Strengthening Adult Community Education (ACE)

Strengthening ACE 2018/19 and Beyond

Stage 1 and 2 Engagement Process

Feedback Summary Report

Date: 26 July 2017

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Contents

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Department of State Development

Strengthening Adult Community Education (ACE)

Introduction

The Department of State Development, with Community Centres SA, is strengthening the Adult Community Education (ACE) Program for 2018/19 and beyond through a comprehensive engagement process with stakeholders.

The Department of State Development and Community Centres SA jointly invited ACE providers, tutors, participants, other training bodies and peak organisations, as well as State and Commonwealth departments to partner with us in co-designing the future of ACE.

This unique and extensive engagement process has meant working alongside those who deliver and benefit from ACE programs in the decision-making process, along with those who fund and support the ACE sector.

Experienced ACE tutors have met with more than 50 participants to discover, through sharing of stories and experiences, how ACE has impacted their lives. This valuable input has informed our new ACE vision and will inform program changes.

We have also engaged more broadly with the public through the Government's YourSAy online engagement tool, with 22 people providing valuable input.

By harnessing the insights of our stakeholders, including organisations that can help to strengthen outcomes for participants and the sector, we can be confident that the strategies identified to strengthen the ACE program will capitalise on its achievements and potential.

Engagement Approach

This engagement process has sought feedback to the question "what would a stronger ACE Program look like?" In 2016, engagement with the ACE sector identified five key themes. This engagement process has built on these key themes, which are:

1. **Funding** certainty and length of funding arrangements.
2. **Improving connections** with other programs and services to support transitions for participants.
3. **Communications and marketing** of ACE to attract partners and participants.
4. **Streamlining program management** including reporting, data and evaluation.
5. **Sector capacity and workforce development** to deliver on program outcomes – what do ACE providers need to improve program outcomes? What do participants need to improve their experience?

Community and stakeholder input has identified strategies for improving the ACE Program, particularly in relation to program outcomes; measures of success; transitions and pathways for participants; accessibility for participants; provider capacity and capability building; what is working well, what could be improved and new opportunities to strengthen ACE.

The updated ACE Program Statement for 2018/19 and beyond, is being co-designed between DSD (Skills and Employment Division), Community Centres SA and the Department of Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI).

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The engagement process includes:

- Preliminary engagement with a broad range of stakeholders, communities and ACE participants: May 2017 (completed).
- Co-design of a Strengthened ACE Program Statement 2018/19 and beyond: June 2017 (completed)
- Consultation on the draft ACE Statement: July 2017.
- Launch of the 2018/19 ACE Program Statement and Guidelines: late 2017.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the engagement process is now complete, with the following partners, peaks, providers, participants and public engaging in the process (refer to Appendix 1 and 2):

- 41 existing ACE Providers (64 individuals)

- 7 potential new ACE Providers (9 individuals)

- 10 ACE tutors

- 22 respondents from the general public through YourSAy

- 52 ACE participants (with 30% of respondents to the survey from non-English speaking backgrounds)

- 9 Peak organisations involved in the Human Services Partnership Forum (Stronger Together)

- 10 other organisations (Local, State and Commonwealth Government agencies, including TAFE SA).

Workshop Feedback Summary

New / emerging ACE Providers Workshop

A workshop was held with seven potential new / emerging Providers who identified that the following would assist them to become an ACE Provider:

- flexibility on grant application to meet local needs in a timely manner

- multi-year programs could be successful in some areas

- ability to provide programs based on a need presented in a fast and rapidly changing environment, particularly in relation to National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

- greater profile for ACE and year-round information about the program, including eligibility criteria, application timing and requirements

- programs to help the long-term unemployed

- being able to partner with other ACE Providers for specific skill sets

- making ACE more financially sustainable and less resource intensive

- clearer multi-agency funding arrangements and links across Government departments.

Existing ACE Provider workshops

Two workshops were held with more than 40 existing ACE Providers in May 2017 to find out what is working well, what could be improved, as well as current challenges that need to be overcome and opportunities to strengthen ACE.

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Vision and goals

ACE Providers at the workshops were asked to provide input to a strengthened vision for ACE. The statements and phrases that providers felt are important and appropriate, broadly fell into two categories: the benefits ACE brings to participants; and secondly how ACE needs to be connected to the whole education and employability journey to deliver its full potential. Providers observed that the current vision adequately addresses the program benefits, but doesn't emphasise the importance of the connection to the whole skill development, education and employment journey.

Some statements and phrases providers felt are important and appropriate for the new vision include:

Benefits for participants
- Empowering lifelong learning.
- Building confidence and personal growth.
- Gateway to social and economic participation.
- An inclusive, welcoming and safe place to learn.
- Start of a pathway of life skills and employability skills for participation in everyday life.

Connecting ACE to the whole education and employability journey
- Providers to have clarity on future pathways, beyond course delivery and communicate with other government departments to enable seamless participant progress.
- Better partnerships to enable learners to move from Certificate I (ACE) and Certificate II (Job Active Providers).
- Ensure ACE is presented to secondary school students while still at school, particularly with those becoming disengaged.
- Greater recognition of the complexity of ACE participants' needs when beginning the program and at times through delivery, both within and outside of ACE.
- Client focused approach – a synthesis of government departments working together to address participant needs.

The Draft ACE Program Statement has a new vision, which reflects this feedback.

Funding arrangements

ACE providers were asked to discuss the current structure of the program budget in terms of the allocation of grants for accredited and non-accredited courses, auspicing of accredited courses, workforce development and other program costs. During the workshop, providers found it difficult to reach consensus about the funding structure and while most groups 'tinkered' with the funding allocation, it was indicated that the funding structure could remain the same.

However, funding caps, contract length and the differences between accredited and non-accredited funding grants were considered to be the more significant issues to deal with than the overall allocation of funds.

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Providers did reach consensus that longer contracts and predictable, long-term funding would be beneficial. Providers recommended that contracts should be a minimum of three years and many respondents advocated five years. Respondents also felt that the current funding cap of $25 000 is too low for non-accredited grants and the funding cap needs to be increased as the administration and program costs are similar for both accredited and non-accredited courses. However, there was little consensus on what figure the non-accredited cap should be, but there was mostly consensus for both caps being the same.

The proposed new *goal five - an improved ACE model*, aims to address this feedback.

Improving connections with other programs and services

ACE providers were asked what they would do to improve connections with other programs and services to support participants. Suggestions were varied, but overall respondents agreed, that improving connections was a very important goal – but time and resources limited their ability to achieve this.

Suggestions for improving connectivity are:

- building relationships with registered training organisations (RTOs) and TAFE SA to ensure better student transitions
- TAFE SA lecturers, counsellors and other key staff should visit ACE Programs so they better understand ACE participants and where they come from and the programs being delivered
- better education more broadly on ACE would help transitions for participants
- a showcase for providers to share what they are delivering with TAFE SA, local and state government and other referring organisations
- online and hard copy booklet to showcase programs being delivered and student stories
- one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders to ensure better understanding and knowledge about ACE.

Some current barriers identified for connectivity in the ACE program include:

- connections are really valuable for the ACE participant but the problem is they take time and effort and they are not funded.
- a lack of time to develop connections for participants is an issue for Providers.
- transitioning ACE participants is more challenging in country areas
- funding for dedicated resources to underpin and drive improved connectivity as it often becomes a side issue and because of insufficient time
- alignment of state and federal programs with ACE to ease transition from one to the other
- need additional resources for referrals into and out of ACE.

The proposed new *goal four – formalise connections between ACE providers and other programs and services* and *goal three – create a framework that supports seamless pathways for individuals within and beyond the ACE program* will both contribute to addressing this feedback.

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Department of State Development

Strengthening Adult Community Education (ACE)

Communications and marketing of ACE

ACE Providers generally felt that ACE is not promoted or marketed well and the tools are missing to do this effectively. In addition, providers felt a brand could be beneficial, as it would provide the Program with a clearer identity and credibility. A well-formed brand could support a better level of understanding and education about ACE and help it to achieve a higher profile, which would be beneficial to address many of the opportunities and current barriers.

During the workshops, providers were asked to list target audiences of a marketing strategy, key messages and how best to reach those audiences.

Target audiences identified include:

- prospective and actual participants
- partners (industry, TAFE SA/RTOs/NDIS providers, Community centres and libraries, local and state government agencies)
- Commonwealth programs (Centrelink, Job Active providers, Funding bodies)
- Primary schools, kindergartens and secondary schools
- general public
- community stakeholders - health care providers, other job agencies, counsellors, sports clubs, banks and churches
- businesses / employers
- newly arrived migrants
- correctional services.

Please refer to Appendix 3 for more information about Provider suggestions to strengthen ACE in relation to communications and marketing.

The proposed new *goal one - strengthen the profile of the ACE program and promote its unique strengths*, will address this feedback and is linked to *goal four – formalise connections between ACE providers and other programs and services.*

Streamlining program management

Feedback was generally consistent from ACE providers, which highlighted that decision-making on approvals and contracts both need to occur more quickly. Providers need to know the status of their grant application by May each year at the latest, to allow time for providers to advertise, organise courses and ensure staffing arrangements are in place.

In addition, it was recommended by most providers that the second progress report needs to be the final report and should be delivered at the end of July / early August. This would enable community centres to provide accurate and final data on results (as opposed to being required mid-term, as currently occurs). Data entry into the existing reporting system (STELA) was not seen as a significant issue.

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In addition, the timing of program reporting is not practical as course delivery aligns with school terms but funding does not, which makes it difficult to meet reporting requirements.

The proposed new *goal six – capture all measures of success* will address this feedback.

Sector capacity and workforce development

Feedback from providers, focussed on three core issues:

- the importance of professional development for tutors
- difficulty with funding equipment purchases and resources needed to support course delivery
- the need for administrative and other support, particularly relating to referrals, networking and marketing.

The proposed new *goal two - recognise and build the capability of the ACE workforce*, will address this feedback.

Proposed New goals

The feedback provided by participants, providers, peaks, partners and the public during the engagement process directly reflects the proposed new goals and high-level strategies for the ACE Program from 2018/19 and beyond, which are detailed below.

Goal 1: Strengthen the profile of the ACE program and promote its unique strengths

Key feedback that has shaped this goal includes:

- ACE Providers generally felt that ACE is not promoted or marketed well and that the tools are missing to do this effectively, so marketing needs to be funded as part of a strengthened ACE Program. In addition, they felt a brand could be beneficial, as it would provide the Program with a clearer identity and credibility. The brand would need to capture the diversity of ACE and ensure that what makes it different from WorkReady and other training programs is clear

- ACE Participants/public want better promotion of courses in local communities and view the small class sizes, one-on-one support and non-threatening learning environment as the unique strengths of ACE

- Peaks bodies / partner organisations stated better marketing would improve ACE, as well as strengthen relationships with ACE providers and other support services. Marketing should aim to reach a broader range of participants (e.g. young people or migrants) and provide wider promotion of good news stories related to successful transitions and pathways of ACE participants.

Goal 2: Recognise and build the capability of the ACE workforce

The engagement feedback was clear that the current functions and success of the ACE program relies on many unfunded hours contributed by tutors, coordinators and volunteers for mentoring, supporting and connecting participants with services and pathways into training or work.

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Government of South Australia
Department of State Development

Strengthening Adult Community Education (ACE)

Key feedback that has shaped this goal includes:

- Tutors have suggested:
    - more networking opportunities with other providers to share knowledge, experience and skills
    - more resources to address the complex needs of individual ACE participants
    - involvement in grant applications.

- Providers have suggested:
    - additional professional development for Tutors to improve and maintain quality of accredited training and to ensure tutors understand their role and responsibilities
    - regional coordinators to connect providers to share resources and learn from each other
    - ability to pay tutors to attend professional development activities
    - regular support visits from auspicing Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)
    - time to train volunteers and paid staff
    - sharing of resources between ACE providers
    - flexibility to purchase equipment with grant funds (e.g. updated computers for digital literacy courses).

- RTOs would like the opportunity for accredited providers to undertake moderation of ACE courses.

Goal 3: Create a framework that supports seamless pathways for individuals within and beyond the ACE program

Key feedback that has shaped this goal includes:

- ACE Providers want local employers and RTOs connecting with them, to help transition participants to volunteering, further learning or work

- Participants / public would like more mentoring and one-on-one support to enroll in further training, as well as knowing more about opportunities to continue learning

- Peak bodies have suggested:
    - stronger links and connections to employment pathways for participants

    - increasing resources and funding for ACE

    - youth friendly marketing to attract younger ACE participants.

    - links with all education settings to assist with post school transitions

    - the South Australian Government and the not-for-profit health and community services sector continuing to work together according to the Stronger Together principles to provide quality and culturally appropriate services that improve the wellbeing of South Australians.

- Partners have suggested delivering Commonwealth SEE Program in Community Centres and the creation of a "Transitions" program – part delivery in Community Centres and part delivery at TAFE SA.

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Goal 4: Formalise Connections between ACE providers and other programs and services

Key feedback that has shaped this goal includes:

- Providers have suggested:
    - resources (funding) to better connect participants and facilitate pathways
    - promote the ACE Program to improve referrals (for steady flow of participants)
    - ACE promoted as a preferred option, that is recognised and valued for its contribution to the individual's pathway (including releasing participants from mutual obligation requirements).

- Participants / public need:
    - clearer pathways to training / employment
    - more courses for career planning (potential link to career services)
    - volunteering placements with employers
    - ACE units of competency contributing to a qualification
    - support services referring them to ACE

- Peak bodies have suggested:
    - funding to coordinate programs outside of community centres
    - more resources to improve transitions / pathways for participants
    - stronger employer connections
    - increased access for socially excluded groups.

- Partners have suggested:
    - wrap around services integrating with social support
    - anticipate NDIS opportunities
    - shared learnings / collaboration with complementary services.

Goal 5: An improved ACE Program Model

Key feedback that has shaped this goal includes:

- Providers have identified:

    - the need for a new ACE program model that supports greater flexibility, recognises the vast expertise in the ACE sector and seeks to reduce red tape and administration costs

    - further support for targeting individual needs of participants and establishing connections with other services and pathways

    - the need to reduce the costs and time spent on administration and reporting

    - more resources are needed to meet the complex needs of ACE participants.

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Goal 6: Capture all measures of success

Key feedback that has shaped this goal includes:

- ACE Providers have suggested:

    o reporting should measure all outcomes and success factors for ACE participants (i.e. outcomes beyond course hours, employment outcomes and number of participants)

    o Results Based Accountability (RBA) should be considered for rolling out to all ACE Providers (following the pilot program with 10 providers) to enable better measurement of program success

    o Implementing a variety of measures of success to capture a broader range of outcomes (including improvements in the foundation skills of learners).

Draft ACE Program Statement 2018/19 and beyond

To find out more about the proposed new goals and strategies, please visit the YourSAy website to view the Draft ACE Program Statement 2018/19 and beyond, which has been released for consultation with the ACE sector and other stakeholders until 31 July 2017.
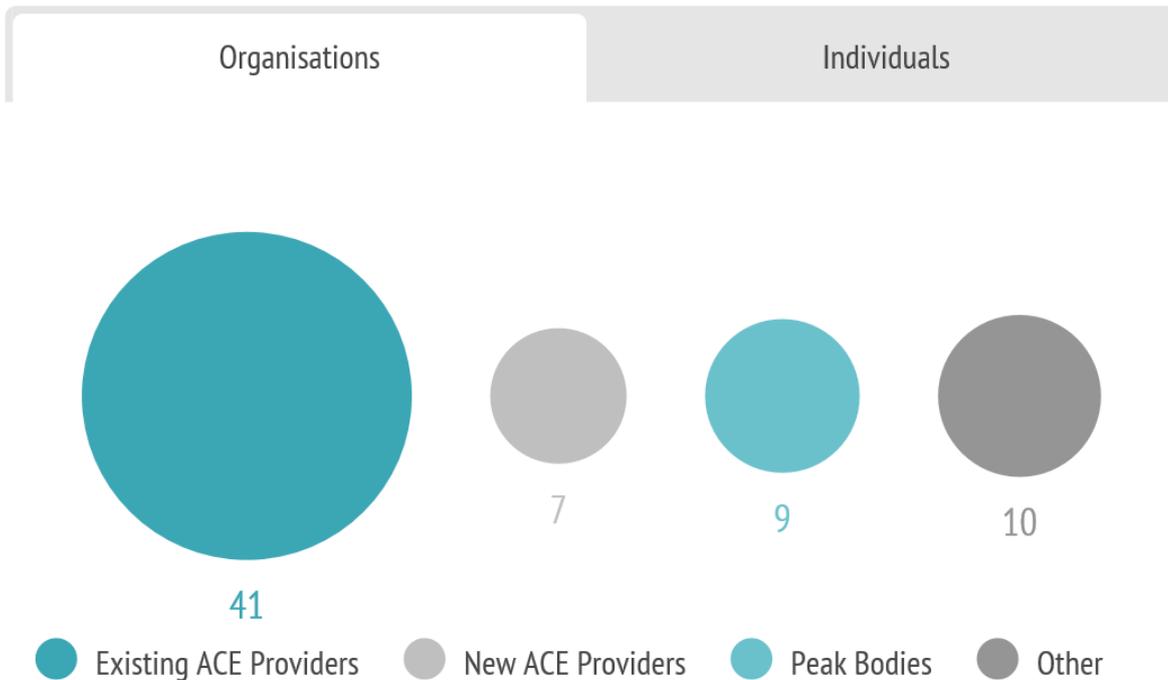
The Guidelines for 2018/19 will be developed once the ACE Program Statement is finalised following consultation with stakeholders.

The ACE Program Statement 2018/19 and beyond is expected to be released in September 2017.
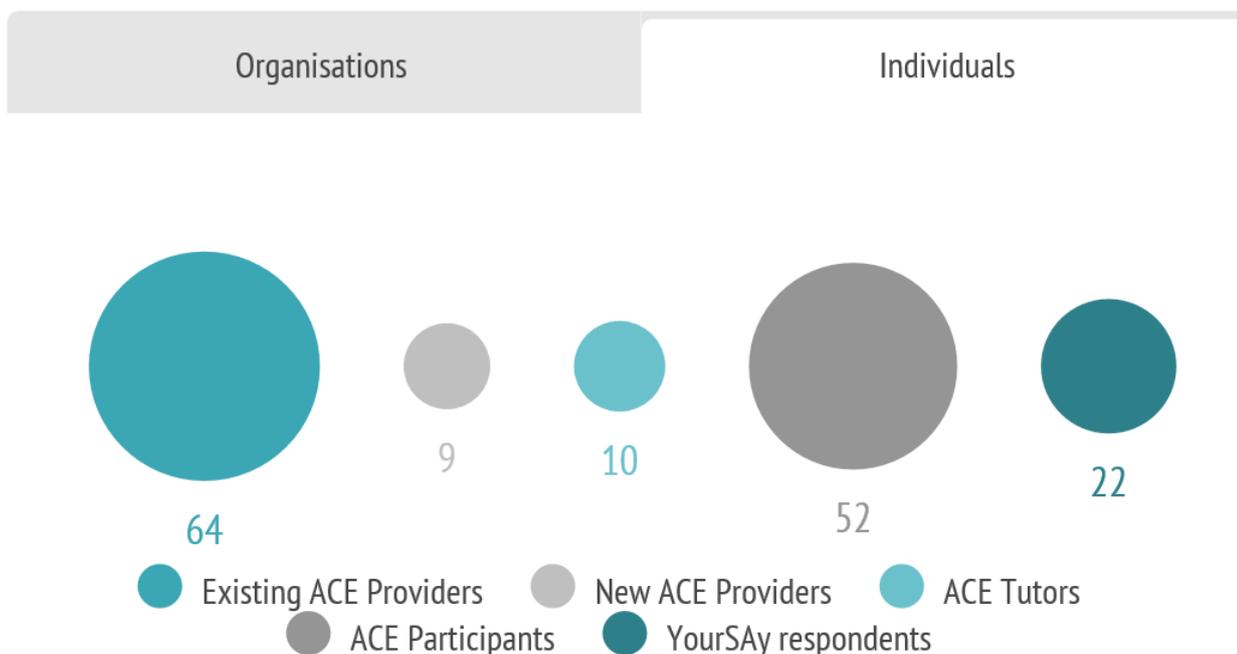
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Appendix 1: Engagement reach of Stage 1 engagement process for Strengthening ACE

Number of organisations engaged

Organisations	Individuals

41 — Existing ACE Providers
7 — New ACE Providers
9 — Peak Bodies
10 — Other

- Existing ACE Providers
- New ACE Providers
- Peak Bodies
- Other

Number of individuals engaged

Organisations	Individuals

64 — Existing ACE Providers
9 — New ACE Providers
10 — ACE Tutors
52 — ACE Participants
22 — YourSAy respondents

- Existing ACE Providers
- New ACE Providers
- ACE Tutors
- ACE Participants
- YourSAy respondents

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Strengthening Adult Community Education (ACE)

Appendix 2: Social media reach of Stage 1 engagement process for Strengthening ACE

Strengthening ACE 2018/19 Social Media Reach

12, 000
Social Media Reach

78
Facebook Post Clicks

30
Unique Downloads (Fact Sheet)

699
YourSAy page views

571
Unique page views (YourSAy)

3:02
Average time spent on site

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Strengthening Adult Community Education **(ACE)**

Appendix 3: Provider feedback at May 2017 workshops for marketing of ACE

The below table summarises the target audiences, priority key messages and tools identified in the Provider workshops in May 2017.

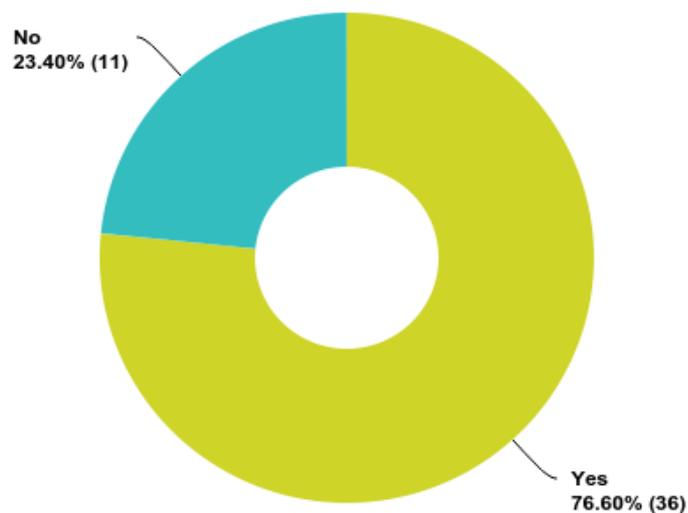| Target audience	Priority key messages	Suggested tools to reach them
• Prospective and actual participants	• Social engagement / inclusion • Talk to individual need as opposed to employment / training as initial needs are often soft entry such as community participation and ready to children • Support	• Online / digital, especially social media • Visual presentation of information • Referrals • Community events • Paper-based campaign / junk mail • Council run events / libraries / council publications • Radio, country papers, cinema • 'Come and try' day
• Partners	• ACE Program has real value and benefit equal to any training organization • ACE addresses cases with different / unique barriers. • What's the benefit to them? • Uniqueness of what ACE does and what is achieved for participants	• Face-to-face meetings • Information pack / resources and tools • Regional showcase • App or web portal – shows classes, programs, providers • Cross-referrals • Speaking opportunities
• Commonwealth programs	• Value and purpose of ACE • Referrers commitment to the value of ACE is very important • Assist people with multiple barriers to build the skills they need to reach their required Job Active outcomes • ACE Program has real value and benefit equal to any RTO	• Face-to-face meetings • Information pack / resources and tools • Open days • Cross-referrals • Speaking opportunities

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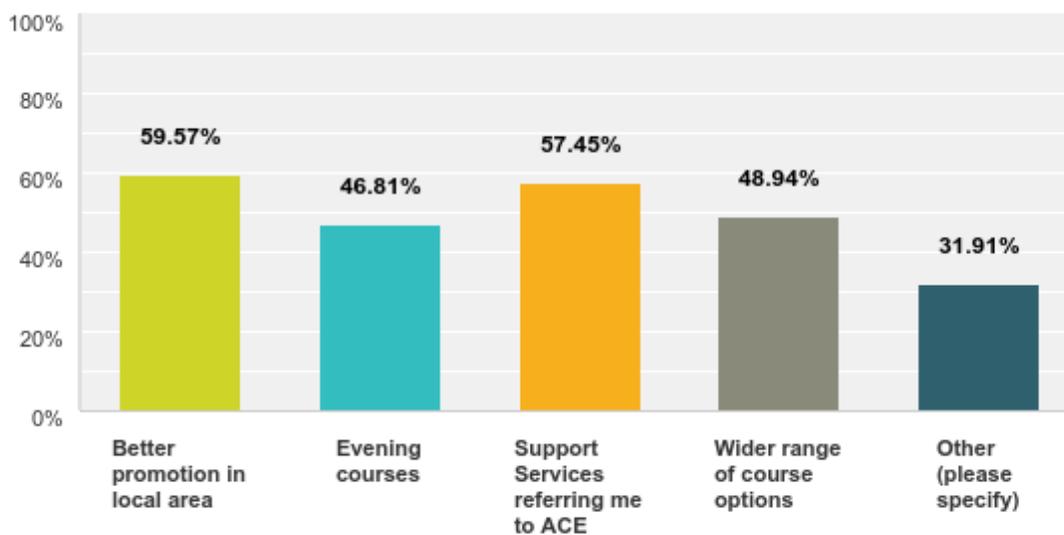|		
• Schools and kindergartens	• Parenting and life skills • Support • Confidence • Work readiness	• Face-to-face meetings
• General public	• No referral required • Do you know someone who could benefit?	• Visuals • Video • Story-telling • Radio • Social media
• Community stakeholders	• Value and purpose of ACE • We are here – knowledge levels can be low • ACE Program has real value and benefit equal to any training organisation	• Presentations • Face-to-face meetings • Open days to see how ACE program runs • Cross-referrals • Speaking opportunities
• Other businesses / employers	• ACE is a strong starting point • Articulate outcomes and roles so what ACE does is clearly understood • Importance of placements / work experience • Pathway to being work-ready	• Open days • Word of mouth • Speaking opportunities
• Newly arrived migrants	• Language • Enculturation • Provide a positive start	
• Correctional services	• Articulate outcomes and roles so what ACE does is clearly understood	

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1. **Do you know where to access Adult Community Education courses in your community?**

No
23.40% (11)

Yes
76.60% (36)

2. **Would any of the following make ACE more accessible in your community?**

59.57%	46.81%	57.45%	48.94%	31.91%
Better promotion in local area	Evening courses	Support Services referring me to ACE	Wider range of course options	Other (please specify)

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3. What would improve your experience of ACE?
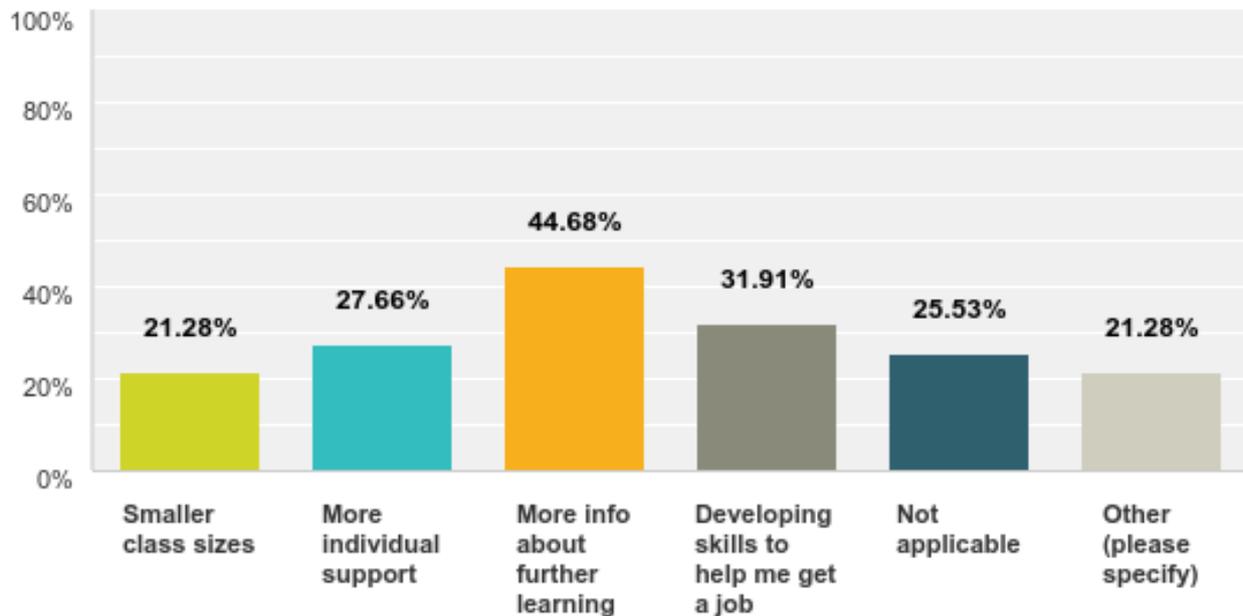
4. Participant pathways from ACE to further learning, training, volunteering or work

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