skills, and matching cadets to employer needs. Their pre-existing employer relationships enabled them to tailor their training and ensure work placements were available for cadets.



Sources: Community Corporate DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024

Community Corporate | Participant demographics

Of the 65 cadets in the program, the majority of cadets had overseas tertiary qualification prior to the cadetship and were either unemployed or underemployed. The main reason for undertaking the cadetship was due to having limited work experience.

Of the 65 cadets who started the program, they are…

More likely to identify as male (53 cadets).

Within the 20 – 39 years age bracket (49 cadets).

All concentrated in New South Wales (38 cadets) and South Australia (26 cadets).

Within participant backgrounds…

100% identify as Refugee / Asylum seekers

100% are from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background.

Education and employment background

85% of cadets had a tertiary qualification prior to the cadetship.

45% of cadets were unemployed prior to the cadetship. A further 32% were working part-time or casually. And 18% were already undertaking some form of study.

87% of cadets decided to enter the cadetship because they had limited work experience. Only 6% of cadets decided to undertake the cadetship because they were returning to work and a further 6% because they wanted a career change. This indicates that the cadetship acted as a bridging course to find employment, more than as a way to upskill in existing skills.

Sources: dandolo analysis of Attachment B - Cohort Data Report - Refugee Digital Cadetships April 30 2024.

Community Corporate | Design

Community Corporate invested significant time in understanding employer workforce needs and marketing the program to employers, but this mostly occurred after initial design of the project. Throughout implementation of the project, they provided regular opportunities for feedback, which they used to tailor the model to better meet the needs of employers.

1 Employers were not closely involved in the initial design of the project.

- The Community Corporate project design aimed to take an employer-led approach, ensuring that the training and placement activities aligned with real industry demands and opportunities. It incorporated a flexible structure to adjust to changing market needs and employer feedback throughout the program lifecycle.
- Employers told us they were not closely engaged in the initial co-design process, including key decisions around the type of training and its length and recruitment of cadets.

"Don't recall a lot of co-design and could have spent more time at the onset to co-design more and bring in different parts of the business which would have let them know that ServiceNow wouldn't have been that suitable." – Employer

2 Once the project commenced, Community Corporate made significant effort to understand employer workforce needs and explain the benefits of the program.

- Throughout implementation of the project, Community Corporate undertook significant work with potential employer partners to understand their workforce needs and explain the benefits of the program.
- This included thorough analysis of skill shortages across organisations and industry trends to understand the program's relevance to employers and tailor it to their needs.
- Employers were involved in the selection process of cadets by reviewing profiles, conducting interviews, and assisting in making the final match, which aimed to create employer ownership of the process and investment in the cadets' success.

"The employers had different requirements within each area, they all want different skills as well…We were meeting fortnightly [with the employer] which was really labour intensive. They changed the goalposts every meeting but we responded every time which is why they stayed committed." – Community Corporate

3 Community Corporate provided regular channels for feedback from employers, which they used to tailor the model.

- Although there were initial organisational misalignments within some employers about the deployment and training of cadets, Community Corporate navigated these challenges through collaborative engagement with employers.
- This included adjusting their processes to include more initial coordination and engagement with employers and aligning roles to ensure that cadets' training and placements were in sync with actual job market needs within the employer's organisation.
- This was well received by all Community Corporate employers we spoke to, who noted that this process of feedback and iteration meant that the model improved and became more fit for purpose for their needs as time went on.

"Community Corporate were amazing, very supportive and understanding and collaborative and worked with us to ensure that we did get the best out of the program as possible. We had a recruiter on the ground doing meet & greets with participants and involved in regular touchpoints throughout the training and through the interview process as well." – Employer

dandolopartners

Sources: dandolo interviews with Alumni, employers, Community Corporate and the Community Corporate DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

Community Corporate | Structured training

While the training and tailored supports provided by Community Corporate were well received by cadets, they did not always meet employer needs and often required employers to provide additional training to cadets. Employers attributed this to the nature and complexity of the roles and skills required, rather than the quality of training.

	Cadet experience	Employer experience
Soft skill training	Cadets valued the soft skills training and most told us it was the most important aspect of the structured training to help them bridge cultural gaps and navigate the nuances of the Australian workplace. The focus on communication and cultural competence was particularly well received as it helped to boost confidence and equip them with communication skills.	Soft skills training was well received by employers, with many employers highlighting cadets' preparedness for the workplace, polished interview skills and ability to integrate seamlessly into existing teams. Employers also recognised the importance of cultural training, which not only benefited the cadets but also enriched the cultural sensitivity of their existing workforce.
Technical training	Most cadets told us they found the technical training they received was well delivered, and in particular called out the usefulness of the certifications and real-world applications of training. However, some cadets told us that the training needed to be better tailored to address the tech stacks used by the employers.	Some employers told us that the technical training did not fully align with the specific needs of the roles and required additional on-the-job training. Employers suggested closer alignment with industry standards and more advanced technical training. They noted that changes made to structured training, including extending its duration, meant that it became more fit-for-purpose as the project evolved.
Prior training	Many cadets who undertook training had previous digital skills qualifications or were returning to the workforce after time away. As a result, the training acted as a refresher / upskilling course for them. Cadets valued the recognition of their prior overseas experience in the course, as it validated their professional backgrounds. Despite having previous experience, some cadets acknowledged that the training helped them to contextualise their experience in line with local practices.	Employers acknowledged the significant expertise and professionalism that the cadets brought from prior work experience. They appreciated the way the program facilitated the translation of these competencies into the Australian context, although they noted the process of aligning these skills with specific operational needs was an ongoing challenge. Some employers noted that cadets would not have been as successful in the workplace and would not have had the requisite technical skills without existing prior training and experience.

"The softer skills were way more important, the soft skills of how to get work in Australia. The culture of work in Australia is quite different from where I'm from. Tech skills I can learn outside, soft skills I cannot." – Alumni

"As long as they have some IT skills they can train on the job. It's more about the soft skills, you have a client facing job, it's harder to pick up those skills. We look for motivation and soft skills." – Employer

"With a grad they don't care about your certificates, they care about your problem solving, that's more important for them than anything else. There was no pre-req to start the job, its grad level." – Alumni

Sources: dandolo interviews with Alumni, employers and the Community Corporate DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024

Community Corporate | Industry placements

Community Corporate invested significant time in matching cadets to employer needs. Regular feedback channels enabled them to tailor their training to meet the needs of employers and ensure work placements were available for cadets.

	Cadet matching process	Employer engagement	Work placement outcomes
Cadet perceptions	Cadets felt that the matching process was generally effective in aligning their skills and aspirations with suitable roles, although some noted a mismatch in expectations and delays in setting up placements. They valued the transparent communication and the effort to match their capabilities with potential employers but suggested improvements to the clarity of role descriptions.	Cadets told us that active and consistent employer engagement throughout their placements played a key role in their learning, professional development and integration within the teams. They felt supported when employers were actively involved in facilitating their learning and acclimatisation to the workplace.	Post-placement, cadets generally reported positive outcomes, including increased industry knowledge, expanded professional networks, and in some cases, job offers. They felt that the work placements were important to provide them with the opportunity to apply their skills in a local context.
Employer feedback	Employers appreciated the initial screening and matching process that considered the company's needs and cadet profiles. However, some employers noted the challenge of accurately assessing the cadet's skill level and cultural fit purely based on profiles and interviews, suggesting a trial project or more interactive assessments could enhance the process in future.	From the employers' perspective, active engagement with cadets was seen as mutually beneficial, contributing to a supportive work environment and allowing for real-time feedback and adjustment. Employers noted that this engagement and support for cadets on the job required resources and commitment but ultimately led to more effective placements and long-term employment relationships.	Employers shared that the placements often resulted in valuable contributions to their projects and, in many cases, led to considering cadets for future roles within their organisations. They suggested more structured follow-ups post-placement to further discuss and potentially formalise employment opportunities.

"We were supposed to start our work placement in Sept of 2022 but it kept getting pushed out. Community Corporate promised they would get a placement for me, it was really great. The placement was delayed by [the company], but Community Corporate did everything they could to get us another placement ASAP." – Alumni

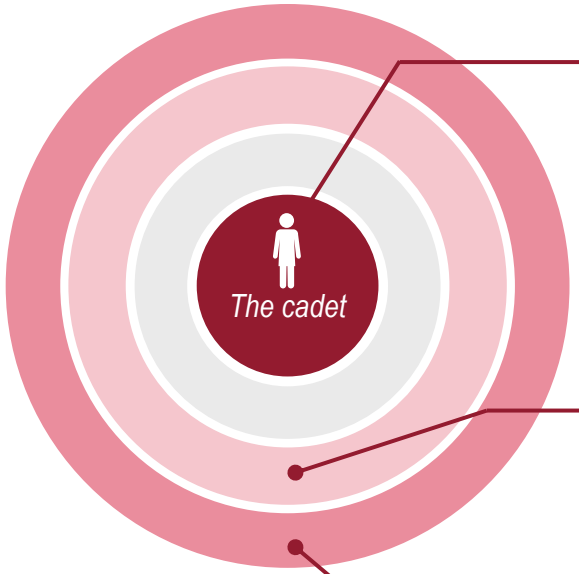
"At [my placement company] they have a learning program internally that they pay for. They have access to tons of educational material, tech and softer skills, we have access and if we have time we can go through and learn if we have time." – Alumni

"[The host company] have good processes such as a new joiner experience program for three weeks to teach us about the company and intense programs to teach us everything we needed to know for our role." – Alumni

Sources: dandolo interviews with Alumni, employers and the Community Corporate DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

Community Corporate | Mentoring, wrap-around and transition support

A core component of the Community Corporate model was the mentoring, wrap around and transition support they provided to cadets. This was highly valued and well received by cadets and employers.



Mentoring support helped cadets to clarify expectations and support their career development

Cadets we heard from valued the mentoring support they received through the cadetship. In particular, they found it useful to receive guidance tailored to their specific circumstances and help them navigate the corporate landscape. Mentor's also assisted cadets with clarifying expectations, facilitating skill application, and offering career advice. Community Corporate facilitated training with supervisors of cadets from employer organisation, which focused on cultural competence and communication strategies. Employers we heard from told us this training was essential, noting improvements in team dynamics and the integration of diverse talents into their workforce.

Wrap around support helped cadets address professional and personal challenges they encountered during placements

In particular, cadets we heard from told us this support helped them with their overall well-being and job satisfaction. Employers also acknowledged the value of wrap-around support services, in particular finding that they supported cadets' work experience and facilitated smoother transitions into their roles. They found these wrap around supports complemented services they provided through HR and other diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives aimed at increasing inclusivity in the work environment.

Transition support helped cadets to prepare for long-term employment post cadetships

Transition support was seen by cadets as a bridge to long-term employment, with many noting the practical assistance in CV writing, interview preparation, and understanding job market expectations were important supports to help them prepare for life after the cadetship.

Employers viewed transition support as beneficial to both the cadets and their organisations, noting that it prepared cadets for potential full-time roles and reduced turnover. They found the dual focus on both immediate job skills as well as longer term career and employment opportunities as one of the most beneficial features of the model.

"[Community Corporate] was involved with everybody and did so much and would personally follow up everything. The team is amazing of course. Their leader pushed for everything, she's looking for a result." – Alumni

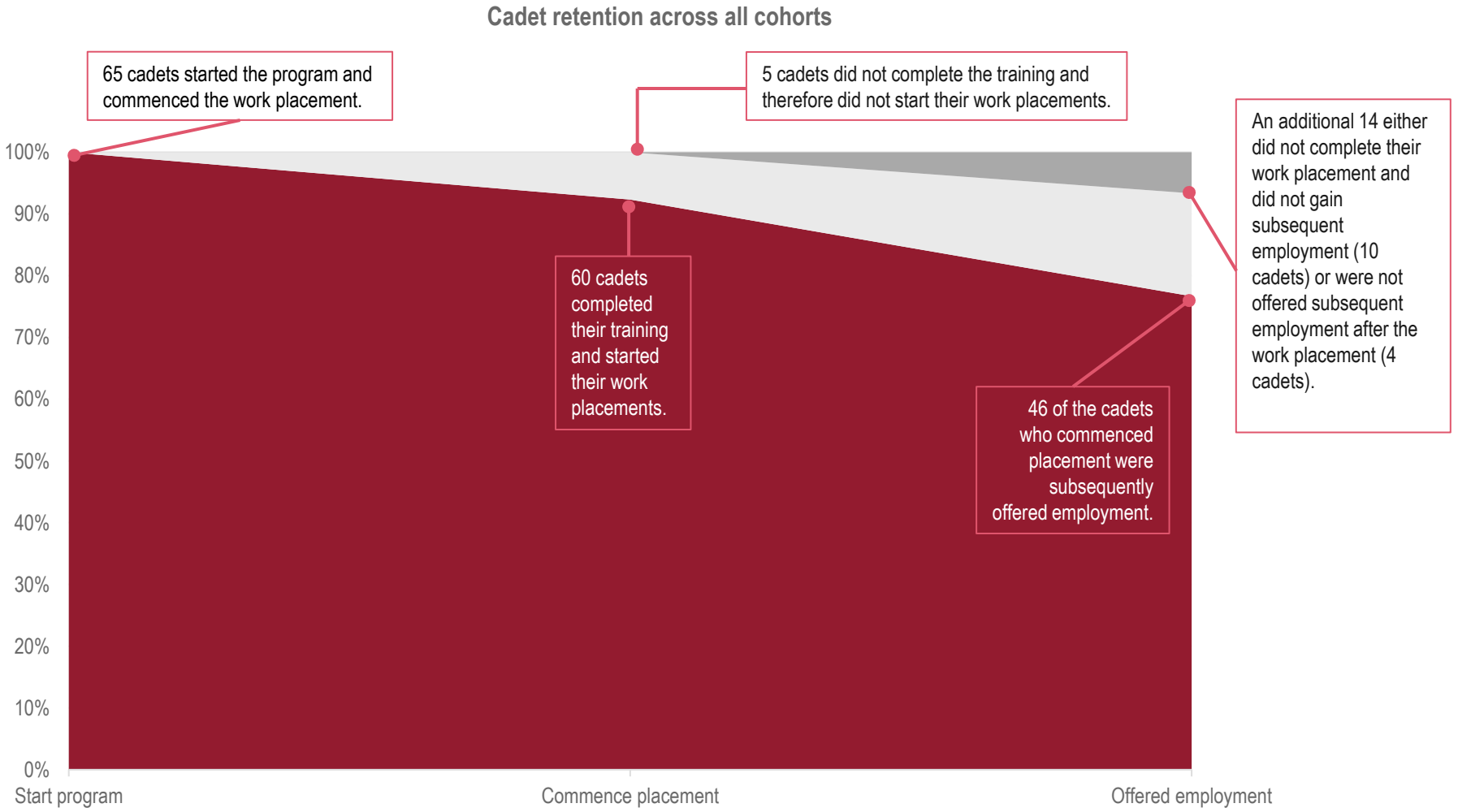
"We were very hands on in terms of time and support needed from our own team and providing buddies for and supporting the cadets." – Employer

"They have an intense program to teach us everything we need to know for the role. We had three weeks of training. After that we have contact with HR and we have a buddy to give us advice which is very important in the first few months. We have these programs and benefits and we have managers and they have tons of support, every month we have a meeting with our leads, so really they have a good system of support." – Alumni

Sources: dandolo interviews with Alumni, employers and the Community Corporate DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

Community Corporate | Outputs of the project

Community Corporate delivered the cadetship program to seven intakes of cadets. Retention and completion were high across the seven intakes, with 50 of the 65 cadets progressing to start work placements and 46 cadets who commenced placements being offered subsequent employment.



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Sources: dandolo interviews with Alumni, employers and the Community Corporate DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

Community Corporate | Post-cadetship outcomes

There was a high conversion rate of placements into full-time work post-placement with 92% of cadets being offered ongoing employment or contract extensions. This may be because of the extent of employer involvement in the co-design process and Community Corporate's smaller cohort pool.

50 cadets who completed the 12-week paid work placements…

Of those that secured full-time employment and contract extensions (46 cadets)

28%

Of cadets (14 cadets) received ongoing permanent roles and are still employed 12 months+ in the digital/ tech industry.

14%

Of cadets (7 cadets) received contract extensions of 6 months + in the digital/ tech industry.

50%

Of cadets (25 cadets) received contract extensions between 3-6 months in the digital/ tech industry.

1 cadet

Is due to complete cadetship in April with an extension confirmed until May in the digital/ tech industry.

Other pathways post-cadetship

1 cadet

Returned to further tertiary / technical studies.

2 cadets

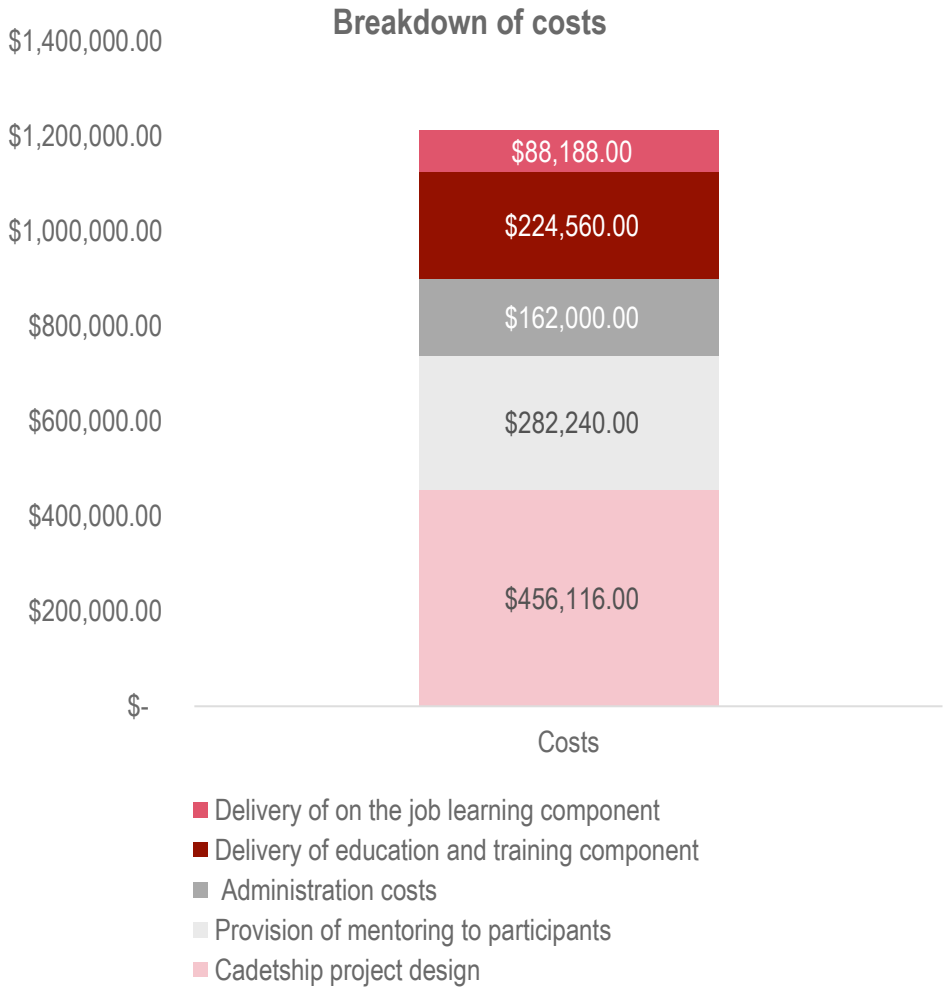
Completed cadetships on 1st March 2024 and were extended for an additional 3 months until 30 June in the digital / tech industry but have not yet commenced this period.

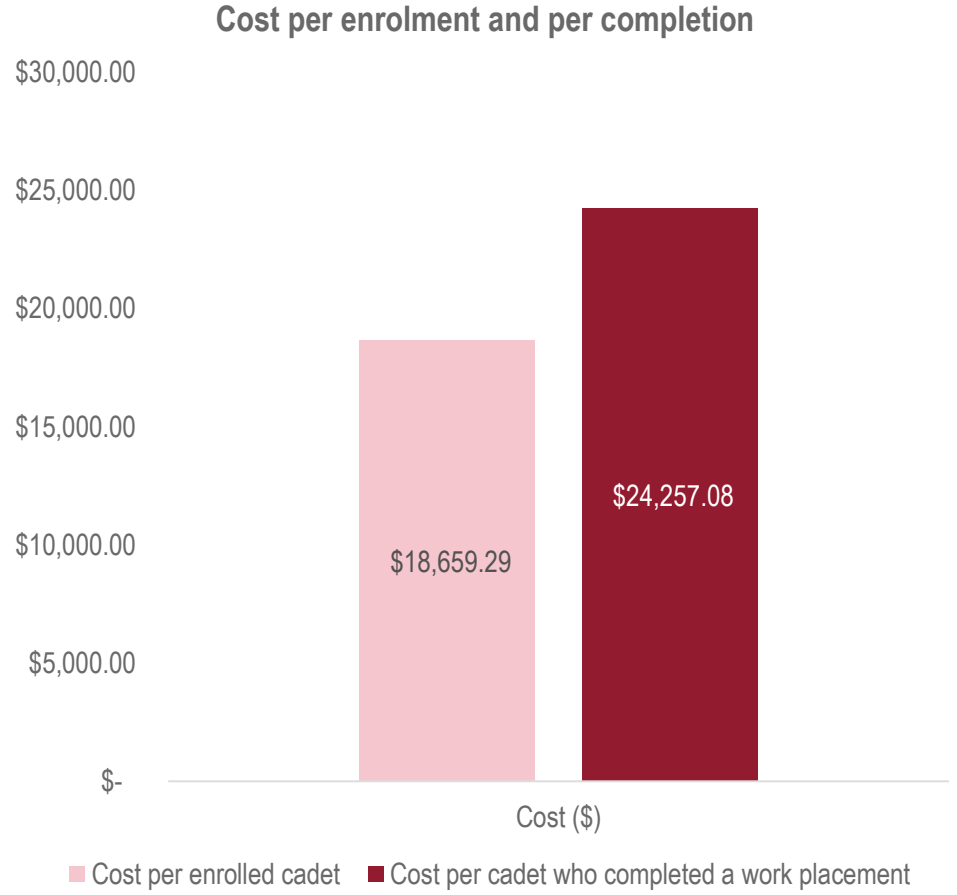
Further information about post-cadetship outcomes and the impact of the cadetship on individual cadets is provided in the case studies at Appendix F.

Sources: Community Corporate DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

Community Corporate | Costs

Community Corporate spent $1.2 million on the cadetship project. A third of the costs were attributed to cadetship project design, which is comparable to other providers. Costs per cadet enrolment and cadet completion were comparable because Community Corporate had a high retention rate, with 50 of 65 cadets completing a work placement.





NB: These costings detailed on this page have been designed for measuring and comparative purposes and should be used with caution. It's important to note that they do not take into account the differences between provider models and factor this into costing models.

Source: Community Corporate DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

Providers | MEGT | Key findings

The MEGT cadetship project aimed to support women re-entering the workforce, drawing on an 'earn while you learn' model. Overall, six in ten cadets secured employment. MEGT faced challenges in aligning training with employer needs and despite significant investment, there was a lower than expected uptake from host employers.

Model and design	Structured training	Industry placements	Mentoring, wrap around support and training	Cost
MEGT collaborated with employer organisations to co-design the cadetship. Despite employers being involved in the co-design process, some of these employers didn't continue on to take cadets in placements, which limited its effectiveness.	The project supported cadets to develop digital skills, however, the training they received did not always meet employer needs. This was due to the nature and complexity of the skills required for roles.	Employers and cadets both expressed that training needed to align more closely with the job roles, with employers suggesting that project-based learning could better align training to the placements.	MEGT's cadet mentoring received positive feedback, with suggestions for improvement including more comfortable avenues for expressing concerns and enhancing peer support networks. Other wrap-around supports and the transition support services were well-received by both cadets and employers.	MEGT spent $2.9 million in total, of which over a third of the costs were attributed to cadetship project design.
The majority of cadets already held a tertiary qualification and were unemployed.	Out of 63 cadets who started the cadetship and commenced the work placements, 59 completed their training and placement, and 36 of the cadets who commenced placement were subsequently offered employment. 23 cadets who completed their training and started their placements were not offered ongoing employment. Lack of employer involvement in the co-design process, as well as the limited number of roles available by employer organisations for cadets (which was not within the control of the DSCT) appears to have contributed to this.			Cost per enrolment for MEGT cadets was $43,822, slightly lower than the cost per cadet who completed work placements ($46,793).

NB: These costings detailed on this page have been designed for measuring and comparative purposes and should be used with caution. It's important to note that they do not take into account the differences between provider models and factor this into costing models.

MEGT | Overview of the model

The MEGT cadetship project was designed with employers, largely drawing on learnings and feedback received from an existing 'earn while you learn' model. The project focused on supporting women re-entering the workforce.

Attraction

- Recruitment of employers through social media, sales campaigns, webinars, newsletters
- All applicants funnelled to information portal on MEGT website
- Digital advertising campaign developed to target women in key demographics

Selection

- All applicants are tested for suitability for the program considering work experience and prior IT education
- There are multiple rounds of assessment for cadets including:
  - Screening by MEGT recruiter for suitability for the program
  - Invitation for suitable candidates to take the Prodigy Learning Digital Literacy Skills Test
  - Interview by an MEGT recruiter of candidates who passed Digital Literacy Skills Test

Matching

- Successful participants participate in employer interviews
- Employers then choose which candidates they wish to employ

Preparation

- Information session (IAT[1] and MEGT)
- Exam Preparation and IT capability checkoff session
- 3 days prior learning to placement
- MEGT provide supervisor training 2 weeks before the cadet starts
- Pre-training session in the week before cadets start their placement

Formal learning

- Successful cadets receive a digital skills badge and progress to Microsoft Office Specialist industry-recognised certifications
- Cadets complete a MicroSkill in all three disciplines (short, foundational, introductory, unaccredited learning)
- Over 14 weeks, two stackable training blocks with micro-credentials

Ongoing assessment

- Throughout the work placement an MEGT Industry Employment Consultant visits with the cadet and employer to assess work performance and address any issues
- On completion of the relevant training, candidates undertake certification exams for two (relevant stream) Micro-credentials and Microsoft Certifications

Work placement

- MEGT provide networking halfway point for cadets (organised by MEGT, delivered by Women in Technology (WIT)

Transition

- Cadets guided to other employment opportunities e.g. permanent placements or casual roles
- Cadets assisted with advice on further study

Support

Site visits as part of MEGT's monitoring and mentoring program. Mentoring, pastoral care and coaching includes :

- Assistance to develop tools and strategies to address and cope with any issues that may be impacting work or study
- Mental health first aid support
- Information, resources and referral to professional support services where required

[1] The Institute of Applied Technology acted as an education delivery partner with MEGT.
Source: MEGT DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

MEGT | Participant demographics

Of the 63 cadets who participated in the cadetship with MEGT, the majority of cadets had a tertiary qualification prior to commencing and were unemployed.

Of the 63 cadets who started the program, they are…

The majority of cadets are between 30 – 39 years old (31 of the 63 cadets). It is interesting to note that almost a third of the cadets were between 40 – 59 years old.

Most of the cadets are located in New South Wales (24 cadets) and Queensland (21 cadets).

Within participant backgrounds…

60% From Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background.

10% Identify as Refugee / Asylum seekers.

5% Identify as First Nations.

Education and employment background

84% of cadets had a tertiary qualification prior to the cadetship.

79% of cadets were unemployed prior to the cadetship. A further 19% were working part-time or full-time.

Sources: dandolo analysis of the Attachment B - Cohort Data Report - Refugee Digital Cadetships April 30 2024.

MEGT | Design

The MEGT cadetship project was designed with employers, largely drawing on learnings and feedback received from an existing 'earn while you learn' model. The project focused on supporting women re-entering the workforce, with a strong focus on mentorship of cadets.

1

MEGT collaborated with employer organisations to co-design the cadetship

- MEGT worked closely with employers and industry experts to adapt an existing 'earn while you learn' model for the purposes of the cadetship.
- This process aimed to consider and project workforce demands, ensure that the curriculum met the needs of both the cadets and the employers.
- The co-design phase involved engaging with a wide range of organisations, such as Microsoft, Prodigy Learning, Datacom, and Women-in-Technology. These partners provided insights and recommendations that guided key decisions about the program's framework, such as the incorporation of micro-credentials, optimal program duration, and selection of appropriate certifications.

"We had this cohort approach in mind – we are going to have set cohorts and large numbers. The idea of the cadetship worked really well and what we found particularly difficult was getting the right number of businesses was particularly difficult and if I had my time again I would look for a more flexible delivery approach." – MEGT

2

Despite employers being involved in the co-design process, some of these employers didn't continue on to take cadets in placements, which limited its effectiveness

- Despite engaging employers in the initial co-design process, many of these employers did not continue on as employers that took cadets for placements. This limited the effectiveness of the co-design process as it meant design of the model wasn't tailored to the specific needs of participating employers.

"We encountered some challenges with some employers choosing not to follow on after the initial co-design phase to take on cadets for work placements." – MEGT

3

MEGT created opportunities for continuous feedback, which meant the model was iterated and refined throughout the life of the project to meet the needs of employers

- Employers who hosted cadets were given opportunities to provide continuous feedback on the MEGT model, including its structure and content delivered to cadets.
- For instance, employer feedback led to changes in the delivery of training, including a three-day training introduction introduced from intake three onwards to support cadets ahead of commencing placements, as well as modifications to the training schedule to better accommodate the employer and cadet needs.

"We had very regular meetings on teams with their contact person, fortnightly and later on they were monthly, and then a close up meeting at the end, so we could give feedback. Everyone attends that last meeting." – Employer

Source: MEGT DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

MEGT | Structured training

The project supported cadets to develop digital skills, however, the training they received did not always meet employer needs. This was due to the nature and complexity of the skills required for roles.

	Cadet perceptions of the training	Employer feedback
Workload challenges	• Initially, cadets found the scheduling of the training intense, indicating that the workload, especially when combined with work placements, was substantial. This feedback led to adjustments in the program structure, including the introduction of a three-day training induction and a two-week training consolidation period to alleviate the intensity.	• The changes made to the program structure, based on initial feedback (like extending the program duration and introducing mid-placement consolidation), were well-received by employers. Employers noted these adjustments positively impacted many cadet's ability to manage the demands of the program and contributed to a more beneficial learning experience.
Technical training	• Cadets we heard from told us the content of the foundational digital skills and the specialised micro-skills training in Cyber, Data, and Cloud Computing were relevant and beneficial for their professional development and future career prospects. • During later cohorts, some cadets told us that a closer alignment between the training and the tasks they were performing in their work placements would have been useful to enhance the applicability of their learning and increase their effectiveness at work.	• Employers were generally satisfied with the structured training as it provided cadets with the foundational skills needed in their roles. However, some employers noted that the Micro-Skills training could be better tailored to match the specific needs of their operations. • Some employers had expectations that exceeded the entry-level nature of the program, particularly in specialised areas like Cyber Security. This mismatch led to feedback suggesting the need for clearer communication about the program's scope and the level of cadet expertise.
Real-world job application on the go	• Cadets said that while training was valuable, the opportunity to apply what they learned in a real-life work environment made it more effective by helping them to contextualise learning and apply it to real life work scenarios.	• Employers found the mandatory supervisor training to be useful as it helped supervisors better understand their roles and how to support cadets effectively.

"They do offer an online training – we do 4 days at work and 1 day online training which is quite handy and it helps if you have questions to go to the lecturer which I think was quite helpful." – Cadet

"It was relevant for the roles we are hiring for. They do a program in MS so we use a lot of that especially for students. I was quite happy with what they had, so long as they had IT foundation, they had to learn a lot on the job." – Employer

Sources: dandolo interviews with Alumni, employers and MEGT DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

MEGT | Industry placements

Employers and cadets both expressed that training needed to align more closely with the job roles, with employers suggesting that project-based learning could better align training to the placements.

	Cadet matching process	Employer engagement	Work placement outcomes
Cadet perceptions	Cadets underwent a rigorous selection process including skill assessments and interviews. A structured database helped match cadets' skills and preferences with employer requirements. Cadets expressed a desire for placements that aligned with their skills and interests more closely. Cadets faced challenges when employer expectations exceeded the entry-level scope of the program, requiring expectation management and communication from MEGT.	Cadets said that the hands-on experience was important for their learning and professional development. Cadets received structured training and mentoring, which includes employer involvement to ensure practical learning aligns with theoretical training.	Cadets expressed a strong appreciation for the opportunity to apply their learning in real-world settings, which helped solidify their understanding and boost confidence in their professional skills.
Employer feedback	Employers provided role definitions and skills needed to inform the cadets matching process which have been crucial to ensuring that cadets meet their expectations and standards. Employers noted mismatches between cadet training and job roles, particularly in cyber security positions, and have faced challenges matching with cadets in regional areas due to limited applicant pools.	Employers have continuously engaged in the process, providing feedback that led to program adjustments such as extending the placement duration and introducing preplacement training days to better prepare cadets. Further, employers have also introduced supervisor training to better mentor and support cadets.	Some employers suggested that including more case studies and project-based learning could enhance the training's effectiveness, providing cadets with more hands-on experience before entering the workplace.

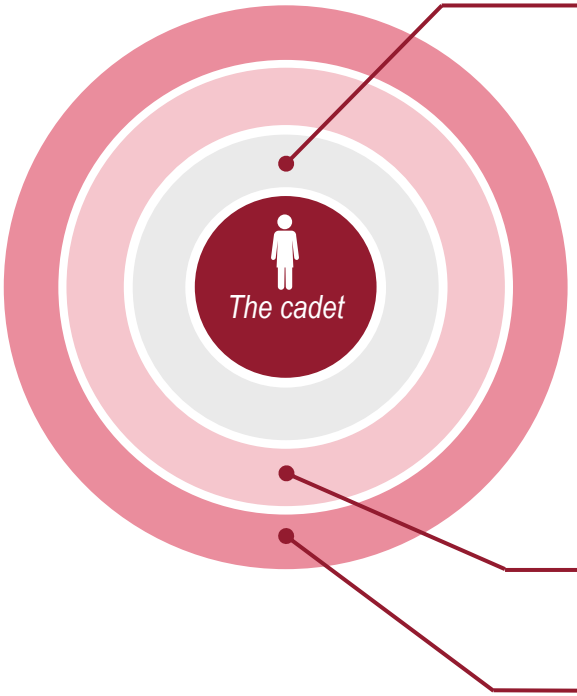
"MEGT have a checklist to make sure that employers don't throw people in to the dark, they have proper onboarding, proper equipment, HR process, proper protection as any other staff working here. Checklist with me and then checklist with the candidate so that the things I say they make sure I did it. Every meeting they have, they have a checklist and there's an agenda." – Employer

"The MEGT coordinators were really helpful and connected since the start of the process. I had a lot of struggles even getting the formal offer letter. They were really helpful and chased [the employers] up and even during the process of during the cadetship while we were having 1-1 conversations." – Cadetship Alumni

Sources: dandolo interviews with Alumni, employers and MEGT DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

MEGT | Mentoring, wrap-around and transition support

Mentoring, wrap around and transition supports were well received. Employers and cadets also identified some opportunities for enhancement and improvement in future.



Mentoring arrangements were well received by employers and cadets, who also identified some opportunities for enhancements and improvements in future

MEGT internal mentoring arrangements were structured to provide cadets with tailored support and guidance throughout the cadetship. This included an initial meeting between supervisors, cadets and mentors, which served as an opportunity to address queries and concerns and ensure alignment from the outset, as well as regular fortnightly mentor catch ups conducted via Microsoft Teams to provide cadets with regular opportunities to discuss their experiences. In addition, meetings with cadets, mentors and supervisors occurred every four weeks to check in on progress. Cadets and employers we heard from were generally positive about the mentoring component of the program and noted that it provided regular feedback channels and opportunities to trouble shoot issues early.

Cadets and employers noted that there were opportunities to improve mentoring supports in future, including one on one meetings between supervisors and mentors to express concerns more comfortably. In addition, they considered there were opportunities for enhancing employer understanding of the training requirements of cadets, establishing better peer support networks and supports such as a group chats, to enhance communication and camaraderie between cadets.

MEGT cadets also received a range of other wrap around supports through the cadetship

Other supports MEGT cadets received included induction and welcome information sessions, sessions to support exam preparation and IT capability check offs and networking events run by Women in Technology.

Ongoing training and transition support from the employer

The transition support services were well-received, with many cadets stating that these services helped them feel more prepared for the workforce. The resume and interview prep sessions were highlighted as particularly beneficial.

Employers valued the program's focus on transition support, acknowledging that this not only helped cadets prepare for future roles but also benefited their organisations by cultivating well-prepared, employable employees.

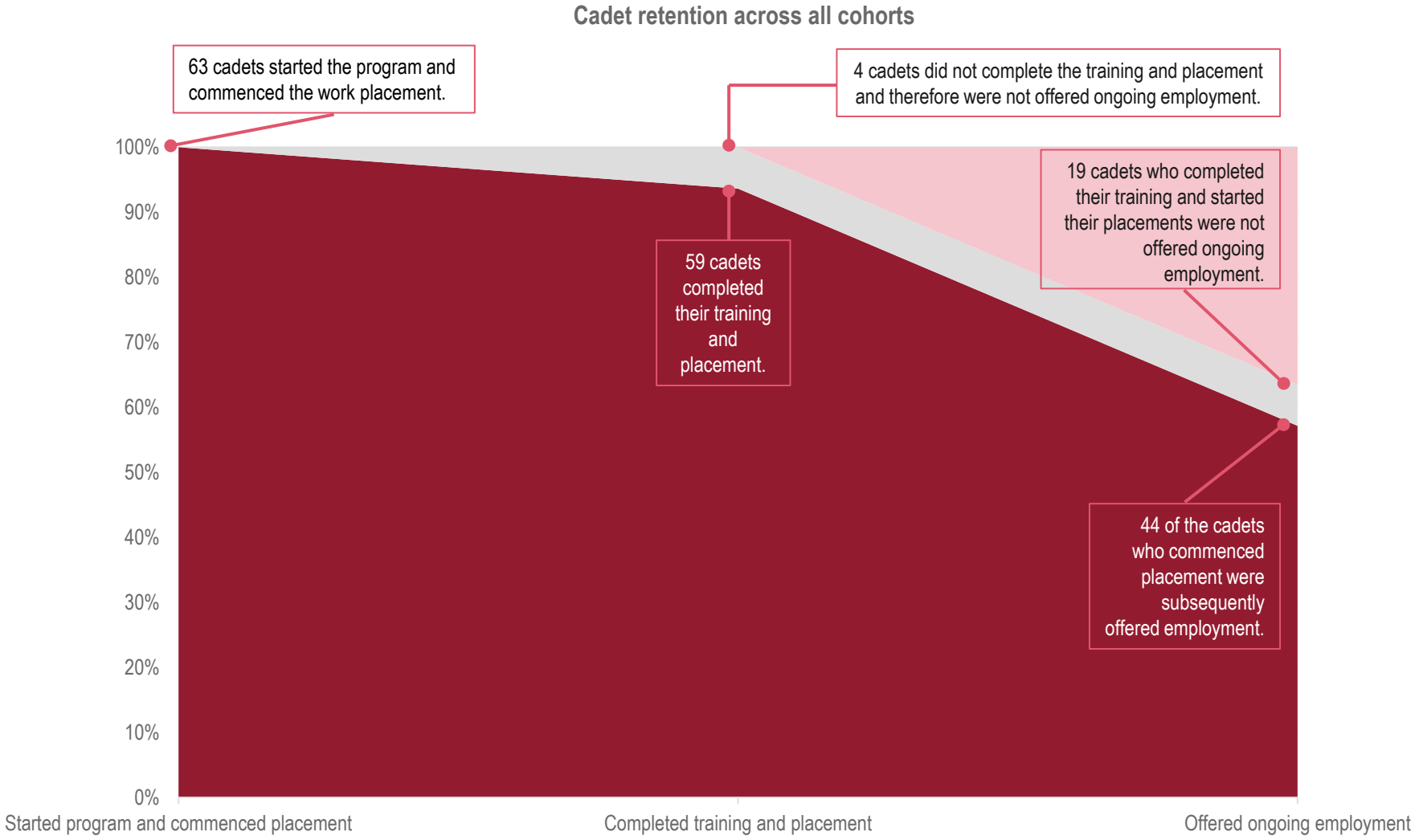
"The supervisor provided training and it was really good." – Cadet

"MEGT finding the right placements to start with. Meet up with my manager. Communication is helpful. To be honest start with an organization without any knowledge or background – support is really important" – Cadet

Sources: dandolo interviews with Alumni, employers and MEGT DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

MEGT | Outputs of the project

A high proportion of MEGT cadets completed the structured training program and placements. However, there were low employment outcomes for MEGT cadets, with about six in ten cadets being offered employment after their placements.



Source: MEGT DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

MEGT | Post-cadetship outcomes

There are a significant number of cadets who have not found employment in the digital skills sector post-cadetship. Lack of employer involvement in the co-design process, as well as the limited number of roles available by employer organisations for cadets (which was not within the control of the DSCT) appears to have contributed to this.

63 cadets were enrolled in the program...

Of those that secured full-time employment and contract extensions (59 cadets)...

75%

Of the completing cadets (44 cadets) secured ongoing employment at the end of their cadetship.

96%

Of those that secured ongoing employment, 42 of the 44 cadets secured positions in IT-related roles.

77%

Of cadets (7 cadets) received contract extensions of 6 months + in the digital/ tech industry.

55%

remained employed with the host employers they were placed with during their cadetships.

Further training

4 cadets

Pursued Microsoft Office Specialist and Microsoft Certified Fundamentals certifications as part of their training, potentially opening doors to higher qualifications and positions within the IT sector.

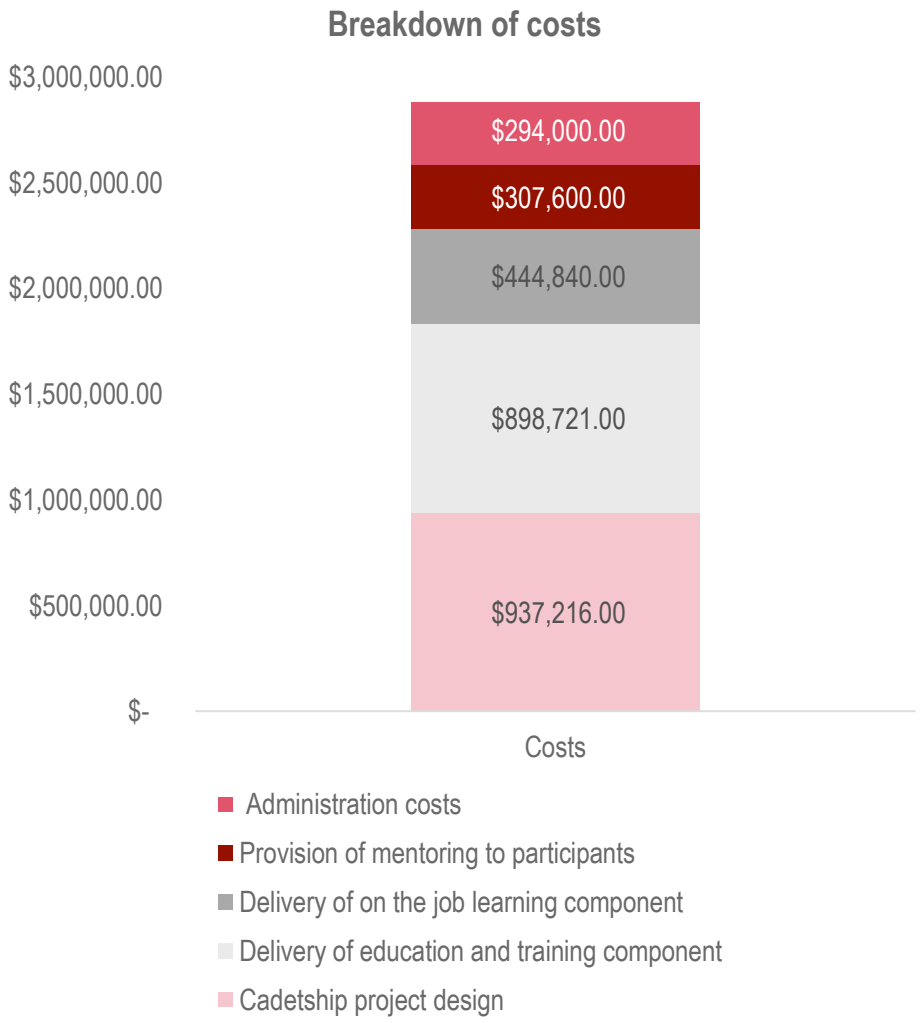
Some cadets shifted into specific IT roles such as Cyber Security Analysts and Data System Analysts, suggesting a pathway towards specialised IT fields.

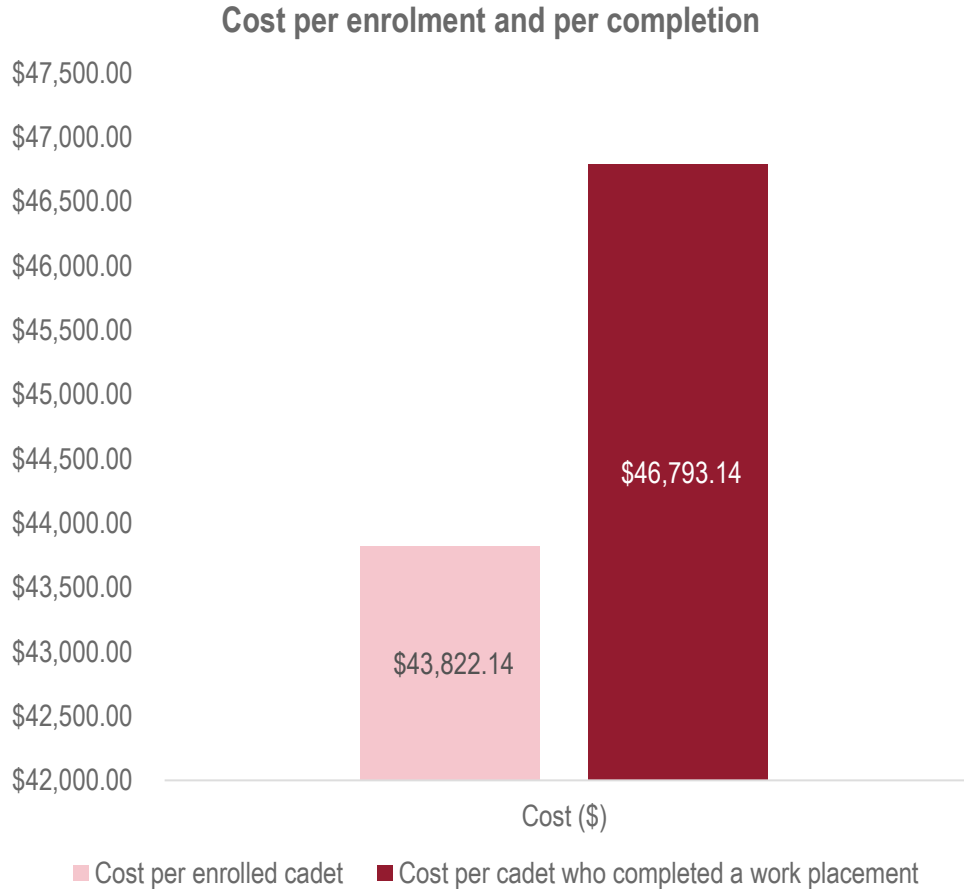
Further information about post-cadetship outcomes and the impact of the cadetship on individual cadets is provided in the case studies at Appendix F.

Source: MEGT DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

MEGT | Costs

MEGT spent $2.9 million on the cadetship program, with over a third of the costs attributed to cadetship project design. MEGT's cost per cadet who completed a work placement was slightly higher than cost per enrolled cadet because fewer cadets completed a work placement.





NB: These costings detailed on this page have been designed for measuring and comparative purposes and should be used with caution. It's important to note that they do not take into account the differences between provider models and factor this into costing models.

Source: MEGT DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

Providers | Goanna Education | Key findings

The Goanna Education cadetship targeted diverse cohorts. The digital courses delivered included a mix of VET and vendor training. The project encountered challenges in recruiting host employers and securing work placements which led to low cadetship completions and mixed outcomes for participants.

Model and design

Goanna Education worked with employers on initial co-design of the project, but this wasn't done in a meaningful way at the start. The level of co-design and employer involvement differed by course. Goanna Education worked with employers to iterate and refine the cadetship informed by feedback over the life of the project.

The Goanna Education project provided tailored support to cadets, alongside an intensive upskilling period before entering the workplace. Employers were engaged in tailoring training content to their needs, however they largely adapted existing models.

Structured training

The project was designed to equip cadets with digital skills, but its ability to produce job-ready candidates was constrained by challenges such as limited work placements. These limitations impacted the depth of practical experience gained and the breadth of skills covered, potentially hindering cadets' readiness for employment.

Out of the 122 cadets who started the program, 31 cadets who completed training received a work placement and a further 2 found digital-related roles independently of Goanna Education. Following the work placements, 23 were subsequently offered ongoing employment (including the 2 cadets that went straight into digital jobs).

There were significant number of cadets (63) who have not found employment in the digital skills sector after completing their training. Lack of employer involvement in the co-design process and misalignment of industry skills needs, as well as limited work placements available for cadets (which was not within the control of the DSCT) appears to have contributed to this.

Industry placements

The availability of placements for cadets was influenced by industry layoffs and recruitment freezes, as well as challenges in securing commitments from employers. Delays in placement matching and a lack of guaranteed placements caused frustration among cadets, impacting the overall program experience.

Mentoring, wrap around support and training

There was poor uptake of the structured mentoring components from ACS by Goanna Education cadets. Employers pulling out of placements and the large number of cadets that were waiting to be placed compounded the challenge for Goanna Education of supporting cadets well through transitions.

Cost

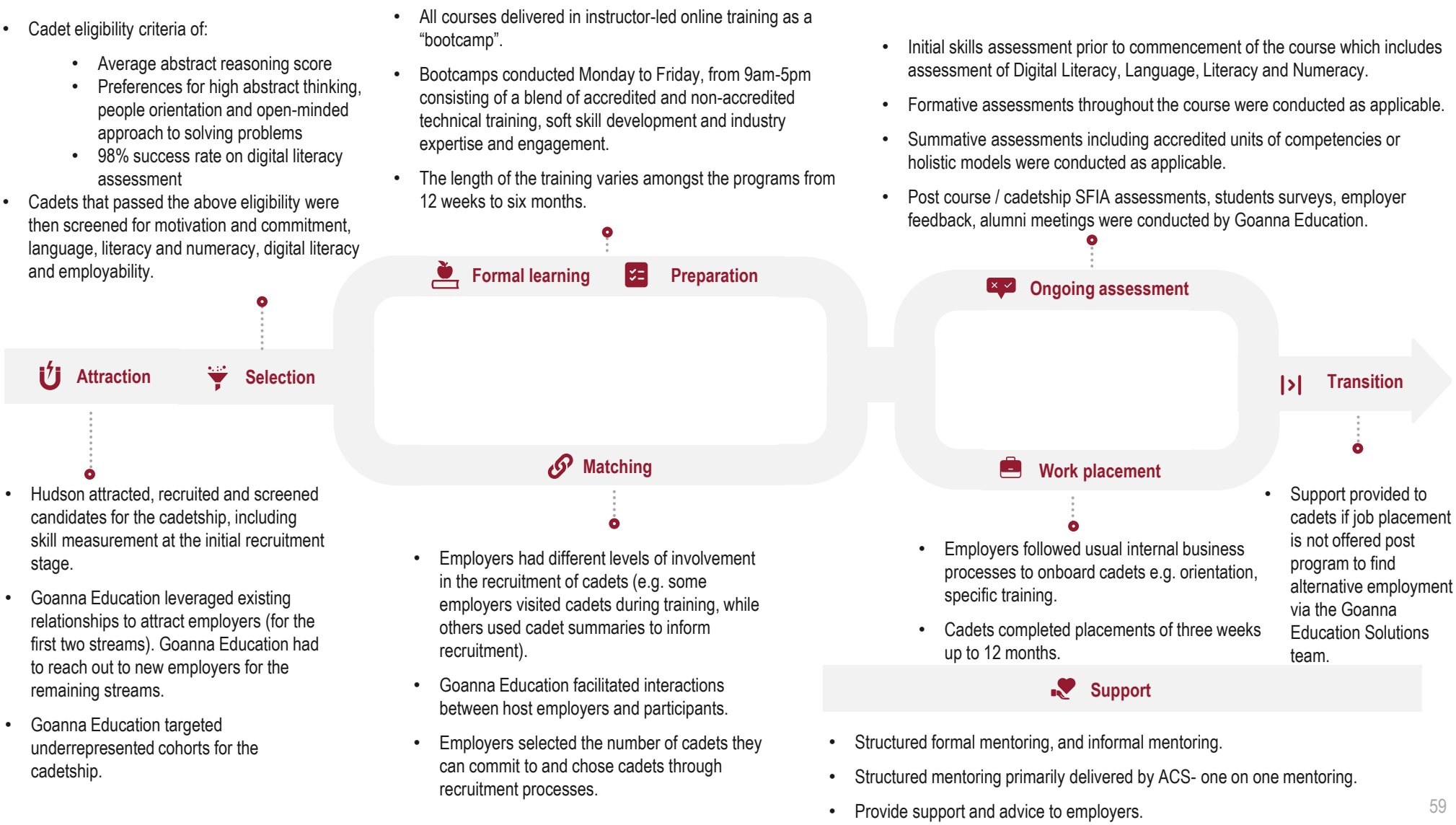
Goanna Education spent $1.5 million in total, of which just over a third of the costs were attributed to delivery of education and training.

The cost per cadet who completed their work placement ($48,724) was significantly higher than the cost per enrolment for Goanna Education cadets ($12,381).

NB: These costings detailed on this page have been designed for measuring and comparative purposes and should be used with caution. It's important to note that they do not take into account the differences between provider models and factor this into costing models.

Goanna Education | Overview of the model

The Goanna Education project provided tailored support to cadets, alongside an intensive upskilling period before entering the workplace. Employers were engaged in tailoring training content to their needs, however they largely adapted existing models.



- Cadet eligibility criteria of:
  - Average abstract reasoning score
  - Preferences for high abstract thinking, people orientation and open-minded approach to solving problems
  - 98% success rate on digital literacy assessment
- Cadets that passed the above eligibility were then screened for motivation and commitment, language, literacy and numeracy, digital literacy and employability.

- Hudson attracted, recruited and screened candidates for the cadetship, including skill measurement at the initial recruitment stage.
- Goanna Education leveraged existing relationships to attract employers (for the first two streams). Goanna Education had to reach out to new employers for the remaining streams.
- Goanna Education targeted underrepresented cohorts for the cadetship.

- All courses delivered in instructor-led online training as a "bootcamp".
- Bootcamps conducted Monday to Friday, from 9am-5pm consisting of a blend of accredited and non-accredited technical training, soft skill development and industry expertise and engagement.
- The length of the training varies amongst the programs from 12 weeks to six months.

- Employers had different levels of involvement in the recruitment of cadets (e.g. some employers visited cadets during training, while others used cadet summaries to inform recruitment).
- Goanna Education facilitated interactions between host employers and participants.
- Employers selected the number of cadets they can commit to and chose cadets through recruitment processes.

- Initial skills assessment prior to commencement of the course which includes assessment of Digital Literacy, Language, Literacy and Numeracy.
- Formative assessments throughout the course were conducted as applicable.
- Summative assessments including accredited units of competencies or holistic models were conducted as applicable.
- Post course / cadetship SFIA assessments, students surveys, employer feedback, alumni meetings were conducted by Goanna Education.

- Employers followed usual internal business processes to onboard cadets e.g. orientation, specific training.
- Cadets completed placements of three weeks up to 12 months.

- Support provided to cadets if job placement is not offered post program to find alternative employment via the Goanna Education Solutions team.

- Structured formal mentoring, and informal mentoring.
- Structured mentoring primarily delivered by ACS- one on one mentoring.
- Provide support and advice to employers.

Sources: Goanna Education, DSCT Interim Implementation Report, May 2023 and Goanna Education, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.

Goanna Education | Participant demographics

Of the 122 cadets in the program, the majority of cadets had a tertiary qualification prior to the cadetship and were employed in some capacity prior to the cadetship.

Of the 122 cadets who started the program, they were…

The majority of cadets were between 30 – 39 years old (61 of the 122 cadets).

Most of the cadets were located in Victoria (33 cadets), Queensland (24 cadets) and New South Wales (23 cadets).

Within participant backgrounds…

65% From Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background.

6% Identified as Refugee / Asylum seekers.

20% Identified as First Nations people.

Education and employment background

54% of cadets had a tertiary qualification prior to the cadetship.

64% of cadets were working in either casual, part-time or full-time work prior to the cadetship. Only 18% were unemployed or studying prior to the cadetship.

Note: Data was not shared for the 22 cadets who were enrolled with UST[1].

Source: dandolo analysis of Goanna Education, Cohort Data Report, April 2024.
[1] See page 64 for more information.

Goanna Education | Design

Goanna Education worked with employers on initial co-design of the project, but this wasn't done in a meaningful way. Goanna Education worked with employers to iterate and refine the cadetship model throughout the life of the project.

1

Goanna Education worked with employers on initial co-design of the project, but this wasn't done in a meaningful way at the start.

- The initial co-design process involved working with AWS, Salesforce and Microsoft, as well as Atlassian, Avanade and Macquarie Group / UST to provide initial feedback and guidance on the program structure and curriculum.
- This included early engagement sessions ahead of submitting the response to the RFT.
- Despite this initial engagement, we heard from employers and Goanna Education that the co-design process would have been more meaningful if clearer expectations and alignment with partners was established earlier on to ensure the broad structure of the program aligned with employer needs.

"[Some students did not complete the qualification we needed], not sure if we emphasised enough that it was something we wanted them to do. Maybe we needed to be stricter with our criteria." - Employer

2

The level of co-design and employer involvement differed by course.

- For some courses, we heard there was significant and close consultation with employers on what training was required to meet employer needs. We heard in particular this occurred with the AWS re/Start course to create a custom bootcamp for this program and UST Step it up. Goanna Education also collaborated closely with Salesforce to develop training products. This occurred both during the initial design phase and alongside implementation, where regular feedback was provided on the provision of the course.
- For other courses, there was more limited engagement with employers, particularly where courses were started without secured placement opportunities.

"Having worked with Goanna before we had confidence in the people coming through and we knew that what they were teaching would align with what they then required [in the workplace]." - Employer

3

Goanna Education worked with employers to iterate and refine the cadetship informed by feedback over the life of the project.

- Goanna Education consulted with employers over the life of the project to adjust the format, skills and delivery of the model to align with their preferences. For example, a Microsoft Azure certification was added following this being raised as a preference by Avanade in 2022.
- Goanna Education met with businesses and employers on a monthly basis to ensure there were ongoing and open channels for feedback and iteration of the cadetship and courses.

"We had a good relationship with [Goanna Education] and felt comfortable having that backwards and forwards." – Employer

Sources:
Goanna Education, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.
Goanna Education interview with dandolopartners, 25 March 2024. Employer interviews with dandolopartners, 2024.

Goanna Education | Sub-contractors and employer partners

Goanna Education engaged Hudson and ACS as delivery partners, leveraged existing employer relationships and worked with industry to design course content.

Support Organisations

Hudson
Hudson were engaged under a master service agreement (MSA) to complete the advertising, recruitment and screening of participants. The majority of advertising and recruitment occurred through traditional social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Neither Goanna Education or Hudson formed relationships with community organisations to access the hard-to-reach cohorts they were aiming for. Goanna Education acknowledged there were limitations to Hudson's recruitment and screening processes that impacted on the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cohorts they were able to engage.

Australian Computer Society (ACS)
ACS were engaged under an MSA to provide mentoring and support to cadets and provide content and curriculum support to Goanna Education.

"The intention of working with two big companies that are well recognised within Australia was the leverage their industry contacts…[to] expand Goanna Education's already existing networks." - Goanna Education

Industry and Employers

Goanna Education consulted with industry in designing course and learning materials, particularly vendors who own the certifications being taught. Employers were consulted, but largely secondary to industry's involvement, with one employer describing their involvement as 'tweaking what was already there'.

Microsoft, AWS and Salesforce
Goanna Education engaged closely with these organisations to deliver their vendor certifications. Goanna Education worked closely with AWS to map the AWS re/Start course to units of competency in the Certificate III of IT to create a custom bootcamp for this program. Goanna Education also collaborated closely with Salesforce to develop training products. AWS's policies prevent Goanna Education from accessing their clients to market trained cadets, however Salesforce advertised the DSCT to clients to encourage placement uptake.

UST and Macquarie Bank
UST are contracted by Macquarie Bank to recruit and train employable workers. UST provide mentoring and guidance to a small cohort of students for Macquarie Bank, resulting in a highly customized and specific program to the employer's needs. UST, Macquarie and Goanna Education met regularly to fine tune the training and ensure that students were prepared for the specific activities they would encounter on placement. Goanna Education acknowledges this model was successful, with cadets prepared to be job ready, regular co-design and fine tuning of the existing program.

"[Cadets did not do the qualification we requested in co-design]. Not sure if we emphasised [our skills requirements enough]. Maybe we could've been stricter with our criteria." - Employer

Atlassian and Avanade
Based on consultation with these employers, Goanna Education shifted the code language from JavaScript to Java in the Diploma of IT, and later added the Microsoft Azure certification.

- Atlassian employed 4 cadets immediately after the completion of their training for a 12-week placement. Changes at Atlassian including redundancies presented challenges for cadets' transition to the workplace.
- Avanade delayed their intake of cadets by 3 months to May 2023. Goanna Education took this opportunity to collaborate with Avanade on supporting elements of their onboarding prior to cadets beginning placement, including security clearances and enrolment in short courses relevant to their placement. Goanna Education notes this approach was successful and enabled cadets to 'hit the ground running'. Avanade provided compensation to cadets for the wait period. **The unexpected extra time enabled collaboration and co-design of pre-employment preparation, a best practice representation of what the trial intended to produce.**

"Industry satisfaction with the project has been positive, with employer partners recognising the value of the alternate training pathways and the quality of cadets produced by Goanna Education." - Goanna Education

Sources:
Goanna Education, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.
Goanna Education interview with dandolopartners, 25 March 2024.

Goanna Education | Structured training

The project supported cadets to develop digital skills, however, the effectiveness of the training program in producing job-ready cadets was limited due to a lack of work placements and constraints as a result of timeframes and what could feasibly be taught through training.

	Cadet perceptions of the training	Employer feedback
Workload challenges	• Cadets enjoyed the flexible working style of the online training. Cadets noted that Goanna Education assisted with CV and interview skills, but the program design meant the majority of soft skills were built during mentoring, a program many cadets found too onerous to participate in. • The full-time schedule of the training imposed a financial burden on cadets, with some cadets stating they had to set aside savings prior to starting in order to remain financially stable.	As training ran prior to work placements, employers did not have any feedback on training workload.
Technical training	• Cadets we heard from told us that the six-month Diploma of IT was an effective and informative course, but the intense and time consuming nature of its delivery created barriers to participation and satisfaction. One trainer told us that the program was very intense, and that if cadets were absent for an hour or two, they risked missing out on vital learning. • In addition, courses that taught complex content in shorter time frames did not produce cadets who felt job-ready. One cadet stated that their course felt more like a broad introduction to their skill area, rather than an effective skilling pathway to make them job ready.	• Employers described the training as providing a 'base level' of knowledge. One employer stated that upon entering employment, cadets would undergo a further six weeks of training including further vendor certifications, which they needed to orient themselves with the organisation. • Employers felt soft skills, particularly interview skills, should have received further focus. • Goanna Education failed to find work placements for whole cohorts of cadets, for example the Indigenous Digital Operation Bootcamp, indicating that some courses did not align with market need. • One employer we spoke to noted that even though their desired vendor qualification was recommended to students, not all completed the qualification. They were unsure whether their need for this qualification was passed onto cadets.
Real-world job application on the go	Cadets said that the work placement element was vital to embedding their learning and becoming job ready. Many cadets did not get the opportunity to practice their learning in a professional environment.	Employers we spoke to were happy with the quality of cadets they received and invested significant resources in ensuring they had the support needed to succeed in their placements.

Sources: Goanna Education, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.
Alumni, employer, trainer and provider interviews with dandolopartners, 2024.

Goanna Education | Industry placements (1)

There were internal and external factors that impacted the availability of placements for cadets, however, the lack of communication with cadets around timeframes had a negative impact on cadet employment and wellbeing.

Challenge: Recruitment of Employers

- Lead in time between training and work placement resulted in some disengagement from employers.
- Goanna Education only had two employers secured as of April 2022, meaning cadets were starting the program without placements secured.
- Goanna Education noted that there were challenges in getting employers formally committed to taking cadets.
- Goanna Education was unable to engage other large employers as many only work with a panel of preferred suppliers, requiring pre-membership or application.

Challenge: Economic downturn

- Lay offs and recruitment freezes across the tech industry affected Goanna Education's efforts to secure placements for cadets.
- For employers still able to take cadets, this resulted in a change in the numbers of cadets they could employ. This increased the workload for Goanna Education and the time required by employers to onboard and train new cadets.
- 50 cadets are still awaiting work placement as at April 2024. Goanna Education reports that finding placements continues to be a priority.

Cadet matching process

Cadet perceptions

Cadets told us there were significant delays in being matched with an employer organisation and being informed of who this was. Some cadets told us this had an impact on their mental health and wellbeing and had a significant impact on their experience with the program. Cadets also told us that the advertising and communication from Goanna Education implied that the work placement was a guaranteed element of the cadetship, which was not the case.

Employer feedback

Employers told us that they saw the best outcomes with cadets when line areas and managers were actively involved in recruitment of cadets. Employers we heard from told us that Goanna Education was supportive of the level of involvement they wanted them to have, including hosting events for employers to meet with cadets, providing opportunities to get to know them and assessing suitability for their organisation.

> '"[Goanna Education] was liaising with all of us a lot. Organising interviews, tests, the whole process was [really good]" - Alumni

> "We were also looking for the right motivations, it wasn't just 'I want a job', they had to want to do it." – Employer

> "Cadets had to pass our regular employee interview process. There was perhaps some thought that [the work placement] was going to be an automatic thing." – Employer

Sources:
Goanna Education, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.
Alumni, employer and provider interviews with dandolopartners, 2024.

Goanna Education | Industry placements (2)

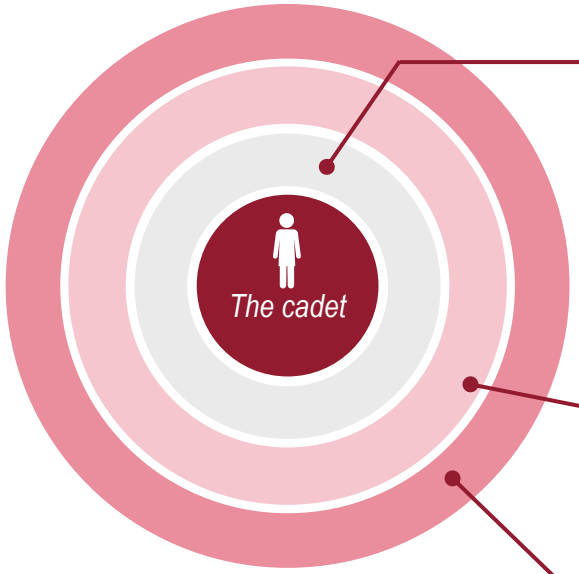
There were internal and external factors that impacted the availability of placements for cadets, however, the lack of communication with cadets around timeframes had a negative impact on cadet employment and wellbeing.

	Work placement	Post cadetship outcomes
Cadet perceptions	Many cadets did not receive a work placement and experienced disappointment and frustration. They felt that Goanna Education did not communicate effectively with them or support them to find further work. Cadets who did receive a work placement reported that they were happy overall with the process and appreciated the level of support their employer gave them, including buddies, supervisors, and further training.	Cadets have experienced mixed outcomes and there is a range of perceptions on the success of the cadetship program due to this. Where cadets received a work placement, they reported that overall their post cadetship experience has been very positive, either transitioning into full time work or further study or a mix of both. Many cadets who did not get the opportunity to undertake a placement expressed frustration that they may have wasted their time in participating in the program.
Employer feedback	Employers valued the influx of entry-level employees, especially where economic downturn required labour costs to remain low. Overall employers' experience of the work placement process was positive.	One reason employers participated in the DSCT was to employ diverse workers. Employers have retained many of the cadets who completed a work placement. One employer hoped to take all cadets from the program, but due to economic conditions was only able to offer 6-month contract extensions to many.
	'When I finish there was no guaranteed placement as they advertised that was a disappointing part, they explained that…they have trouble finding organisations to do placement so it becomes competitive and you have to apply for jobs yourself.' - Alumni	'Other than what I mentioned previously. I am very grateful for goanna doing 100% of the organising to have me straight into job after I graduating. This was the most important part of the degree.' - Alumni
	'Goanna Education did not provide cadetship as they promised for [many] of the students and they have been dishonest and not cooperative.' - Alumni	"We very much enjoy our relationship with Goanna and we feel we have welcomed employees into our business that may not have found a pathway in without our relationship." – Employer

Sources:
Goanna Education, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.
Alumni, employer and provider interviews with dandolopartners, 2024.

Goanna Education | Mentoring, wrap-around and transition support

Employers pulling out of placements and the large number of cadets that were waiting to be placed has compounded the challenge for Goanna Education of supporting cadets well through this transition. There was also poor uptake in the structured mentoring components of the program.



Many cadets found the mentoring component of the cadetship delivered by ACS to be too onerous.
This was particularly the case due to the demanding nature of other aspects of the program, including the full-time, 13-week course designed to develop cadets' skills. Some cadets we heard from also told us that there were aspects of the mentoring that felt infantilising or didn't align with their needs. Other cadets we heard from also told us they did not know that the ACS mentoring program was a key design feature of their cadetship.

Goanna Education acknowledged that the mentoring program was at times misaligned with the training and work placement, with cadets finding mentoring commitments too onerous and in future better alignment of programs to complement training and fit within the time available to cadets may have improved student engagement.

Goanna Education found many cadets difficult to engage in wrap around support activities.
The one-on-one mentoring from ACS and Alumni check in were designed to provide numerous points of contact and support to cadets. Goanna Education reported that it was difficult to engage cadets in alumni activities and many cadets were not interested in being involved in wrap around support activities.

Cadets found post-cadetship transition support provided by Goanna Education to be useful.
Cadets reported that the onboarding, further training and transition supports from their employers were helpful and thorough. Goanna Education also provided further support to develop cadets' CV and interview skills. This was useful for cadets who did not receive a work placement.

"ACS worked in partnership with Goanna, and forced us into a mentorship program which needed a huge time commitment. And I was so confused – and I asked my employer – do I have to do the ACS mentorship? And I asked ACS to remove me after my employer told me it wasn't mandatory." - Alumni

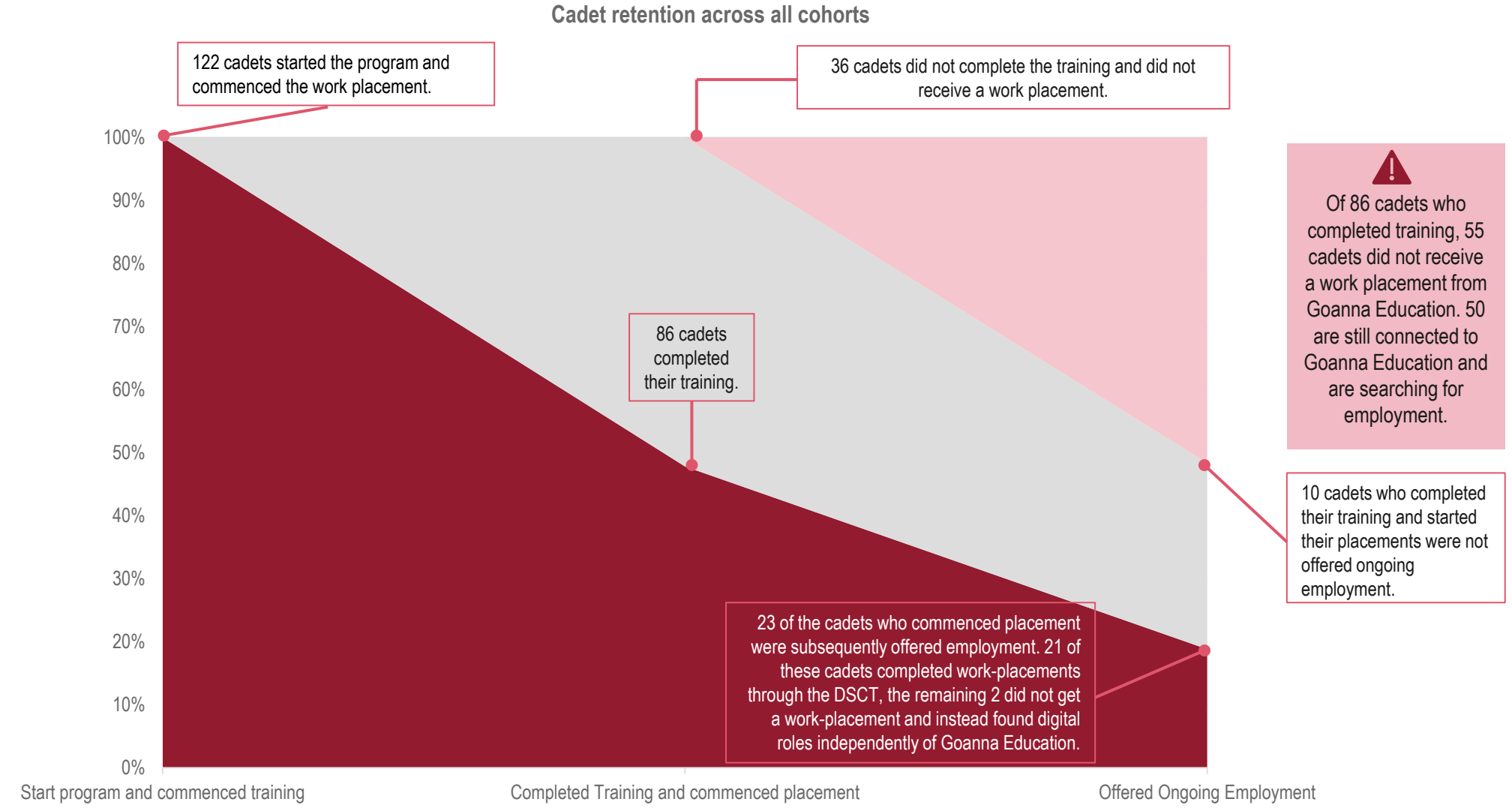
"Ensuring better alignment between mentoring commitments and work placements… could alleviate challenges faced by cadets transitioning to new work environments." - Goanna Education

"They support with the interview and CV, they would look at the CV and tell me their ways to improve, to adapt to a more professional style which was helpful, interview role play so they can tell me things that I can improve on." - Alumni

Sources:
Goanna Education, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.
Alumni and provider interviews with dandolopartners, 2024.

Goanna Education | Outputs

31 cadets who completed training received a work placement. Of those who completed a work placement, a high number were offered employment.



Sources:
Goanna Education, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.
Goanna Education, Cohort Data Report, April 2024.

Goanna Education | Post-cadetship outcomes

There are a significant number of cadets who have not found employment in the digital skills sector after completing their training. Lack of employer involvement in the co-design process and misalignment of industry skills needs, as well as limited work placements available for cadets (which was not within the control of the DSCT) appears to have contributed to this.

122 cadets were enrolled in the program...

Work placement

- **36% of cadets** (31/86 who completed training) — Received a work placement from Goanna Education, 31 cadets completed their placement.
- **64% of cadets** (55/86 who completed training) — Are awaiting a work placement opportunity.
- **58% of cadets** (50/55 who did not receive a work placement) — Are still engaged with Goanna Education and are looking for a role in the digital / tech industry

Employment

- **64% of cadets** (21/33 who started placement) — Received permanent employment offers or contract extensions.
- **2 cadets** (who completed training) — Found permanent digital related roles independently of Goanna Education, but did not complete a work placement.

Other pathways

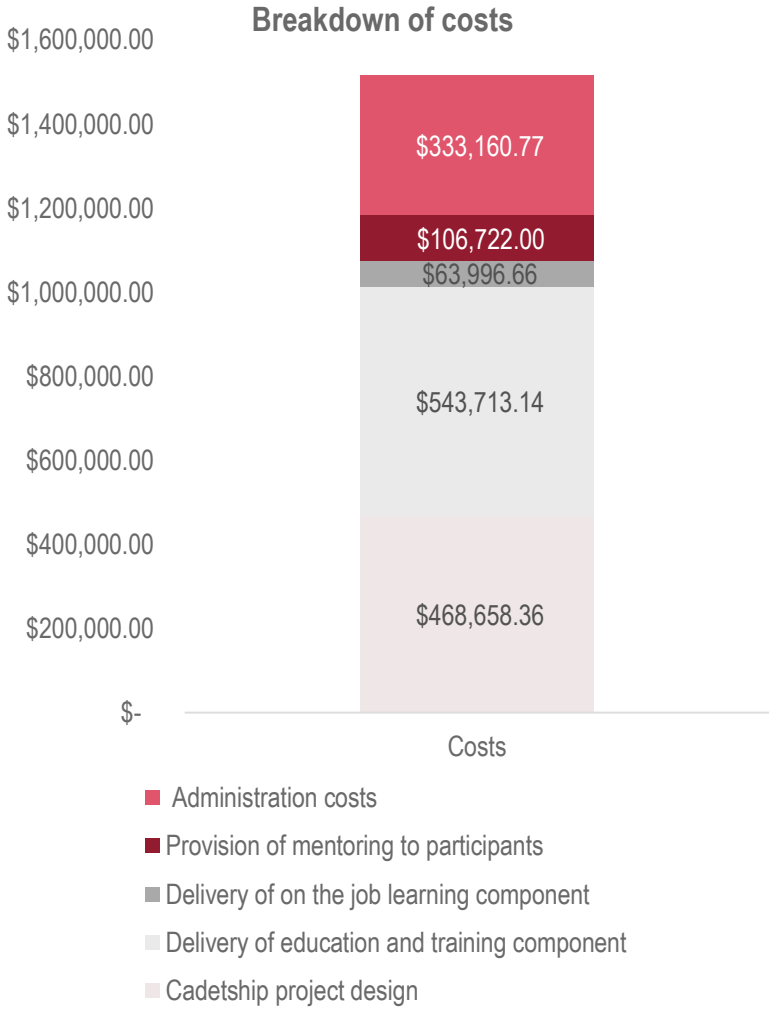
- **7 cadets** (7/86 who completed training) — Enrolled in further tertiary / technical studies (2 cadets are studying while working in a digital role)
- **1 cadet** — Returned to their previous role outside the digital / tech industry

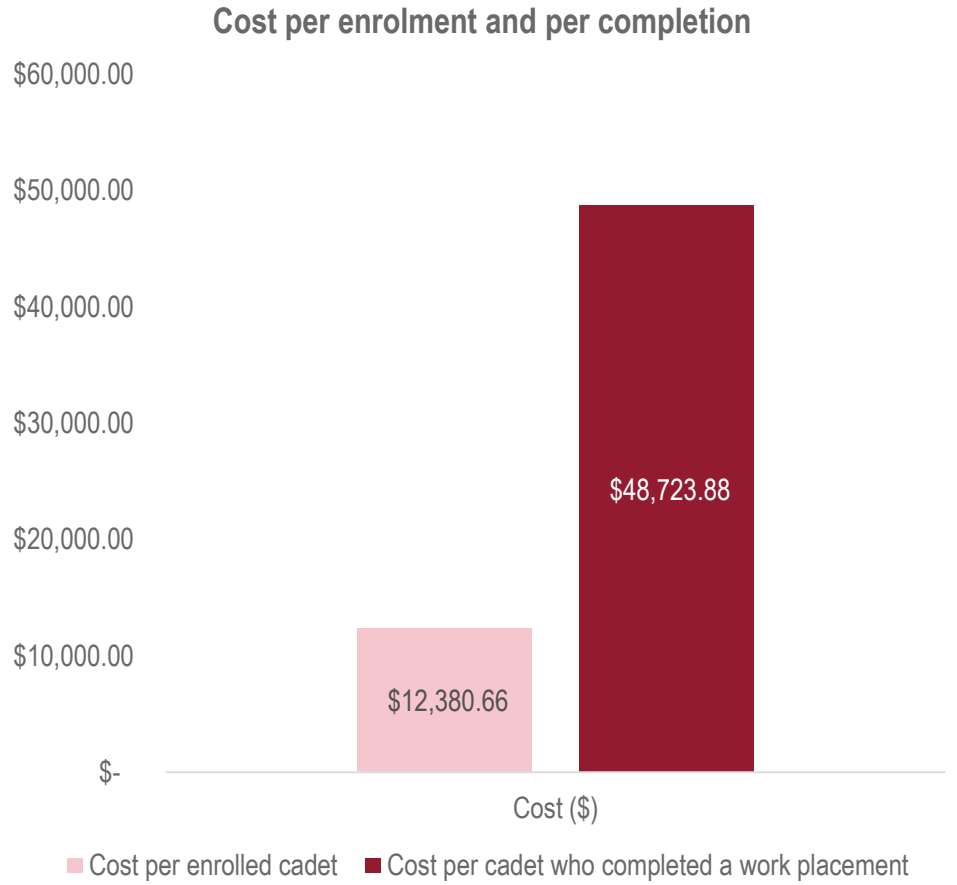
Further information about post-cadetship outcomes and the impact of the cadetship on individual cadets is provided in the case studies at Appendix F.

Source: Goanna Education DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.

Goanna Education | Costs

Goanna Education spent $1.5 million in total, of which just over a third of the costs were attributed to delivery of education and training. Further, Goanna Education's cost per cadet who completed a work placement is significantly higher than cost per enrolled cadet because fewer cadets completed a work placement.





NB: These costings detailed on this page have been designed for measuring and comparative purposes and should be used with caution. It's important to note that they do not take into account the differences between provider models and factor this into costing models.

Source: Goanna Education DSCT Final Implementation Report 2024.

Application of findings

Changes in the operating environment since the DSCT's establishment

Since the establishment of the DSCT, there's been shifts in the labour market, policy and operating environment and intergovernmental context that are relevant in considering how to take forward the lessons of the trial.

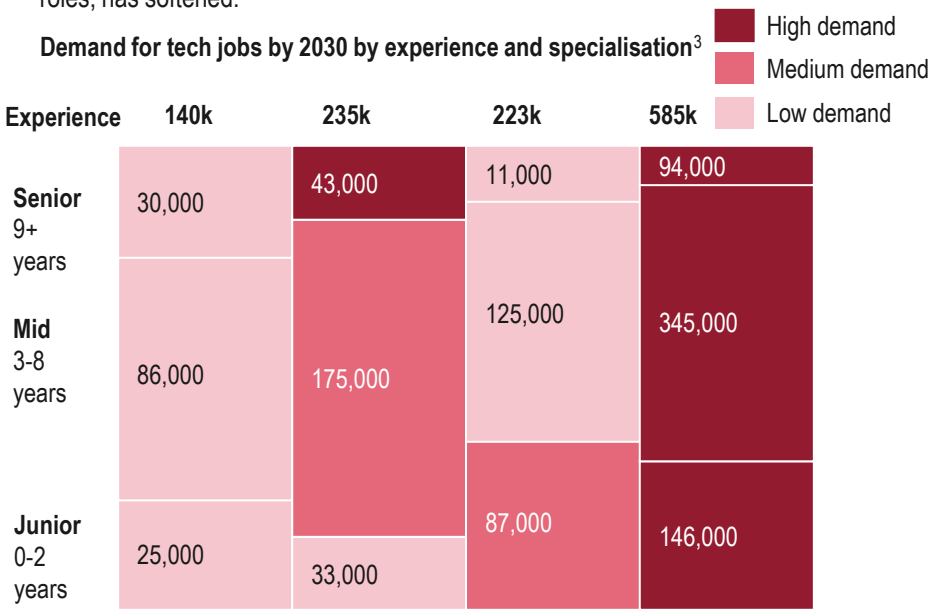
Changes in the labour market

Australia has seen a rapid rise in tech jobs since the early 2000s. Since that time, growth in technology jobs has outpaced all other occupations by a factor of four.[1]

This growth was at an all-time high during the COVID-19 pandemic, which occurred shortly prior to the establishment of the trial. Since that time, Australia has seen these numbers stabilise and a normalisation of strong demand for technology jobs occur.

As these figures have stabilised, it's become clear that demand for technology jobs is highly concentrated in specialised tech roles, where there are high barriers to entry. Demand for more junior tech roles, other than those in highly specialised roles, has softened.[2]

Demand for tech jobs by 2030 by experience and specialisation[3]



[1] Tech Council of Australia, the state of Australia's tech ecosystem, March 2024.
[2] Tech Council of Australia, the state of Australia's tech ecosystem, March 2024.
[3] Tech Council of Australia, the state of Australia's tech ecosystem, March 2024.

Changes in the policy environment

Since the establishment of the DSCT, there have been a number of implemented and planned changes that have occurred across the vocational education and training system in Australia. Examples of this include:

- The establishment of **Jobs and Skills Councils**, which have the mandate of providing innovative solutions to qualifications beyond the traditional role of training packages. Relevantly to this trial, the former Digital Skills Organisation has had its mandate as the organisation responsible for addressing current labour and skills shortages across the finance, technology and business sectors formalised.
- Jurisdictions pursuing their own approaches to establish training pathways to support learners to upskill into digital skills roles and create pathways for underrepresented cohorts in the digital and technology sectors. This includes the Victorian Government's **Digital Jobs Program** and Queensland Government's **First Nations Digital Careers Program** (see Appendix C for more information).

Changes in the intergovernmental context

A new 5-year National Skills Agreement (NSA) between the Commonwealth, states and territories commenced in January 2024. The NSA aims to significantly shift the way that governments work together to address the shared challenges across the VET sector, with a new stewardship model to support governments to work collaboratively towards shared priorities. This includes a renewed focus on equity and ensuring Australia's digital and technology capabilities.

Alongside the NSA, Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) was established in 2023 to provide a permanent role to advise government and key partners on skills needs, including the current and emerging labour market, workforce needs and priorities and future skills training needs. The JSA has established a new tripartite partnership between the Australian Government, states and territories and unions, industry and education providers to work together to address these challenges.

Key lessons for the Australian Government from the DSCT (1)

The DSCT was designed to address gaps and challenges identified by stakeholders, but these didn't play out as anticipated. Going forward, the Australian Government should thoroughly interrogate and validate problems identified by stakeholders ahead of designing and tailoring interventions to address them.

Conclusion

The DSCT was designed to address clear gaps and challenges identified by and advocated for by stakeholders. These gaps and challenges identified by stakeholders, however, did not play out as anticipated.

1. Stakeholder perspectives informed key assumptions underpinning the trial, which were sound and well reasoned in theory, based on what government was hearing. They included:
   - That there was demand for entry-level jobs in the digital and tech sectors
   - That the problem to overcome was on the supply side
   - That short, sharp training pathways would be effective to overcome these challenges.
2. Ultimately, however, some of the assumptions underpinning the DSCT, in particular that there was a short-supply of digitally skilled workers in entry level positions, did not play out as it was anticipated through implementation.

Key lessons for the Australian Government going forward

The Australian Government should seek to thoroughly interrogate and validate problems identified by stakeholders ahead of designing interventions to address them. This includes:

- **Ensuring the problem is well defined and articulated**
- **The problem definition is backed up by evidence and evidence is triangulated through multiple data sources and voices**
- **The solution or intervention is designed to respond to the problem definition and designed to address the nuances of the defined challenges**
- **Where policy advice is required, Jobs and Skills Australia resources should be leveraged**

Key lessons for the Australian Government from the DSCT (2)

The DSCT aimed to address multiple challenges at once. Going forward, when the Australian Government is designing interventions that aim to address multiple challenges at once, it should consider the relationship between the challenges and trade-offs required when addressing them together.

Conclusion

The DSCT aimed to address multiple challenges at once.

1. The DSCT had a several intersecting challenges and problems it was seeking to address. These included:
   - The need to increase the supply of individuals with digital skills identified as in demand by employers
   - Considering how to increase pathways for underrepresented cohorts to address skills shortages in the digital and technology industries.

   While it was reasonable to consider ways to address both of these things, they are two different challenges with different contributing factors, which creates complexity.
2. The DSCT aimed to address both of these challenges together but did not clearly identify or outline a hierarchy for how they should be prioritised and addressed together.

Key lessons for the Australian Government going forward

When designing interventions that aim to respond to and address multiple, intersecting challenges, it's important to:

Understand the relationship between multiple problems and how they compound each other

Consider trade-offs between these challenges, and the extent to which addressing a challenge may have flow on impacts for others

Clearly define and articulate a hierarchy for how the multiple challenges should be prioritised and addressed together

Key lessons for the Australian Government from the DSCT (3)

The DSCT assumed that there was a structural / financial barrier to providers offering a suitable pathway and this was a key 'market failure' for government to respond to. It's important to consider the risks associated with this.

Conclusion

The DSCT assumed that there was a structural / financial barrier to providers offering a suitable pathway and that this was the key 'market failure', which a government intervention would respond to.

1. Our evaluation revealed that this barrier was not the only, or indeed necessarily the major rate limiting step connecting employers with new digitally skilled talent. The mismatch between the level and specialisation of skills and demand was more significant. This contributed to fewer employers providing fewer placements than originally anticipated.

2. Other work undertaken across industry and government, including the Digital and Tech Skills Working Group, has suggested an underlying market failure on the demand side: employers were reluctant to hire junior level employees – even with some training complete – because those employees generally needed significant investment in their development, with too much risk that this not be recouped before an employee leaves.

   This represents a coordination failure where the industry as a whole has an interest in supporting junior staff, but individual employers do not.

Key lessons for the Australian Government going forward

Interventions that relate to the training system and employment may need to overcome multiple barriers / market failures. It's important to consider:

There is a risk in assuming that targeting one issue will be sufficient. It is useful to try and test each step in a logic or theory of change that is assumed to underpin an intervention to assess its likely viability

Key lessons for the Australian Government from the DSCT (4)

The DSCT was designed with the intention that the projects would be co-designed with employers, but this was more difficult in practice than anticipated. When engaging employers and industry going forward in co-design processes, the Australian Government should clearly define roles, responsibilities and expectations.

Conclusion

The DSCT was designed with the intention that the projects would be co-designed with employers. In practice, providers encountered significant challenges with engaging with employers during the design process. These included:

1. Employers were not engaged in a meaningful way on the design of many aspects of the projects.
2. Where employers were engaged, many of them chose, for a range of reasons, to not take cadets for placements or be involved in the projects more broadly.

Key lessons for the Australian Government going forward

When engaging employers and industry in co-design processes going forward, there should be clearly defined roles, responsibilities and expectations set out about what this should include.

Clearly defined roles, responsibilities and expectations of what role industry and employers should have in design

Established mechanisms through contract arrangements to ensure that employers engaged in co-design continue to be involved in implementation (e.g. drawing from an Industry Compact model)

Considering ways to incentivise employers to be engaged and involved in future projects

Key lessons for the Australian Government from the DSCT (5)

The DSCT model has limited options for scalability in its current form. In considering ways to scale the model, the Australian Government should consider models that involve more providers, are employer developed and led or partnerships with other jurisdictions.

Conclusion

The cadetships model has limited options for scalability in its current form.

1. The DSCT delivered training and placements to 140 cadets, approximately 48% less than the maximum number of cadets intended to be involved.
2. The smaller projects (Community Corporate and Goanna Education) were able to adapt more readily to respond to the needs of employers on an ad hoc basis and adjust to unforeseen circumstances in the broader labour and economic market.
3. While this was a strength of the projects, it also limits the scalability of the model.

Key lessons for the Australian Government going forward

If considering ways to scale this model, the Australian Government should:

- **Consider implementing the model with more providers involved**
- **Consider ways to scale the model by considering employer-led models**
- **Consider ways to partner with other jurisdictions and partners to support initiatives that could be implemented by others**

Appendices

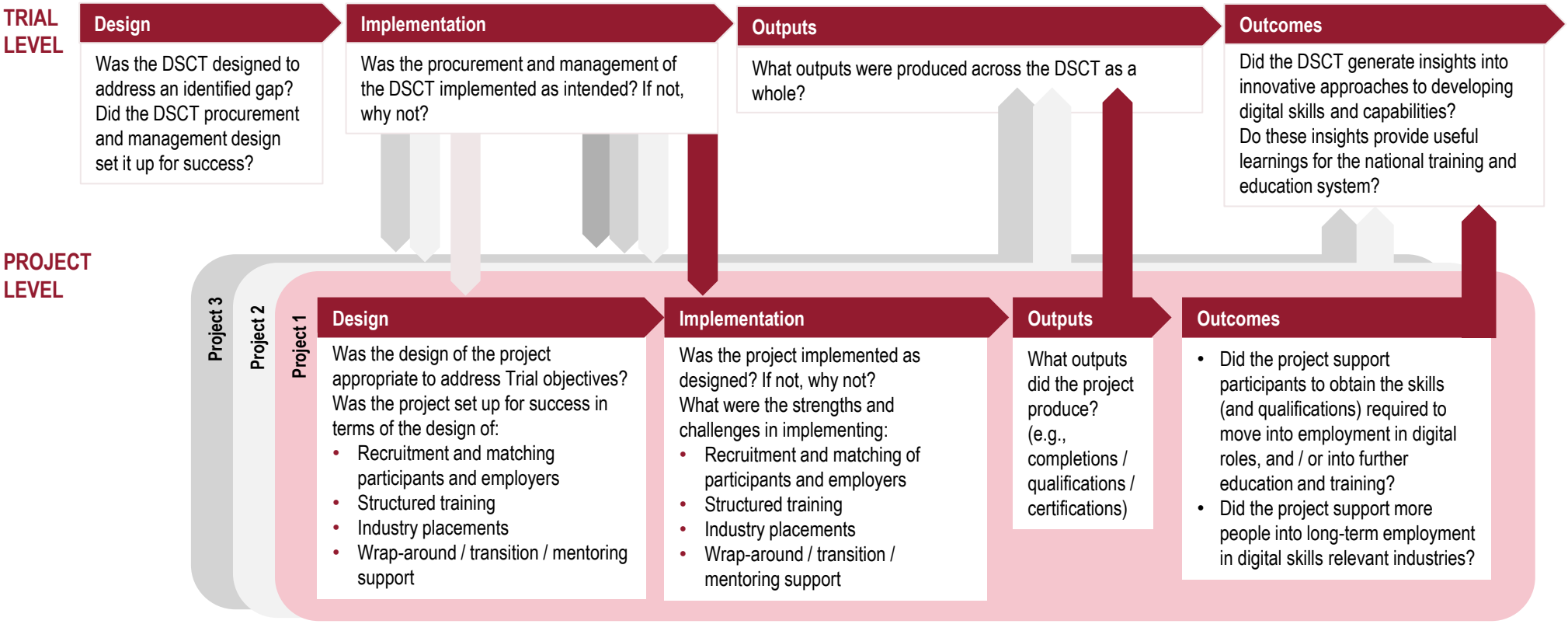
Appendix A : Detailed evaluation framework and evaluation questions

Our evaluation framework

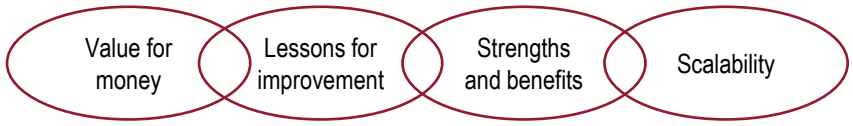
Objective of the DSCT

The Trial aimed to:

1. Generate insights into innovative approaches to developing digital skills and capabilities.
2. Support participants to obtain the skills (and qualifications) required to move into employment in digital roles, and / or into further education and training.
3. Increase the number of people with high level digital skills identified as in demand by employers.



Lenses for analysis



Segmentation

Geography	Provider and training type	Employer type	Participant demographics	Participant skills / experience

Trial level evaluation questions (KEQs)

Design Was the design of the whole Trial appropriate to address the problem?	**Implementation** Was the whole Trial implemented as intended? If not, why not?	**Outputs** What did the DSCT produce?	**Outcomes** What outcomes can we see overall?
Designed to address the problem: • Was there a clear demonstration of need or gap in relation to existing digital skills training offerings? • Were the DSCT objectives clear, and aligned with the identified need? • Was the DSCT designed effectively to address that need or gap? • Did funding arrangements support success? **Procurement design:** • How was the procurement process designed? • What assessment criteria were created? • What key KPIs or milestones were set for the DSCT and were they aligned with the objectives of the DSCT? **Management design:** • How was the governance, operation and reporting of the DSCT designed / structured?	**Provider procurement:** • How was the REOI / RFT marketed / disseminated? • How many REOI / RFT responses were received? • What were the characteristics of the providers who responded to the RFT? Did this align with expectations? • How were they assessed? • What were the characteristics of the providers who were selected / contracted? • Did the procurement process and materials support / incentivise effective project design? **Pilot management:** • How were the pilots overseen and managed? • Were governance and reporting arrangements followed? • What support was provided to the projects? What role did the Department play and did this differ across projects? • How effective was the management and support provided? How did this differ?	• How many projects were established, and how many were successfully trialed / completed? • Aggregated project outputs (for example, total number of participants, projects, employers, etc. across all projects), as well as any outputs produced by the Department.	1. **Did the DSCT / project support participants to obtain the skills (and qualifications) required to move into employment in digital roles, and / or into further education and training.** — Aggregated project outcomes – see Outcome 1 in project KEQs 2. **Did the DSCT / project support more people into long-term employment in digital skills relevant industries?** — Aggregated project outcomes – see Outcome 2 in project KEQs 3. **Did the DSCT generate insights into innovative approaches to developing digital skills and capabilities?** — Does the cadetship model provide a viable approach to rapidly upskill people for digital roles? In what circumstances? — What are the benefits of combining formal learning with on-the-job learning? — How effective is an employer-led approach? — Can short and sharp training pathways be effectively deployed to better meet the digital and work readiness needs of employers? — Can providing targeted support to specific cohorts facilitate improved training and employment outcomes? — Are there learnings from the DSCT / projects that can be applied to the Digital Skills Development model / DSO's case for change? Has this been beneficial for employers particularly in articulating skills? — Are there learnings about how to strengthen connections between employers and education and training providers? — Are there opportunities to enhance Australia's national education and training system? *Note: these questions were considered as part of Stage 2 of the evaluation.*

Project level evaluation questions (KEQs)

Design

Was the design of the project appropriate to address the objectives of the DSCT?

- Was it co-designed with employers, training providers and other partners?
- Was it designed to address employer demand in an emerging and priority digital field? Was the project design employer-led?
- Was it designed to address an identified gap in existing training offerings?
- Was the approach new and innovative? What were the unique design features of the project? What was the rationale for these features?
- Were the digital skills standards used to describe employer skill requirements, and did the project's design align with these requirements?
- How was the project governance designed and structured?
- What other objectives did the project seek to achieve?
- Was it designed to meet participants needs?

Was the DSCT set up for success in relation to design of:

- **Recruitment and matching of participants and employers**
  - What were the target demographics or skills / experience level of participants?
  - What were the target characteristics of employers?
  - What was the planned number of participants and employers?
  - What were the reasons behind employers engaging in projects?
- **Structured training**
  - How was the structured training and assessment designed?
- **Industry placements**
  - How were the industry placements designed?
  - How were supervisors supported?
- **Mentoring, wrap around and transition support**
  - How were the mentoring arrangements designed?
  - Were wrap around supports designed to support the relevant target cohorts?
  - Was transition support through and out of the project incorporated into the project's design?

Implementation

Was the project implemented as designed? If not, why not?

- Was the project implemented as designed?
- Was the project delivered on schedule and on budget?
- What were the main cost drivers?
- Did the design of the project change as it was implemented and over time? Why / why not?
- How did employers, training providers and other partners collaborate during implementation?
- Were changes / improvements made to the project during implementation based on lessons learned?

What were the key strengths and challenges of the project's implementation, including in relation to:

- **Recruitment and matching of participants and employers**
  - How were participants and employers matched? How many employers were recruited / participated in the project? What were their characteristics?
  - How many participants were enrolled / participated in the project? What were their characteristics (skills / experience and demographics)?
- **Structured Training**
  - What strengths and challenges were faced in delivering the structured training and assessment? Did it deviate from design?
- **Industry placements**
  - What strengths and challenges were faced in delivering the industry placements? Did it deviate from design?
  - Did the placements provide work-place relevant learning opportunities?
- **Mentoring, wrap-around and transition support**
  - How were mentoring supports delivered?
  - How were wrap-around and transition supports delivered?
  - What supports were offered to participants experiencing difficulties?

Outputs

What outputs did the project produce:

- Number of cadetship completions and completion rate:
  - Structured training completions
  - Industry placement completions
- Qualifications / certifications gained / assessment outcomes achieved (for non-accredited).
- What specific digital and enterprise/soft skills were participants equipped with on completion?
- Did any participants drop out? If so, why, who and when?
- Did participation / completion rates of structured training change over time?
- How did the completion rate compare with expected numbers?
- How did the completion rate compare with alternative training pathways?

Outcomes

What outcomes did the project produce across the three key objectives of the DSCT?

1. Support participants to obtain the skills (and qualifications) required to move into employment in digital roles, and / or into further education and training

- Were participants job-ready on completion?
- How many participants transitioned into a role in a relevant digital field?
- How many participants transitioned into further education and training?
- What proportion of participants feel well prepared to perform their job or a future job in the same digital stream?
- Have providers gained a clearer understanding of industry needs?
- Were there any outcomes unique to specific cohorts?

2. **Support employers to meet their skill needs**

- Have employers gained a clearer understanding of their own needs relating to digital skills?
- How relevant were the skills / qualifications / certifications gained to the participating employers?
- How relevant were the skills / qualifications / certifications gained to industry more generally / how transferrable were the skills gained?
- How many participants transitioned into on-going employment with a project participating employer?
- Did the project help expand the pool of suitably skilled people available to employers?

3. Generate insights into innovative approaches to developing digital skills and capabilities

See Outcome 3 in Trial KEQs

Were stakeholders satisfied with the project's outcomes?

Appendix B: Aspects of each project model

Project models (1)

Each provider trialed a different approach to rapidly upskilling people for digital roles over a 4 – 6 month period, with the aim of preparing cadets to transition into employment or further training.

Project element	Community Corporate	MEGT	Goanna Education
Design of project	Host employers played a key role in the co-design of trials. They influenced the process by: identifying cadetship roles in their business and suitable training components for non-accredited training and industry accredited training courses; providing feedback on the onboarding and induction process, onboarding and induction process, sourcing and selecting job buddies and participating staff for cultural confidence training.	Engaged with different organisations to co-design the cadetship to facilitate industry needs. This process informed program structure, incorporation of streams and micro-credentials, program duration and Microsoft certification.	Goanna Education developed the cadetship in co-design with employers, including Atlassian, Avanade, and Macquarie. Its model was based on cadets completing formal training prior to placements (i.e. on-the-job learning). Employer feedback informed program structure as well as the curriculum, which were tailored.
Recruitment of cadets	Community Corporate developed and disseminated promotional and marketing materials which included flyers, FAQs, information sheets and EOI QR postcards. They distributed surveys at meetings with community organisations. Community events were also hosted and attended at to promote cadetships . The recruitment strategy also included mapping skills based on employer feedback.	Utilised traditional and innovative channels to attract candidates including digital marketing platforms as well as targeted approaches (e.g. collaborations with not-for-profit organisations, partnerships with VTEC). This was to cast a wide net of female participants	Hudson was the primary recruiter for cadets. The cadetships were advertised through various marketing channels, and Goanna Education also supported this through similar platforms.
Assessment of cadets prior cadetship	Cadets were assessed for the cadetship while they were being matched to employers. See *Matching cadets to employers* for further information.	Applicants were screened by MEGT recruiters to determine suitability. They then undertook a Prodigy Learning Digital Literacy Skills Test, interviewed with MEGT recruiters, as well as interviews with host employer.	Hudson conducted pre-selective assessments which included: predictive hire, digital literacy, abstract reasoning and psych overall. Following this assessment, Goanna Education assessed candidates to ensure that they could participate in the training (LLN, Motivation & Commitment; Employability; Digital Literacy).
Recruitment of employers	Community Corporate partnered with some organisations including key stakeholders across relevant digital areas of business, HR & Talent Acquisition to ensure they had visibility of future headcount and genuine job opportunities.	Utilised various channels which include: LinkedIn, B2B avenues through sales and webinar, in-person information sessions, and Women in Tech network newsletters.	Goanna Education capitalised on existing employer relationships with successful education-to-employment outcomes. They used various engagement models tailored to employer needs.
Employer support	Community Corporate delivered Cultural Confidence Training to employers. They also organised routine check-ins with employers on a fortnightly basis for the first six weeks, which pivoted to monthly thereafter.	Supervisors from host employers undertook mandatory training to equip them with relevant skills and insights to support cadets. Host employers also received ongoing support and assistance from MEGT and delivery partners.	Goanna Education provided support and advice to host employers, as part of their service delivery model. This included coordination support and assistance to troubleshoot cadet performance issues and reporting on industry downturn and impact on the employment of cadets.

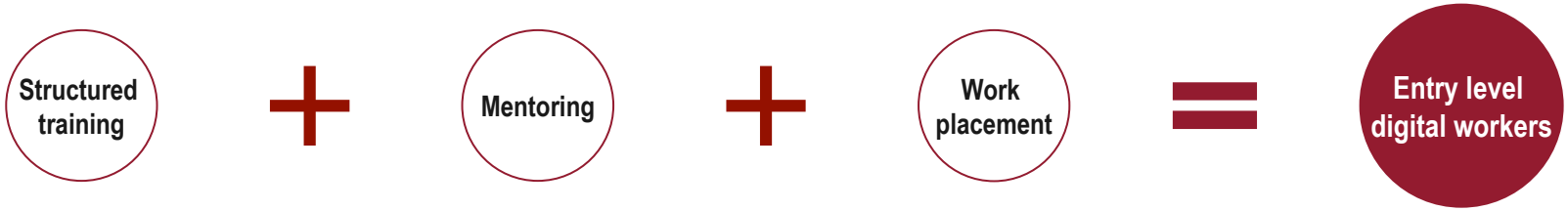
Project models (2)

Project element	Community Corporate	MEGT	Goanna Education
Matching cadets to employers	Community Corporate was heavily involved in this process. They provided updates to employers on the EOIs received from cadets prior to cadets commencing the cadetship. Once cadets were interviewed and assessed, Community Corporate provided CVs and profiles to employers (who had confirmed availability of roles). Employers then provided feedback on the shortlisted cadets. Cadets received pre-employment training and undertook a final selection period by employers. Community Corporate customised elements of cadets coaching plans during the selection stage to ensure that cadets were set up well through the process.	Recruiter and host employer met to outline specific skillsets, experience, qualifications, and cultural fit, and to capture details about workplace environment. MEGT maintained a structured short-list candidate pool database to facilitate matching, which was used by the recruiter. Cadets then undertook testing, phone screenings, face to face interviews, and pre-employment checks.	Goanna Education collaborated closely with host employers to ensure an optimal match. Some host employers were involved during recruitment, and others preferred to come in later. Goanna Education facilitated meetings between host employers and cadets to foster mutual understanding and promote successful matches. Host employers were also invited to contribute to the program through industry sessions, interview and resume sessions, and speed dating events where industry gets time with participants.
Structured training and learning	The cadetship included industry accredited training delivered through 4 partners: ServiceNow, Amazon Web Services, CISCO and Google Certification.	Cadets completed an entry Digital Literacy Assessment and Foundational Digital Skills program and received a digital skills badge on successful completion. They then undertook Micro-Skills in three disciplines, and a skills assessment on a Prodigy Learning platform, and receive IAT branded digital badges. Cadets were also provided with access to LinkedIn Learning and pre-training sessions.	There were several programs conducted under the cadetship, which included six different courses. These included: ICT50220 Diploma of Information Technology; UST/Step It Up Program Full Stack Web Development; Data Analytics and Cloud Training (Vendor Certification); AWS re/Start+ (Vendor Certification & Accredited Units of Competency); Salesforce Administrator/Developer Bootcamp (Vendor Certification & Accredited Units of Competency); Indigenous Digital Operations Bootcamp (Vendor Certification & Accredited Units of Competency).
Work placement	Cadets undertook a 12-week work placement. Placements were organised to facilitate genuine future employment opportunities to cadets.	Cadets undertook 14-week paid placements, with one day a week dedicated to completing theoretical training.	On completion of structured learning, cadets were to undertake on-the-job learning (i.e. paid work placements).
Mentoring / wrap around support for cadets	Cadets underwent a pre-employment training (21 hours in total – 3 days) which was delivered face to face to prepare them for the assessment stage with employers for selection. Community Corporate's job coaching and mentoring framework tailored to the specific needs of cadets to ensure that they were equipped and adjusting to their work placements. They also organised group and one-on-one sessions (on a case by case basis). Refugees also received a Skilled Job Coaching toolkit.	Cadets were assigned a supervisor from their host employer for personalised guidance and support through fortnightly mentoring sessions. Cadets also received indirect support which included attendance at various sessions: Induction & Welcome Information session, Exam Preparation; IT Capability Checkoff Sessions, and a Networking Event by Women in Tech.	Cadets engaged with industry experts through mentoring programs, guest sessions and external industry events. The Australian Computer Society (ACS) offered a structured mentoring program (one-on-one mentorship) where mentees discussed goals, received feedback and explored PD opportunities. It was designed to connect experienced professionals with less experienced professionals, while working their way through a 13-week self-guided course made up of four modules.

Appendix C: Comparator programs

Victorian Digital Jobs Program

The Program targets educated mid-career workers to transition to a digital career and has so far upskilled and placed over 5000 participants.



Funding Timeline	Target cohort	Application and recruitment	Scale	Duration	Support	Incentives	Aims
$64 million initiative commenced in 2021, funded until June 2024	Entry level digital skills, but targeted at mid-career workers with 10+ years' experience. Data indicates that participants are 59% female and 63% CALD.	Selective entry, employer matching and employer-led recruitment	Just over 5000 participants selected from 31,900 applications	12-week free training, 12-week minimum full time (or part-time equivalent work placement	Participants are paired with a mentor to support them through training and placement.	$5000 incentive for employers to subsidise participant wages. Participants are paid an entry level wage	Entry level digital workers who are job ready. Employers are encouraged to employ program participants who meet their needs

Employer perspectives

'Participants bring maturity and professional skills as well as experiential and cognitive diversity which helps us think differently about solutions for our customers and staff.' – Shayne Elliott, ANZ CEO

Participant perspectives

'I've had the opportunity through this program to develop a business that works to support other businesses. It's given me a really good foundation for how I can give back to the community that I live in, and this is really important to me.' – Cass, participant

Victorian Department of Jobs, Skills Industry and Regions, Digital Jobs Participant Profile, no date.
Victorian Department of Jobs, Skills Industry and Regions, Business Information Presentation, February 2024.

Appendix D: Fieldwork

Engagement Summary: Fieldwork cycle 1 & 2

Desktop review and analysis [Cycle 1]

- Trial design documents
- Project design documents
- Cadetship training materials
- Selection process documents and data
- Project reporting documents

Cadet survey responses [Cycle 2]

By provider	Total	MEGT	Community Corporate	Goanna Education
Baseline	20	8	8	4
Endline	21	2	9	3

NB: Total number of survey respondents for the endline survey across MEGT, Community Corporate and Goanna Education do not add up to 21. This is due to some survey respondents not identifying which provider they undertook the cadetship with.

Employer survey responses [Cycle 2]

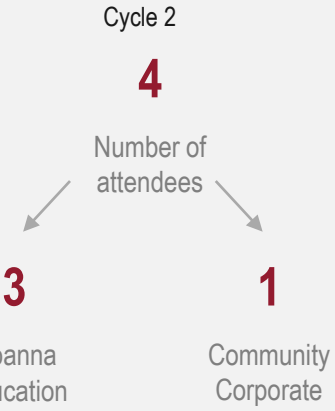
	MEGT	Goanna Ed	CC
TOTAL	**7**	**0**	**4**
Involved in the company decision to participate	4	0	1
Involved in design of the cadetship program	0	0	2
Involved in the cadet recruitment process	5	0	3
Involved in placing cadets in a placement	4	0	3
Involved in supporting cadets during their work placement	5	0	3
Involved in the work that cadets did during the work placement	5	0	3
Involved in the training that cadets complete during their work placement	3	0	3
Involved in the cadets off-boarding (including any decisions around offering employment post-cadetship)	1	0	3

Given the low response rates for each segment of the employer survey, we have incorporated insights qualitatively throughout the report without reporting quantitative statistics to avoid false precision.

Number of interviews

We spoke with all providers, and at least 1 employer partner for each project.

Focus groups



We conducted a focus group with 4 attendees, mostly from Goanna Education.

Engagement Summary: Fieldwork cycle 3

Number of interviews

3	7	8	3	4	2	1
Providers	Employers	Alumni	Departmental representatives	Peak bodies	Program staff	Comparator Program

Interview breakdown

	Community Corporate	MEGT	Goanna Education
Employers	**2**	**2**	**2**
Alumni	4	5	2

Alumni survey responses

By provider	Total	Community Corporate	MEGT	Goanna Education
	49*	11	17	10

Focus groups

3

MEGT Alumni

We conducted two focus groups with 2 attendees in the first and 1 attendee in the second, all from MEGT.

* We received 11 survey responses from Community Corporate cadets, 17 from MEGT cadets and 10 from Goanna Education cadets. 11 cadets did not identify the provider they completed the cadetship through.

Interview list (1)

Dandolo conducted a total of 59 interviews from January 2022 to May 2024, 47 of which are itemised below, the remainder were with cadets.

Organisation name	Fieldwork cycle
Providers	
Community Corporate	1, 2, 3
Goanna Education	1, 2, 3
MEGT	1, 2, 3
Employers	
UST (Goanna Education)	2
Avanade (Goanna Education)	2, 3
Woolworths (Community Corporate)	1, 2, 3
Shell Energy (MEGT)	2
Suncorp (MEGT)	2
Mangano IT (MEGT)	2 (written response)
Accenture (Community Corporate)	1, 3
Identity (MEGT)	3
Griffith University (MEGT)	3

Interview list (2)

Dandolo conducted a total of 59 interviews from January 2022 to May 2024, 47 of which are itemised below, the remainder were with cadets.

Organisation name	Fieldwork cycle
Peak Organisations	
Business Council of Australia	3
Tech Council of Australia	3
Australian Chamber of Commerce	3
Future Skills Organisation	1, 3
Comparator Programs	
Digital Jobs Program – Victoria	3
Departmental Representatives	
Director – Qualifications Reform	3
Employer Liaison Officer – ICT Industry Sector	3
DEWR Director who had oversight of the procurement process and initial contract management of the DSCT	3
Program Staff	
Mentor (Goanna Education)	3
Trainer (Goanna Education)	3

Appendix E: Case studies

Overview of the case studies

We've case studied six cadets through our evaluation, each with unique life and employment backgrounds and experiences, to demonstrate how the cadetship was experienced by participants and the outcomes it delivered.

Purpose and caveats

These case studies provide an overview of the journeys and experiences of cadetship participants. There are two case studies per provider (i.e. MEGT, Community Corporate and Goanna Education). The case studies aim to show the personal experiences of the cadetship, including how interactions between stakeholders, participant demographics, and program structure can influence participant experiences and outcomes.

It's important to note that the case studies are not intended to be representative of the broader experience of every cadet involved in each of the provider projects, or across the Digital Skills Cadetship Trial (DSCT) more broadly. They are instead intended to provide illustrative examples of how cadet participants experienced the cadetships.

In addition to the above, it's also important to note that there is likely to have been some sampling bias for these case studies. This is because cadets were required to opt in to participating in case studies and it is likely that a higher proportion of cadets who had positive experiences were more willing to share these with us.

Method

Cadets chosen for case studies were randomly selected using the following method:

- **Recruitment of cadets:** We recruited cadets who completed the alumni survey by asking them to share their details if they would like to be interviewed as a case study.
- **Sampling:** We identified cadets through sampling activities and filtered them according to their previous academic and professional experience, demographic factors, skill focus and outcomes post cadetship. Where possible, we have tried to speak to different types of learners who have profiled different perspectives.
- **Interviews:** We interviewed cadets individually to develop these case studies. Cadets were provided with a $50 voucher to thank them for sharing their experiences.

The case studies have been deidentified to ensure anonymity of each cadet who participated.

Contents

Each case study includes two key sections

About the cadet

This section provides an overview of the cadet. It includes:

- **Cadet profile**: Information on their background (demographic aspects) and their education and professional experience
- **Overview of the training received**: The training structure and digital skill focused during their cadetship
- **Overview of work placement:** The employer organisation the cadet undertook their placement with (if relevant) and the role.

Cadet experience

This section covers on the cadets journey and experience in applying, undertaking the cadetship and their post-cadetship. It covers:

- Motivation and recruitment
- Training
- Work placement
- Wrap-around supports
- Post-cadetship outcome.

Community Corporate Case Study #1: 'David'

David is a recent migrant to Australia. Prior to the cadetship he had been looking to pursue a role in the digital sector. David has two degrees in IT and was employed in a software engineering role for his work placement.

Cadet Profile

Background
David is in his early 30s and migrated to Australia around seven years ago from his home country in Africa. David came to Australia wanting to pursue a career in the digital sector.

Education and professional experience
David has three years' experience working in IT in his home country. He completed a Bachelor of Computer Science and a Masters of Telecommunications Engineering overseas. Prior to the cadetship, David was unable to secure a role in the digital sector despite upskilling and completing an unpaid internship. He worked as a laborer and ride-share driver.

Overview of the training received

Training structure
David completed a cyber security course from CISCO. The training is 71 hours spread over four weeks, but David took three months to complete his training. The majority of course hours were self-paced and completed online, with some live training with a lecturer. Industry experts provided support outside of structured learning activities. The CISCO course also included two optional soft skills units: English for IT and Engaging Stakeholders for Success.

Digital skill focus
The course included:

- An introduction to cyber security, terminology and the industry
- Understanding of cloud security which led to a Cloud Security Knowledge Certification.

Outside of formal training, David also upskilled in coding and mobile app development.

Overview of work placement

Employer organisation
David was employed in a large retail and food group. The employer is known for substantial investment in technology and innovation.

The role
David's six-month placement was in an entry-level role in the software engineering team. This involved working directly with software used by his employer, including solving problems, writing code and pushing fixes.

Sources:
Community Corporate Cadet #1 interview with dandolopartners, 4 Apr 2024.
Community Corporate, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.

Community Corporate Case Study #1: 'David'

David had a positive experience of the cadetship program and has since been employed in a full-time ongoing role at the same employer where he completed his work placement.

Motivation and Recruitment

David:

- Was motivated to find a professional role in the digital sector. He learned about Community Corporate through a friend after completing an unpaid internship.
- Interviewed with Community Corporate and then participated in three days of training in soft skills before Community Corporate accepted him into the cadetship program.

Training

David:

- Completed training in cyber security over three months. David found his lecturer knowledgeable, but still new to the digital sector. David found the courses to be quite technical, requiring time in the lab practicing the concepts he was learning.

'The training is challenging, but you learn a lot if you spend time with it. [The course is] quite useful for cyber security.'

- Also worked as a ride-share driver in the evening while completing training.
- Received a good understanding of the Australian employment landscape and soft skills required for work from the Community Corporate training which he found incredibly helpful.

'Everything was amazing, the time they spent on training people, giving information on the workplace culture, how to attend the meetings, and also the professional training they provided that was great'

- Reflected that while he would have been able to answer all the technical questions in a job interview, without the soft skills training provided by Community Corporate he would not have secured full time work.

Work Placement

David:

- Completed his placement in the software engineering team at a large retail and food group and received positive feedback from supervisors.
- Completed a placement unrelated to cyber security. He noted that the alignment of the technical aspects of his study and that he was able to use these skills in his placement.
- Did not receive a job description detailing the tasks that he would be expected to undertake as part of the placement. This meant that he was not able to tailor his course choices to the requirements of the placement.

'I believe if they can liaise with employer and ask what kind of certifications they need for the job, that would be great. [And] a job description […]that would help us to prepare for that job and do prerequisite training.'

- Found his colleagues to be very knowledgeable, experienced and willing to help.
- Initially found it difficult to make connections with colleagues due to remote working, but daily stand-up meetings assisted in making relationships and building his communication skills.
- Felt that the placement should have been longer than six months to enable him to settle into the role, better integrate into the organisation and demonstrate skills.

'In a one-year work placement it would be easier for [us] to get opportunities.'

Wrap around supports

Community Corporate met regularly with David and his employer to check in on David's progress and address any challenges. They gave David advice on updating and maintaining his LinkedIn profile and applying for jobs at the completion of the placement.

'[The training] helped me a lot to do the job I'm doing now.'

Post-Cadetship

David:

- Applied for jobs with his host employer as he wanted to stay with the organisation. He inquired with his manager about a more permanent role.
- Was offered a role as a software engineer before the end of the placement.
- Requested to remain within the one department to specialise. However, his employer encouraged him to rotate through different tech departments to gain exposure to the different areas of the business.
- Expressed his desire to become a senior engineer and technical specialist in his employer's software. The cadetship equipped him to pursue this goal.

Sources
Community Corporate Cadet #1 interview with dandolopartners, 4 Apr 2024.
Community Corporate, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.

Community Corporate Case Study #2: ‘Alex’

Alex migrated to Australia recently and prior to the cadetship was working as a cashier in a retail company. Alex has two degrees in education and computer science and was employed in a data analytics role.

Cadet Profile

Background
Alex is in his late 20s and migrated to Australia two years ago from his home country in Eastern Europe. Prior to the cadetship Alex worked as a cashier at a large furniture store.

Education and professional experience
Alex has previously worked as a teacher and data analyst in his home country. He studied a Bachelor of Teaching specialising in Mathematics, a Masters of Mathematics and a Masters of Computer Science.

Overview of the training received

Training structure
Alex completed a cyber security course from CISCO. The training involves 71 hours of study spread over four weeks. The majority of course hours were self-paced and completed online, with some live training with a lecturer. Support was also provided outside of structured learning activities by industry experts. The CISCO course included two optional soft skills units: English for IT and Engaging Stakeholders for Success.

Digital skill focus
The course included:

- An introduction to cyber security, terminology and the industry
- Understanding of cloud security which led to a Cloud Security Knowledge Certification

Alex also completed a **Google Certification,** a 16-week course which included two options. Alex chose the Google Data Analytics course.

Overview of work placement

Employer organisation
Alex was employed in a large retail and food group. The employer is known for substantial investment in technology and innovation.

The role
Alex’s six-month placement was in an entry-level role in the data analytics team. This involved working directly with SQL and data visualisation.

Sources
Community Corporate Cadet #2 interview with dandolopartners, 10 Apr 2024.
Community Corporate, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.

Community Corporate Case Study #2: 'Alex'

Alex had a positive experience of the cadetship program. His placement employer extended his contract by six months. He is currently applying for other roles in the organisation to enable him to stay on at the completion of his contract.

Motivation and Recruitment

Alex:

- Tried applying for IT-specific roles when he first arrived in Australia, but initial visa restrictions prevented him from working. Even after these restrictions were removed, Alex found it difficult to secure work in his field.
- Reached out to Community Corporate as he had an existing relationship them. The cadetship offered an opportunity to delve deeper into the IT field, enhance his skills, transition from basic employment to more specialised roles, and integrate more fully into the Australian job market.
- Alex participated in three days of training in soft skills before Community Corporate accepted him into the cadetship program. This helped him understand what to expect and how to present his skills effectively in interviews with two different departments at a large retail and food group

'The skills acquired have allowed us into the local workplace and gain valuable experience.'

Training

Alex:

- studied CISCO's cyber security course and a comprehensive data analytics course, which he started about a month before the cadetship.
- Found the data analytics course challenging due to its complexity, but his prior experience in similar roles provided a solid foundation to build upon.
- Expressed that he would have liked to start the training earlier as the courses were complex to better prepare for the cadetship.
- Did not complete the cyber security certification since it wasn't mandatory or related to his placement.

Work Placement

Alex:

- Completed his placement at a large retail and food group in their data analytics team.
- Met with his manager a week before the placement began to get a clearer sense of the role. This helped him adequately prepare for and understand the expectations of his placement. His prior employment history in data analytics and computer science supported him to transition into the role.

'I hadn't worked for a huge company so its great to learn how it works at this level.'

- The tasks he completed focused on using SQL to work with large databases and data visualisation. SQL is a critical programming language required to manage the large data sets typical in Alex's employer's daily operations.
- Prepared for these areas independently and through courses recommended by Community Corporate. Alex's placement mostly involved remote work with four days at home and one day in the office.

'It was good to work in your own pace and in a comfortable environment.'

- Appreciated the flexibility, but noted that it was challenging to ask questions and connect with team members.
- Found his employer's industry specific language and acronyms challenging at times and experienced language barriers as he had previously never worked in an English-speaking professional environment

Wrap around supports

Alex:

- Benefited from continuous support from Community Corporate throughout the cadetship, which enabled a smooth transition into employment and helped him navigate the complexities of his new work environment effectively.
- Alex was paired with a mentor from Community Corporate, and a buddy at his workplace who assisted with questions and offered advice. He noted that staff would respond very promptly to any questions.

'Community Corporate provided support every day and answered all my questions.'

Post-Cadetship

Alex:

- Secured a six-month contract extension with his employer once his work placement period ended.
- Is currently applying for internal positions given that his contract is ending in a few months.
- Reflected that the cadetship not only helped him understand the Australian job market better, but also improved his communication skills.

'[The cadetship was a] very rewarding and valuable experience that I could only dream of.

Sources
Community Corporate Cadet #2 interview with dandolopartners, 10 Apr 2024.
Community Corporate, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.

MEGT Case Study #1: 'Judy'

Judy migrated to Australia in the early 2000s and had taken a break from her career to raise her children. She has a background in IT and studied Data Analytics. She undertook a work-placement with a large multi-national Airline in an entry-level position.

Cadet Profile

Background
Judy is in her 50s and came to Australia in the early 2000s on a skilled migrant visa from South-East Asia together with her family. After moving to Australia, Judy took on primary care duties for her three children. As she didn't have a familial network in Australia, she had to take an extended break from her career. Her children are adults now and prior to the cadetship she was looking to return to the workforce.

Education and professional experience
Judy completed a Bachelor's degree in an IT field in her home country and was a mid-career professional before migrating to Australia.

Overview of the training received

Training structure
Judy participated in the data analytics micro-credential course with MEGT one day a week over 14 weeks while also working at her placement. The course was broken into two seven-week blocks of stackable micro-credential skill sets. Cadets completed self-paced online learning in addition to weekly online facilitated sessions with an industry trainer and received Institute of Applied Technology-branded badges upon completion of assessment. Judy also studied industry-recognised qualifications in the Microsoft Office suite and Microsoft Azure.

Digital skill focus
Judy studied Data Analytics. The course included:

- Introduction, practice and application of data concepts and techniques in industry and society
- Introduction, practice and application of data visualisation and visual analytics, including preparing and comparing different visualisation methods

Overview of work placement

Employer organisation
Judy was employed in the Australian branch of a large multi-national airline. This organisation provides both domestic and international flights, as well as additional services in cargo transportation, travel services and travel insurance. They also have a loyalty program.

The role
Judy undertook a work placement in an entry-level data migration position as part of the 14-week placement.

Sources
MEGT Cadet #1 interview with dandolopartners, 5 Apr 2024.
MEGT, DSCT Final Implementation Report, April 2024.
MEGT, MicroSkill and MicroCredential Content overview, 2024.

MEGT Case Study #1: 'Judy'

Judy enjoyed the cadetship experience and training with MEGT. As a result of the cadetship, she secured additional fixed-term employment from her placement employer.

Motivation and Recruitment

Judy:

- Was motivated to leverage her previous experience and return to the IT industry given that her children were now adults. She found it difficult to find a job in the sector, and temporarily returned to low-wage work as a scanner in a warehouse.
- Applied for MEGT's existing cadetship programs but was deemed ineligible as she held a prior IT qualification. She applied for the DSCT in 2022 after meeting the eligibility requirements.

'I was worried. I thought do I want to put myself out there again to not be accepted?'

- Passed MEGT's IT skills screening and following an interview with MEGT, was accepted into their cadet program's first intake. The host employer selected Judy for an interview, but she was unsuccessful and instead applied for the second intake.
- Successfully secured a work placement with her current employer. She accredited her success to her basic programming skills and work placement.

'This was my second chance to get back in IT though MEGT, with my age and my knowledge its not enough to get into [the digital job] market.'

Training

Judy:

- Completed training that was focused on data analytics at the request of her employer, which she found very challenging.

'Statistics was very hard for me, It was graphs and new terms. Without an IT background, with programming or database knowledge you would not be able to do it.'

- Completed her work placement at the same time as her training. She was working four days a week and doing training online one day a week at her own pace.
- Judy was also grappling with personal issues at the time of her training and placement.

'I have to study and work at the same time…it was really stressful.'

Work Placement

Judy:

- Was very interested in working in the aviation industry, and through the cadetship she was able to do this.
- Was in an entry level position over her 14-week placement.
- Had a very positive experience in her placement working in an entry-level data migration role.
- Noted that the work she was doing did not directly relate to her training, but her training coupled with her prior work experience made her day-to-day work easier.

'Because I had a background in IT visualization helped me to adapt [to my new work environment].'

- Enjoyed working in a very supportive team and enjoyed building working relationships at daily stand-up meetings.

'The people where I am now [have] really helped me a lot.'

Wrap around supports

MEGT organised meetings with Judy and her supervisor to check in on her progress. MEGT also offered to assist her in finding a new role if her contract is not extended beyond the current fixed-term.

'MEGT [have said they] are willing to help once I have finished at this job. I have not contacted them yet because I still have a job, but if [my contract is not renewed] I might try it.

Post-Cadetship

Judy:

- Was offered a 6-month fixed term contract before the end of her placement to continue with her employer in a similar role.

'Never thought that I would find a company with flexible work arrangements. It helps me enjoy my life in my organisation.'

- Credits the cadetship program with helping her gain updated knowledge to work in IT again and find a role in a company she enjoys working for.

'I can say that I am so thankful and so grateful for this program, it helped me to boost my confidence, get me back in IT and get my house where I live now. I hope they will continue doing this program.'

Sources
MEGT Cadet #1 interview with dandolopartners, 5 Apr 2024.
MEGT, DSCT Final Implementation Report, April 2024

MEGT Case Study #2: ‘Helen’

Helen migrated to Australia in the 2010s and spent some time out of the workforce looking after her young children. She has a background in education and studied cyber security through a work placement in an entry-level IT support role.

Cadet Profile

Background
Helen is in her late 30s and came to Australia around seven years ago from her home country in South-East Asia. She has been out of the workforce since she came to Australia, as without relatives close by she needed to take on primary care responsibilities for her three children. Her children are now school age and Helen has been upskilling and looking to engage in fulfilling work.

Education and professional experience
Helen has a background in teaching with an undergraduate degree and eight years of experience in the education sector in her home country. Prior to the cadetship Helen also completed other short upskilling qualifications in IT as she is interested in working in the IT sector.

Overview of the training received

Training structure
Helen completed a cyber security micro-credential course with MEGT one day a week over 14 weeks while also working at her placement. The course was broken into two seven-week blocks with stackable micro-credential skill sets. Cadets completed self-paced online learning in addition to weekly online facilitated sessions with an industry trainer and received Institute of Applied Technology-branded badges upon completion of assessment. Helen also studied industry-recognised qualifications in the Microsoft Office suite.

Digital skill focus
Helen studied cyber security. The course included:

- An introduction to cyber security, terminology and the industry
- Understanding authentication methods, use cases and risks and vulnerabilities of authentication
- Practical experience in responding to cyber attacks, including recovery and containment and organisation communication with internal and external stakeholders.

Overview of work placement

Employer organisation
Helen was employed in IT solutions consultancy providing helpdesk support among other IT services. The organisation has a focus on supporting clients’ employees and equipping them to take advantage of the opportunities new technologies have to offer.

The role
Helen undertook a work placement in an entry-level IT support role which involved communicating with customers, triaging queries and escalating issues.

Sources
MEGT Cadet #2 interview with dandolopartners, 27 Mar 2024.
MEGT, DSCT Final Implementation Report, April 2024.
MEGT, MicroSkill and MicroCredential Content overview, 2024.

MEGT Case Study #2: 'Helen'

Helen's experience of the cadetship program was positive, but unfortunately her employer was unable to offer flexible work arrangements. This meant Helen had to resign from her position to care for her family.

Motivation and Recruitment

Helen:

- Felt like she had lost her sense of self after sidelining her career to assume full-time caring responsibilities for her children. She also reflected that she found it challenging integrating into Australian culture.

'I want to support my family and have [my] mental wellbeing and help myself to heal. I feel like I [have] lost my identity.'

- Started doing certifications in tech (including AWS Cloud) and experimented with blogging.
- Considered returning to education as an education support worker. Helen was highly motivated to get into tech and had previously applied to the Victorian Digital Jobs Program but did not progress. Helen applied to MEGT in mid-2022 knowing she wanted to study cyber security and felt that it would be good fit for someone with an education background.

'I was contemplating how can I align myself [in the tech sector] with an [my] education background.'

- Found the recruitment process very straightforward and organised, with high standards for entry. Helen was accepted by the first employer she interviewed with to complete her placement.

Training

Helen:

- Found her lecturer to be very knowledgeable and attributed her motivation to work as an analyst to the insights provided by the lecturer into the industry and the role.
- Did the training for six months* (finishing post-placement) and enjoyed learning about cyber security as she was very interested in that area of digital skills.
- Found balancing the work placement and training difficult in addition to her responsibilities at home. She was unable to implement flexible work arrangements during her probation period. Helen resigned from her position and found the training much easier to complete when she could focus solely on the learning.

Work Placement

Helen:

- Was placed in an IT support role at an IT solution consultancy.
- Was disappointed that she was not able to apply her cyber security knowledge into practice. She suspects it may have been difficult to place cadets in cyber roles as they may have needed additional security clearances.

'My expectation for the placement is that I would apply what I studied. But, I am doing IT support, so it's different. I have to learn two things.'

Wrap around supports

Helen:

- Received one-on-one support from senior colleagues and her supervisor through her employer's onboarding process.
- Built a network with the other women in her course and has stayed connected with them post-cadetship.
- Connected with an MEGT mentor every two weeks while completing the cadetship but did not find the mentorship very helpful.

Post-Cadetship

Helen:

- Was offered a full-time permanent role at the same organisation before the end of her cadetship period and worked in that role for two months. Unfortunately, her family were not ready for her to return to full time work, and her employer was unable to offer flexible work arrangements, so Helen resigned from her role.

'I think that industry is not ready for me. I feel like I'm a liability as a mother with kids, even though I know I have potential. It's the business [environment], and it pulls people away [from home life].'

- Got a taste of working in IT through the cadetship, which she very much enjoyed.
- Has continued her studies through a Diploma of IT and is considering further digital career options.

'The cadetship opened a door for me to do the Diploma... I [now] also have work experience that helps to get a job through the Diploma.'

- Received an offer from her employer to return to work once she finishes her Diploma, but she is unsure if she would like to do that.

'I hope the cadetship returns, it's like a bridge to help us get to the company… the cadetship gave me opportunities.'

Sources
MEGT Cadet #2 interview with dandolopartners, 27 Mar 2024.
MEGT, DSCT Final Implementation Report, April 2024.
* Helen chose to complete the training over a longer period of time, making her training longer than the standard 14 weeks of training delivered under the MEGT cadetship model.

Goanna Education Case Study #1: 'Gina'

Gina migrated to Australia around 10 years ago and had previously worked in a labour-intensive role. Gina had no background in IT prior to commencing the cadetship and did not undertake work placement.

Cadet Profile

Background
Gina is in her late 20s and migrated to Australia 10 years ago from Asia. Prior to the cadetship, Gina worked in a labour-intensive role in a factory.

Education and professional experience
Gina holds a Certificate III in Engineering which she completed upon arrival to Australia. Gina had no prior IT experience before commencing the cadetship.

Overview of the training received

Training structure
Gina completed the AWS re/Start+ Bootcamp over 12-weeks of full-time instructor led training online. This maps the AWS cloud re/Start program to units of competency in Certificate III in IT to qualify students as AWS Cloud Practitioner and with the unit of competency in Certificate III in IT.

Digital skill focus
The course included:

- Cloud fundamentals training
- Cloud security, database, and operating systems training
- An introduction to Python programming
- A soft skills unit on team work

Overview of work placement

Gina did not receive a work placement through the cadetship.

Sources
Goanna Education Cadet #1 interview with dandolopartners, 26 Mar 2024
Goanna Education DSCT Final Implementation Report

Goanna Education Case Study #1: 'Gina'

Gina found the training, the soft skills and CV skills useful and is currently in a role that is adjacent to the digital sector. She did not undertake a placement through the cadetship.

Motivation and Recruitment

Gina:

- Was not satisfied in her previous job and felt there was little opportunity for career progression. She was looking to move into a new field with more desirable conditions and came across the Digital Skills Cadetship Program with Goanna Education.

'I was looking for opportunities in a different field that would get me better pay and better conditions.'

- Was interested in the program because it required no prior IT experience, included a guaranteed job placement, was free of charge, and provided her with an opportunity to trial a role in IT before pursuing it as a career.

'[Goanna Education] were attractive to me in the first place they say no IT experience required for application and anyone can [get a] guaranteed job placement.'

- Found the recruitment process very straightforward. She was required to complete several entry tests, including general knowledge and numeracy tests.

Training

Gina:

- Completed the AWS Cloud certification over 12 weeks of full-time training online. She found the course to be well organised with knowledgeable teachers.
- Described that her course also included some basic programming education in Python, which she found valuable.
- Encountered technical issues during training, meaning her group or their teacher had to skip sections of the training.
- Found her training period to be too short to feel job ready for a digital role. She described the course as being more of an introduction to cloud, which she acknowledged is a large and challenging topic.

'They basically touch base on everything, broad but not very deep, that's probably the best they can do in an introductory course.'

- Emphasised that a key part of the cadetship for her learning would have been on the job experience, which she unfortunately was not able to gain as she was not placed in an organisation.

'Time is very short, you can't have someone job ready in just three months.'

Work Placement

Gina:

- Was disappointed to learn from Goanna Education that they had been unable to find a placement for her because the market demand for cloud workers had dropped and organisations had withdrawn from the program.

'I thought from the promotions of the cadetship there is a great shortage of IT specialists which is true, but its more than that, they need IT specialists but not entry level.'

- Was encouraged by Goanna Education to apply for other jobs. However, she found that she was not qualified or competitive for the advertised roles, which included junior cloud engineer roles.

'I don't feel like I am the top of the class there are other people with a lot more experience [in the program] even though they said no experience required.'

Wrap around supports

Gina:

- Was given tailored training by Goanna Education on CV writing and interview practice.
- Was provided with information on the funded mentor program with ACS but was under the impression that she could choose whether to join and opted not to participate as the program was very full on.

'I just want a placement and for me to do months of study and then the ACS mentorship, I didn't accept [the invitation].'

Post-Cadetship

Gina:

- Went through a different recruitment agency to find her current role as a technician.
- Enjoys her role as it involves manually working with hardware, as well as undertaking research and paperwork. She considers this role to be adjacent to a digital role, but unrelated to her training in cloud.

'If [the placement] had happened it would have changed everything, it would have set me up for a further job.'

Sources:
Goanna Education Cadet #1 interview with dandolopartners, 26 Mar 2024.
Goanna Education, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.

Goanna Education Case Study #2: 'Jack'

Jack grew up in Australia. Prior to the cadetship he was interested in IT but had no formal qualifications or experience in the sector. Jack undertook a work placement at a large global services organisation specialising in IT consulting.

Cadet Profile

Background
Jack is in his mid 20s and grew up and still lives in north-eastern Australia.

Education and professional experience
Jack struggled academically at high school and explored several higher education pathways. He started but did not complete a Diploma of IT, as well as several other university degrees. During this time, Jack worked as an air traffic controller.

Overview of the training received

Training structure
Jack completed a Diploma of IT over six months of full-time instructor led training online. This is Goanna Education's most comprehensive course.

Digital skill focus
The course included:

- **Web development:** This course introduced programming and front-end website development. Learners gained fundamental skills of programming using the industry leading. They also researched NodeJS as an emerging technology. Website design and coding was introduced using HTML, CSS, PHP, and further Java.
- **Cloud computing:** This program was based on the AWS re/Start curriculum which teaches AWS Cloud fundamentals to help learners succeed in entry-level cloud positions. Through real-world, scenario-based exercises, labs, and coursework, learners built Linux, Python, networking, security, and database skills. They also got first-hand experience with using common Cloud services and technologies on the AWS platform.

Overview of work placement

Employer organisation
Jack was employed in a large global services organisation specialising in IT consulting. The organisation had a well-established partnership with Goanna Education.

The role
Jack completed a work placement in a consulting project team. Jack was employed as a junior project consultant as part of his work placement.

Sources:
Goanna Education Cadet #2 interview with dandolopartners, 20 Mar 2024.
Goanna Education, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.

Goanna Education Case Study #2: 'Jack'

Overall, Jack had a positive experience of the cadetship program but did not find the mentoring component useful. He enjoyed the training and received a full-time ongoing role from his work placement employer.

Motivation and Recruitment

Jack

- Had prior work experience including various roles that provided insight into a range of different fields, but did not lead to a clear career path.
- Was drawn to participate in the cadetship because of the promise of stable employment.

'This cadetship seemed like a university-fast track, which will land me a career.'

- Was particularly interested in the cadetship program as it promised a rapid, more direct and hands-on route to a stable career in IT.

'Why would you ever go to uni when you can get just as qualified in a quarter of the time.'

Training

Jack:

- Received robust, comprehensive training that was designed to be practical and applicable in the workplace. The training was conducted online, which suited his lifestyle preferences and allowed for a flexible learning environment.

'It was all online. It suited [me] really well and I could go at my own pace.'

- Learnt about Web Development: Jack reflected that this was the 'best' module. It covered essential elements of web development, providing a strong foundation in creating functional websites and applications.
- Learnt JavaScript: Jack reflected that this module equipped him with critical programming skills. He was also provided with additional challenges to master JavaScript, which was crucial for front and back-end development.
- Learnt about Cloud Architecture: Jack reflected that this module introduced cloud computing concepts and practical applications, and that this prepared him for modern IT environments that rely heavily on cloud technologies.
- Noted that some areas (particularly JavaScript) could have been further tailored to cadet interest and industry needs.
- Also undertook training in areas such as management skills, which he found less useful and engaging.
- Expressed dissatisfaction with the soft skills components of the program and felt they did not contribute value to his training.
- Balanced a part-time job while engaging in the cadetship, which was critical for his financial stability during this period.

Work Placement

Jack:

- Was placed with a large tech consultancy, known for its structured environment and comprehensive support systems.
- Reflected that he wasn't offered opportunities to engage with other firms through the placement matching process.
- Had a delayed start to placement by three months due to unforeseen circumstances within the industry. He stated his employer managed this situation by compensating the cadets financially during the waiting period.
- Described the work placement as a bridge between theoretical knowledge acquired during training and applying it in a professional setting.
- Worked in a large and modern IT organisation for the first time through this cadetship.
- Noted the induction process was welcoming and well-planned. Jack was assigned with a manager and mentor from his very first day. The buddy system was particularly beneficial during the early stages of his placement.

'[My employer] was a good choice for a partner. Everyone is so happy, [Goanna Education] had everyone ready to go.'

Wrap around supports

Jack

- Opted out of participating in the mentoring aspect of the program because he felt that the amount of work and effort required from him was not necessary.
- Was not aware that mentoring was a key component of the cadetship model at Goanna Education.

Post-Cadetship

Jack

- Transitioned into a permanent role within his employer
- Described that since completing initial training he was on the "bench", where he waited assignment to specific projects. This time was used for further learning.
- Reflected that despite being on the 'bench', he still felt secure in his role during his placement.
- Expressed optimism regarding his future career prospects in the organisation and ability to adapt to the changing IT landscape.

Sources:
Goanna Education Cadet #2 interview with dandolopartners, 20 Mar 2024.
Goanna Education, DSCT Final Implementation Report, 2024.