



## MULTICULTURAL SERVICES

### Pathways to Empowerment: Strengthening Communities through Skills and Opportunity

#### Project Overview:

*Pathways to Empowerment* is an employment pathway program that offers micro-credential training designed to eliminate financial and social barriers to employment for refugees and migrants in the Greater Bendigo region. This project will provide participants with job-ready skills in sectors facing critical labour shortages, such as healthcare, childcare, and hospitality. In addition to improving employment prospects, the program will significantly impact participants' mental health by fostering confidence, resilience, and a sense of purpose through structured support and training. With bilingual support and targeted individually designed skills development, participants are empowered to secure meaningful employment, job advancement and financial independence.

#### Key Benefits:

1. *Job-Ready Skills:* Participants will receive industry-recognised micro-credential training, enabling them to access employment opportunities in high-demand sectors.
2. *Mental Health Improvement:* The program includes support focused on building resilience, boosting self-confidence, and addressing mental health challenges. For many refugees and migrants, unemployment contributes to stress, anxiety, and depression. By helping participants gain meaningful employment, the program will offer economic benefits as well as improved emotional wellbeing.
3. *Financial Independence:* Micro-credential training empowers participants to secure higher-paying roles, improving their financial stability and reducing reliance on social support services.
4. *Social Inclusion:* The training creates opportunities for participants to engage with their local community, fostering social cohesion and reducing isolation.

#### Program Structure:

- *Triage:* Participants will be triaged by the LCMS Education and Employment team. Where necessary jobseekers will be referred to the relevant LCMS pre-accredited education course.
- *Micro-Credential Training:* Financial support to undertake certifications will be offered in sectors such as healthcare, hospitality, and childcare to build job capacity and/or resume boosting.
- *Bilingual Support:* To assist participants with limited English proficiency and ensure successful completion of the courses.
- *Mental Health Support:* Mentoring services will address stress management, emotional wellbeing, and resilience-building in the context of employment challenges.  
NB. There is often a great deal of pressure put on participants from refugee backgrounds to take on any job to support their family. This is common for youth who often feel a need to take entry level jobs rather than continue to study because of cost-of-living pressures on their family. Personalised mentoring sessions will allow participants to identify employment pathways that will suit their lifestyles, responsibilities, needs and goals.



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### Why LCMS Is Uniquely Positioned to Deliver This Program:

Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services (LCMS) is a trusted and award-winning organisation with over two decades of experience serving culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, particularly refugees and newly arrived migrants.

1. *Expertise in Multicultural Education:* LCMS is highly regarded for its inclusive education programs that help CALD individuals overcome language barriers and adapt to the Australian workforce.
2. *Proven Ability to Address Social Barriers:* LCMS supports marginalized groups through programs integrating skills training with mental health support, helping individuals achieve personal and professional growth.
3. *Strong Community Ties:* LCMS maintains robust partnerships with local organisations and employers, ensuring participants transition smoothly from training to employment.
4. *Track Record of Delivering Impactful Programs:* LCMS has consistently demonstrated success in running projects that deliver measurable outcomes, including improved employment rates and social inclusion for participants.

### Budgets for Different Participant Numbers:

#### Budget for 20 Participants:

Item	Amount (\$)
Micro-credential training (20 participants at \$600 each)	12,000
Bilingual support services	5,000
Mental health and resilience workshops	5,000
Project coordination and administration	4,000
Marketing and outreach	2,000
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>28,000</b>



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### Budget for 40 Participants:

Item	Amount (\$)
Micro-credential training (40 participants at \$600 each)	24,000
Bilingual support services	10,000
Mental health and resilience workshops	8,000
Project coordination and administration	7,000
Marketing and outreach	3,000
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>50,000</b>

### Key Measures:

- Depending on the level of funding support, 20 – 60 participants will receive personalized employment pathway mentorship, bi-lingual support (where needed) and financial support to undertake micro credential training.
- At least 70% of participants are expected to secure employment or promotion in their current role within six months.
- 90% of participants will report improved confidence and mental resilience through workshops and support.
- The program will focus on building emotional wellbeing to address the mental health challenges many migrants and refugees face due to long term employment and familial caring responsibilities.

### Leveraging LCMS Services:

LCMS teaches a suite of free pre-accredited training courses that focus on language, literacy, numeracy, employability and digital literacy skills. These courses serve to supplement support and build capacity of all community members, including those seeking employment or wishing to change careers.

Currently, LCMS has more than 90 community members on a waitlist for employment support. Many of these jobseekers require minimal support such as updating their resume or cover letters and will find employment relatively quickly. However, it is our experience that unfortunately, many jobseekers, especially those from a refugee background, often face unconscious bias and other additional barriers to employment. Some may possess all of the skills required for the job but require an additional micro credential certificate in order to be considered.

#### Examples

“Wah” wants to work in the kitchen at the hospital and has relevant experience. The job specifies that a food handling certificate is required, but Wah lacks the financial means to be able to obtain it.

“Paw” has been working in food production for 5 years and is tired and ready to change careers. Paw is newly divorced and has young children who are currently being cared for by extended family during the day which is negatively affecting her mental health. Paw really wants to work as an evening-shift cleaner so she can better support her family but does not have the financial means to pay for the cleaning certificate.



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“Siva” has always wanted to drive forklifts. He took an entry level job in food processing when he arrived in Australia 10 years ago but hates going to work and is depressed. He has 5 children so cannot afford to pay for a forklift license.

“Say Paw” has completed her Certificate 3 in individual support and is looking for work. She has never worked before and continues to have no luck securing an interview, despite having applied for more than 40 jobs within the sector. She was advised by one employer that having a first aid certificate or NDIS check would make her resume stand out more and bolster her chances of employment, however she cannot afford to do this and is considering returning to food processing.

### Case Study

Despite speaking good English, “Htoo” was in her 40s and had never had a job. She was lacking in confidence and thought she wouldn’t be able to do anything besides working at the local chicken processing factory. Htoo was full of negative self-talk, however after working extensively with the LCMS employment and education teams, Htoo decided to join the Starting Work in Childcare course. LCMS was able to find funding to provide Htoo with the means to undertake a Childcare First Aid course and is now employed as a childcare assistant.

This funding will provide “Wah,” “Paw,” “Siva,” and “Say Paw” with the microcredentials that they need to change their lives, and like “Htoo”, to secure meaningful and fulfilling employment in their desired field. (\*names changed to protect privacy).

### **Risk Mitigation:**

1. *Participant Engagement and Retention*
  - Risk: Participants may struggle to stay engaged due to external challenges such as family responsibilities or mental health issues.
  - Mitigation: LCMS will provide flexible scheduling, bilingual support, and mental health workshops to ensure participants remain engaged throughout the program.
2. *Language Barriers*
  - Risk: Participants with limited English proficiency may find it difficult to complete their training.
  - Mitigation: Bilingual support services will be available to help participants fully understand the course material.
3. *Employment Placement Challenges*
  - Risk: Participants may face difficulties securing employment post-training.
  - Mitigation: LCMS will leverage its strong relationships with local employers to facilitate employment opportunities in high-demand sectors.
4. *Financial Sustainability*
  - Risk: Limited funding may impact the ability to scale the program.
  - Mitigation: LCMS will seek additional grants and funding streams to ensure the program’s sustainability and continue to offer in-kind support through existing educational programs.
5. *Mental Health and Wellbeing*
  - Risk: Participants may experience stress or anxiety related to the training process.
  - Mitigation: LCMS will offer mental health support and resilience-building workshops to address these challenges and ensure participant wellbeing.
6. *Adapting to Changing Employment Needs*
  - Risk: The labour market may shift, reducing demand in certain sectors.
  - Mitigation: LCMS will continuously monitor labour market trends and adjust the course offerings, accordingly, ensuring the program remains relevant to employer needs.

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### **Why Your Support is Crucial:**

Your support will directly empower refugees and migrants in the Greater Bendigo region by providing them with the skills and confidence they need to achieve financial independence and mental wellbeing. This program offers a holistic approach to employment by addressing both practical skills gaps and the mental health challenges that participants face. Your contribution will help reduce unemployment, build stronger communities, and create lasting social change for these vulnerable populations.