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Title of project/innovation/initiative	Learning Links – <i>Practical job seeking for a multicultural community</i>
Date initiated	November 2012
Date completed	ongoing

The issue/challenge

CityLibraries aims to contribute to an inclusive and engaged community. To this end, CityLibraries Townsville has partnered with the Community Information Centre to create the Learning Links project: a register of community members willing to share their skills with others. As the Learning Links project grew, it quickly became apparent that many of those registering an interest in learning were from the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community, and the skills they were most interested in acquiring were everyday English language skills, résumé writing and selection criteria assistance. To meet this community need, CityLibraries and CIC developed a partnered multicultural program entitled *Practical job seeking for a multicultural community* under the Learning Links banner.

Project details

This program offers two-hour weekly classes consisting of English literacy skills related to everyday life in Australia, as well as résumé and selection criteria writing classes, interview skills, job seeking assistance, and increasing the awareness of, and ability to access services. The target group was adult members of the CALD community, particularly new migrants and refugees with low English language skills seeking employment. The broader community can also be considered a targeted client group, as the success of the program will result in an increase in social interaction between all community members.

With the assistance of a Multicultural Queensland grant a tutor was employed to develop and implement the program which includes guest presenters on specialised topics such as Emergency Management Queensland talking to the group about Cyclone Preparedness. The program is also supported by volunteer tutors. The objectives of the program are to

- Develop and improve English language skills of CALD community members
- Increased capacity for adults from the CALD community to access volunteering and employment services
- Increased employment opportunities for CALD community members
- Improved collaboration among particular service providers in delivery of culturally responsive support for people from culturally diverse backgrounds

- Strengthen the capacity of CALD community members to actively participate in the economic and social spheres of the wider community
- Increased self-esteem and sense of self among members of the CALD community through enhanced communication skills and ability to enter the job market
- Identification of a group of mentors from the CALD community who can provide sustainability for the program
- Enrich the community as a whole by increasing contact and understanding between people of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds

As result of the program eight students who have participated and completed resumes have gone on to gain paid or volunteer employment.

The program recently celebrated a milestone during Queensland Multicultural Week, 1-9 September 2013, involving the students, their friends and families, and all stakeholders in a Master Chef Morning. Students explained in English how they had made a particular dish from their culture and then guests got to try the dishes and vote on a winner of competition. It was a very successful morning with students from China, Japan, SriLanka, Burma, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Hungary talking about their dishes and answering questions about their food and country of origin. The competition stimulated borrowing of cook books by both students and guests. Overall the program has had very positive outcomes and it was obvious from their willingness to participate in the Master Chef competition how much confidence the students have gained through the classes.

One of our challenges is to make this program sustainable through ongoing funding into the future once the funding for the tutor ends. It is obvious that there is a need for such classes and that the library provides a non-threatening relaxed environment where the students can learn without the stress of formally structured classes.

