

Evaluation of INSTEP



Executive Summary

April 2010

The Indigenous Skills Transfer and Exchange Partnership (INSTEP) is a skills exchange program in which volunteers (aged 50+) work on projects identified by Indigenous people as priorities for their community.

This is a brief summary of an evaluation of INSTEP that was designed to assess the experiences of volunteers and communities, explore the views of stakeholders, and make recommendations for enhancing the volunteer training and community engagement aspects of the program.

The evaluation consisted of interviews, field observations and informal consultations. A review of the volunteer training process was also conducted by an independent Educational Gerontologist.

The evaluation revealed a number of positive outcomes for volunteers and communities. These included personal development, reconciliation, learning, travel, and the achievement of community goals. The evaluation also showed that the program is held in high regard by government and community stakeholders.

The evaluation also identified areas of INSTEP which require improvement. These include the training of volunteers, the preparation of communities, the continuity between volunteers and projects, and the public profile of the program.

The evaluation made a number of recommendations for capitalising on the strengths of INSTEP and addressing those aspects of the program which could be improved. These recommendations included expanding the program to include communities in southern states, improving the preparation and coordination of communities, developing clear policies on accommodation and activities, encouraging volunteers to visit communities multiple times, and developing strategic plans for securing funding, raising profile, and building capacity.

The review of the volunteer training process also resulted in a number of recommendations, including reorganising the materials into four distinct training phases, devising clear and measurable training aims and objectives, developing a learning event to address each objective, and modifying the materials for the vision and hearing needs of older adults.

Overall, the evaluation showed that INSTEP makes a significant contribution to Indigenous communities and the lives of older volunteers. It was also clear that there is the potential to do even more. It is hoped that the evaluation will serve as a catalyst for recognizing and reaching this potential. To facilitate this, the full report of the evaluation has been provided to the INSTEP Project Manager, the National Seniors Australia Board, and the National Seniors Community Foundation Board. These parties will now work together to decide if, how, and when to implement the recommendations in the report.

If you would like to receive a copy of the full report, please contact

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The evaluation was conducted by Dr Siobhan O'Dwyer (National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre) in partnership with the National Seniors Community Foundation.

It was funded by the Queensland Community Foundation and National Seniors Australia.

