



Financial and Commercial Literacy Programs for Indigenous Communities: Workshop Report

This report summarises the discussions held at a workshop convened by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), the Northern Territory (NT) Government and CPA Australia on 19 July 2011 in Darwin.



ASIC

Australian Securities & Investments Commission



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Executive summary

There are a number of service providers delivering financial literacy programs in Indigenous Communities across the Northern Territory. Financial literacy is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes that people use to adopt good money practices for the buying, selling or exchanging of products and services. Due to the number of different service providers, challenges with remote service delivery and current performance measures, it is difficult to evaluate best practice.

Furthermore, these programs generally don't include a commercial literacy component. Commercial literacy includes an understanding of concepts of profit and loss which is critical for entrepreneurs. This knowledge is often absorbed by virtue of living in a mainstream economy. However commercial activity, and commercial literacy, is limited in communities that are remote, isolated from markets and that have high levels of welfare dependency.

On 19 July 2011, a group of approximately 50 individuals from a range of backgrounds (including business, government, Indigenous commerce, small business and not-for-profit organisations) came together at a workshop jointly convened by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), the Northern Territory (NT) Government (Community Stores in the Department of Justice; and Remote Industry Development, Department of Business and Employment) and CPA Australia. This workshop was dedicated to finding meaningful answers in the quest for best practice in engagement, delivery and measurement of financial and commercial literacy programs for Indigenous communities.

This is a timely and innovative initiative with important implications for the Australian Government's National Financial Literacy Strategy (see Appendix 1) and the NT Government's 'A Working Future' policy (see Appendix 2). The National Financial Literacy Strategy seeks to improve the financial literacy of all Australians and enhance their financial well-being, while the Working Future policy focuses on the development and growth of 20 major remote centres across the Northern Territory. This growth envisages an economically viable private sector that can only be built on sound financial and commercial literacy.

This report addresses these needs and summarises some of the key issues, questions and recommendations flowing from the workshop. There will continue to be a need to develop and refine a more coordinated effort for program delivery.

The workshop was structured to reflect the insights of six researchers who presented on the day, and on the workshop discussions and answers to a questionnaire sent to each of the participants before the workshop.

The conveners of the workshop gratefully acknowledge the input and ideas from individuals who attended the workshop (see Appendix 3 for a full listing of workshop participants). The conveners also acknowledge the role of Vinita Godinho, a PhD student at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, who assisted with the writing of this report.

If you would like to comment on, clarify or add to the summary points in this report, please contact Vinita Godinho, John McLaren or Duncan Poulson by email (see Appendix 3 for contact details).

Section A: Overview of the workshop

Workshop objectives

Financial and commercial literacy services in remote towns in the Northern Territory are currently delivered by a range of providers, in various formats to various groups via largely self-regulated programs.

Given the large number of stakeholders and delivery methods, success in this area surely requires effective partnerships, collaboration and coordination between all those involved in commercial and financial literacy work.

There also needs to be mutual agreement about ways forward, in order to achieve the goal of greater economic participation and local people owning and running their own businesses in a sustainable manner.

What skills and information do these service providers (including accountants, managers and other support services to Indigenous enterprise) need to assist in this learning process? How can they share their learnings, collaborate and form effective partnerships?

ASIC, the NT Government and CPA Australia attempted to kick-start this discussion by bringing together key financial and commercial literacy stakeholders across the Northern Territory at a workshop in Darwin on 19 July 2011. The objective of the workshop was to share learnings and best practice in engagement, delivery, and measurement of financial and commercial literacy in Indigenous communities.

Pre-workshop questionnaire

In an effort to ensure that the participants were truly able to maximise their learnings from the workshop, a pre-workshop questionnaire was distributed to all attendees. The questionnaire contained the following five questions:

Question 1: What are the gaps (particularly for remote Indigenous communities) in existing financial and commercial literacy knowledge?

Question 2: What are the opportunities that enhancing financial and commercial literacy knowledge could provide?

Question 3: What are the key challenges for the successful implementation of financial and commercial literacy programs in Indigenous communities?

Question 4: How could these challenges/hurdles be addressed, to advance financial and commercial literacy education?

Question 5: How can the outcomes (both successes and failures) of existing programs be evaluated?

Responses were received from more than 50% of the registered attendees and were collated and analysed. The key themes that emerged from participants' responses were woven into the agenda for the day and debated in a public discussion forum.

Workshop agenda

Given the broad range of topics to be explored, the agenda of the workshop included five interactive sessions with experts and researchers from a number of fields:

- **Professor Roslyn Russell** (School of Economics, Finance and Marketing, RMIT University) shared the longer-term impacts of a financial literacy and savings program (Saver Plus) on low-income households.

- **Gillian Dadswell and Kitty Kahn** (Two-Way Communications) discussed the challenges of communication across the cultural divide.
- **Dr Pascal Tremblay** (Department of Education and Training, Economist, Australian Evaluation Society NT) shared lessons learnt through designing the Department of Business and Employment's pilot Indigenous financial literacy survey 2010.
- **Brownyn Rossingh** (Accountant (CPA), PhD student and Associate Researcher, Charles Darwin University) explored Indigenous community notions of accounting and accountability relating to government funding frameworks.
- **Peter Ogilby** (School of Sustainable Futures, Swinburne University of Technology) discussed the design, development, delivery and assessment of training and mentoring programs to remote stores in the Northern Territory.

A summary of the key highlights from each presenter is contained in the next section. These interactive sessions were followed by a public discussion forum facilitated by John McLaren (Manager, Community Stores Licensing Regime, Department of Justice) and Michelle Crowther (Manager, Remote Industry Development, Department of Business and Employment) using the key themes that emerged from participant responses to the pre-workshop questionnaire and various learnings highlighted by the presenters.

Participants were invited to share real-life examples based on their own experiences and share learnings with the broader audience. The very robust discussions that ensued were a testament to the keen interest generated by this workshop. There were also ample opportunities provided for participants to network and establish key relationships.

The day concluded with a thought-provoking summary by Toni Ah-Sam, Chair of the NT Indigenous Business Network (NTIBN). Toni provided an overview of the NTIBN and its future priorities.

Section B: Key themes from presenters

Session 1: Professor Roslyn Russell (School of Economics, Finance and Marketing, RMIT University)

Professor Russell spoke about the longer-term impacts of a financial literacy and savings program (Saver Plus) on low-income households. The aim of Saver Plus is to help families and individuals on low incomes to develop long-term saving habits and to reach a savings goal.

The Saver Plus program has resulted in improved financial literacy outcomes and many of the underlying principles and concepts from the program can be applied to other audiences, including to Indigenous participants. The program helps families develop a savings habit and increase knowledge and skills over a 10–12 month period. Participants are given ongoing mentoring and support, and an incentive through matched savings. The program is resource-intensive, but results are very promising.

Benefits are not just improved knowledge of managing money and achieving a savings goal—participants also describe social and psychological benefits. These include enhanced social and personal well-being (i.e. participants report improved confidence in managing all aspects of life and are less stressed about the future). Participants also encourage family members to save, which shows an inter-generational confidence in teaching children about money.

Learnings from this program:

- Evaluation should be incorporated up-front into program design.
- Increased knowledge and understanding alone does not automatically translate into behaviour change—education should be supplemented by ongoing support and incorporate opportunities to learn by doing.
- Online or self-directed learning does not match the benefits of face-to-face workshopping. Although participants may initially resent having to attend a facilitated session, the interaction and opportunity to network with others who have the same problems created lasting relationships and understanding. This is a big part of the program's success.
- Grow the program slowly: monitor a small pilot and manage growth, based on sound evaluation and research so that it can be based on evidence.
- Have a cross-sectoral governance team that makes sure that decision-making is equally shared between different partners.

Session 2: Gillian Dadswell and Kitty Kahn (Two-Way Communications)

Gillian and Kitty spoke about the challenges of communication across the 'cultural divide'. In a remote community context, communication and especially language is a critical issue. Language is developed by people to deal with the concepts which are important in their world view. Different world views can have different languages.

There is a lack of a common language in Indigenous communities, in relation to money and finance. Money and finance are products of Western culture and therefore the concepts need interpretation. Interpreters need to be cultural advisers who can explain commercial and financial concepts. A cross-sector approach with a common definition of financial and commercial literacy would be ideal.

Gillian and Kitty described the capacity development framework which guides their work. This approach of developing competencies and capabilities leads to self-sustaining performance improvement by focusing on values instead of only on behaviours.

For capacity development to be effective, it is important to understand the cultural context in remote Indigenous communities. Cultural values underpin context and so it is important to understand cultural values and to distinguish between behaviour and values.

Although there is a great diversity between Indigenous people, a generalised description of 'culture' has been used for the purposes of this discussion. The overriding value in Indigenous culture is sharing: this applies to all resources such as food, shelter, cars, money and there is no shame in asking for any of these items to be shared.

This does pose a problem when an individual wants to start up a business and make an income from selling stock or investing assets. Culturally, Indigenous people find it hard to separate their 'business' assets or stock from their family resources.

Learnings from this session:

- Indigenous culture is people-orientated so relationships are important, particularly where people fit in the group. It is crucial to engage the right people at the right time. It is difficult to assume who has the knowledge or who has the authority to answer on behalf of the community. People may not reveal whether they know something, or someone else may answer on their behalf.
- Decision-making in Indigenous communities is largely by consensus—this takes time and not everyone will be on the same wavelength. Singling out a person can create shame or discomfort. Privacy is not always desirable: company is. Programs should involve support and mentoring, especially when training outside a common community.
- Traditionally, knowledge in Indigenous society is held by the elders and passed onto the right people at the right time so people don't always seek information. Certain concepts which are taken for granted in a Western context may not be well understood (e.g. money, profits). Service providers cannot assume this knowledge exists before delivering their programs.
- Directly addressing an issue may be discouraged. Sometimes people don't want to say 'no' for fear or shame so non-Indigenous stakeholders may need to be creative in their inquiry.
- Silence is not uncomfortable in an Indigenous context. This doesn't mean people don't know the answer, but simply that the issue may not be important to talk about.

Session 3: Dr Pascal Tremblay (Department of Education and Training, Economist, Australian Evaluation Society NT)

Dr Tremblay spoke about lessons learned through the design of the Department of Business and Employment's (DBE) pilot Indigenous financial and commercial literacy survey 2010.

DBE's objective was to measure the level of financial and commercial literacy of an Indigenous community. Measuring financial literacy is difficult as measures of knowledge do not include behaviour and there is very little current measurement of Indigenous financial literacy levels. DBE was keen to take both knowledge and behaviour into account while assessing financial literacy.

In designing any survey, it is common practice to consider what constitutes a basic 'standard' level of knowledge versus an 'average' or 'desirable' level of knowledge. In establishing an Indigenous financial and commercial literacy survey, the 'average' would indicate the mainstream economy, which is sometimes quite different and unrelated to the Indigenous economy.

It was important to consider the different dimensions of Indigenous financial exclusion for this study. For example, do Indigenous people have differing skills (i.e. numeracy, literacy, economic); have they been financially excluded due to society, poverty or welfare; are they constrained by traditions, cultural mores or social pressures; or do they have a cognitive difference due to nature of their everyday experiences?

The academic research on tacit knowledge could also be applied to financial and commercial literacy program (i.e. some knowledge can only be acquired by experience). In some cases, you have to do something in order to learn it, and you get better by doing it more (e.g. riding a bike). You cannot get this knowledge by reading it in a book; you actually have to ride the bike in order to learn it. Does this apply to Indigenous people's experience with money?

This pilot survey was a first step towards measuring existing levels of financial and commercial literacy. It demonstrates that it can be done. However, amendments must be made to the survey and its methodology, based on lessons learned in its inception.

Learnings from this survey:

- There were some cultural sensitivities around how invasive a survey question can be: we did not want to shame the participants. Open-ended survey questions could be more useful in this context.
- Financial and commercial literacy knowledge varies considerably, ranging from a large proportion of respondents lacking even basic knowledge, to some participants with quite adequate levels.
- While 32% of participants declared that they save, only one participant (3%) saved beyond one pay cycle. This indicates that what is considered 'saving' is actually delayed consumption among this group. This absence of saving, or even delayed consumption, extends to BasicsCards with 71% of those who answered the question, 'How long does the money on your BasicsCard last?' reporting it lasted three days or less.
- Employment is the central factor explaining basic commercial knowledge, as it is correlated with 'practice'. It could be assumed that people who interact with market forces are exposed to necessary tacit skills. Those participants whose main source of income was a job, rather than welfare, had higher financial literacy levels across all indicators.
- The extent of the grey economy is far greater than previously expected, with 86% of participants declaring that they hunt or fish at least once a week. In addition, 64 % of participants reported hunting for food when they ran out of money.

Session 4: Bronwyn Rossingh (Accountant (CPA), PhD student and Associate Researcher, Charles Darwin University)

Bronwyn spoke about Indigenous community notions of accounting and accountability relating to government funding frameworks.

Bronwyn's research on cultural notions of accounting and accountability was based on workshops with Indigenous groups from remote NT communities who were seeking government funding. The workshops used program-based application forms. This study on Indigenous understanding of government funding processes highlighted the importance of using a common language that incorporates culture-based concepts and highlights the need for an inter-cultural approach to minimise the hardships that technical and complex language may create for Indigenous people.

The following is an illustration of how some commonly-used English words were interpreted by the Indigenous participants of Bronwyn's study:

Budget: Suggestions included using money, save money, bank, budgeted, how you get through the money from week to week.

Profit: Suggestions included what you make, money, profit is money, profitable business.

Financial: This word doesn't get heard in remote communities. 'Sound financial management' was interpreted by the local community as 'managing the sound'.

Commercial: Participants thought it may mean an advertisement, what you are trying to tell people.

Income generation: Participants thought 'income' meant when they perform, they keep the money. Some thought 'generation' referred to handed down from generation to generation.

Ownership: Participants referred to ownership of their culture. The knowledge of assets or ownership is more for community as a whole as a sharing culture—exclusive ownership was not understood.

Learnings from this research:

- Language and wording can be very misleading, especially English language concepts. We need to re-think word choice in government funding forms and funding-associated processes. Some words are not being 'heard' so the responses do not match the expectations of government.
- Key concepts relating to accounting and accountability, which are within the funding application forms, used technical words repetitively, and often these words have many different meanings.
- Indigenous people have a strong sense of accountability to their own culture which includes:
 - continuing culture*—accountability and historic record keeping
 - cultural obligation*—looking after valuable assets
 - living culture*—transacting, making the project happen
 - building culture*—networking, negotiating outcomes and goals.
- Another point made by Bronwyn was that Indigenous students prefer to learn from a strategic viewpoint first, then learn the smaller sub-concepts, whereas Western practice tends to teach small abstract and unrelated concepts first, building up to the strategic concept.

Session 5: Peter Ogilby (School of Sustainable Futures, Swinburne University of Technology)

Peter spoke about the current Independent Indigenous Community Stores program for community stores and their managers and links through to Indigenous Community Committees. Swinburne School of Sustainable Futures has a number of programs running in the Northern Territory including Outback Stores, the Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA) and Independent Community Stores. These programs have a collaborative and linking approach with a number of stakeholders such as the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), the Service Industries Training Advisory Council (SITAC) and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

Community stores are defined as socially responsible sustainable businesses. In the case of Indigenous owners, core values related to the descriptors of such businesses are nearly

always far better understood by the owners than by outsiders. Therefore, one of the major roles of Swinburne in this program is to work with and through the stores to the owners to support these values and relate them to business and financial requirements needed to maintain operational stores. Such unique collaborative partnerships provide innovative outcomes, from which considerable learning benefits can flow.

Peter's experience with the concept design began with a strategic approach. It was important to establish a needs analysis of each store and participant in the preliminary stages, therefore maximising with the stores opportunities for effective measurable outcomes. A holistic approach in the design, development, delivery assessment and evaluation of training and mentoring programs highlighted the need and benefits in working with the entire community to answer the questions: where are we now, where do we want to be and how do we get there?

Learnings from this session:

- Training and mentoring programs should be practical, of a holistic nature with all phases (including evaluation) built in from the start, as part of the process.
- Programs should reflect 'Local needs ... local solutions'.
- Programs should clearly identify the learning benefits for the training organisation and for the participants in measurable ways. Return on investment is a key marker for the training organisation, the participants and stakeholders.
- There is a need to work together in a socially-inclusive way to strengthen the relationships between those with knowledge and those with 'qualifications'.
- Reporting on training and mentoring programs needs two complementary parts: a report which measures traditional outcomes (e.g. improvements in education, health, jobs) and a 'not for profit' report along the lines of 'Why democracy needs the humanities' by Martha C. Nussbaum.

Section B: Key themes from the public discussion forum

The public discussion forum was based on the key themes that emerged from participants' responses to the pre-workshop questionnaire. Economic development in the NT community requires a collaborative effort to support the individual entrepreneurs. Cross-cultural communications need to be worked on as the 20 growth towns will have a host of 'new' entrepreneurs who need capability building

The following is a summary of responses to each of the five questions in the pre-workshop questionnaire, and the robust participant discussions on the day.

Question 1: What are the gaps (particularly for remote Indigenous communities) in existing financial and commercial literacy knowledge?

Participants highlighted several knowledge 'gaps' in existing financial and commercial literacy among Indigenous communities. These include lower levels of basic literacy, numeracy and oracy skills. People need English literacy and numeracy in order to access financial and commercial literacy programs. These gaps are exacerbated by a lack of practical hands-on knowledge of running a commercial enterprise and general business management capability.

As well as challenges in terms of the overall responsibilities involved with developing and managing a business, remote communities also face additional barriers due to the lack of access to 'commercial' markets and networking opportunities with other entrepreneurs, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Often Indigenous entrepreneurs are the first in their immediate family and community to embark on a commercial business venture and are therefore unable to benefit from the experience of other business role models and mentors.

Cultural obligations related to reciprocity and kinship often clash with a strictly 'commercial' business ethos and create further barriers for Indigenous enterprise. All of these factors have also been documented in existing research on Indigenous entrepreneurship.

Service providers who have developed a deep, grass-roots understanding of Indigenous culture also point to the growing disconnect between traditional Indigenous knowledge and world-view and modern-day Western business concepts. Existing financial and commercial literacy programs tend to assume existing knowledge of certain commercial concepts (e.g. profits, flows of money), but these are not necessarily understood in the same way in Indigenous communities, particularly those in more remote locations.

It is important to identify what Indigenous people are doing right and use this to work from a strengths perspective. Acknowledge and respect Indigenous knowledge and work with what they are doing right, not what they are doing wrong. Indigenous people may well know what they are doing; they just may not know it in the context of mainstream financial literacy.

Flexible programs that acknowledge that people are already doing something well in their cultural context will remove the focus of a 'deficit' and prevent having to reinvent the wheel.

From an Indigenous perspective, it is important to identify who has the authority to carry out a particular action or speak about a particular issue. Western business practices do not take into account these social structures.

These last observations are crucial for the wider set of service-delivery stakeholders to take note of, as it may require existing programs to be further refined. Assumptions of pre-

existing knowledge of certain concepts may need to be challenged, and ways to build on traditional knowledge systems may well prove to be invaluable in efforts to ‘close the gap’.

Some comments:

One of the gaps in existing financial and commercial literacy knowledge is the lack of agencies working together to achieve outcomes for community members.

Yvonne Dunne, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC)

Lack of interest is the biggest issue. Countering the ‘shame’ associated within a community of admitting lack of financial knowledge. Understanding of the need to attend regular training sessions—similar to issues with school enrolment and attendance.

Brad Hopkins, FaHCSIA

Question 2: What are the opportunities that enhancing financial and commercial literacy knowledge could provide?

Participants consistently described a broad range of opportunities that enhanced financial and commercial literacy could provide. These include increased personal literacy and confidence, which in turn translates to broader benefits not just for the individual, but for the community as a whole.

What is the underlying motivation to achieving financial literacy or to get educated in the first place? People actually want to be able to deal with each other better. The social aspect of building financial literacy and the positive impact it has on the lives of individuals and communities has often not been acknowledged.

Sharing Indigenous success stories, learnings and celebrating role models will help to inspire others while appointing local ‘champions’ can also reinforce knowledge in the community. Often only ‘bad’ business practices are shared and these tend to create negative stereotypes. The feedback from the community tends to be that there are no success stories to share, only failures.

Building on existing, traditional knowledge will also help entrepreneurs to feel more ‘connected’ to culture and the community. To put all of these into context, a participant provided an example of how financial literacy can provide a better social outcome: a remote community employer introduced an innovative payroll concept to allow people to provide for holidays. They introduced a third bank account for people to accumulate ‘hours for holidays’, and redesigned the employees’ payslip so that people could see how this amount was increasing with each pay. This was a very simple change, but it helped people to quickly understand their entitlements.

People can quickly grasp concepts, including those on official forms and documents, if they are explained in ‘their language’ in a manner they can understand and relate to.

Some comments:

Western concepts of financial and commercial literacy do not correspond to Indigenous concepts. The programs are not connecting with the existing knowledge systems and remain as abstract concepts. They are well intended and thoughtfully designed but often lack the cultural foundations that enable linkages to take place. The key challenge is to take an intercultural approach and not be so inclined to impose Western philosophies on people who think differently even if the strategic visions appear similar.

Bronwyn Rossingh, Charles Darwin University

Programs need to be adaptable for each community and take into account learners with English as a second language. Many programs use language that is too complex.

Anne Shew, Traditional Credit Union

A lack of engagement has not been a challenge for our program in Shepparton but long-term participation is now starting to be of relevance. Financial literacy programs must constantly be updating and changing to adapt to local needs and interests and this can pose a challenge for the continuity of delivery. If programs don't evolve, then low participation can be an issue.

Martha Piper, First Nations Foundation

Oh no, not another training program! Many community people are already trained out. Therefore any future training needs to be relevant and meaningful.

Kitty Kahn, Two-Way Communications

Question 3: What are the key challenges for the successful implementation of financial and commercial literacy programs in Indigenous communities?

There are many common challenges faced by those involved in service delivery. These include the high cost of program delivery especially in remote communities and lack of community engagement and participation in existing programs. Often there is a disconnect between local community needs and aspirations and the required program outcomes; this makes it harder to engage community and evaluate program success.

Service providers will need to identify who in the community has the authority to influence the majority and to engage them first because if they endorse the programs, then others will too.

The multi-agency nature of government service delivery often results in 'silos' and multiple programs with differing requirements and accountabilities. The short-term nature of government funding cycles and reporting further exacerbates these issues.

Some participants highlighted the debilitating influence of welfare dependency which erodes the motivation to be involved in entrepreneurship. There has been a long history of Indigenous people having their needs provided for through welfare. People have grown up within a social environment of welfare dependency.

This has reinforced some misconceptions, including the notion that Indigenous people do not need an education or job in order to survive, or that people can get money by being attached to an organisation (e.g. as a director) without necessarily having to take responsibility for the organisation, such as complying with regulatory and legislative requirements. Some Indigenous people don't want to run a business, learn about finances, take responsibility and be accountable.

In remote areas, the majority of people are on welfare while the minority are not. Leaders who are in enterprises and who have created businesses or who generate employment and have an education are in the minority. The issue is that they have to deal with the majority; their own children and kin ask them why they are working so hard when they can just get money easily from welfare. Welfare has to go before private enterprise will flourish.

Also, cultural differences in valuing individual 'commercial' success makes it very difficult for people to maintain the 'fire in the belly' which is required to succeed in a commercial business. Cultural obligation can be a barrier to saving and business. In less remote locations, it might be easier to jump beyond the family obligation and run a business individually.

This is sometimes a social or cultural 'cost' that Indigenous entrepreneurs have to pay, but some people will endure this for the sake of their children. However, on the whole

Indigenous people don't necessarily see cultural obligation as a negative thing—they look at sharing as a positive and actively work to see how this can be done.

Indigenous economic participation and employment initiatives must also consider career path planning for employees. There are some particular hurdles here. Indigenous workers make progress through various positions within the store; however, cultural factors may mean that despite having the required knowledge, they don't want to be the manager of the store.

The reality of actually having Indigenous store managers may therefore be a generation away. There is a need to undertake more supporting activities (e.g. offering shadowing or secondment so that Indigenous workers can work together with a supportive environment).

A participant provided a real-life example from stores in the Northern Territory: store managers are often brought in from the 'south' and they tend to assume that skills and knowledge levels among the 'northern' Indigenous workers are very low. They end up trying to do all the work themselves, but if they had just asked the local workers, they could have helped much more. These Indigenous 'northern' workers do know what to do; store managers should not assume that Indigenous folk do not know how to do these things. It is important to do a skills-mapping exercise so that store managers know who to go to for what experience.

There is a lack of current and reliable data on Indigenous enterprise. This makes it difficult to provide an evidence base for evaluating program outcomes and inform policy.

Some comments:

There are virtually no micro enterprises where Indigenous people can build their business acumen in a practical environment. Other than stores, some tourism, cattle enterprises there is little real business in the majority of remote communities.

Warren Bretag, Consultant

It cannot be underestimated the disincentive that prolonged social welfare has had on the uptake of business enterprise opportunities. While acknowledging that there are many drivers for an individual to enter into a business, if financial gain is not a high priority (due to a welfare disincentive) this may impact on the motivation and interest for many to pursue commercial literacy programs.

Andrew Plate, Indigenous Business Australia

There needs to be an advanced financial literacy program for Indigenous companies wanting to broaden their commercial reach to national and international markets.

Toni Ah-Sam, NT Indigenous Business Network

Question 4: How could these challenges/hurdles be addressed, to advance financial and commercial literacy education?

The high cost of program delivery and lack of community engagement may be alleviated by partnering with local Indigenous organisations, which have built long-term relationships and trust within the community. Involving local communities in the design, delivery and evaluation of financial and commercial literacy may also promote greater ownership and engagement with ongoing programs.

One way to counter a 'silo' approach may be to increase collaboration in program delivery and use existing infrastructure to revitalise commercial enterprise; this will also reduce costs.

Currently, there is no opportunity to declare Indigenous status at the point of business registration. This would assist in capturing more reliable data on Indigenous enterprise.

Question 5: How can the outcomes (both successes and failures) of existing programs be evaluated?

Evaluation of program outcomes is particularly difficult in Indigenous communities, given the many issues described above. Participants offered many practical suggestions to assist program evaluation. These include allowing the local community to define their own measures of success, defining a range of 'concrete' measures of program success (e.g. increase in knowledge, change in behavior) and the ability to track all of these.

Everyone wants a better, functional family life—that's the common ground as a success measure. Although it is important to involve the local community, there is a compounding problem of over-consultation especially in a remote location. Service providers may need to be flexible with how they consult.

A participant provided some learnings, based on his experience with running community consultations in remote communities, about to define success measures for an evaluation. It was important to be aware that there was a group of people who can speak versus those who cannot speak. He took a lady along who sat with the women and got the details of what they wanted to measure. The clan chose who their 'sentinel' would be—this person provided feedback on behalf of the community and 'sentinel reporting' was developed to track progress. The sentinel filled in a short survey at regular intervals (in language) and got paid a small incentive.

Indigenous communities want to know what the data will be used for, rather than just being paid for the data they provide. The 'sentinel' reporting helped the community to see what their responses were being used for.

Another participant mentioned it may help to have an animated computer-based questioner such as the visual character 'Marvin' (developed by NT Consumer Affairs in 2008) who talks in language and asks questions related to behaviour change. The respondent gets to answer the question anonymously. This worked better than face-to-face questioning.

In order to increase collaboration and share learnings, it would also be very useful if program evaluations could be shared with other stakeholders.

Conclusion

This workshop was dedicated to finding meaningful answers in the quest for best practice in engagement, delivery and measurement of financial and commercial literacy programs. This is not possible to achieve in a single workshop. Rather, a key take-away message from the workshop was the realisation that no single organisation or entity can hope to achieve best practice on its own.

This report summarises some of the key issues, questions and recommendations flowing from the workshop. These will be used to continue to develop and refine a more coordinated effort for program delivery.

It is vital to keep the collaborative dialogue open, so that stakeholders can continue to synergise efforts and reduce duplication and waste. The conveners of the workshop would like to see this type of event run on an annual basis.

Other opportunities for stakeholders to share learnings and collaborate are as follows:

- The Department of Business and Employment recently formed a 'financial literacy taskforce' together with other government agencies and the Traditional Credit Union in an attempt to coordinate across agencies to make sure services relating to financial literacy are meeting expectations and being delivered effectively. It is intended that this group will meet on a quarterly basis. The meeting times for this taskforce are not set yet but are likely to be in October 2011, January 2012, April 2012 and July 2012. For more information about these meetings, please contact Hayley Richards, Director, Remote Industry Development, Department of Business and Employment on email: Hayley.Richards@nt.gov.au.
- An Indigenous Economic Development (IED) Taskforce brings together high level representatives from a range of backgrounds, including the NT Government and Australian Government, land councils and the private sector. Since its inception, the IED Taskforce has provided guidance and advice on developing the IED Strategy (http://www.dhlgrs.nt.gov.au/indigenous_development/indigenous_economic_development/indigenous_economic_development_taskforce) as well as other strategies and initiatives aimed at closing the economic gap of Indigenous disadvantage. The IED Taskforce reports to the Chief Minister, the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister for Indigenous Development Affairs and meets quarterly. The meeting times for this taskforce are not set yet but are likely to be in November 2011, February 2012, May 2012 and August 2012. For more information about these meetings, please contact Jodie O'Donnell, Project and Policy Support Officer, Indigenous Economic Development; Indigenous Economic Development Taskforce Secretariat; Regional Development Division I Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services on email: Jodie.O'Donnell@nt.gov.au.
- Indigenous Economic Development (IED) Forums are held biannually in the Northern Territory. In 2009, more than 300 delegates attended the [4th IED Forum](#) in Alice Springs. In 2011, the [5th IED Forum](#) will be held in Darwin on the 13–14 of October. The IED Taskforce is responsible for progressing work on proposals emerging from these forums. For more information about the IED Forum, email: Jodie.O'Donnell@nt.gov.au.
- The Indigenous Economic Development (IED) Field Officers Network was formed in late 2006. The network brings together people who work directly to increase the economic independence of Indigenous Territorians through identifying and supporting business and economic development opportunities and activities. Its members communicate directly with each other through email, and meetings are held around three to four times a year across the Northern Territory. The Department of Housing, Local

Government and Regional Development supports the network. If you are interested in joining this network, please go to www.nt.gov.au/ied and click on 'Join the IED Field Officers Network'. For more information, please contact Marisa McCarthy Regional Development Division, Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services on email: Marisa.McCarthy@nt.gov.au.

- The NT Indigenous Business Network (NTIBN) was formed in 2011. Its membership ranges from sole traders to major corporations. One of its objectives is to provide a representative voice for Indigenous-owned and operated businesses. Membership is open to both individuals and organisations, and the network has waived all membership fees until 30 September 2012. The network plans to host three to four member events per year. For more information, please contact the NTIBN secretariat on email: NTIBN@hotmail.com or Jodie.O'Donnell@nt.gov.au.
- Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) offers free 'Into Business' workshops as part of its Business Development and Assistance Program. The workshops are designed to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to fully investigate and research their business ideas before taking the leap into business ownership. The three one-day, self-paced workshops are spaced over the course of several weeks. For more information about these workshops, please contact Andrew Plate, NT State Coordinator, Indigenous Business Australia on email: Andrew.Plate@iba.gov.au.
- ASIC hosts a financial literacy 'community of practice' meeting on the last Friday of each month. This is a discussion forum with the purpose of strengthening the links between stakeholders who work on financial literacy issues, and to encourage rich discussion and the sharing of information between ASIC and stakeholders in the financial literacy area. For more information about these meetings, please contact Duncan Poulson, NT Regional Commissioner, ASIC on email: Duncan.Poulson@asic.gov.au.
- The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) hosts a Financial Management Support Services Workshop in Darwin and other states each year. These workshops are usually held in March. For more information about these meetings, please contact Brad Hopkins, Assistant Section Manager Money Management Services, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs on email: Brad.Hopkins@fahcsia.gov.au.
- The Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations and the Australian Institute of Company Directors provide training for Indigenous directors and management committee members. Visit their websites (www.oric.gov.au and www.aicd.com.au) for more information.
- At a national level, the Indigenous Financial Services Network (IFSN) is a cross-sectoral collaborative network of key stakeholders dedicated to promoting Indigenous financial inclusion. Key priorities for IFSN are Indigenous financial literacy and assisting economic development. For more information about this group, visit Reconciliation Australia's website at www.reconciliation.org.au.

Appendices

Appendix 1: National Financial Literacy Strategy

In March 2011, ASIC released a strategy for the development and delivery of initiatives to improve the financial literacy of all Australians and enhance their financial well-being. It is a framework for many agencies and organisations working in partnership. The strategy was prepared after considerable research into what Australians know and don't know about money matters and what we do and don't do in this area. The strategy identifies that Indigenous Australians are one group that are most in need of financial literacy assistance. To download a copy of the strategy, go to www.financialliteracy.gov.au

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) funds a number of financial literacy programs that target Indigenous Australians, particularly those in rural and remote communities. Reducing the educational disadvantage of Indigenous students is a key element of the current education reform agenda; it also supports the Australian Government's aims to improve social inclusion. Ensuring financial literacy education at school meets the needs of Indigenous students, teachers and communities is an important objective of ASIC's school work.

ASIC is currently supporting a financial literacy program for Indigenous students called 'Milba Djunga' ('Smart Money'). The pilot involves developing a program for primary school students and one for secondary school students. Trialling of the primary school program began in 2011 in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

The secondary school unit is called 'How Can I Start My Own Business'? This is designed to be taught as a Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) unit, a Maths unit or Business Studies unit.

Both programs involve a range of activities to engage students in exploring wants and needs, and earning and budgeting money in very practical, hands-on ways. A website to house the resources has also been created and is accessible at www.milbadjunga.net.au.

Appendix 2: Territory 2030 and 'A Working Future'

The NT Government's framework state plan is called 'Territory 2030'. This plan places education and training as the central focus of government and community action over the next 20 years. It commits the Northern Territory to:

- increased school participation among Indigenous Territorians
- improved Year 11 and 12 enrolments in Northern Territory schools
- increased proportion of young people aged 15–24 participating in post-school education, training or employment, and
- improved participation in Vocational Education and Training (VET).

In implementing the Territory 2030 plan, the NT Government has also introduced a policy titled 'A Working Future'. This policy establishes a government focus on the development and growth of 20 major remote centres across the Northern Territory. Each of these centres have developed local implementation plans and those plans now form part of a joint NT Government–Australian Government initiative in 15 of the 20 towns.

Each local implementation plan has been developed by consultation with local residents and set out the aims and aspirations of local people in areas of early childhood education, school attendance, housing, community safety and economic participation. One of the plans (the plan for Galiwin'ku) has identified financial literacy as one of their top desired outcomes requiring immediate action as part of the economic participation priority. For example, the Galiwin'ku plan states:

Priority 2: All capable Galiwin'ku adults have the opportunity to engage in meaningful work.

Strategy 2.1: People are ready to work.

2.1.5 Economic, commercial and financial literacy training meets community needs and assists with knowledge in the areas of money management, entrepreneurship, financial wealth and home ownership.

In terms of government cross-agency coordination, the 'economic participation' priority is the most complex. This is because the majority of the actions require at least two agencies to collaborate, with each other and with the community, to achieve the desired outcomes.

Economic participation is summarised in the local implementations plans as 'more local jobs and training and more local people owning and running their own business'. The NT Government has recently published economic profiles for some of the growth towns. These plans highlight employment, business and economic opportunities.

The economic participation priority envisages that a viable private sector must be established, with appropriate governance and associated financial and commercial administrative skills required for them to remain viable. Community stores and other Indigenous-owned enterprises will therefore need to role-model governance and commercial capability.

An essential part of governance is sound financial and commercial literacy. If the domain of financial literacy is sound personal financial management capability, then the domain of commercial literacy should be sound commercial business management capability.

Appendix 3: List of workshop participants and contact details

The following table includes details for all participants who attended the workshop in Darwin on 19 July 2011.

Name	Position	Company/organisation	Email
Organisers			
Michelle Crowther	Manager, Remote Industry Development	Department of Business & Employment	Michelle.Crowther@nt.gov.au
John McLaren	Manager, Community Stores Licensing Regime	Department of Justice	John.McLaren@nt.gov.au
Duncan Poulson	NT Regional Commissioner	ASIC	Duncan.Poulson@asic.gov.au
Stephanie Hunter	Events & Relationship Executive	CPA Australia	Stephanie.Hunter@cpaaustralia.com.au
Debbie Hall	General Manager	CPA Australia	Deborah.Hall@cpaaustralia.com.au
Vinita Godinho	PhD Student & Principal Consultant	RMIT University, GenixVentures Pty Ltd	Vinita.Godinho@inet.net.au
Presenters			
Peter Ogilby	Project Manager	Swinburne University of Technology	POgilby@groupwise.swin.edu.au
Roslyn Russell	Professor	RMIT University	roslyn.russell@rmit.edu.au
Dr Pascal Tremblay	Manager—Evaluation and Research	Department of Education & Training	pascal.tremblay@nt.gov.au
Gillian Dadswell	Principal	Two-Way Communications	Gillian@twowaycommunications.com.au
Kitty Kahn	Principal	Two-Way Communications	kittyclk@bigpond.com
Bronwyn Rossingh	PhD Student/Associate Researcher	Charles Darwin University	Bronwyn.Rossingh@cdu.edu.au
Attendees			
Hayley Richards	Director of Remote Industry Development	Department of Business & Employment	Hayley.Richards@nt.gov.au
Alf Leonardi	Senior Director—Corporate Engagement and Partnerships	Department of Education & Training	Alf.Leonardi@nt.gov.au
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Chris Hayward	Deputy Training Manager	Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation	Chris.Hayward@alpa.asn.au
Toni Ah-Sam	Director	Sed Consulting	tonia@sedconsulting.com.au
Greg Constantine	CEO	Larrakia Development Corporation	Greg.Constantine@larrakia.com.au
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Dominic McCormack	Legal Practice Director	Bowden McCormack	dominic@bowden-mccormack.com.au
Warren Bretag	Principal	OT3 Tools	wjbretag@gmail.com
Stuart Reid	Associate	Meertens Chartered Accountants	SReid@meertens.com.au
Michele Jones	Manager, IM Transition & SEAM	Centrelink	michele.jones@humanservices.gov.au
Melanie Brenton	Executive Officer	Services Industry Training Advisory Council	melb@sitac.com.au , Melanie.Brenton@sitac.com.au
Rhonda Parker	Operations Manager	Services Industry Training Advisory Council	projects@sitac.com.au

Financial and Commercial Literacy Programs for Indigenous Communities: Workshop Report

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Lauren Walker	Outreach Lawyer	NT Legal Aid Commission	lauren.walker@ntlac.nt.gov.au

Appendix 4: Participant feedback on the workshop

The following is a sample of the feedback received from participants at the workshop.

Thank you for an enjoyable seminar. I learnt a lot and enjoyed the input. I feel we are making lots of progress in this area.

Alf Leonardi, Department of Education and Training, NT Government

Well organised and some wonderful presentations. Thanks for the invite and I look forward to the feedback.

Warren Bretag, OT3 Tools

Financial and commercial literacy are foundations needed to build wealth (in the Western sense). The workshop was extremely valuable in tabling the policy issues and challenges with translating these concepts into a different cultural context; particularly in remote communities where people aren't living in the same type of economy as in cities. What happens next is going to be extremely important.

Hayley Richards, Department of Business and Employment

A simple thank you for today's forum. I generally use a simple measure to identify the value of such a forum—did it retain the interest of the group? It did appear resoundingly so. Congratulations and again my thanks for your invitation.

Bernard Moore, Service Skills Australia

The last two to three years has seen important progress made in the Northern Territory in Indigenous matters. In order for this progress to be translated into a broader advancement for Indigenous peoples, a collaborative and innovative approach is required. The workshop was an important catalyst in this, and needs to provide a benchmark (project) to act as a reference point for others.

Peter Ogilby, School of Sustainable Futures, Swinburne University of Technology

Inspiring and rewarding workshop that brought together a diverse range of stakeholders that share common goals and similar challenges to share information, ideas and practical experience. I think that a regular forum such as this (held perhaps twice a year) would do much towards creating meaningful linkages between stakeholder groups and organizations leading to value added outcomes for all concerned.

Chris Hayward, Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation