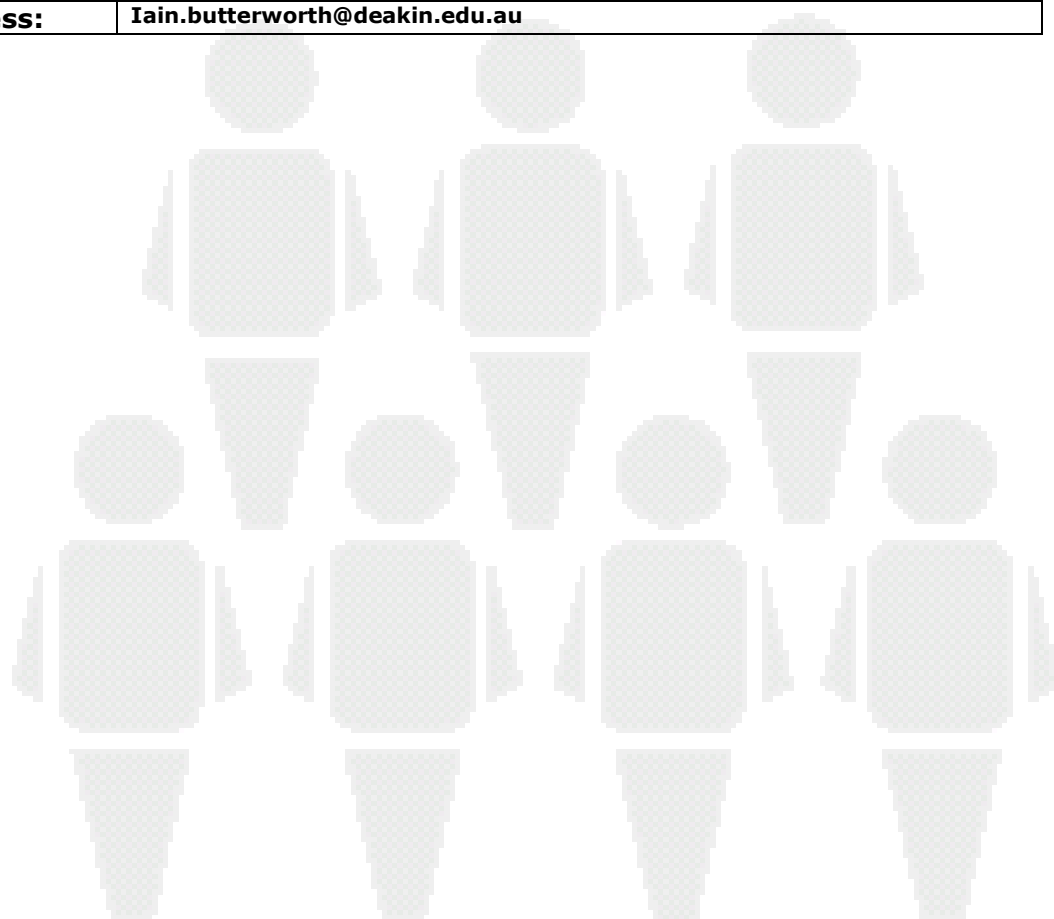


Workforce Innovative Grant Program

Expression of Interest Form

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Project Proposal:

A review and modernisation of student placement systems and practices in the Barwon South West Region's human services.

1 Introduction and Rationale

Student placement opportunities provide a proven pathway for graduates' transition into the human services workforce. Student placements are offered in Community Service Organisations (CSOs) that DHS funds and in DHS' own direct care services. A small number of placements are also offered in DHS' corporate services and administration areas.

As both a funder and provider of services, DHS faces challenging workforce staffing shortages in many program areas and rural settings, which are being compounded by an ageing workforce. There is an increasing shortage of student placement vacancies available in the Barwon South West Region (BSWR) for Medical, Nursing, Allied Health and Community Service professions. The placement demands are extensive, ranging from TAFE Associate Diplomas to University Degree courses. TAFE vocational streams include Youth Work, Child Care, Aged and Disability, Welfare and Nursing. University placements are in high demand for students from Medicine, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Social Work, and Health and Behavioural Sciences.

There is an increasing concern that the demand by Educational Institutions (both TAFE and University) for student placement positions will become critical as course options and student intakes increase across the region. Deakin University's new Medical School is a major Health, Educational and Workforce boost to the region. However the increased demand for medical students in Geelong and Rural settings is a major and increasing challenge. Similarly funding for TAFE Health and Community Service courses is currently increasing with a subsequent increased demand for student placement opportunities.

DHS' direct care services and CSOs are the key referral source for the majority of these student placements. Currently placements are coordinated directly between Faculty/Course area and the key placement sources. These networks and placement positions are usually well established and have been operating reasonably effectively over a long period of time. However the current placements occur under a collection of independent and generally manual placement models with no overall coordination or mapping across the system. This gap in planning and co-ordination itself could be a barrier to achieving future student placement objectives, as current practices are not responsive enough to a rapidly changing environment.

Relevant background work to date

In 2008 the Deakin +DHS Partnership completed a project to produce Student Placement Guidelines and Resources for DHS Direct Service programs in Geelong. These guidelines outline current placement practice and procedures being used by DHS particularly in Child Protection and Disability Services. The Student Placement Guidelines provide a useful resource for DHS Funded Agencies but they do not map out current placement practice in their field of operations, which represents 80% of DHS service delivery.

2 Project Outline

This project is an important change lever that will enable Deakin and DHS to develop a student placement model that is flexible and capable of responding effectively to projected increases in demand across funded CSOs and DHS direct service program areas.

This Proposal has been designed to align with the following Workforce Innovation Grant objectives:

- Identify levers and barriers to achieving change and
- Ensure policy and planning is informed by best practice and linked to the broader health system.

The project aims to introduce an innovative, integrated approach to student placement practice and develop business solutions that can be used as a technological solution as a lever for positive change.

a) Scope and Objectives

- Map current student placement practices and use of information technologies for DHS funded CSOs and direct service programs and collect key data and information relevant to placements in the BSWR.
- Investigate and identify student placement capacity constraints being experienced in funded CSO and DHS settings.
- Identify areas of potential increased capacity for student placements in both funded CSOs and DHS Direct Service Programs
- Analyse student placement data collected and information systems to develop recommendations to facilitate improved regional planning and coordination of student placements within funded CSOs and DHS Direct Care services.

b) Outcomes

A key outcome of this project will be the generation of data that maps out current DHS student placement activity and practice in the Barwon South West Region. This data set will provide a foundation resource to help the DHS Executive team to engage in significant strategic activity, including:

- Identifying key issues associated with student placement practice and use of technologies;
- Mapping student placement activity and trends over time;
- Identifying placement gaps and blockages in the system;
- Identifying student placement opportunities in the system;
- Making recommendations to the Deakin / DHS Partnership about a modern, integrated student placement model for human services; and
- Developing a set of business requirements for an integrated web based student placement solution linking Deakin with CSOs and DHS.

c) Impacts

Key impacts will include:

- Maximizing placement opportunities exposing a greater number of students to human services as a career option;
- Facilitating the student placement priorities of both DHS and Deakin University;

- Developing a modern plan to respond to outdated student placement practices operating between CSOs, DHS, and Deakin and other educational institutions within Barwon-South Western Region;
- Positioning the BSWR to efficiently manage significant increases in demand for student training and placement options;
- Building an increased capacity to identify placement opportunities with funded CSOs and DHS' Direct Services.

d) Budget

The budget for this proposal is as follows:

1 x EFT Senior Research Fellow	\$90,000 with on costs
Consumables/operating costs	\$15,000
Total	\$105,000

e) Timeline and milestones

This project will be conducted over 12 months. The milestones are as follows:

- i. Recruitment (weeks 1-4)
- ii. Inception (weeks 5-8):
 - Draft Work plan
 - Governance plan
 - Final Work plan
 - Stakeholder engagement strategy
 - Communications plan
 - First Advisory Group meeting
- iii. Data Collection /consultation / information gathering (weeks 9-24)
- iv. Second Advisory Group meeting
- v. Synthesis /analysis (weeks 25-30)
- vi. Draft Report (weeks 31-35)
- vii. Third Advisory Group meeting
- viii. Feedback (weeks 36-40)
- ix. Final Report (weeks 41-45)
- x. Presentation – Final Advisory Group meeting (week 46)
- xi. Launch (week 47)

f) Risks

Risks identified for this project include:

- The need to engage with the right people within DHS and Educational Institutions
- The need to ensure DHS and Educational Institution engagement in the project

g) Evaluation approach

A 'utilisation-focused evaluation' approach (as propounded by Michael Quinn Patton) will be designed in the initial project planning stage and structured to measure progress towards achieving key project milestones (goals and objectives) across the duration of the project. Progress toward achievement of milestones will be monitored regularly by DHS Barwon South West Executive management team.

3 Demonstrated support of senior management

The scope and objectives of this project have been reviewed and endorsed by the Regional Director in the Barwon South West Region. The objectives of the project clearly align with Workforce planning in regard to student placement issues within DHS agencies.

The Deakin University+DHS (Barwon-South West Region) Partnership is a mature one that has been in existence for over a decade. It covers all human service programs and has recently been reviewed and relaunched (see www.deakin.edu.au/dhs).

The current membership of the Deakin/DHS Partnership Executive includes:

- Mr Jim Higgins, Regional Director, DHS BSWR (Co-Chair)
- Prof John Catford, Dean, Faculty of Health, Medicine, Nursing and Behavioural Sciences (Co-Chair);
- Mr John Hedditch, Manager, Regional Planning, DHS (BSWR);
- Prof Evelyne de Leeuw, Associate Dean (Development), Faculty of Health, Medicine, Nursing and Behavioural Sciences;
- Ms Kay Mills, Deakin/DHS Barwon-SWR Partnership Coordinator, DHS (BSWR)
- Dr Iain Butterworth, Deakin/DHS Barwon-SWR Partnership Coordinator, Deakin;
- Mr Christopher Loughnan, Project Officer, Deakin/DHS BSWR Partnership (secretariat support to the Executive).

The Partnership's governance arrangements consists of four Advisory Groups that involve service providers, government, peak bodies and education and training representatives from Deakin university and VET sectors (Gordon TAFE).

The Partnership Executive recently approved three "Beacon" research projects. Resources need to be applied to each of them into the medium term. They are:

1. Workforce planning and development
2. Addressing disadvantage initiatives
3. Farmers health

These 'Beacon' initiatives are mutually supportive in that they reflect activity and ideas generated from all of the Partnership's Advisory Groups.

4 The existence of champions for the project at senior levels

This project has a direct impact on issues of student placement and workforce capacity relevant to both DHS (BSWR) and Deakin University. This project has the strong support of Mr Jim Higgins (Regional Director DHS, Barwon South West Region) and Mr John Hedditch, Manager Regional Planning, DHS BSWR.

Dr Kathryn von Treuer, Associate Head of School (Partnerships and Development) and Senior lecturer Industrial and Organisational Psychology at Deakin University's Waterfront Campus, has also indicated her support of the project (Appendix 1). Dr Treuer writes:

The Organisational Psychology team would be pleased to provide any assistance that may be required for this project. We have recently been successful in obtaining a Strategic Teaching and Learning Grant which will be used to provide comprehensive analysis of students' strengths and weakness so that student placements will then be better matched to their learning needs. We have several staff who have expertise in career assessment

for development and recruitment who would be able to supervise such a project.

Dr von Treuer's team would recruit and supervise the Senior Research Fellow, in collaboration with the Deakin/DHS Partnership team.

5 Capacity to effectively engage with external stakeholders:

The project has a strong network of potential avenues for stakeholder engagement including but not limited to:

- **Deakin+ DHS Teaching and Workforce Advisory** group which represents a wide cross section of membership from DHS BSW, Deakin University and the Gordon Institute of TAFE.
- **Regional Primary Care Partnerships** representing the wide range of Health and Aged Care agencies funded by DHS in the region.
- **G21 Geelong Regional Alliance.** This is an alliance of a variety of independent organisations including representation from the Victorian Government, five local government areas as well as a wide representation of community and business organisations.
- **Deakin University, SW TAFE and the Gordon Institute of TAFE.**

6 Communication and Consultation strategy

The project aims to engage and seek the commitment of key stakeholders, in particular key student placement personnel at DHS agencies, Deakin and the Gordon Institute of TAFE. A comprehensive stakeholder scanning exercise will be undertaken to identify organisations and individuals relevant to the study and those that should be directly engaged. A strong stakeholder engagement strategy will be developed to obtain the participation of all stakeholders involved in this project.

7 Readiness to Commence

This position can be supported and accommodated in the Strategic Planning Section of DHS BSWR, as well as the School of Psychology at Deakin's Waterfront Campus. Indeed, one of the strengths of this application is that the Senior Research Fellow can be based and supported at each institution.

8 Commitment to a staged project with regular review

DHS Regional Executive recognises the crucial student placement capacity issues this project seeks to address and understands the importance of regular and ongoing evaluation and review of progress.

9 Support for expansion of this model to the broader health system

This project has been developed as a foundation initiative to develop and map DHS student placement data in the region. This will provide the longer term potential to monitor and track placement trends and opportunities over time. The outcomes from this project have the potential to inform and improve student placement practice across the health system.