

Empowering clients of the Asylum Seekers Centre with life-long employability skills

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1. Summary of impact

UTS Careers staff produced a series of resources for clients and volunteers of Sydney's Asylum Seekers Centre (ASC) designed to familiarise them with the Australian employment landscape. These included career education workshops and an animated video called '[How to find work in your community or through people that you know](#)' that introduces jobseekers to the 'hidden job market' – employment opportunities that aren't advertised publicly – and the job search process in Australia. The video has been translated into three languages and made available on the ASC and UTS Careers websites, as well as on YouTube.

2. The problem

People seeking asylum in Australia receive limited support from the Australian government. For many, finding paid employment is essential to their financial survival. But barriers abound – a lack of personal and professional networks, little understanding of Australian recruitment processes and a lack of access to the hidden job market leave many people unsure how and where to look for work.

3. Beneficiaries

This project delivered practical, supportive employment resources for ASC clients and volunteers, preparing current and future asylum seekers to approach the Australian job

market with enhanced knowledge and confidence. The production of the 'How to find work in your community' video also resulted in paid employment opportunities for both UTS students and ASC clients – UTS students provided animation and sound design expertise, while two ASC clients were hired to deliver translation and voiceover services.

4. Approach to impact

At UTS, staff members can take up to five days of paid leave to pursue volunteering opportunities that deliver positive community impact. This leave arrangement was the starting point for what became an ongoing collaboration between UTS Careers and the ASC.

In early 2020, UTS Careers consultants Claudia Cowell and Helena Asher-Chiang approached the ASC to discuss administering a careers program for the organisation's clients and volunteer staff. As COVID-19 lockdowns began, the initial agreement – face-to-face careers workshops coupled with regular volunteer shifts in the ASC's employment clinic – was reimagined to become a series of online workshops for jobseekers and training sessions for volunteer staff, as well as the production of an animated video on the job search process.

The online jobseeker workshops covered a range of topics, including Australian workplace culture and how to search for jobs, while a train-the-trainer workshop prepared volunteers to support ASC clients with resume and cover letter writing. Post-workshop surveys showed that the majority of jobseekers would strongly recommend the workshops to friends, and that staff felt more confident in their abilities to help ASC clients who were looking for work.

The animated video, which became the major piece of collateral to emerge from the partnership, was focused on job searching techniques and the use of personal and professional networks to leverage the opportunities available on the hidden job market. It was translated into Arabic, Tamil and Bengali, is now available on YouTube and the UTS Careers and ASC websites.

5. What has changed as a result of this work?

ASC clients now have a better understanding of Australian recruitment processes and workplace culture and have access to an ongoing video resource that will continue educating future asylum seekers. UTS Careers staff have gained a better understanding of how their skillsets can contribute to better outcomes for marginalised communities, while the students and ASC clients who worked on the video gained paid professional experience that could help them progress their careers.

6. What has helped you accomplish this work?

The strong partnership that developed between UTS Careers and the ASC was essential to the development of employment resources that would provide meaningful insights to ASC clients and volunteers. The Social Impact Grant and supplementary funding from UTS Careers supported the video production processes, ensuring that the work could be completed and delivered to the ASC.

7. Challenges

Overseeing the video production process was a challenge for Helena and Claudia, who were unfamiliar with this type of work.