

Skills Plus: Life, learning and mentoring for adult migrants

A Registered Training Organisation (RTO) in Frankston, Victoria, Skills Plus specialises in migrant assistance and delivers the Adult Migrant Education Program. The RTO sought to develop awareness of the usability of competencies from the *Blueprint* for refugees, migrants and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups through the development and implementation of workshops within their existing life skills program.

Skills Plus trialled the *Blueprint* with a view to:

- Developing a greater awareness of the usability of a number of competencies from the *Blueprint* with newly arrived adult migrants and refugees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Increasing organisational awareness of the aims and content of the *Blueprint* and its applicability to the suite of programs offered by Skills Plus.

What did they do?

A skills analysis mapping client's skill levels against job advertisements, which were also used to help clients learn career-related vocabulary. Working with migrants, it was always necessary to deliver basic ESL as well as the *Blueprint* information. The goal-setting sheet was simplified, replacing difficult concepts like 'measurable' with more basic English, to convey what was being asked. Simple goals were set relating to the workplace. Clients would then write a covering letter for an advertisement and practise telephoning for jobs. Checklists were developed and speakers introduced for migrants wishing to establish their own business. Research was conducted on voluntary organisations relating to areas of interest for employment.

This was overlaid with addressing clients' needs with respect to completing forms, volunteering, pursuing interests and mixing with others. Using digital cameras and Photo Story® software, they went on to learn how to create a photo story (like a slide show). Themes were discussed, storyboards were planned (with the help of the facilitator) and digital stories created. The aim was to show the themes these migrants were experiencing in adjusting to their new environment.

Feedback forms were utilised to assess how migrants felt at the end of each session and at the end of each week. All notes were fed back into the action-learning diary to assess what was working and what was not.

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Chapters 1, 2, and 7 of the prototype were used, along with appendices A, B, C and D. A variety of competencies were utilised including: Phase I competencies 1-10, Phase II competencies 1-11, Phase III competency 11, and Phase IV competencies 1-11.

Did the *Blueprint* help?

The project participants were excited that their skills could be transferred and were still relevant in their new country and the course would be tailored to their needs. They recognised the requirement to establish what their needs were in terms of type of employment, how they would get to places of employment, and how that might impact on them financially. This identified other areas of learning – for example, how to use the bus/train systems and costs incurred in running a motor vehicle.

Discussion opened up the possibility of working for the sake of work or waiting to find a job you really wanted. Whereas some migrants needed to find work straight away, others could wait until they had found work they wanted to do. This then led to a discussion of ‘needs’ versus ‘wants’. The skills matrix helped them identify areas of skills they needed to develop further, to better establish themselves in the job market. This tool assisted in finetuning the progress towards employment in an area of their choice.

Delivering a non-accredited course, the facilitator observed:

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