

Community participation in program design: The Welcome Experience

Preliminary research and design



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Executive Summary

Access to reliable essential services when they are needed is a basic amenity for all communities. However, providing equitable access to essential services for residents of regional NSW has long been a challenge for government.

Attraction and retention of skilled staff is critical to the delivery of these essential services. In June 2021 the NSW Secretaries Board tasked the Department of Regional NSW (DRNSW) with the research and development of possible solutions related to the challenges of essential worker attraction and retention, with a focus on the employees of the NSW Departments of:



Education



Health



Communities and Justice, including
Police and Family and Community Services



Fire and Rescue

In response, DRNSW has led the development of a whole-of-government collaboration to improve the attraction and retention of essential workers in regional NSW. This report details the research and outcomes of this process.

Preliminary research indicated a significant service gap between regional and metropolitan areas that is critically linked to the supply of skilled staff. DRNSW produced two key reports.

The first report identified existing issues and programs to address them, including relevant attraction and retention strategies. The research described by this report found that the retention of essential workers was highly dependent on workers' community participation, social connections and alignment with life aspirations. Where essential workers are moving to a regional community as a family group, the education and employment options available for family members also influenced retention. Extensive consultation with NSW government agency partners showed that various agencies employing essential workers were already addressing work-related attraction and retention incentives effectively, but that there was a gap in the attraction to the 'life outside of work' space. This important gap in work across agencies highlighted the space in which DRNSW could contribute to essential worker attraction and retention in regional NSW.

The second report was an in-depth place-based study at Walgett, NSW that found that financial attraction incentives were not generally effective in retaining essential worker staff beyond the incentivised contract period and additionally, that a lack of social and professional networks deterred higher skilled staff.

These findings indicated that the experience of essential workers in their life outside work was critical to the design and success of attraction and retention programs. In February 2022 DRNSW engaged The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) through an open tender process to help design a service that would improve essential worker attraction and retention using Human Centred Design (HCD) methods. The aim was the design of a place-based solution, focusing on personal life factors that impact people's decisions to move to, or stay in, regional NSW for work. DRNSW and TACSI selected Walgett, Bega and Wagga Wagga as sample locations and consulted essential workers, their employers, community organisations, local councils and the local community, to inform the design of a prototype service to address the needs of new essential workers.

This consultation found both individual and structural factors contributed to essential worker relocation. Individual factors impacting attraction and retention included that:



People move to regions for pay and incentives, but stay for community,



It's hard to settle-in to a new community without an existing social connection,



Essential workers bring families that also require support.

In direct response to this community feedback, a multi-faceted program was proposed to address these individual factors. This became the Essential Worker Attraction Program (EWAP) which was established by DRNSW to support worker attraction and retention. The program is guided by a steering committee comprised of representatives from each in-scope NSW government agency and other key public sector stakeholders such as the NSW Public Service Commission and the NSW Department of Customer Service.

There are three components to the EWAP:

1. The Welcome Experience (TWE):
the cornerstone of the EWAP suite of programs, TWE is a place-based concierge service which aims to support essential workers and their families when relocating to regional NSW.

2. an integrated Attraction Campaign:
a state-wide marketing campaign to promote regional NSW as a great place to live and work.

3. an integrated Partner Employment support service:
an initiative to support the meaningful employment of essential workers' partners in regional communities to help attract and retain essential workers.



TWE is the lead program of the EWAP suite of programs with \$10.8 million committed over 2022-2026. TWE aims to improve the attraction and retention of essential workers in regional NSW by providing them with support in their personal life as they transition to life in a regional community.

This involves providing essential workers and their families with opportunities to make connections with the communities they move into through a place-based Local Connector. Ultimately, this will reduce vacancy and staff turnover rates so that regional communities benefit from consistent, fully staffed services.



For essential workers and their families, TWE supports positive regional experiences and a sense of belonging to encourage their decision to move regional and stay longer.



For the local community, TWE supports longer tenures and reduced vacancy rates that underpin consistent and locally available services. This in turn improves place-based amenity, reputation and attractiveness.



For employers, TWE supports staff wellbeing and increased length of tenure to reduce pressure on the wider team and provide sustainable public services.

To improve the prototype before rolling out services across the state, DRNSW decided to pilot the program for a 12-month period at eight diverse locations across regional NSW. DRNSW sourced delivery partners in each pilot location using an open tender process in late 2022. Applicants were chosen to ensure a diverse set of delivery partners, and include a local Council, community groups, and government organisations. The pilot program commenced delivery in February 2023.

The pilot phase provides an opportunity to collect real-time process and outcome evaluation data and use it in a continuous improvement process that iterates on a quarterly basis. To achieve this, a comprehensive Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework for the TWE pilot phase was developed, and commenced in parallel with the delivery of the program. The MEL describes the iterative improvement of the program through short and long cycles of feedback, operationalised through a series of data collection methods. The TWE (Pilot Phase) Progress Report will be completed after six months of the service being in operation across all sites. This report will collate program improvements identified by service partners, service users and DRNSW staff during the pilot phase, and make recommendations for revised program parameters and deliverables for further roll-out of service across the state in 2024.

The EWAP is an important, evidence-based response to the continuing challenge of consistent service delivery in regional communities. It addresses the 'soft infrastructure' needs that are critical to the delivery of essential government services; needs that are difficult to meet in regional areas. As the cornerstone service, TWE sets the standard for interagency coordination and demonstrates the value of place-based, whole-of-government solutions to challenges that impact outcomes for regional communities and the NSW government agencies that support them.

Introduction

Access to reliable essential services when they are needed is a basic building block of amenity and liveability in all communities. Providing equity of access to essential services for residents of regional and remote NSW has been a long-term challenge for government and has intensified in recent years.

In addition to the ongoing requirement for adequate infrastructure and funding, a key factor in the provision of these services is the need for a consistent and sufficient supply of skilled staff. Broader structural issues such as a tight labour market, restrictions on migration during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a widespread housing affordability and availability crisis have impacted both the attraction and retention of essential workers to these communities, which in turn has contributed to the service gap between regional and metropolitan areas.

This is particularly concerning when considered in terms of the provision of the essential government services such as health and education and has been an ongoing concern of many government departments. As an important example, the Audit Office of NSW has consistently found that “regional, rural and remote disadvantage is a longstanding and well-known issue” in educational outcomes.¹ While there are competing definitions of what constitutes an ‘essential’ service, to effectively scope the scale of the service gap in key government service delivery in regional areas and research potential solutions, this project needed to develop a practical definition of essential NSW government services to test during pilot phase. In response to this practical need, the set of services that communities might see as the basic set of ‘essential services’ required to meet a minimum standard of amenity and safety were proposed by program staff and interagency collaborators. To that end, the terms ‘essential workers’ and ‘essential services’ refer to the employees and work of the following agencies only, for the period of the pilot:



NSW Department of Education



NSW Department of Communities and Justice



NSW Health



Fire and Rescue NSW



NSW Police Force

Individually, these agencies have pursued various incentive programs to attract and retain workers, however the Department of Regional NSW (DRNSW) acknowledged that a more coordinated response was required. In July 2021 the leadership group for the NSW public sector, the NSW Secretaries Board, sought to develop a whole-of-government collaboration to improve education outcomes and employment opportunities in regional NSW. DRNSW was tasked with the research and development of possible solutions. This report details the research and outcomes of this process.

¹ Audit Office of NSW (2023). Regional, rural and remote education: Performance audit. Audit Office of NSW. <https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/regional-rural-and-remote-education>

Preliminary research:

Essential worker attraction and retention

Shortages of essential workers in regional NSW have exacerbated over recent years, leading to inequitable access to services and poorer outcomes for regional residents as compared to their metropolitan counterparts. The Legislative Council inquiry into health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales² found:

“residents in rural, regional and remote New South Wales have inferior access to health and hospital services, ... rural, regional and remote medical staff are significantly under resourced when compared with their metropolitan counterparts, exacerbating health inequities”.

The Legislative Council inquiry into teacher shortages and education outcomes in New South Wales³ found that

“teacher shortages are widespread and affect the education outcomes of students across the state”.

In 2021 there was a growing acknowledgement of the need for coordinated action to address these issues. As the leadership group for the NSW public sector, The NSW Secretaries Board endorsed a

“place-based, whole-of-government collaboration to improve youth education outcomes and employment opportunities in remote communities, starting with Walgett”.⁴

This action was led by DRNSW and the resulting research focussed on Walgett, NSW as the first community to be consulted. Alongside the development of a place-based coordination group and related workforce strategies, DRNSW was tasked with investigating the potential for a new whole-of-government workforce attraction and retention strategy, starting with essential workers. Walgett was also the pilot location for this approach.

² New South Wales Parliament Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health (2023). Report no. 57: Health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales, New South Wales Parliament, p. xii.

³ New South Wales Parliament Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education (2023). Report no. 50: Teacher shortages and education outcomes in New South Wales, New South Wales Parliament, p. viii.

⁴ NSW Secretaries Board, June 2021.

DRNSW undertook desktop research, interviews with organisations that had developed their own attraction and retention strategies, interviews with essential workers living and working in Walgett, and site visits to understand the challenges in attracting and retaining essential workers in regional NSW.

Two reports were produced from this process:

‘Attraction and retention of key workers in regional NSW – Key findings’⁵ was informed by initial consultation with NSW Government clusters, an interjurisdictional scan, a literature review, and interviews with those involved in the development of relevant attraction and retention strategies. These included the Rural Health Professionals Attraction Program in Alberta (Canada), EvoCities, and an initiative jointly run by Murrumbidgee Local Health District and Calvary Hospital, as well as Rural Councils Victoria, and Dr Cath Cosgrave’s Attract, Connect, Stay program for health professionals.

This report found that the retention of essential workers was highly dependent on workers’ community participation, social connections and alignment with life aspirations. Where essential workers are moving to a regional community as a family group, the education and employment options available for family members also strongly influence retention.

‘Insights on education, employment and key workers in Walgett’⁶ was based on research undertaken in December 2021 and May 2022 during which DRNSW consulted with community members and essential workers in the Walgett area, delivering a survey to 18 essential workers to capture insights into what attracted and deterred staff to Walgett and what affected retention. The results identified that consistency and stability in the teaching workforce had a positive impact on educational outcomes in the Walgett community but there were several factors deterring essential worker attraction and retention.

A key observation was that attraction incentives were not generally effective in retaining essential worker staff beyond the incentivised contract period and a lack of social and professional networks deterred higher skilled staff, including General Practitioners.

⁵Piper, D., O’Dowd-Austen, Paine, L. and Pham, T. (2021). Attraction and retention of key workers in regional NSW – Key findings. Department of Regional NSW.

⁶O’Dowd-Austen, L., Kyatt, B. & Passfield, L. (2022). Insights on education, employment and key workers in Walgett: A perspective from key service providers in the community. Department of Regional NSW.

DRNSW also consulted NSW Government agencies who employ essential workers in regional NSW, with the aim of understanding the challenge of attracting and retaining essential workers from their perspective.

Feedback from this consultation was that DRNSW had a role to play in the coordination of existing attraction and retention strategies across NSW government agencies. This consultation also corroborated community feedback that any staff involved in supporting the attraction and retention of staff to new communities must have lived experience of the particular community in question.



Feedback from this extended consultation converged on the proposal that social integration is key to retaining essential workers in regional areas. It also provided some potential strategies for achieving this, including:

Promoting the benefits of a country lifestyle and career through positive stories, myth-busting and real experiences of country lifestyle.

Supporting social and community connections.

Promoting the professional development opportunities that arise from working in smaller regional communities.

Improving the fairness of incentives across professions.

Housing was identified as the most influential incentive especially for those with families.

Improving the appeal and liveability of the community through recreation activities.

A need for better education and professional development opportunities for locals.

Improving communication and collaboration between key organisations including government and non-government organisations within the community.

Funding

Funding for Rural and Regional Health Projects secured \$25m in November 2021 (Cabinet Submission SC1334-2021) to design and run the Essential Worker Attraction Program for a period of three years and seven months, concluding on 30 June 2026. Funding was approved on the basis that the program develops cross-government, place-based initiatives to attract and retain essential public service workers, in particular health care workers, in priority areas of current and future need. A further \$9m was approved at a later date to increase the scope of essential public sector workers to include those employed by the NSW Departments of Education, Communities and Justice (Police, Family & Community Services, and Courts) and Fire & Rescue. In mid-2023, \$10m of this funding was recovered by NSW Treasury to fund NSW Budget repair measures.



Human-centered design to hear community voices

The findings of the preliminary research indicated that prioritising the experience of essential workers and local communities was critical to the design and success of attraction and retention programs. DRNSW engaged The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) through an open tender process to help design a service that would improve essential worker attraction and retention using Human Centred Design (HCD) methods.

HCD is a staged process that seeks to implement place-based strategies to address complex problems. It does so by gleaning insights from affected stakeholders to develop and test prototype strategies and refine them to recommend solutions. This method was selected because the aim of the research was to find what factors supported or prevented retention of essential workers in regional NSW and address them. During the discovery phase, TACSI used a human-centred and systemic approach to identify the needs of the 'customer', service users and the broader authorising environment. Essential workers were consulted and asked to identify what factors were most influential in deciding to leave or stay in regional communities.

The HCD approach was the preferred method as it has several benefits for both project outcomes and communities. HCD enables regional communities, essential workers and their agencies to actively participate and contribute to the development and delivery of a project through active collaboration and live prototype testing. Along with providing valuable insight, HCD builds social capital by strengthening community ties and encouraging collaboration, partnership and cooperation between pre-existing groups. This allows new stories to emerge and builds momentum for exploring other possibilities of change.



The approach by TACSI incorporated six key phases:

1. **Project initiation and HCD capacity-building:** collaborative project planning, on-boarding with participating DRNSW staff and coaching of participant recruitment; foundational HCD capability building sessions.
2. **Discover and understand context:** making sense of existing insights; listening and learning from essential workers and systemic stakeholders (e.g. diverse government agencies and partners).
3. **Design and prioritise options:** designing and prioritising critical assumptions to test in three regional communities and with systemic stakeholders; creating an evaluation and measurement framework for selected prototype testing.
4. **Prototype to learn:** prototyping and preparing to test key assumed service interactions, roles or experiences; undertaking two learning loops through prototype testing in each sample community.
5. **Making the case:** making sense of what was learnt from sample communities; building a case or a value proposition (e.g. desirable, viable, feasible) for prototypes showing promise; building a high-level developmental evaluation and measurement framework for selected prototypes to progress to other communities.
6. **Document, storytelling and setting up for scaling:** final service documentation in line with requirements, including a high-level framework for developmental evaluation and measurement; storytelling and making a case for piloting in additional regional locations; reflecting to learn.



Listening to community voices is central to this approach and a number of methods were used. DRNSW consulted with NSW Government agencies to determine suitable locations to prototype early versions of the proposed service. Bega, Wagga Wagga and Walgett were selected as prototyping locations.

Walgett was chosen partially because of existing relationships with community organisations and NSW Government agencies in the area, and Bega and Wagga Wagga provided complementary diverse locations and communities to draw insights from. At these sample locations, TACSI and DRNSW consulted and interviewed essential workers, their employers and the local community to inform the design of a prototype service to address the needs of new essential workers, including through two separate stages. The first stage involved consultation on issues, opportunities and barriers around essential worker attraction and retention. Once this stage was complete, a draft program 'prototype' was developed. This prototype was then taken back to the target research locations to test with these communities for fitness of purpose. These stages comprised the following activities:

- Interviews with essential workers from NSW Department of Education, NSW Health, NSW Police Force, NSW Department of Communities and Justice and Fire & Rescue NSW.
- Workshops with agency staff and community groups to actively participate in the prototyping process to ensure design solutions would be compatible with community organisations that may be interested in running the service. Community representatives and organisations that participated included:



Walgett: Aboriginal Medical Service, Best Employment, Mission Australia, Country Women's Association, Kelly's Real Estate, Outback Division of GP, Walgett Community Working Party, Walgett Shire Council



Wagga Wagga: Committee for Wagga, Huntsman Recruiting, PRD Real Estate, Multicultural Council of Wagga Wagga, Wagga Wagga City Council, Riverina Murray Regional Alliance, Kirinari, Regional Development Australia



Bega: Bega Rotary Club, Bega Valley Medical Practice, Sapphire Coast Community Aged Care Group, The Disability Trust Bega, Bega Valley Shire Council, Bega Chamber of Commerce

- Focus group sessions held in communities to test the prototype after incorporating essential worker insights into the program design.
- This community and stakeholder consultation incorporated the views and a second round of feedback of approximately 160 participants across the two separate site visits in the three chosen locations. This process provided the basis for establishing a program design that was relevant and responsive to the lived experience of the people this service intends to support.

Developing the evidence-based

Essential Worker Attraction Program

The Human-Centred Design process described above provided a grounded evidence base that was explicitly considered in the design of the service. The findings indicated both individual and structural factors that directly contribute to essential worker attraction and retention:



Factors impacting workforce attraction and retention

Individual factors:



People move to regions for pay and incentives but stay for community

Essential workers indicated that financial and housing incentives were factors that attracted them to living and working in regional areas. The workers who remained in regional areas beyond their expected departure date indicated that integration into the community was as important for their retention. Where essential workers had moved with their partners and/or children, the integration of their family into the community in which they worked as equally important.



It's hard to settle-in to a new community without an existing social connection

Essential workers found it difficult to 'break into' the existing social structures of their new communities. This issue became more pronounced the smaller a community became. These workers suggested that having a warm introduction to their new communities would have helped them to settle in better during the initially stressful period when they were moving into a new community, a new workplace and a new home.



Essential workers bring families that also require support

Essential workers moving with partners often had to leave a community, even where they found the work to be rewarding and a good opportunity for professional development, due to a lack of employment opportunities for their partner. Where essential workers had moved with young children, a lack of access to childcare services and well serviced schools also negatively affected their retention in regional locations.

Structural factors:



There are place-based challenges like housing and child-care

Housing availability and affordability was a major concern for essential workers in regional communities. Agencies that offered suitable, subsidised housing for their employees was a major factor in retaining essential workers. Where employee housing was not available or did not suit the needs of the workers, private housing shortages drove essential workers back to metropolitan areas.

The level of existing social support for new essential workers also varied across regional communities. Some communities enjoy engagement in this space from local councils and community organisations such as neighbourhood centres and chambers' of commerce, while many others did not.

In direct response to this community feedback, the Essential Worker Attraction Program (EWAP) was established by DRNSW to support essential worker attraction and retention. All features of service delivery, including a toolkit of possible activities to engage new essential workers, have their origins in feedback collected directly from essential workers, their employers and communities. Further detail is available in Appendix A, The Welcome Experience Program Guideline (Pilot Phase).

Additionally, high-level program governance is guided by a collaborative Interagency Steering Committee with senior representatives from each of the five delivery agencies (NSW Department of Education, NSW Health, NSW Police Force, NSW Department of Communities and Justice and Fire and Rescue NSW) as well as Service NSW, Multicultural NSW, (former) Department of Premier and Cabinet, and the NSW Public Service Commission. The input of these stakeholders ensures the required authorising environment for staff at the regional and local levels and assists in coordination and promotion across agencies.



Regional towns can grow their-own workforces

Communities and local employers were keen to point out that importing workforces has a displacing effect on the many talented and motivated young people who already live in regional locations. Many research participants told us that essential workforce needs may be met in the future by providing a clear vocational pathway from the early years of high school into identified career paths including the essential roles in the scope of this research. This feedback was especially strong in less economically advantaged communities.



There are three components to the EWAP:

1.

The Welcome Experience (TWE):

The cornerstone of the EWAP suite of programs, TWE is a place-based concierge service which aims to support essential workers and their families when relocating to regional NSW across four key stages: attract, prepare, welcome and stay. Through the dedicated support of a 'Local Connector', TWE aims to seamlessly integrate essential workers and their families into regional communities by facilitating meaningful social connections within the community and providing personal assistance with needs outside of work.

2.

The Attraction Campaign:

A state-wide marketing campaign to promote regional NSW as a great place to live and work. The Attraction Campaign was designed to complement TWE and support the service by including an essential worker website containing information on regional career opportunities and living.

3.

Partner Employment support:

An initiative to support the meaningful employment of essential worker partners in regional communities to help attract and retain essential workers.

This suite of programs developed in response to this feedback acknowledges the critical need for essential worker attraction and retention by seeking to address individual factors affecting relocation to the varying advantages and challenges experienced by different regional communities. It is important to note that structural factors are being considered and addressed by other parts of DRNSW, including the Regional Housing Policy and Regional Liveability teams, through programs such as the \$174 million Key Worker Housing Package, and the Early Childhood Education and Allied Health workforce support pilots and projects. The community feedback on regional towns' capacity to grow their own workforces is also significant and DRNSW is considering how to make best use of this insight, both through the internal work of the Regional Development branch and in partnership with other NSW government agencies.

Essential Worker Attraction Program cornerstone:

The Welcome Experience pilot

Based on the findings of the research and collaboration at the sample locations, along with research previously compiled by DRNSW, TACSI and DRNSW created TWE prototype including tools and resources to support the service. TWE is the lead program of the EWAP suite of programs with \$10.8 million committed over 2022-2026 to deliver the program.

TWE aims to improve the retention of essential workers in regional NSW by providing them with support in their personal life as they transition to life in a regional community. This involves providing essential workers and their families with support and opportunities to make connections with the communities they move into.

DRNSW contracts a Host Agency at each location, who then employs a Local Connector with extensive lived experience of the local community and a talent for engaging with people. TWE then provides personalised support to new essential workers at four stages of their move to a regional location. Feedback from essential workers and communities identified these stages as time-critical opportunities to provide support to people moving to a new location;

1. when they are considering moving
2. when they prepare to move
3. when they arrive
4. and as they integrate into the community.

Importantly, the support provided to essential workers during these stages is focused on their personal life, outside of work. This is in line with the research findings that personal connections are a key factor in retaining essential workers in new communities.

A supported journey



Local Connector

Supports Essential Workers transition to life in their new community through four stages

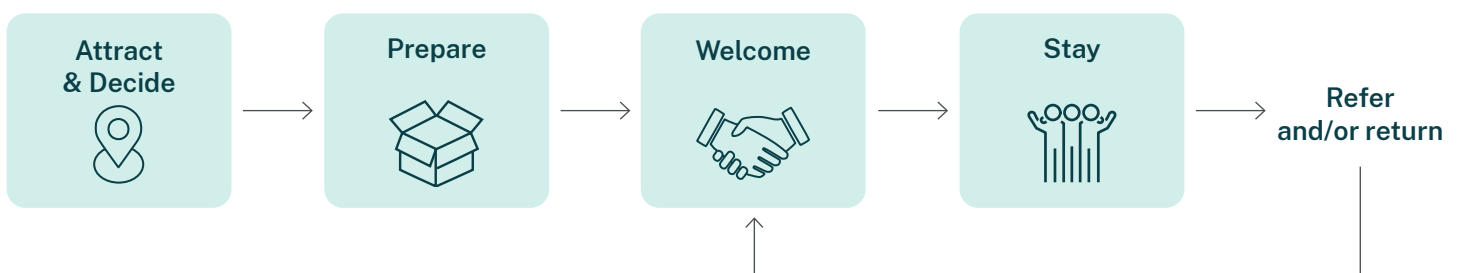


Figure 1: The Welcome Experience service map

To provide the best possible support for new essential workers to settle into community the Local Connector establishes a Local Working Group to coordinate supports. This working group is made up of local and regional representatives from each of the five government agencies, local Council, local service providers and community representatives, including local Aboriginal community members and organisations wherever possible. This allows for the coordination of information, activities and relationships to support the

essential workers across their journey of relocation. DRNSW provides support and resources to each of the delivery partners, including introductions to local government agency staff and community representatives, localised marketing materials, funding for welcome events. DRNSW also facilitates a network for Host Agencies and a community of practice for Local Connectors across the eight pilot sites to collaborate and to help make decisions about program improvements on a quarterly basis.

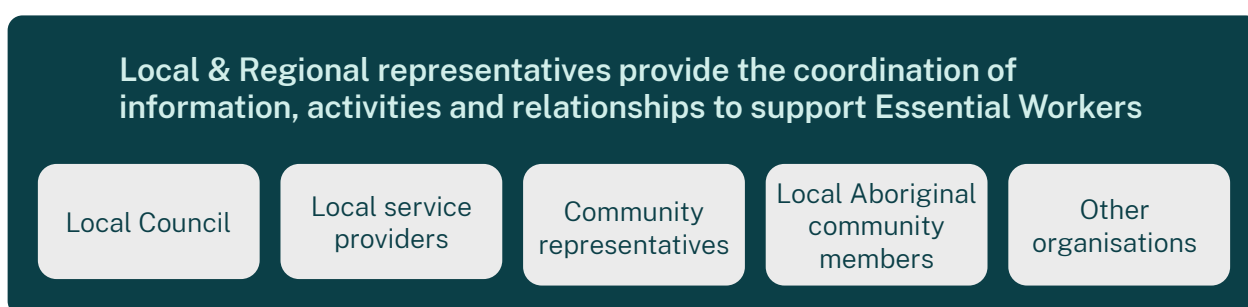


Figure 2: Summary of outcomes for TWE

The overall change that the program aims for is to improve short-and long-term outcomes for essential workers, for places and communities, and for employers as follows:

The Change We Want To See

Short and long term outcomes

For essential workers, their partner and family

We know that relocating to work in regional, rural and remote NSW can be daunting and, in some cases, unnecessarily hard.

Interaction with The *Welcome Experience will improve the preparation, arrival and place-based experience of essential workers and their partner or family.

In doing so, it creates community connections and a sense of belonging in a place to support their decision to stay longer.

Leading to: Positive regional experiences and a sense of belonging

For the place and the local community

We know that communities in regional, rural and remote NSW want more skilled essential workers providing local, accessible services.

Community collaboration with the Local Connector and employers to create The *Welcome Experience will result in a positive experience for newcomers.

This experience will contribute to increased tenure and consistency of service, improved place-based reputation and increased contribution of essential workers to local community.

Leading to: Consistent, locally accessible services

For employers and teams

We know that communities in regional, rural and remote NSW are calling for support to attract and retain staff.

Collaboration with the community and Local Connector to support The *Welcome Experience will increase wellbeing and tenure of staff.

In doing so it will reduce pressure on wider team and increase referral and return of essential workers.

Leading to: Sustainable public services

Given the need to iteratively improve the prototype, it was decided to pilot the program for a 12-month period before wider rollout across the state. DRNSW proposed up to 25 potential locations to deliver the TWE pilot, based on need and geographical diversity. On 31 October 2022, the then Deputy Premier approved the pilot and selected eight locations to run the service for 12 months.

DRNSW sourced delivery partners to deliver TWE in each pilot location using another open tender process. A copy of the Program Guideline provided to applicants is included as Appendix A. Applicants were chosen to ensure a diverse set of delivery partners, and include local Councils, community organisations, and government organisations. Each host agency contractor then recruited a 'Local Connector' to facilitate meaningful connections between essential workers and regional communities.



The list of pilot locations and delivery partners are as follows:

Location	Delivery Partner
Bega Valley	Bega Chamber of Commerce
Broken Hill	Regional Development Australia - Far West
Coffs Harbour	Service NSW
Corowa	Service NSW
Goulburn	Regional Development Australia - Southern Inland
Griffith	Regional Development Australia - Riverina
Muswellbrook	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Walgett	Department of Regional NSW

Figure 3: TWE pilot locations and delivery partners

The map in Figure 4, shows the eight pilot locations across regional NSW. The pilot locations attempt to represent the diverse community types across regional NSW, taking into account,

- Relative remoteness & proximity to the east coast
- Demographic diversity and size
- Diversity of dis/advantage (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA Index))

These efforts to select diverse pilot locations were an attempt to represent a diverse set of community types and geographic locations, and therefore provide a useful spectrum of localised challenges and opportunities to learn from during the pilot phase of the program.

The Welcome Experience pilot locations



Figure 4: Map of TWE pilot locations

Testing and continuous improvement of

The Welcome Experience pilot

The pilot phase of this program allows a unique opportunity to collect real-time process and outcome evaluation data and use it to learn how to improve the efficiency of delivering the service as well as the positive impact it provides for essential workers and communities, before further roll out across the state in 2024.

All programs administered by the NSW Government with funding exceeding \$10m are subject to evaluation. The NSW Treasury states that,

It is important to develop a stronger evidence base of “what works” in the NSW context. As evidence is accumulated, it will inform service deliverers, policy makers and government decision makers. With the government’s adoption of outcome budgeting, there is now a consistent focus on outcomes, from performance monitoring, budgeting and reporting through to assessment and policy and decision making.⁷

To meet Treasury evaluation and benefits realisation requirements we elected to develop a process that collects feedback on process efficiency and implementation fidelity from the people involved in delivering the service on the ground and further feedback on the outcome of the service for its end users. Uniquely, EWAP is using this data in a continuous improvement process that iterates on a quarterly basis. To achieve this, a comprehensive Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework for the TWE pilot phase was developed and commenced in parallel with the delivery of the program.

The MEL aims to:

- **Inform improvement:** to support Local Connectors make ongoing improvements to The Welcome Experience by integrating MEL activities with continuous improvement cycles and to inform the design of broader roll-out.
- **Guide development:** to further develop understanding about the model (e.g., what works, and how) to inform scaling, as well as clarifying and codifying MEL data requirements for delivery partners (for the pilot phase and beyond).
- **Model the process:** to provide guidance to other agencies by modelling willingness to iteratively learn-through-doing in the government service context.
- **Contribute evidence:** to pave the way for similar kinds of initiatives by demonstrating outcomes.

As part of the design of the program, a comprehensive program logic was developed to map the short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes across each of these stages. This was used in the MEL to develop measurement and evaluation tools, such as staged evaluation questions and appropriate data sources.

⁷New South Wales Treasury. (2023, September 29). Decision making to improve outcomes. Retrieved from NSW Treasury: Decision making to improve outcomes. Available at <https://www.treasury.nsw.gov.au/four-pillars/outcome-budgeting/decision-making-improve-outcomes>

The Welcome Experience Program Logic

Objective: Attract and retain targeted workers to regional NSW job roles by supporting them throughout their relocation journey.

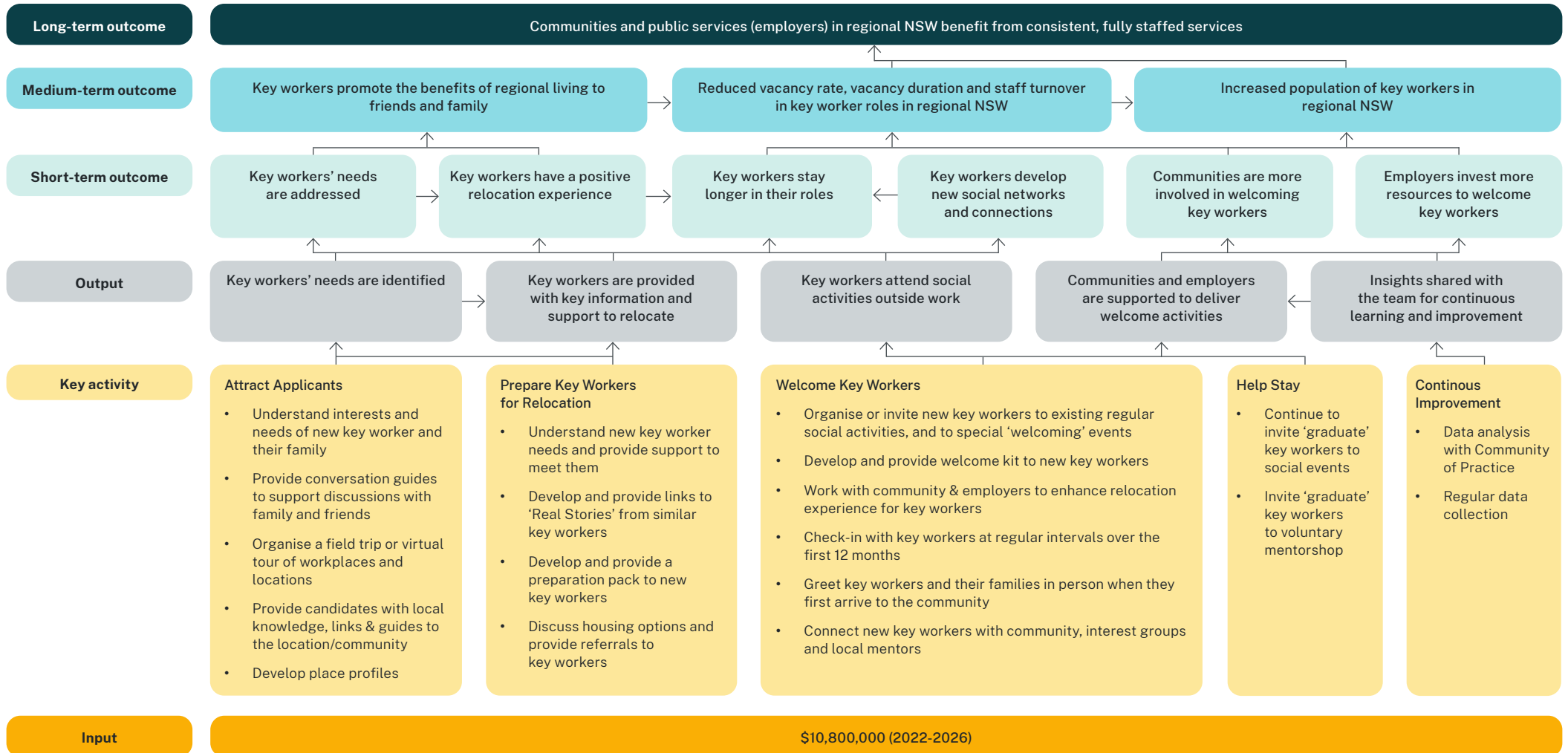


Figure 5: The Welcome Experience Program Logic (Pilot phase)

The MEL utilises both process evaluation and outcome evaluation. This is driven by Key Evaluation Questions that are mapped against the program logic for the program. The MEL describes the iterative improvement of the program through short and long cycles of feedback, operationalised through a series of data collection methods described below:

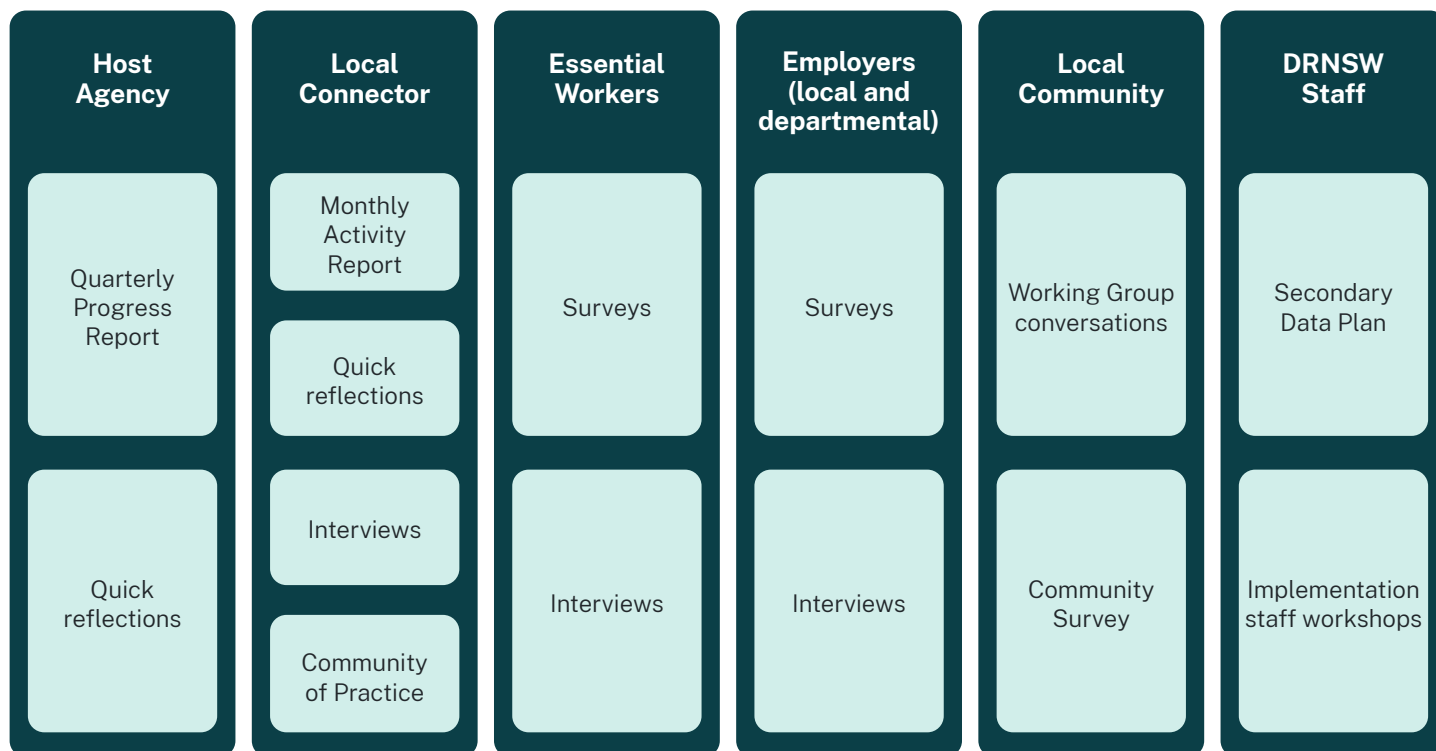


Figure 6: Summary of TWE MEL Framework data collection methods and participants

Further detail is available in the full MEL Framework document included as Appendix B.

The TWE (Pilot Phase) Progress report will be completed after six months of the service being in operation across all sites. This report will collate program improvements identified by service partners, service users and DRNSW staff during the pilot phase, and make recommendations for revised program parameters and deliverables for further roll-out of services across the state.

Conclusion

The Essential Worker Attraction Program is an important, evidence-based response to the continuing challenge of consistent service delivery in regional and remote communities. It addresses the ‘soft infrastructure’ needs that are critical to the delivery of essential government services, needs that are particularly difficult to meet in regional and remote areas.

As the cornerstone service, The Welcome Experience sets the standard for interagency collaboration and demonstrates the value of place-based, whole-of-government solutions to challenges that impact outcomes for regional communities. Through the considered gathering and use of grounded data and place-based testing of solutions, TWE delivers a service that directly addresses the challenges felt in regional communities. Using short- and long-term cycles of feedback, the 12-month pilot program allows the unique opportunity for testing and iterative improvement. This will ensure the broader rollout of the program in 2024 will continue to meet the needs of essential workers, employers and communities as an exemplar of intentional listening to community voices in government program design. This service, together with the integrated attraction campaign and partner supports, will effectively support the attraction of essential workers to regional NSW.



Glossary

DRNSW	The Department of Regional NSW
EWAP	Essential Worker Attraction Program
HCD	Human-Centred Design
MEL	Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Framework
SEIFA	Australian Bureau of Statistics, Socio-Economic Index for Areas
TACSI	The Australian Centre for Social Innovation
TWE	The Welcome Experience

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Appendix A:

The Welcome Experience Program Guideline (Pilot Phase)



**Regional
NSW**

The Welcome Experience

Pilot Program Guidelines for Hosts

November 2022

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1. Purpose of Guideline

This Guideline has been prepared by the Department of Regional NSW to support host organisations pilot The Welcome Experience (the service) in their regional communities.

The Guideline has three main sections to help hosts:

- Section 2 describes the service and its objectives
- Section 3 explains how the service will work in detail
- Section 4 is about how we hope to learn from pilot projects and improve the service over time
- Section 5 contains the Program Set Up Procedures

Importantly, the Guideline leaves room for local leadership and innovation. The service is a flexible concept that draws on the strengths of each community, and we expect that it will look slightly different from place to place as host organisations try different things and learn from their experiences. Where we have set out specific requirements, it is to make sure that the program delivers the NSW Government's objectives and that each pilot project helps us to learn and develop our essential worker programs.

The Department of Regional NSW is responsible for updating this Guideline and welcomes feedback from all project stakeholders.

2. The service at a glance

2.1 What is it?

This is a new service for regional NSW communities where staff help **essential public sector workers** (abbreviated to essential workers herein) and their families prepare for and settle into their new communities. It matches and connects new essential workers with local people and local resources to help them settle in and feel at home in their new community faster.

Essential public sector workers are teachers, nurses, medical practitioners, police, emergency service workers, case workers and other people who work for the NSW Government providing critical frontline public services.

2.2 What does it aim to do?

The service aims to make regional NSW an even better place to live by **providing personalised support to new essential workers at four stages of their move to a regional location:**

1. **Attract/Decide**
2. **Prepare**
3. **Welcome**
4. **Stay**

Evidence suggests that by better preparing and supporting new arrivals to integrate into community, essential workers will be more attracted to **move to, and stay in regional, rural and remote NSW communities.**

2.3 Why do we need it and how does it relate to communities in regional NSW?

People in regional NSW rely on a range of local public services. Shortages of essential workers can put these services at risk, with direct impacts on our local communities.

The NSW Government is committed to making sure **regional communities are great places to live** by supporting initiatives that make the provision of public services more reliable and more consistently available.

Evidence (literature reviews, interviews with essential workers and site visits to regional communities) tells us that **social factors** play a significant role in attracting and retaining essential workers to regional, rural and remote NSW. The service will support essential workers in their lives outside of work by **supporting social connections** in the new communities that they serve.

This helps improve how liveable regional NSW communities are, because essential workers and their families contribute more than just the services they deliver. Although we may not directly use some public services every day, the knowledge that they are available and fully staffed gives people confidence in the way their community operates now, and in its prospects for the future.

2.4 Why it is a pilot? When, where and who will deliver it?

The service is the first of its kind to be funded by state government in NSW. To ensure the service is successful and meets the needs of our diverse communities it will be piloted in several regional locations before a larger scale roll-out. This will allow the Department of Regional NSW to trial different delivery models and learn from essential worker interactions and experiences. It is anticipated that the service will be continuously improved and adapted during the pilot phase.

The service will be piloted over 12-18 months and will target up to eight regional communities starting from December 2022. Further locations will be added on a rolling basis during 2023. Once piloting has been completed the service will be rolled out more broadly across interested regional NSW locations. The pilot locations will continue delivering the service beyond the pilot phase if all parties agree that it is achieving its intended outcomes.

The NSW Government is funding the service and is responsible for the selection and sequencing of pilot communities, administration, coordination, reporting and evaluation of the pilot.

The service will partner with a range of **host agencies** such as local councils, other NSW Government agencies and Non-Government Organisations (i.e. business chambers, neighbourhood centres, etc) to deliver the pilot in their communities.

2.5 What support will be offered to host agencies during the start-up phase?

During the initial pilot phase, the Department of Regional NSW will support host agencies to set up the service. This support will be tailored to the needs of host agencies and may include:

- understanding the logic and background to the service and how it can be customised to their community and local context
- supporting the recruitment and onboarding of service delivery staff
- supporting the development of delivery support plans (see section 3.5.1)
- facilitating introductions to local government agency employers
- supporting the development of local brand and marketing resources to align with the service, and
- supporting the use of reporting platforms and collection of outputs and performance data to assist with **pilot evaluation and improvement**.

Further information on the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Regional NSW and host agencies can be found in section 3.5. and the Program Set Up Procedures.

3. Scope

3.1 Objective of the service

Making the choice and then moving to an unfamiliar place can be logistically and emotionally difficult for essential workers and their families. Feedback from essential workers across regional NSW is that lack of connection with a new place of work and home can lead to workers feeling alienated in their new environment. Without support to build the social connections to help essential workers feel at home quickly, many return to more familiar surroundings prematurely.

The short-term objectives of the service are therefore to:

1. support essential workers to settle into their new community by facilitating positive social connections, and
2. test and learn what is the most effective and successful delivery model for a diverse range of regional, rural and remote NSW communities.

Over the medium to longer term, the service aims to contribute to improving essential worker attraction and retention in regional rural and remote NSW. By collaborating with stakeholders, drawing on existing initiatives and programs, and ultimately providing a positive experience for essential workers, the service will support the reduction of essential worker vacancies and improve the availability of public services.

3.2 Target workers

The service targets essential workers who are considering moving or have moved from a metropolitan (Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong), interstate or overseas location to a regional, rural or remote area in NSW.

Essential workers include those employed by the following NSW Government agencies:

- **Department of Education and Training** employees, including primary and secondary school teachers and non-teaching staff
- **NSW Health** employees, including nurses, allied health professionals, ambulance staff, visiting medical officers and specialists employed through the Local Health District
- **NSW Police Force** employees
- **Department of Communities and Justice** employees
- **NSW Fire and Rescue** employees.

Subject to need and localised negotiation, The service may also be extended to:

- local general practitioners, and
- staff of Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS).

3.3 Local Connector role

The service relies on a dedicated role employed to deliver concierge-like services in the pilot location. Successful **Local Connectors are likely to be sociable, creative, empathetic, organised and collaborative people that have great knowledge of their communities and what it is like to move to a new area.**

The Local Connector is the bridge between new essential workers and the community. Research informing the service shows that people go through four decision stages when relocating to a regional location for work: Attract and Decide, Prepare, Welcome, and Stay.

The responsibilities and activities of the Local Connector in engaging newcomers and connecting them to their local community will be spread across these four stages. A **toolbox of activities, ideas and resources** will be made available for Local Connectors to use at the completion of the tender process. Table 1 summarises these suggestions. These activities are a guide only and host agencies and Local Connectors are encouraged to identify new activities and products that suit the locations that the service will operate in.

Table 1 Activities and products that Local Connectors may offer in their service, and their purpose and outcomes

	Attract / Decide	Prepare	Welcome	Stay
Purpose	Positively affect the perception of life and work in regional, rural and remote NSW when essential workers are considering applying for roles.	Provide information and support essential workers to move once they have accepted a regional, rural or remote job offer.	Support the post-move integration of essential workers into local communities over a 12 month period.	Support essential workers to stay on for more than 12 months in regional, rural and remote NSW.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide local knowledge, links or guides to the location/community provide conversation guides to support discussions with family members and friends about moving to a regional area develop place profiles so that essential workers understand the services and amenities available in the area they are interested in moving to organise a field trip to the area or a virtual tour of workplaces and locations where an in-person visit is not possible subject to permission, provide the contact details of other essential workers or peers in the area understand the interests and hobbies of essential workers and scout options if appropriate, understand essential worker partner occupation and scout possible employment opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand the needs of essential workers and support required in the move develop and provide a preparation pack relevant to the local context of the community to which the essential worker is moving such as information about local schools, partner employment opportunities, social activities and details about essential amenities and services discuss housing options and/or provide referrals to assist with securing appropriate housing develop and provide links to 'Real Stories' from similar essential workers who moved to the region previously. Ideally these would be short videos explaining their experience in a positive and realistic way provide ongoing support and advice in the lead up to moving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> greet essential workers and their families in person when they first arrive to the community map out the unique needs of essential workers in the settlement process develop a welcome kit that includes things like local products, maps of the local area, vouchers to use at local businesses, etc. invite new essential workers and their families to a 'Welcome to [Community Name]' event to introduce them to members of the community and other essential workers share information on the history and culture of the local community and facilitate Welcome To Country in collaboration with Traditional Owners / Aboriginal Elders connect essential workers with community champions and local mentors to support their transition connect new arrivals to local hobbyist, social and special interest groups check-in with essential workers at regular intervals over the first 12 months regarding their experiences and needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> invitations to stay connected with the community of new essential workers via voluntary mentorship or attendance at regular planned social events seek to understand, and address where possible, the drivers or reasons why a essential worker is considering leaving prematurely arrange thank you letter/s from local leaders for the services provided by the essential worker organise a farewell party for essential workers who are leaving the community provide referrals to other regions participating in the service to support the relocation of the essential worker and their family members.
Outcome	Increase the number of applications and acceptances for regional essential worker roles.	More positive relocation experience for essential workers by reducing uncertainty and small transition frictions.	Improve retention of essential workers in regional communities by providing positive social experiences and access to established social networks in their new community.	Increase the duration that essential workers spend living and working in regional NSW. Increase the likelihood that they will return to regional NSW at a later point.

As a guide, it is expected that around half of the Local Connector's time will be spent on direct essential worker contact and support. The remainder of their time will most likely be spent on building the employer and community network and collaboration of contributors to the service. During the pilot phase, Local Connectors will be asked to keep a record of the time spent on essential work activities to understand where the bulk of the workload lies.

3.4 Governance

The Department of Regional NSW manages the service and is responsible for ensuring it integrates with and complements other NSW Government workforce attraction and retention initiatives.

The Department of Regional NSW will continue to work closely with essential NSW Government agencies including:

- NSW Health
- NSW Department of Education
- NSW Communities and Justice
- Fire and Rescue NSW
- NSW Police Force
- Service NSW
- iworkfor.nsw.gov.au administrators.

Close collaboration with these partners will ensure that the program continues to meet the needs of NSW government agencies that employ essential workers.

Once host agencies and Local Connectors are onboarded, the Department of Regional NSW will be the central NSW Government contact to support implementation of the service.

At the local level, host agencies and Local Connectors may choose to form a Local Working Group to steer and coordinate local delivery. This will also support Local Connectors in receiving essential worker referrals from local employers and being connected to other initiatives and programs. This Working Group may comprise relevant local stakeholders such as:

- council representatives
- employers
- other government agencies
- community leaders
- community organisations.

3.4.1 Local Connector community of practice

Each service will be supported by the wider group of Local Connectors and host organisations across regional NSW through membership of a Community of Practice coordinated by the Department of Regional NSW.

The purpose of the Community of Practice is to:

- facilitate the sharing of problems, knowledge, and best practice
- make data and information about improvement decisions available to the whole community of practice
- enable continuous improvement of the service across all sites

The Community of Practice will meet on a quarterly basis, and focus on:

- sharing knowledge and learning from Local Connectors
- reviewing program performance data from the previous quarter

- agreeing ways to use data from the previous quarter to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the service

3.5 Roles, responsibilities and milestones

The roles and responsibilities of partners is outlined below. Milestones and their proposed timelines to establish the service are listed in Table 2.

Department of Regional NSW

The Department of Regional NSW is responsible for the overall administration, coordination, reporting and evaluation of the pilots and the program, including:

- the selection/sequencing of pilot and future expansion communities
- the negotiation and execution of agreements with host agencies
- supporting host agencies with the set up and customisation of the service in their communities
- supporting recruitment and onboarding of Local Connectors
- convening interagency meetings to ensure the service addresses the needs of the relevant government agencies
- facilitating the Community of Practice
- supporting host agencies to develop delivery support plans (see section 3.5.1)
- endorsing media announcements, new resources and products
- the preparation of briefs and reports to Department of Regional NSW executives and the Minister
- monitoring and mitigating high level program risks
- managing contracts with subject matter experts/third party providers
- finalising and implementing the Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework, and
- analysing data and measuring progress against short, medium and long-term outcomes.

Host agency

The host agency leads the local service design and supports the Local Connectors to successfully deliver the service, by:

- supervising and managing Local Connectors
- developing the local service brand, marketing and resource materials in collaboration with Local Connectors
- convening a local working group to coordinate local delivery
- supporting engagement with the Community of Practice
- developing and implementing local delivery support plans (see section 3.5.1) in collaboration with Local Connectors
- monitoring and mitigating local delivery risks
- preparing and submitting quarterly reports, and
- testing and implementing the Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework in collaboration with the Department of Regional NSW and the Community of Practice.

Table 2 Milestones and proposed timelines for establishing the service

Milestone	Lead	Indicative date
Agreement executed with first tranche host agencies	Department of Regional NSW	From December 2022
Recruit first tranche of Local Connectors	Host agencies	From January 2023
Develop local Delivery Support Plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Plan • Risk Management Plan • Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan 	Host agencies with support from Department of Regional NSW	From January 2023
Commence networking and marketing and development of local resources	Local Connectors	From February 2023

3.5.1 Delivery Support Plans

The Department of Regional NSW will provide templates and work collaboratively with host agencies in the set-up phase of the service to develop the following delivery support plans. These templates and plans will be refined and improved as the pilot progresses.

Implementation Plan

This plan will guide local delivery of the service and will include:

- **stakeholder analysis** detailing the names, roles and contact details of all stakeholders (also see below and section 3.4 Governance)
- **schedule** listing important tasks and milestones for the local roll-out of the service, timeframes and who will lead them across the 18-month period
- **operational outline** describing how the host agency will implement tasks described in the schedule and identifying local context, constraints, risks and opportunities
- **budget** detailing planned expense types, allocations and actual expenditure, and
- **improvement register** recording details of issues raised, proposed changes and their outcomes.

Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan

This plan will guide local stakeholder engagement and communications and will describe:

- stakeholder mapping, analysis and prioritising
 - Who are all the stakeholders to the service?
 - What are their needs?
 - How can they support or hinder the service?
 - How and when should they be engaged?
- communication plan and budget
 - record the methods, timing, and content that the service will use to keep communicating with the stakeholders identified above
 - state the desired outcomes of communication
 - itemise/forecast a communications budget.

Risk Management Plan

This plan, based on the principals of ISO31000, will identify and manage local delivery risks. The plan should identify measures that remove or minimise exposure of staff, stakeholders and members of the public to risks. It must be reviewed and updated at regular intervals and comprised of a risk register that:

- identifies significant risks and any existing controls

- assigns a base level and residual risk rating (category, likelihood, consequence)
- describes risk mitigation measures, and
- identifies the risk owner and a timetable for implementation.

The risk plan should also adopt a scenario approach that maps dependencies between tasks and milestones, and outlines contingencies to manage when things do not go to plan. For example, how host agencies and Local Connectors will maintain service delivery in the face of unscheduled delays, constrained budgets, loss of staff etc.

3.6 Financials and remuneration

The Department of Regional NSW will lead the negotiation and execution of agreements with each host agency.

Eligible host agency expenses include:

- Local Connector wages, inclusive of on-costs such as superannuation, payroll tax and relevant insurances
- Administration overheads such as:
 - Human Resources, finance and management support staff
 - workplace accommodation, including workspace, electricity, access and licences to corporate systems
 - professional development and training
- Marketing and promotion activities, publication of resource materials and products, and
- Operational expenses including consumables, catering, motor vehicle, travel, venue hire.

Administration charges must be directly and only associated with the delivery of the service, with the Department of Regional NSW willing to consider reasonable host agency administration costs and charges.

3.6.1 Local Connector capabilities and wages

The service relies on the advanced interpersonal, organisational and promotion skills of the Local Connectors. In addition to knowledge of their local community and regional life experiences, desirable Local Connector capabilities include effective communication, ability to work flexibly, collaboratively and creatively, solve problems, plan and prioritise and be customer-service orientated.

Local Connectors must be able to work flexibly and be regularly available to work outside normal business hours and some weekends to meet the needs and conveniences of essential workers. For regional communities with many new essential worker arrivals, the role will likely be a full time job. In other smaller locations, it may be part-time. Some larger regional communities may require more than one Local Connector. Host agencies can scale the role up or down dependant on local need.

With respect to Local Connector staff wages, the Department of Regional NSW acknowledges that host agencies work under different job classifications, grades and awards. In the pilot phase, the Department of Regional NSW will **not prescribe a one-size-fits-all hourly rate** and will instead request that host agencies nominate their most appropriate job classification, grade and award conditions (i.e. standard hourly and penalty rates).

The following pay rates for a Grade 6 Community Development Worker under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award (MA000100) is provided **as a guide only**.

Social and community services employee Level 6 - Pay Point 1	Hourly pay rate
Permanent Hourly Pay Rate	\$49.07
Casual Hourly Pay Rate	\$61.34
Saturday	\$73.61
Sunday	\$98.14
Afternoon shift (finishes after 8pm and before midnight) Monday to Friday	\$55.20
Night shift (finishes after midnight or commences before 6am) Monday to Friday	\$56.43
Public holiday	\$122.68

4. Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

Piloting allows experimentation with a service or product to examine its effectiveness before it is adopted at greater expense and scale.

Data collection on the service Pilot is critical to evaluate the program's effectiveness and efficiency from the perspective of

- the investor (the NSW taxpayer and government)
- the service providers (host agencies, Local Connectors)
- the beneficiaries (new essential workers, essential public service agencies and regional communities).

While data collection is an important component, the Department of Regional NSW does not expect it to be onerous and will work with host agencies to manage this requirement.

Host agencies and c will also be asked to develop, test and iterate the process and platform to collect pilot performance data. In the meantime, the performance data suggested for collection and its timing is outlined below.

Local employers and community organisations who interact with the service may also be invited to participate in qualitative data gathering from time to time.

Which data are we interested in and why?

Host agencies and local connector staff will be asked to participate with the Department of Regional NSW in the measurement and improvement of the performance of the service.

Host agencies and local connector staff will be asked to collect specific data throughout pilot implementation and to undertake the following activities:

- develop a site-specific MEL plan with input from the Department of Regional NSW work with the Department of Regional NSW to refine program data collection, analysis and reporting systems
- collect and manage data for the site and prepare agreed reports
- participate in quarterly data reflection and continuous improvement activities through the Community of Practice
- share lessons learnt and participate in other evaluation activities including focus groups and interviews, and
- engage with stakeholders to facilitate their engagement in measurement and evaluation activities.

Purpose

Performance data will be collected to:

- support **continual improvement of the service** for the benefit of all stakeholders including local connector staff, host agencies, essential workers, local employers and local communities.
- help us **develop our knowledge** about what works best to help people settle into new communities,
- **create more value than burden** for the people who collect performance information, and
- **model** the value of human centred service design and the process of continuous improvement in government services.

Method and timing of data review

Data from all pilot locations will be reviewed on a quarterly basis through the Community of Practice with the goal of engaging all people involved in delivering the service.

Appendix B:

The Welcome Experience Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Framework

Essential Worker Attraction Program

The Welcome Experience

Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Framework (Pilot Phase)

Operational Version 2.1

20 June 2023



Department reference number: RDOC23/122813

More information

The Essential Worker Attraction Program forms part of the suite programs within Regional Liveability, Department of Regional NSW. For more information see [Improving regional liveability \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

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Cover image: DRNSW stock photo

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Preamble

We stand on Country that always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging.

We are committed to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work.

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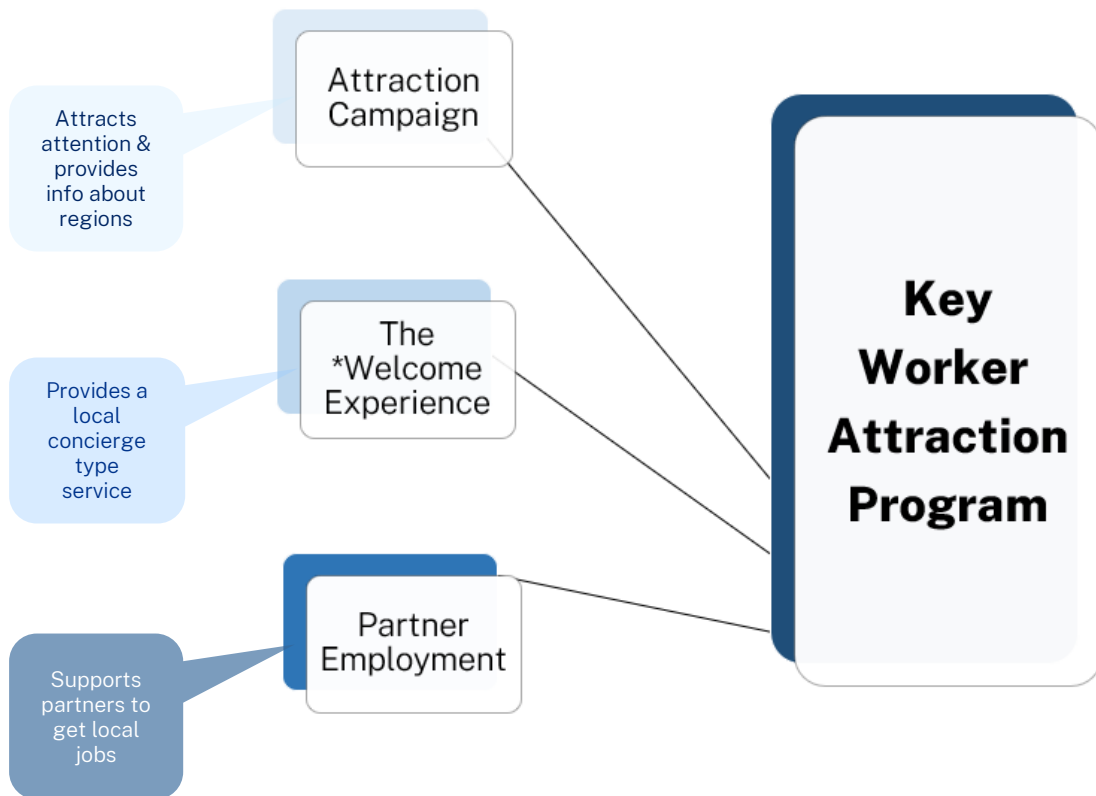
Introduction

What is the *Welcome Experience?

The *Welcome Experience (*WE) is a new service for regional NSW communities where ‘Local Connector’ staff help key public sector workers (abbreviated to essential workers herein) and their families prepare for and settle into their new communities. It matches and connects new essential workers with local people and local resources to help them settle in and feel at home in their new community faster.

Evidence suggests that by better preparing and supporting new arrivals to integrate into community, essential workers will be more attracted to move to, and stay in regional, rural and remote NSW communities. The *Welcome Experience aims to make regional NSW an even better place to live by providing personalised support to new essential workers at four decision stages that people undergo when they move to a new regional location: Attract/Decide; Prepare; Welcome and Stay.

The *Welcome Experience is part of a broader three-fold Essential Worker Attraction Program:



Pilot Phase

The *Welcome Experience is the first of its kind in NSW. To ensure the service is successful and meets the needs of our diverse communities it will be piloted in several regional locations before a larger scale roll-out. This will allow the Department of Regional NSW to trial different delivery models and learn from essential worker interactions and experiences. It is anticipated that the service will be continuously improved and adapted during the pilot phase.

Scope

Purpose

The MEL Framework (Pilot Phase) will:

- **Inform improvement:** to support Local Connectors make ongoing improvements to The *Welcome Experience by integrating MEL activities with continuous improvement cycles and to inform the design of broader roll-out.
- **Guide development:** to further develop understanding about the model (e.g., what works, and how) to inform scaling, as well as clarifying and codifying MEL data requirements for hosts (for the pilot phase and beyond).
- **Model the process:** to provide guidance to other agencies by modelling willingness to iteratively learn-through-doing in the government service context.
- **Contribute evidence:** to pave the way for more similar kinds of initiatives by demonstrating outcomes.

Audience

The audience for the MEL Framework (Pilot Phase) includes:

- **Primary audiences**, stakeholders who will use the data collected to inform decision-making processes. They include:
 - Local Connectors and host agencies
 - DRNSW
 - Employers (Steering Committee)
 - Communities
- **Secondary audiences**, stakeholders who may access the MEL data, but are not responsible for decision-making. They include:
 - NSW Treasury
 - Essential workers
 - Potential host communities/organisations
 - DRNSW Media, Communications and Engagement (MCE) team
 - Deputy Premier's Office

Boundaries

The MEL Framework (Pilot Phase) is guided by the Program Logic to **understand the implementation processes** and **effectiveness of the Program** during the pilot phase, and to learn from this to inform the design of the wider program roll-out.

In scope

- short- and medium-term outcomes for essential workers, and early signs of medium- and long-term outcomes for communities and employers within the timeframe of the pilot phase (12 months from contract signing at each location, and 12-18 months for the entire phase).
- the tools, processes and feedback mechanisms used by Local Connectors and DRNSW team during the pilot phase.
- learnings about the model/s for scaling, including iterative review of the MEL framework.

Out of scope

- medium- long term outcomes beyond the pilot phase
- activities of other initiatives
- economic evaluation of The *Welcome Experience

Audiences and their Information Needs

Primary Audiences	Why do they need this information?	Connection to MEL Purpose
Local Connectors and host agencies	To continuously improve their connecting and facilitating work.	Inform improvement Model the process Contribute evidence
DRNSW	To learn about the model, both in terms of implementation (e.g. barriers/enablers to implementation, variability of local contexts and impacts on future roll-out, process successes and failures) and effectiveness (e.g. what works and what doesn't; impacts of the variability of contexts in terms of staffing requirements, program footprint, and effective delivery partnerships; patterns in enablers such as key people in the locations to work with; key components that lead to positive experiences; what realistic, clear and meaningful MEL data requirements for the hosts might be) to inform design of the program roll-out; use stories of positive experiences of relocating. This extends to the use of this data to inform decisions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Essential Worker Attraction Program (KWAP) team, (<i>note: this includes TACSI as implementation partners</i>) - Executive Director, Regional Liveability, and - Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Corporate and Performance 	Inform improvement Guide development Model the process Contribute evidence
Employers/ Steering Committee	To be informed of the level and effectiveness of engagement with essential workers; to be provided with the opportunity to contribute feedback, including the identification of potential gaps and/or complementary or alternative approaches.	Inform improvement Guide development Model the process
Communities	To be informed of the type, level and effectiveness of engagement with essential workers in their community and in other communities; to encourage connection with the Local Connector team.	Inform improvement
Essential workers engaged in the *WE	To be informed of the level and effectiveness of engagement with essential workers; to be provided with the opportunity to contribute feedback, including the identification of potential gaps and/or complementary or alternative approaches.	Inform improvement Guide development
All of the above	To learn about the model and encourage collaboration, cross-pollination of ideas and group learnings and support each other in the program implementation and delivery	Inform improvement Guide development Model the process Contribute evidence

Secondary Audiences	Why do they need this information?
NSW Treasury, Deputy Premier's Office	To see the value of the model
Potential host sites	To see the value in hosting The *Welcome Experience
DRNSW MCE team	To use stories for promotion of program and DRNSW

What Success for the MEL Would Look Like

The DRNSW team identified the following factors as being central to successful MEL during the pilot:

- **Focused, relevant and accessible:** data are relevant and useful for ongoing learning and improvement of The *Welcome Experience, and easy and accessible (including plain English) to the primary audiences
- **MEL is flexible and adaptable, with core dataset:** there are consistent data collection points, but data that are being collected also informs refinement and adjustment to MEL in order to ensure its meaningfulness and relevance.
- **Ownership at the Local Connector level:** MEL is embedded in local connector practice as part of learning loops for refining their work, including CoP meetings and potential incorporation with other State-wide services
- **Learning focus:** MEL clarifies what most useful aspects of the model are, and it ensures all experimentations – be they successful or otherwise – are turned into learning opportunities.
- **Expectation setting:** the learning focus is communicated to the newcomers, local connectors, community and employers from the start, so that they all share understanding that we are learning by doing.
- **Rich stories:** MEL produces rich stories about experiences of regional relocation.

Program Logic and the links to Benefit Realisation

What is a Program Logic?

Program Logic describes what the initiative is doing and why. It shows how inputs and activities will lead to expected changes:

- Program Logic helps refine the activities and outputs that are prerequisite to bring about the expected changes.
- It provides a framework to monitor and evaluate initiatives by identifying what outputs and outcomes should be measured to assess whether initiatives are working as planned.
- When a Program Logic is developed in consultation with stakeholders, it can help to build a shared understanding of how the initiatives will work.
- Program Logic provides a roadmap for learning and adapting, it can also serve as a communication tool to explain the concepts of the initiatives.

Key elements	Brief description
Objective	It describes what the initiative aspires to achieve based on the problem identified.
Long term outcomes	Long term outcomes are the changes in conditions that align with initiative objectives.
Medium term outcomes	Medium term outcomes are the changes in conditions including practice, productivity, competitiveness, caused by short term outcomes.

Short term outcomes	Short term outcomes are the changes in knowledge, skills and infrastructures due to initiatives' deliverables.
Outputs	Outputs are the initiatives' deliverables in terms of products, services and infrastructure resulting from initiative's activities.
Activities	Activities are the actions carried out by an initiative by using inputs.
Inputs	Inputs are the resources that are needed to implement the initiative to address the identified objective. They are usually a combination of funding, time, expertise, infrastructure, equipment etc.

What is a Benefit?

A benefit is the measurable improvement resulting from an outcome which is perceived as an advantage by a stakeholder. Benefits are the net positive changes resulting from outcomes. It is essential to understand the outcomes before we can define and declare them as benefits.

Benefits can be classified into the following types:

- Financial – benefits that can be quantified and valued in financial terms (e.g. cost savings)
- Non-financial – benefits that can be quantified in non-financial terms or qualitative terms (e.g. social benefits such as improved well-being)

Benefits Realisation Management¹ provides best practice principles that inform investment decisions to realise intended benefits.

When considering the longer-term outcomes and evaluation of the Program, it is useful to consider the intended benefit realisation. The Benefit Pathway for the Program can be ascertained through a simple three-column analysis:

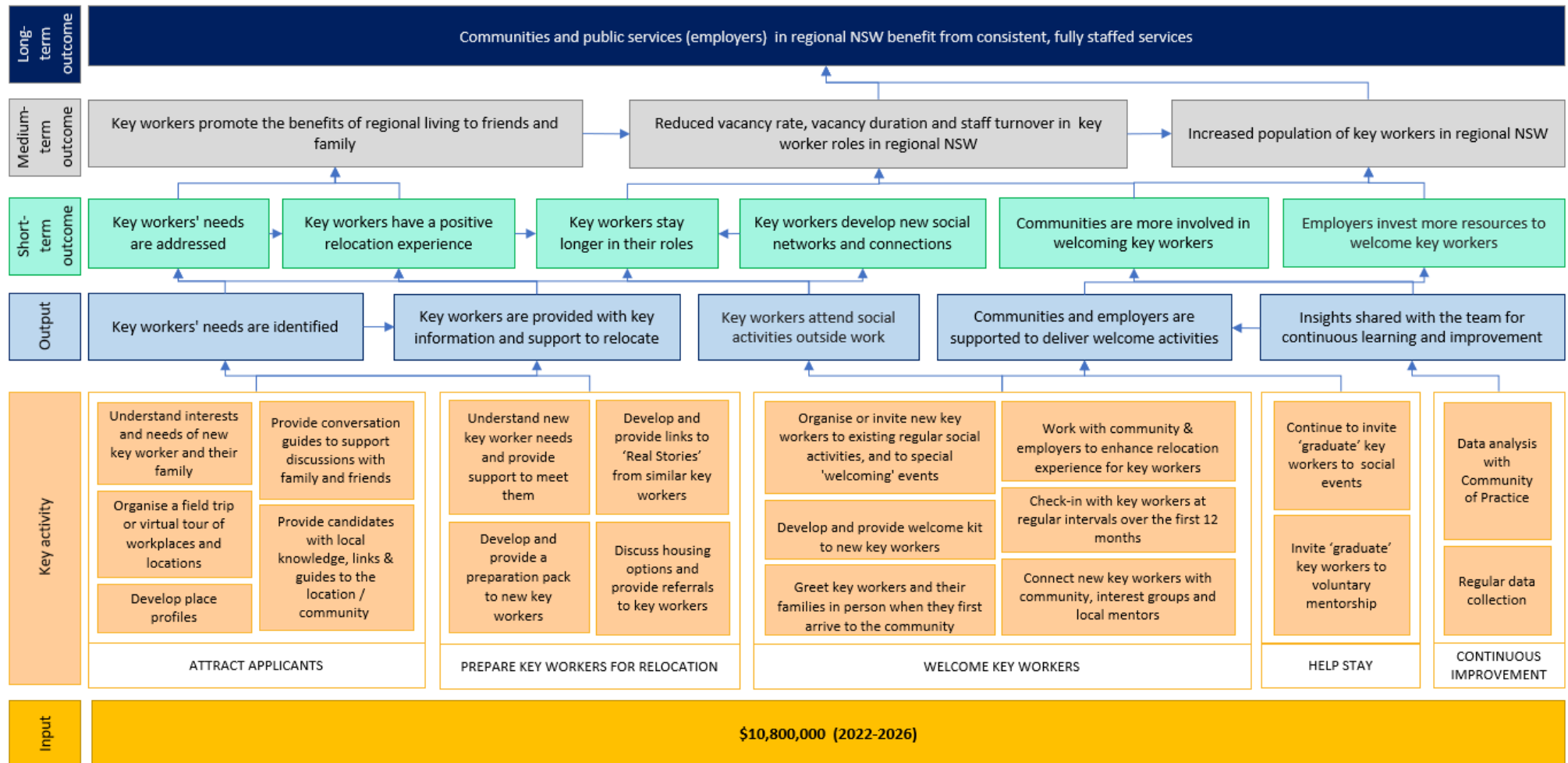
Current business problem	+	What has to change?	+	What must be stopped?	=	Benefits
Insufficient numbers of essential workers in regional NSW, leading to inconsistent service delivery.		Attracting and retaining essential workers to our regions is essential to effective service delivery, therefore there needs to be greater support to attract and retain staff.		High vacancy rates, long vacancy durations and high staff turnover of essential workers in regional NSW.		Communities and public services (employers) in regional NSW benefit from consistent, fully staffed services. These benefits are both financial (cost-savings) and non-financial (increased regional liveability).

The Program Logic maps the ways in which Program activities contribute to this benefit pathway and guides the evaluation framework.

¹ See [Benefits Realisation Management Framework | NSW Government](#)

The Welcome Experience Program Logic

Objective: Attract and retain targeted workers to regional NSW job roles by supporting them throughout their relocation journey.



Types of Evaluation

Type	Focus
Process evaluation	Investigates how the program is delivered, including efficiency, quality and customer satisfaction. May consider alternative delivery procedures. It can help to differentiate ineffective programs from failures of implementation. As an ongoing evaluative strategy, it can be used to continually improve programs by informing adjustments to delivery.
Outcome evaluation (or impact evaluation)	Determines whether the program caused demonstrable effects on specifically defined target outcomes. Identifies for whom, in what ways and in what circumstances the outcomes were achieved. Identifies unintended impacts (positive and negative). Examines the ways the program contributed to the outcomes, and the influence of other factors.

Key Evaluation Questions

What are Key Evaluation Questions?

Key evaluation questions (KEQs) are overarching questions that seek answers to make interpretation and judgement about The*Welcome Experience in achieving intended outcomes, as well as to facilitate learnings and the development of Program prototype/s.

The KEQs are accompanied by more specific sub-questions to guide the collection of evidence to answer the KEQs across all aspects of the Program Logic.

The *Welcome Experience Pilot Phase Key Evaluation Questions

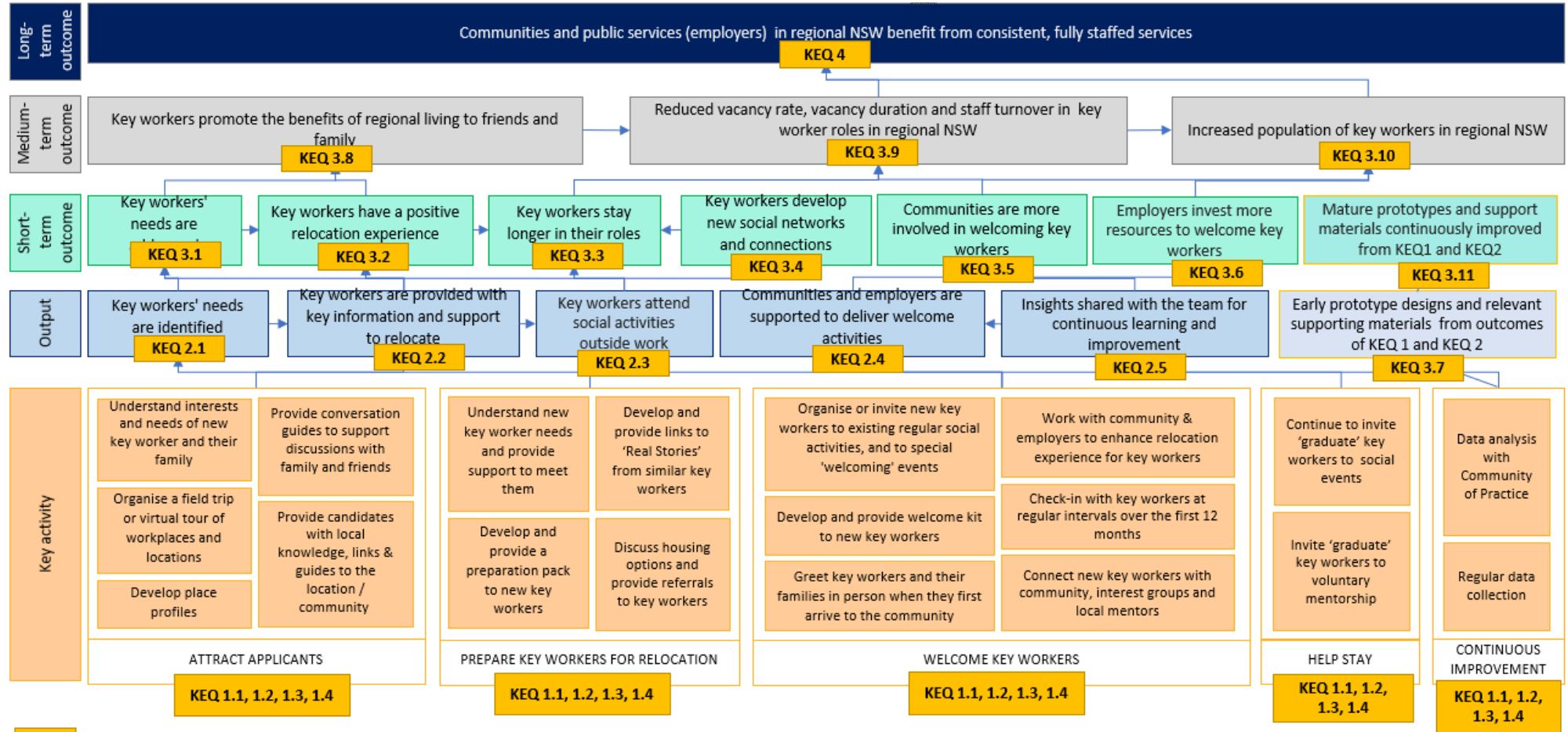
Evaluation Type	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub Questions	Program Activity Stage (Attract, Prepare, Welcome, Help, Improve)
Process Evaluation Investigates how the program is delivered.	KEQ 1: How has the Program been implemented and what are the key learnings?	1.1 Has the Program reached the essential workers, employers and community as planned across each stage of the *WE program?	All
		1.2 What were the enablers and barriers to implementation at each stage?	All
		1.3 Are/were there any changes to the original program activities at each stage? If so, why?	All
		1.4 Could there have been other changes if resources (e.g. time, staff, support) allowed?	All
	KEQ 2: Have the activities and their delivery models been effective and what are	2.1 What were the most and least effective ways of identifying Essential workers' needs?	Attract Prepare
		2.2 What were the most and least effective ways of providing information and supports to relocate?	Attract Prepare
		2.3 How have Essential workers engaged with social activities outside of work?	Welcome Help

Evaluation Type	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub Questions	Program Activity Stage (Attract, Prepare, Welcome, Help, Improve)
	the key learnings?	2.4 What were the most and least effective ways of supporting communities and employers to deliver welcome activities?	Welcome Help
		2.5 What were the most and least effective ways of sharing insights for continuous learning and improvement?	All

Evaluation Type	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub Questions
Outcome Evaluation Seeks to verify a causal link between activities and intended outcomes. Identifies overall outcomes and any unintended consequences for program participants.	KEQ 3: Are the intended outcomes occurring? Did the Program cause the intended outcomes?	Short-term outcomes 3.1 Are Essential workers' needs being addressed? What has been the role of the program activities in this? 3.2 Are Essential workers having a positive relocation experience? What has been the role of the program activities in this? 3.3 Are Essential workers staying longer in their roles? What has been the role of the program activities in this? 3.4 Are Essential workers developing new social networks and connections? What has been the role of the program activities in this? 3.5 Are communities more involved in welcoming Essential workers? What has been the role of the program activities in this? 3.6 Are employers investing more resources to welcome Essential workers? What has been the role of the program activities in this? 3.7 What are unintended (positive or negative) outcomes caused by the Program?
		Medium-term outcomes 3.8 Do Essential workers promote the benefits of regional living to friends and family? What has been the role of the program activities in this? 3.9 Have the vacancy rates, vacancy durations and staff turnover rates reduced? What has been the role of the program activities in this? 3.10 Has the population of Essential workers in regional NSW increased? What has been the role of the program activities in this? 3.11 What are unintended (positive or negative) outcomes caused by the Program?
	KEQ 4: What is the longer-term benefit realisation of the Program?	4.1 Has there been a change in how regional NSW communities experience local services, in terms of locality and consistency of key services? 4.2 Has there been a change in how public services (employers) in regional NSW experience local services, in terms of locality and consistency of key services?

The *Welcome Experience Program Logic Evaluation Map

Objective: Attract and retain targeted workers to regional NSW job roles by supporting them throughout their relocation journey.



 = Key Evaluation Question/ Sub-question

Measurement Tools

Data Source	Mode	Program Activity/ Outcome Stage	Trigger	How
Local Connector Activity Report	Online form	All stages - monthly	LC contract commencement date	Consolidated day-to-day data such as the number of inquiries, and relevant deidentified case notes about Local Connector engagement with essential workers, community organisations and employers (both numbers and the nature of interactions), instances of change as observed by Local Connectors.
Local Connector Interviews	Conversation (in-person or online)	All stages - quarterly	LC contract commencement date	DRNSW team to conduct interviews with local connectors to explore key evaluation questions about program implementation, key learnings, outcome achievements, stakeholders' capacity, etc and story collection.
Host Agency Quarterly Progress Report	Online form	All stages - quarterly	*WE contract commencement date	Host agencies to prepare and share the quarterly progress report on the template provided by the WE team.
Essential worker Surveys	Online form	A: Attract, Prepare - 3 months B: Welcome, Help, Improve - 3 and 6 months C: 12 months after relocation or on employment exit	KW registration with LC KW relocation date KW program or employment exit date	A short survey of questions mapped against KEQs. Participating essential workers will be invited to complete the online survey. Survey responses will be deidentified.
Essential workers Interview	Conversation (in-person or online)	Short-term – 6 months Medium-term – 12 months	KW registration with LC KW registration with LC	DRNSW to conduct interviews to explore KEQs and for story collection.
Employer Surveys – Local and Departmental	Online form	Short-term – 6 months Medium-term – 12 months	LC contract commencement date LC contract commencement date	Short survey about their service offering, staffing capacity, vacancy, turnover and practice and resourcing for welcoming mapped against KQs. Participating employers will be invited to complete the online survey.
Employer Interviews – Local	Conversation (in-person or online)	Short-term – 6 months Medium-term – 12 months	LC contract commencement date	DRNSW to conduct interviews with employers to explore significant changes regarding the staff welfare, tenure, and welcoming practice.
Local Community Working Group Survey	Online Form	Baseline (0 months) Short-term – 6 months	Group formation	DRNSW to circulate survey to local community working groups that have been identified / formed / supported by LC staff in each location.

Data Source	Mode	Program Activity/ Outcome Stage	Trigger	How
		Medium-term – 12 months		
Local Community Working Group Conversations	Conversations/ Workshops (in-person or online)	Baseline – 0 months Short-term – 6 months Medium-term – 12 months	Start-up workshops where possible	DRNSW to arrange and conduct interviews with local community working groups that have been identified / formed / supported by LC staff in each location.
Local Community	HaveYourSay	Long-term: Baseline (0 months) Pilot end (12+ months)	Pilot start and end	Targeted location surveys to establish a baseline related to long term outcomes
Secondary Data Plan	Desktop research	All stages - 0 (baseline), 6, 12 months from contract start	First contract commencement date	DRNSW team to gather information about the number of advertisements per position, total number of essential workers, allocated FTE, occupied FTE, key services offered by employers in targeted LGAs and other metrics.
DRNSW Staff Implementation Survey	Conversation and/or online form	All stages - quarterly	First contract commencement date	Internal data collection with those involved in the implementation of aspects of the *WE program to explore key evaluation questions about program implementation, key learnings, outcome achievements, stakeholders' capacity, etc. (for e.g. identify process successes and failures, opportunities for streamlining of processes, learnings to inform broader rollout).
Community of Practice outputs	Various	All stages - quarterly	Second LC contract commencement date	This includes outcomes of activities such as Local Connector meetings, CoP activities and discussion groups and post-quarterly progress report submission (combined celebration, networking and comparison of findings/learnings)

Implementation: Applying the Measurement Tools to the KEQs

KEQ	Sub-Question	Program Activity/ Outcome Stage	Data source														
			LC Monthly Activity Report	LC Interviews	Host Agency Qtly Progress Report	KW Survey A	KW Survey B	KW Survey C	KW Interview	Employer Survey	Employer Interview	Local WG Survey	Local WG Conversations	Community survey	Secondary Data	DRNSW staff survey	Community of Practice
KEQ 1: How has the Program been implemented and what are the key learnings?	1.1 Has the Program reached the essential workers, employers and community as planned across each stage of the *WE program?	Attract Prepare Welcome Help Improve	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓
	1.2 What were the enablers and barriers to implementation at each stage?	Attract Prepare Welcome Help Improve	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
	1.3 Are/were there any changes to the original program activities at each stage? If so, why?	Attract Prepare Welcome Help Improve	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓			✓	✓
	1.4 Could there have been other more preferable changes if resources (e.g. time, staff, support) allowed?	Attract Prepare Welcome Help Improve	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓			✓	✓

			Data source														
KEQ	Sub-Question	Program Activity/ Outcome Stage	LC Monthly Activity Report	LC Interviews	Host Agency Qtly Progress Report	KW Survey A	KW Survey B	KW Survey C	KW Interview	Employer Survey	Employer Interview	Local WG Survey	Local WG Conversations	Community survey	Secondary Data	DRNSW staff survey	Community of Practice
KEQ 2: Have the activities and their delivery models been effective and what are the key learnings?	2.1 What were the most and least effective ways of identifying Essential workers' needs?	Attract Prepare	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								✓
	2.2 What were the most and least effective ways of providing information and supports to relocate?	Attract Prepare	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓								✓
	2.3 How have Essential workers engaged with social activities outside of work?	Welcome Help	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓
	2.4 What were the most and least effective ways of supporting communities and employers to deliver welcome activities?	Welcome Help	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
	2.5 What were the most and least effective ways of sharing insights for continuous learning and improvement?	All	✓	✓	✓								✓			✓	✓

KEQ	Sub-Question	Program Activity/ Outcome Stage	Data source														
			LC Monthly Activity Report	LC Interviews	Host Agency Qtly Progress Report	KW Survey A	KW Survey B	KW Survey C	KW Interview	Employer Survey	Employer Interview	Local WG Survey	Local WG Conversations	Community survey	Secondary Data	DRNSW staff survey	Community of Practice
KEQ 3: Are the intended outcomes occurring? Did the Program cause the intended outcomes?	3.1 Are Essential workers' needs being addressed? What has been the role of the program activities in this?	Short-term		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓
	3.2 Are Essential workers having a positive relocation experience? What has been the role of the program activities in this?	Short-term		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓
	3.3 Are Essential workers staying longer in their roles? What has been the role of the program activities in this?	Short-term						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
	3.4 Are Essential workers developing new social networks and connections? What has been the role of the program activities in this?	Short-term	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓				✓
	3.5 Are communities more involved in welcoming Essential workers? What has been the role of the program activities in this?	Short-term	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
	3.6 Are employers investing more resources to welcome Essential workers? What has been the role of the program activities in this?	Short-term	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
	3.7 Are there any unintended (positive or negative) outcomes caused by the Program?	Short-term		✓						✓		✓	✓			✓	✓

			Data source														
KEQ	Sub-Question	Program Activity/ Outcome Stage	LC Monthly Activity Report	LC Interviews	Host Agency Qtly Progress Report	KW Survey A	KW Survey B	KW Survey C	KW Interview	Employer Survey	Employer Interview	Local WG Survey	Local WG Conversations	Community survey	Secondary Data	DRNSW staff survey	Community of Practice
KEQ 3: Are the intended outcomes occurring? Did the Program cause the intended outcomes?	3.8 Do Essential workers promote the benefits of regional living to friends and family? What has been the role of the program activities in this?	Medium-term					✓	✓	✓								✓
	3.9 Have the vacancy rates, vacancy durations and staff turnover rates reduced? What has been the role of the program activities in this?	Medium-term								✓	✓		✓		✓		✓
	3.10 Has the population of Essential workers in regional NSW increased? What has been the role of the program activities in this?	Medium-term												✓	✓		✓
	3.11 Are there any unintended (positive or negative) outcomes caused by the Program?	Medium-term		✓					✓		✓	✓				✓	✓

Data source																	
KEQ	Sub-Question	Program Activity/ Outcome Stage	LC Monthly Activity Report	LC Interviews	Host Agency Qtly Progress Report	KW Survey A	KW Survey B	KW Survey C	KW Interview	Employer Survey	Employer Interview	Local WG Survey	Local WG Conversations	Community survey	Secondary Data	DRNSW staff survey	Community of Practice
KEQ 4: What is the longer-term benefit realisation of the Program?	4.1 Has there been a change in how regional NSW communities experience local services, in terms of locality and consistency of key services?	Long-term										✓	✓	✓	✓		
	4.2 Has there been a change in how public services (employers) in regional NSW experience local services, in terms of locality and consistency of key services?	Long-term								✓	✓				✓		

Learning cycles and reporting timeframes

Given the importance of continuous improvement and the need for iterative review and development of program prototypes, both short-term and longer-term reporting cycles will be used. The DRNSW team will provide:

Report	Purpose	Audience	Format
*WE Monthly MEL Report	Inform improvement Guide development Model the process Contribute evidence	Local Connectors (via CoP meetings) Host agencies DRNSW KWAP team	1 -2 page summary of aggregated activity data and any quick learnings
*WE MEL Progress Report –August 2023	Inform improvement Guide development Model the process Contribute evidence	Local Connectors Host agencies DRNSW KWAP team DRNSW MCE DRNSW Employers (Steering Committee)	6 – 10 page summary of MEL findings to date
Phase 2 preparation: Program Guideline and Resources Review – August 2023	Inform improvement Guide development Model the process	DRNSW KWAP team Local Connectors Host agencies Employers (Steering Committee)	Systematic review of guidelines and resources to inform prototype development and improvement
Phase 2 Business Case Development – September 2023	Inform improvement Guide development Contribute evidence	DRNSW DRNSW MCE Deputy Premier’s Office NSW Treasury	4 – 6 page summary of key findings to support further roll-out of *WE across NSW
Pilot Program Final Report draft June 2024, published September 2024	Inform improvement Guide development Model the process Contribute evidence	DRNSW DRNSW MCE Local Connectors Host agencies Employers (Steering Committee) Deputy Premier’s Office NSW Treasury Public – incl Essential workers	30 – 40 page comprehensive report of pilot findings
DRNSW reporting as required	As required	As required	As required

Data collection and use

All data collected as part of the project implementation and evaluation project will be treated within the terms of the NSW Government's privacy responsibilities and obligations, as stated in the [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 No 133](#).

© State of New South Wales through Regional NSW 2023. The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (February 2023). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Regional NSW or the user's independent adviser.

Appendix A: MEL Implementation Review June 2023

Welcome Experience (Pilot Phase) MEL Framework Implementation Review – June 2023

This document provides a review of the status of data collection as set out in The Welcome Experience Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Framework (Pilot Phase) Operational Version 1.0, Feb 2023

MEL Assumption: The MEL Framework was designed with the basic assumption of a full 12 months of data collection feeding into a reporting phase, with all participants in place.

Actual Situation: For various reasons, implementation was delayed. This included both contract start dates and the recruitment of the Local Connectors. These delays and staggered start dates, combined with low team resources during involvement in delivering the co-planning implementation workshops and delayed access to Qualtrics, meant that a revision of the scope and timing of data collection was necessary.

Revised Scope of Data Collection: Data will be collected in 2 phases. Phase 1: April - end Oct 2023. Phase 2: Nov - end Mar 2024. This is to ensure that as reliable and comprehensive a dataset as possible is available for reporting in Nov 23, to inform forward planning and business case development.

Data Source	Mode of collection			Cadence of collection			Trigger for collection			Status	
	MEL	ACTUAL	REASON	MEL	ACTUAL	REASON	MEL	ACTUAL	REASON	Tool development	Scheduled date
Local Connector Activity Report	Online form	Online form - Qualtrics	No change	All stages - monthly	Staggered LC start dates and delayed LC recruitment at some locations	Delayed & staggered LC recruitment means not all sites will complete 12 activity reports	LC contract commencement date	Set dates - report request sent first week of month, returned within 2 weeks. First request is sent the first week of the month after LC commencement.	Staggered reporting dates caused unnecessary workflow complications	Monthly reports have been built in Qualtrics and a process is in place for their continued distribution.	Ongoing, first week of each month.
Local Connector Interviews	Conversation (in-person or online)	At least one in-person conversation, with Interview Guide	No change	All stages - quarterly	At least one set of interviews per site, per data collection phase (Phase 1: April - end Oct, Phase 2: Nov - end Mar 24)	Delayed & staggered LC recruitment resulted in compressed timeframes	LC contract commencement date	All 5 interview types (LC, KW, HA, Emp, Comm) will be conducted at each site over one trip. The timing of this is based on team resources and availability.	Team resources and availability in compressed delivery timeframe	Interview Guide still to be developed. See Tool Development Schedule for details.	4-15 Sep
Host Agency Quarterly Progress Report	Online form	Online form - Qualtrics	No change	All stages - quarterly	No change	No change	WE contract commencement date	Set dates - report request sent first week of month, returned within 2 weeks	Staggered reporting dates caused unnecessary workflow complications	Quarterly reports have been developed in Qualtrics and first have been distributed. Dashboards for review of LC data by HA are under development.	First week of June, Sep, Dec, Mar.
Key Worker Surveys	Online form	Online form - Qualtrics	No change	A: Attract, Prepare - 3 months B: Welcome, Help, Improve - 3 and 6 months	Single survey with branched options	To make the user experience more streamlined, one survey with multiple options that maximised Qualtrics	KW registration with LC KW relocation date	2 x tranches at pre-set dates: Survey 1 - open 4/9/23-29/9/23 (4 wks with 3 weeks term, 1 wk school holidays). Survey 2 - open 5/2/24 - 1/3/24 (school term).	Staggered trigger dates and additional complexities due to privacy impacts caused unnecessary workflow complications. Given timing constraints due to delayed implementation, 2 tranches during the 10 remaining months was a better approach. These dates are spaced to try to balance timing across the ten months, and to allow the first round results can be included in required Phase 1 reporting.	Questions have been developed, still to be built in Qualtrics and tested. Some refinement of questions will be required during the build.	Open 4 Sep

Mode of collection				Cadence of collection			Trigger for collection			Status	
				C; 12 months after relocation or on employment exit		capacity was a better option	KW program or employment exit date				
Key Workers Interview	Conversation (in-person or online)	At least one in-person conversation, with Interview Guide	No change	Short-term - 6 months	At least one set of interviews per site, per data collection phase (Phase 1: April - end Oct, Phase 2: Nov - end Mar 24)	Compressed timeframes and varying staff resources/availability meant that strict adherence to timing schedule was not practical.	KW registration with LC	All 5 interview types (LC, KW, HA, Emp, Comm) will be conducted at each site over one trip. The timing of this is based on team resources and availability.	Compressed timeframes and varying staff resources/availability meant that strict adherence to timing schedule was not practical.	Interview Guide has been developed.	4-15 Sep
			No change	Medium-term - 12 months			KW registration with LC				

Data Source	Mode of collection			Cadence of collection			Trigger for collection			Status	
	MEL	ACTUAL	REASON	MEL	ACTUAL	REASON	MEL	ACTUAL	REASON	Tool development	Scheduled date
Employer Surveys – Local and Departmental	Online form	tbc		Short-term - 6 months	Aim for one tranche per data collection phase (Phase 1: April - end Oct, Phase 2: Nov - end Mar 24)		LC contract commencement date			Questions and processes still to be developed. See Tool Development Schedule for details.	Open 25 Sep
		tbc		Medium-term - 12 months		LC contract commencement date					
Employer Interviews – Local	Conversation (in-person or online)	At least one in-person conversation, with Interview Guide	No change	Short-term - 6 months	At least one set of interviews per site, per data collection phase (Phase 1: April - end Oct, Phase 2: Nov - end Mar 24)	Compressed timeframes and varying staff resources/availability meant that strict adherence to timing schedule was not practical.	LC contract commencement date	All 5 interview types (LC, KW, HA, Emp, Comm) will be conducted at each site over one trip. The timing of this is based on team resources and availability.	Compressed timeframes and varying staff resources/availability meant that strict adherence to timing schedule was not practical.	Interview Guide still to be developed. See Tool Development Schedule for details.	4-15 Sep
			No change	Medium-term - 12 months							
Local Community Working Group Survey	Online Form	Covered by HYS Community Survey	The groups had not formed in time to conduct at baseline, but all stakeholders were emailed with the HYS survey request	Baseline (0 months)	-	-				Delivered in partnership with DCS and they will also develop reporting dashboards.	Closes 30 June
		Nil	There is considerable overlap between the Employer group and the LWG, so it was decided not to proceed with this extra survey. There will be rich data from the structured conversations.	Short-term - 6 months		Not to proceed	Group formation	Not to proceed		Questions and processes still to be developed. See Tool Development Schedule for details.	Not scheduled
		Nil		Medium-term - 12 months	Aim for one tranche per data collection phase (Phase 1: April - end Oct, Phase 2: Nov - end Mar 24)	Not to proceed		Not to proceed			

	Mode of collection			Cadence of collection			Trigger for collection			Status	
Local Community Working Group Conversations	Conversations/ Workshops (in-person or online)	At least one in-person conversation or focus group, with Interview Guide	No change	Baseline - 0 months	At least one set of interviews per site, per data collection phase (Phase 1: April - end Oct. Phase 2: Nov - end Mar 24)	Compressed timeframes and varying staff resources/availability meant that strict adherence to timing schedule was not practical.	Start-up workshops where possible	All 5 interview types (LC, KW, HA, Emp, Comm) will be conducted at each site over one trip. The timing of this is based on team resources and availability.	Compressed timeframes and varying staff resources/availability meant that strict adherence to timing schedule was not practical.	Interview Guide has been developed.	4-15 Sep
				Short-term - 6 months							
				Medium-term - 12 months							
Local Community Survey	Have Your Say	No change	No change	Baseline (0 months)	Survey open during May, which is effective baseline for program	Caretaker and election delayed release and promotion	Pilot start and end	Survey open during May, with 4/8 sites with Local Connectors recruited, only 2 of which were active >1 mth		Delivered in partnership with DCS and they will also develop reporting dashboards.	Closes 30 June
		No change	No change	Pilot end (12+ months)						Second tranche yet to be negotiated/scheduled.	
Secondary Data Plan	Desktop research			All stages - 0 (baseline), 6, 12 months from contract start			First contract commencement date				
DRNSW Staff Implementation Survey	Conversation and/or online form	Online Form - MS Forms	Low availability of staff, online was more efficient	All stages - quarterly	Aim for one tranche per data collection phase (Phase 1: April - end Oct, Phase 2: Nov - end Mar 24). Phase 1 complete.	Limited staff resources and availability, as well as fewer 'touchpoints' at mid-stage of implementation.	First contract commencement date	Staff availability	Phase 1 survey complete. Data is stored in the Continuous Improvement folder in MS Teams.	Phase 1 survey complete. Phase 2 yet to be scheduled.	
Community of Practice outputs	Various	Data reports/slides; Minutes; Short summary report from CoP and HAN meetings prepared in the few days before Interagency SteerCo.	As required	All stages - quarterly	As per agreed dates, approx. quarterly.	-	Second LC contract commencement date	Set dates beginning July 2023.	As required.	Planning has begun. Data reports will be prepared using Qualtrics dashboards, minutes will be an artefact of meetings; short summary report format is to be confirmed but will use same data as presented to CoP/HAN.	CoP/HAN dates - 17 July, 30 Oct, SteerCo dates - 24 July, 11 Sept, 4 Dec.

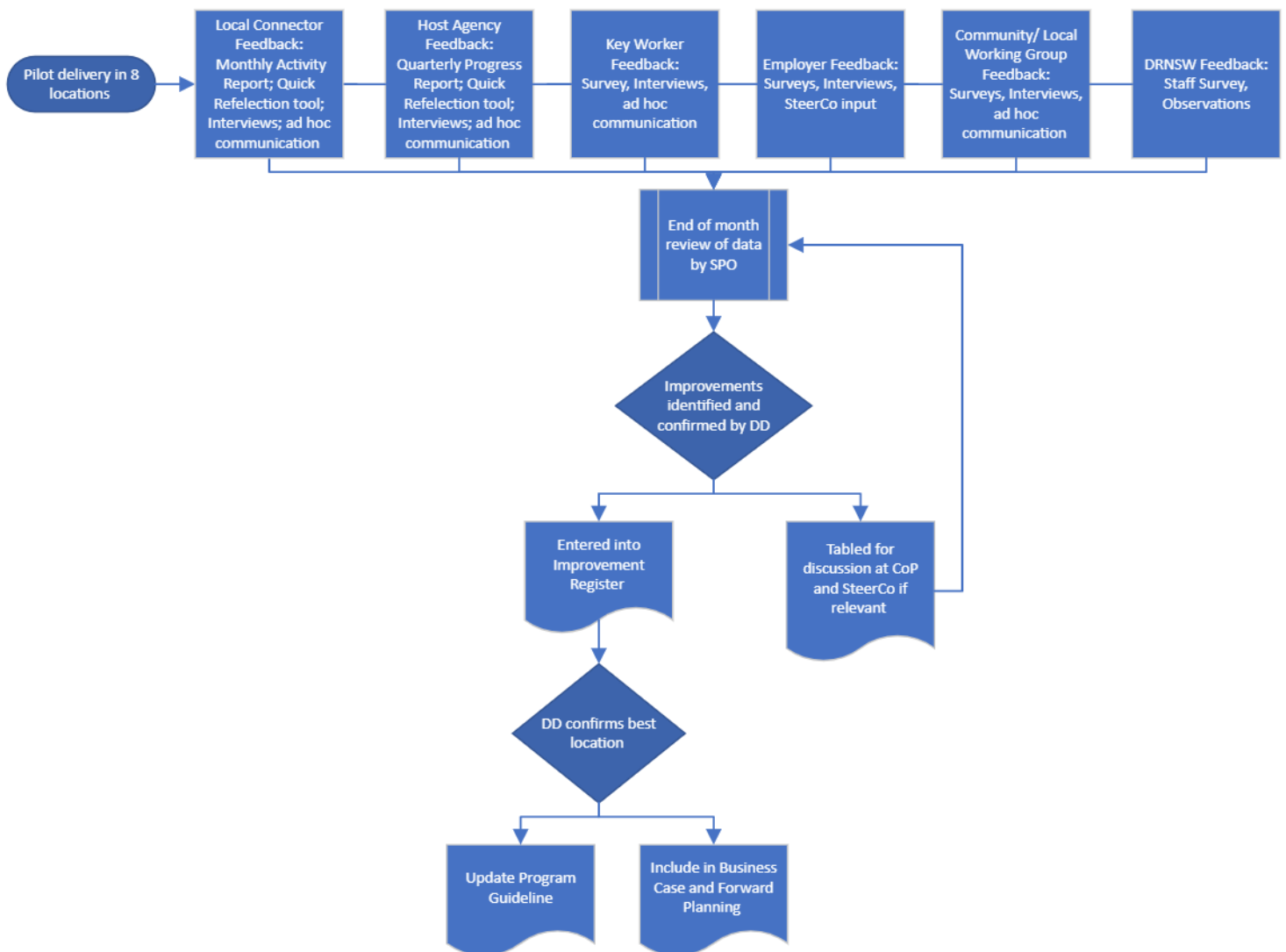
For full size document see RDOC23/122150

Appendix B: Continuous Improvement Plan

The Welcome Experience Pilot ME framework generates a number of data points, The Continuous Improvement Plan outlines the ways in which this data contributes to the continuous improvement of the pilot design and delivery.

Process

The Research Manager (Evaluation) will review the available data at the end of each calendar month (data sources listed below). Any potential improvements will then be discussed with the Deputy Director for entry into the Improvement Register and tabling for discussion at the next Community of Practice. When appropriate, the improvement will be escalated to either or both the Program Guideline and the forward planning and business case development.



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