

e-Backpack for Indigenous Rangers Impact Awards Submission

This document outlines the challenge, solution, learning impact outcomes, and return on investment of the 'e-Backpack for Indigenous Rangers' project.

CHALLENGE

Trainers are challenged in the Northern Territory to teach effectively in remote areas. Access to both remote areas and a consistent group of Indigenous learners is problematic. An e-backpack was needed to support and reinforce learning within and between teaching blocks and to follow up with existing and new learners across isolated sites. The approach was used with entry level staff and then extended to support transition across learning pathways. Supervisors were able to reinforce learning during weekly activities and meetings, using the materials for preparation and to strengthen learning in different situations.

SOLUTION

Digital media was used to support the learning of remote Aboriginal rangers enrolled in the Charles Darwin University (CDU) Certificate II Conservation and Land Management across Northern Australia. Mobile technologies were used to record students' learning, record the instructions in the teachers' and students' first languages, and use these materials for ongoing teaching, professional development and assessment. The material was developed in partnership with senior traditional owners working on their own country, and was aligned with the relevant qualification and audit processes.

LEARNING IMPACT OUTCOMES

Learners are able to integrate their learning into the workplace, demonstrate leadership in their learning and find information when the trainer is not available. Learners are able to access learning in their own language, with a written English summary to develop their literacy. This is particularly important for young people who generally speak little English. Learners are looking for opportunities for long term employment, want to learn more about the job that they do, and want to work on their traditional country. Students feel they can manage their learning in ways that relate to their own worlds, without dependence on short, irregular visits by teachers. Learners are supported to learn in their first languages while at work and in training sessions, and from people with significant knowledge and authority. Learners are able to reinforce their learning and that of fellow students who miss a session. This approach has been adopted by four other programs in the Northern Territory and four programs internationally in South East Asia and Peru.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

There are currently up to 55 Yirrkala, 40 Thamarrurr rangers and 7 Dhimurru Rangers in training with CDU and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and approximately 250 within the CDU Indigenous ranger training footprint. Learner numbers remain consistent despite staff turnover being relatively high in the remote locations. There is a significant saving in repeat visits to remote areas to assess students who did not attend learning or assessment sessions, with resulting improvements to the return on investment in teaching and assessment activities.