

FORUM SUMMARY:

Economic Inclusion for Health

Making sure everybody has access to meaningful work



Overview

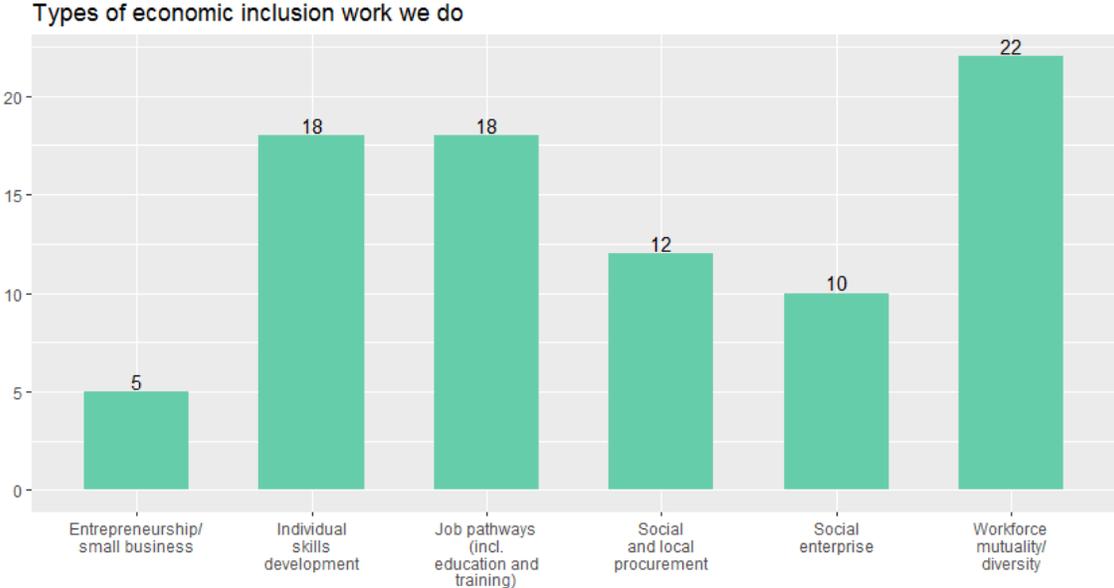
On the 15 October HealthWest held an Economic Inclusion for Health forum. The morning was attended by 48 people including representatives from member organisations, other interested stakeholders and community. The forum was facilitated by Nyaruot Ruth Ruach and Najib Warsame, who have previously worked on projects with HealthWest. Professor Yin Paradies, Chair in Race Relations and Indigenous Knowledges and Culture Coordinator at Deakin University opened with a thought-provoking presentation. Jim Kane, a Health Promotion Practitioner, at cohealth followed with a presentation about cohealth’s journey in implementing the HealthWest Standards for Workforce Mutuality. Marianne Essa and Florent Soli from cohealth shared some of their lived experience seeking employment after coming to Australia, and talked about their new roles as Employment Pathways Workers. Participants then engaged in roundtable conversations.

Download the presentations here:



Survey results

In the lead up to the forum, HealthWest disseminated a brief [discussion paper](#) and surveyed organisations to find out what economic inclusion work is happening in the region. With 37 responses, 31 people said that economic inclusion is a priority for their organisation or team, five said that it might be in the future. The graphs below indicate the types of economic inclusion work organisations are involved in.



Roundtable discussions

Participants engaged in roundtable conversations, taking a deeper dive into areas of economic inclusion. Some key findings are highlighted below.

- **Workforce mutuality/ diversity** – Workforce diversity remains a critical issue of concern for many organisations with communities continuing to experience employment discrimination and racism. There remains strong interest in advancing workforce mutuality, particularly in large organisations, corporate and government taking a lead. However, organisations are experiencing challenges in attaining leadership support, addressing workplace cultures and resource limitations. There was active interest in improving recruitment practices, data collection and setting of targets.
- **Social procurement** – There was strong interest but limited knowledge of how to implement social procurement. Social procurement frameworks exist in local and state government, but there is limited guidance and varied progress and commitment.
- **Job pathways** – There was concern existing services are misdirected, sometimes counterproductive and not meeting the needs of community. There was interest in working to join the dots and improve pathways which result in ‘real’ jobs.
- **Individual skills development** – Skills recognition remains a critical issue of concern, particularly in the health professions. There was strong interest in transferability of skills, recognition of lived experience, development of soft skills and skills which link to ‘real’ jobs in growth industries. Transport in the west was identified as a barrier preventing access to skill development.



Partnering with community

As part of the roundtable discussions HealthWest invited participants to talk about how best to partner with community to address the areas of economic inclusion. A number of key themes emerged from these discussions which will inform HealthWest’s next steps in partnering with community and any future activities.

- **Empowerment** – it is important to remove barriers and empower community with knowledge, confidence, connections, opportunities to engage and skills.
- **Respect** – it is necessary to acknowledge what has happened before, communicate with transparency and reimburse community for their time.
- **Grounded** – it is valuable to create spaces to partner with community, be attentive to diversity and intersectionality, listen to lived experience and share stories of success.
- **Sustainability** – the impact of funding limitations and sustainability of effort needs to be considered.
- **Equity** – need to address inclusion beyond ‘labour’ based jobs, focusing on sectors and professions where there are ‘real’ jobs.

Next steps

The forum affirmed that there is significant interest and emerging activity in economic inclusion and race-based discrimination in our region. Participants at the forum expressed ongoing interest in addressing racism in the health and community sector, progressing workforce mutuality, and collaborating to improve employment pathways.

There was also strong interest in coming together for more forums in order to make a positive impact in the community. In the future participants would like to see better representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, TAFEs, training organisations, employment services (inc. Job Actives), employers (inc. Private sector, hospitals and local business), and more community (inc. young people, service users and greater diversity).

HealthWest is currently planning a series of community conversations to create opportunities for community from diverse backgrounds to contribute to this ongoing conversation. The community conversations will seek to identify areas of felt need and clarify accessible and appropriate language for use. Alongside this, HealthWest will pursue engagement with other regional strategic platforms with a shared interest in economic inclusion.

There is ongoing interest in the Standards for Workforce Mutuality, because of this HealthWest is planning a second pilot of the standards in 2020. The focus of this pilot will be developing a good-practice methodology for implementing the standards, with a focus on the foundational Standards 1 & 2 (leadership and organisational culture) and staff diversity data collection. An expression of interest to participate in this pilot will be sent to HealthWest partners soon.

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20 November 2019