Indigenous ICT Cyber Regional Employment Pathway

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A Supply Nation Certified Company

Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity submit a response around the discussion paper.

Kirra Services have a newly created pathway program to supply more Indigenous and regional people into the ICT and cybersecurity industry particularly within the Commonwealth Public Service, large corporates and even the wider SME market.

There is a considerable shortage of cyber specialists. The government wants to triple the number, but you cannot bring them in from overseas due to the long citizenship and clearance process. We need to train Australians.

This pathway program will focus on regional areas, Indigenous people; but will also be open to all Australians.

COVID has accelerated the rise of the digital nomad, allowing staff to work from anywhere. Why can't we help Indigenous and regional people embrace this emerging trend? Allowing them to remain on their ancestral country.

The aim is to provide practical cyber training courses, and internships utilising our industry and vendor network. Courses will predominately be run remotely, allowing students from regional Australia to participate. The courses will be focused around two skillset levels:
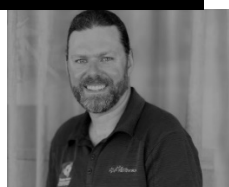
1. Entry Level Cyber – with basic existing IT skills
2. Intermediate Cyber – already in the IT industry wanting a move into Cyber

There are numerous cyber training companies and academies targeting those with existing IT skills and in metropolitan areas. Yet there is a lack providing entry level cyber combined with IT training. We wish to focus on this entry level and regional areas to help build the next generation.

Regards

Brad Nagle

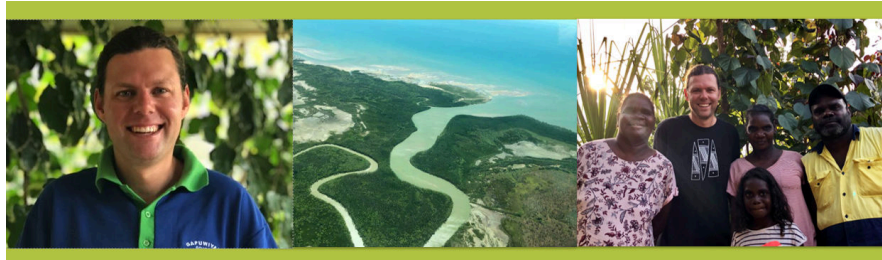Managing Director, Kirra Services

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1 About us

Kirra Services - Our mission is to build strong business partnerships that increase opportunities for Indigenous participation in the ICT industry

Founded in 2017, we specialise in recruitment, ICT support services, and value-add hardware/software for government and corporates.

Our founder, Bradley Nagle is a proud Bundjalung man with cultural connections back to Fingal Head (Phillips family), a small township of Tweed Heads on the far north coast of NSW. Kirra also means 'leaf' in the local language and is an important part of our connection to the land and country.

Kirra Services is a Canberra-based majority-owned and Supply Nation Certified Indigenous business service provider.

In late 2020/21 we won the largest ever Dell Australian Channel deal. This was also the largest value Indigenous ICT project:

Successfully delivering the supply, imaging, aseting, physical rollout, sanitisation, and asset buy back of over 4,894 Dell Laptops, 4,769 monitors, 5096 docks, and almost 20,000 associated accessories (mice, pens, keyboards, sleeves, etc). The total value of the project was over $15 Million, and it included multiple locations across Australia.

Kirra secures 3rd in the CRN 2020 Fast 50 and the Editorial award for giving back to the community. The highest ever placing for an Indigenous company. This has been followed up by coming 4th in 2021 and winning the Impact Awards.

[Kirra Services Places 4th in the CRN FAST50 for 2021 | Kirra Services](#)

[2021 CRN Impact Awards Winners | Kirra Services](#)

We were a Telstra Small Business Finalists for 2022.

2 Supply Nation Certification

Supply Nation is the Australian leader in supplier diversity, established in 2009 to connect their membership of Australia's leading brands and government with Indigenous businesses across the country. Kirra Services is a Certified Supply Nation business, which means the Indigenous owner Brad Nagle is a majority shareholder and actively works in the business.

Brad is a proud Bundjalung man with cultural connections back to Fingal Head (Phillips family), a small township of Tweed Heads on the far north coast of N S W. Kirra also means 'leaf' in the local language and is an important part of Kirra's connection to the land and country.

Back in early 2017, Brad Nagle reached out to several senior ICT consultants to help him build a Supply Nation Certified Indigenous ICT company. Three of those consultants agreed to mentor Brad and invest both time and equity into the enterprise. Each mentor brought over two decades of experience and invaluable industry contacts. The company is fully Australian-owned. We are open to investment to help grow the business nationwide, but we are committed to remaining a majority Indigenous-owned organisation.

Since 2018, almost 600 contracts have been awarded to Indigenous SMEs through the DTAs Digital, Hardware, and Software marketplaces, with a 1300% increase in contracted value from 2018-19 ($13M) to date ($188M). Kirra has become a trusted name and is working with several departments and corporates.

IPP Exemption 16:

Did you know that procuring directly from an Indigenous-owned business is the easiest and fastest way for a Federal Government department or entity to procure any good or service.

Whilst you will have mandatory threshold limits in place; exemption 16 allows you to procure items over your department's threshold.

Provided you can prove market value and are sure the supplier can deliver, exemption 16 allows you to procure up to any value of an item provided you get the appropriate level sign-off.

This means that with a single quote you can get work out the door pretty much in the space of an afternoon. Great for urgent tasks or keeping in mind if you have a lot of procurement on your plate.

Kirra Services is a Certified Supply Nation partner; which means the Indigenous owner Brad Nagle is a majority shareholder and actively works in the business.

₃ Giving back to the Indigenous community

- Brad and his family have been living in an Aboriginal community in East Arnhem Land (Gapuwiyak) for 18 months. Brad's wife was teaching at the local school. While Brad was running Kirra Services over a high-speed fibre internet link with connectivity back to Darwin. Brad and family are now back in Albury.

  Here is a YouTube video showcasing the location:
  [Kirra Services - Gapuwiyak - YouTube](#)

- We actively work with several other Indigenous businesses locally and inter-state:
  - Adam Goodes' Indigenous company iDIC. http://www.idefcon.com.au/
  - New Futures IT for work in the N.T region
  - Willyama
  - Gapuwiyak School IT Support
  - Among others

- Kirra and Industry Trading offer government departments the option to donate depreciated assets. We recently donated 18 government laptops to the Canberra Institute of Technology's (TAFE) Indigenous Digital Literacy program. This donation will impact the lives of 20 Indigenous students by providing hardware to enable connectivity and the associated training. We have also donated another 10 x laptops to Indigenous students at the Bega High School and another 10 to the Dr Steve foundation.

- Kirra Services provides IT support Aboriginal Hostels Limited (Canberra based entity) and wish to provide internships to indigenous students via this pathway.

- Kirra Services helped source football boots for East Arnhem land:
  [How Football Equipment Can Lead to Opportunities for Disadvantaged Kids: A blog about the power of sport, its influence & the community spirit | Kirra Services](#)

4 Background

Information, Communication Technology (ICT) Indigenous owned businesses have been successful in terms of securing work under the Indigenous Procurement Policy both for Federal and State/Territory work. In Canberra alone there are 37 Indigenous owned ICT companies.

At any given moment there are 400-500 ICT positions available in the ACT. Of these only two at the time of searching were Aboriginal identified.

The 2018 report Australia's Digital Pulse (from Deloitte Access Economics for the Australian Computer Society) reported Australia's total ICT workforce at 663,100 workers in 2017, up 3.5% from 640,800 in the previous year. They forecast continued growth to a high of 758,700 by 2023.

With a projected total of nearly ¾ of a million employees by 2023 and a straw poll of recent ACT jobs revealing just 0.5% of all roles advertised were advertised as Indigenous identified, there is clearly some scope to improve this even if we could boost the percentages to be equal with the population ratio of 3%.

Overall, nationally, the employment rate for Indigenous Australians has not improved over the past decade. The Indigenous employment rate fell from 48% in 2006 to just under 47% in 2016. Over the same period, the non-Indigenous employment rate was broadly stable, at around 72%. As a result, the gap has widened.

5 Problem

Whilst Indigenous employment in the Commonwealth public service is tracking well it's clear that employment within government ICT departments is lacking.

Most Indigenous owned ICT companies have a stated intent to create more pathways for Indigenous employees but find it difficult to find Indigenous candidates and then to retain them.

One challenge is that most ACT-based Indigenous owned ICT companies are busy enough delivering upon contracts with little scope to put the time and effort into identify suitable applicants, training them up and mentoring.

There are several great government indigenous employment programs however these are only effective if they are leveraged. The reality is the Indigenous employment market in ICT is not a profitable sector, whilst there is the will, businesses lack the time and resource to push indigenous placement into ICT Government roles.

A majority of ICT resides on the east coast and in Metropolitan area placing more demographic challenges in attracting indigenous candidates away from community.

A service is needed to assist ICT companies to work with the Commonwealth to attract, develop and place Indigenous ICT workers.

6 Opportunity

We are all aware that there is a considerable shortage of cyber specialists. The government wants to triple the number, but you cannot bring them in from overseas due to the long citizenship and clearance process. We need to train Australians.

The opportunity exists for a holistic process from talent identification, connections to community, training, internships, mentorship and eventual placement for Indigenous and regional contractors. This would include managing the security clearance and recruitment processes also.

Kirra has acquired co-funding to support two full-time staff members: a program manager, and recruitment consultant to get the program up and running and engage part-time support, trainers and mentors.

We have an initial 2 years of funding. The first year would be dedicated to setting up the entity with the aim of having an intake in the first year with subsequent years taking in more intake groups per year. Further funding will help us broaden the student intake.

7 Partners

Kirra Services has the will and the network of partners and vendors to help bridge the gap. Thus far Kirra has serious interest from the following partners to participate in the program:

1. Kirra Services – core administration and placement opportunities
2. Dr Steve Foundation – indigenous recruits
3. Oxide Interactive – web development internship partner
4. ASI Services – internship partner
5. LaTrobe – cyber security Training partner
6. Vertex Cyber Security Training partner
7. Mercury ISS – cyber security Training partner
8. Ingenium Group – cyber security Training partner
9. Njoy – cyber security Training partner and mentor
10. Tesserent – cyber security Training partner
11. SAI Learning & Consultancy – training partner
12. TerraTec - Consultant
13. Greenlight – recruitment & mentoring
14. Industry Trading - internships
15. Aboriginal Hostels Limited – training partner and internships
16. Fortinet – training partner
17. RedHat – training partner
18. Veeam – training partner
19. Guardware – Data Loss Prevention training
20. Microsoft – training partner
21. Kirra Services has been approaching our government and corporate customers around internships.

Proposed Training

As mentioned above, Kirra Services has a network of partners and vendors to help develop and present the Cyber training. Initially the training will be focused around two streams:

- Entry level - cyber analyst roles with IT
- Intermediate Level – existing ICT consultants upskilling into cyber

The training will be built around several modules with electives and pre-requisites. For instance, Kirra has developed a Career Development training module which all students must complete:

The module will cover how to approach your career, research yourself and business, as well as writing a Resume, applications and preparing for interviews in the APS context.

Unlike other cyber training providers, we will provide a number of product certificate electives for the candidates to complete. Due to hardware and software side of the business, we get access to numerous product training programs at nil cost.

As an example, a certificate in RedHat Linux Administration is a must for any cyber resource.

9 Objectives

The objective is to develop the pathway program which includes:

1. Providing ICT training programs where students can obtain certifications upon completion, including production certifications
2. Source candidates from community via direct community engagement, networking and advertising
3. Organise internships with government, vendors and ICT companies
4. Place the participants in employment within Government and private sector with induction and mentoring support.

This pathway has enabled the employment of an program manager who will develop the program, establish a brand, website and other communication assets, work with provider to develop a targeted induction and training curriculum, organise and support ICT training courses and begin transitioning candidates into ICT roles in government.

It has also enabled a training facility, online platform and a recruiter.

10 Goals

1. Ensure a high completion rate of certified training courses through mentorship,

2. Evidence of the students obtaining internships within the ICT industry,

3. Evidence of students transferring into permanent or contracting roles with the APS or private sector.

Target Audience

1. All ICT companies that are Supply Nation certified or that have some formalised commitment to Indigenous employment.
2. Members of the Indigenous community aged 18-24, those who want a career change, Indigenous people with a disability or those at risk of incarceration. Those with a cognitive diversity disability may be especially suited to some ICT work. We have already started reaching out to the Indigenous community in Lightning Ridge.
3. The Aboriginal Hostel Limited - Students
4. Regional areas – including women.
5. Commonwealth departments and large corporates looking to take on contractors and permanent Indigenous staff.
6. Hardware, Software and Cyber vendors that have substantial business with the Commonwealth to help support the initiative.

12   Proposed Pilot Site – PACE Program.

Kirra has partnered with the Dr Steve Burroughs foundation to help fund the PACE program.

The Dr Steve Burroughs Foundation can only achieve its goals with the assistance of generous donations. Without donations, the Foundation is unable to promote the advancement of Aboriginal people living in remote regions of Australia.

The Foundation is currently seeking to deliver a mobile unit, known as the Portable Aboriginal Communication Environment (PACE), to enable Aboriginals in remote areas reliable and fast access to the internet. As a valued supporter of our Foundation, we are writing to ask for your financial support to help deliver the PACE pilot for placement in Lightning Ridge. Your donation of funds will go towards the purchase and fit out of the container as well as its transport to Lightning Ridge. The pilot will provide the following benefits to the Lightning Ridge Local Aboriginal Community:

·   Reliable Information Technology (IT) services
·   Portable local IT Infrastructure
·   Expand the wi-fi network allowing more access to the surrounding community
·   Enable internet connections at speeds like those in urban environments
·   Enable Aboriginal communities to keep pace with the latest technology
·   Health, Social and Economic benefits by:

  o   Providing faster, easy access to health and wellbeing information
  o   Providing a place to make and keep online appointments with medical support specialist
  o   Providing access to educational institutions
  o   Enabling faster research
  o   Enabling stable connections to social benefits, e.g. Centrelink, legal aid
  o   Enabling research into cultural connections to family and country
  o   Enabling connections to train and provide employment opportunities

13 Program Specifics

The pathway program would be designed to provide culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to overcome barriers to gaining and maintaining ICT Cyber Employment. We will individually tailor the support required, whether it be certified training, on the job support or mentoring to help in the transition to employment.

The recruitment process will be both advertising, networking, school and tertiary sector engagement and event based (careers fairs and such). A training program will be developed with industry partners. Industry partners will also provide support such as ICT equipment, licensing and other resources. Workplace transition will be supported through mentoring and the delivery of cultural awareness training.

14 Conclusion

If we don't take efforts to open the ICT sector to Indigenous people from an employment perspective, we run the risk of leaving out an already marginalised group from a growing sector of the economy.

From a Commonwealth point of view there has never been a better time than now to get into the ICT/Cybersecurity space. Cybersecurity is identified as a key area for the Commonwealth to focus on in coming years, while ICT is driving transformation efforts across the public service.

Indigenous people won't naturally choose these industries as a lack of role models, educational attainment and simply the 'not for people like me' attitude.

Noting how few identified roles there are for ICT Cyber Employment in Canberra we will never reach 3% Indigenous employment in this industry without extra effort.

This program also presents a great opportunity to develop industry leaders and role models. Noting that 37 Indigenous ICT companies operate in Canberra and all are seeking more Indigenous staff there exists a ready marketplace to places candidate in roles.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further

15 Government Panels

Digital Transformation Agency, WofG Cloud Services Panels:

- o Compute Infrastructure as a Service (UNCLASSIFIED DLM)
- o Compute Infrastructure as a Service (PROTECTED)
- o Storage Infrastructure as a Service (UNCLASSIFIED DLM)
- o Storage Infrastructure as a Service (PROTECTED)
- o Digital Transformation Agency WofG Hardware and Associated Services panel

Digital Transformation Agency - Digital Marketplace member:

- o Agile delivery and Governance
- o Content and Publishing
- o Support and Operations
- o Cyber Security
- o Marketing, Communications and Engagement
- o Software engineering and Development
- o Among others

Other Government Panels

- o GovCMS Drupal Services Panel
- o ATO Contingency Labour Hire Panel

16 Insurances

Trading Name	Kirra Services Pty Ltd
ABN	43 205 269 375
Entity Name	The Trustee for Kirra Services Unit Trust
Established	7/12/2017
Public Liability Value	$20,000,000
Professional Indemnity Insurance	$10,000,000

17 Contact Us

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