



Evaluation of CISVic Working for Victoria project

30 June 2021

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Victorian Government for releasing funds for the WfV project, and for channelling some of this revenue to CISVic. This enabled member agencies to employ staff and continue their support for local communities in a time of crisis, when the usual volunteer workforce was severely depleted.

We would also like to thank the WfV team for their work recruiting, placing and supporting 56 new staff members in a very short time, and also for the data describing this work as laid out at the beginning of the 'Findings' section. This data, alongside information from the consultations, provides considerable evidence of the achievements of this project as well as the dedication of all staff who supported many people in the community during the COVID crisis, either directly or indirectly. This staff includes the CISVic team, the Executive Officer, Managers at participating agencies, and the new WfV employees. The views and feedback of all involved were invaluable for this evaluation.

Member agencies that participated in the WfV project and assisted with this evaluation are listed below.

Albury Wodonga Regional FoodShare
Banyule Support and Information Centre
Bayside Community Information & Support Service Inc
Box Hill CIS
Camcare Access HC
Casey North Community Information & Support Service
Chelsea Community Support Services
CIS Glen Eira
CIS Moreland
CIS Yarra Ranges
CISVic Volunteers Of Banyule
CityLife Community Care
Council of Single Mothers & their Children
Diamond Valley Community Support Inc
Doncare
Knox Infolink
LinC Yarra Valley
Monash Oakleigh CIS
Mornington Community Information and Support Centre
Port Phillip Community Group Ltd
Prahran Citizens' Advice Bureau
South East Community Links
Southern Peninsula Community Support & Information
Western Port Community Support
Whittlesea Community Connections

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Executive summary

Background

In March 2020, the Victorian Government announced a \$1.7 billion economic survival and jobs package, including a \$500 million Working for Victoria Fund (WfV). This was to help those impacted by COVID-19 job losses, job seekers looking for work, and employers looking for suitable employees. CISVic successfully applied for funding under this scheme to support interested member agencies to employ staff, including the three 'branch' agencies it directly manages.

Over the next six months from July 2020, 56 staff were recruited, mainly to help deliver support services at local agencies which had lost most of their volunteer workforce due to COVID-19 and the lockdowns. Most staff were employed for emergency relief, community support work, case work, and the provision of food and groceries. All staff were employed on a temporary basis, usually about six months. Specific project aims were to:

1. deliver information, referral, advocacy and support services in local centres to people in need, particularly those affected by COVID-19
2. build a backup workforce
3. meet immediate needs and respond to community needs.

Evaluation design

The aim of this evaluation was to assess the value of the project against these WfV aims, and its value in general, and to make recommendations for future program design and implementation.

The evaluation activities gathered both quantitative and qualitative data and included the following.

1. Integration of personnel data collected by WfV management at CISVic
2. WfV employee exit survey (N=27)
3. CISVic member Manager survey (of participating agencies) (N=26, from 25 agencies)¹
4. CISVic staff focus group (including two branch Managers) (N=6)
5. WfV team focus group (+ one interview) (N=4)

Key findings

- The project was evidently very successful, enabling 25 member agencies to continue supporting local communities under the difficult circumstances of the pandemic, even with the loss of the usual volunteer workforce.
- Agency Managers, CISVic staff and the WfV team were grateful for the funding which enabled member agencies to keep supporting local people and communities in the absence of the usual volunteers, and in the face of a range of challenges.

¹ Two respondents from Whittlesea Community Connections were: Program Manager Community Support, and Office Coordinator.

Increased agency capacity to meet local need

- All agency *Managers* (100%) agreed that *'employing staff through WfV funding enabled our agency to address critical needs in the community during the COVID-19 crisis'*.
- Managers commented on how they were better able to help the community and people seeking assistance (24 out of 26).
- Most *WfV employees* (92.3%) agreed with: *'I believe I added to my agency's capacity to deliver support services to vulnerable clients during the pandemic'*.

Improved employment outcomes for recruits

- The WfV project surpassed expectations in enhancing the employment prospects of the 56 recruits. Many were actively supported into ongoing employment on completion of their contracts, despite two thirds experiencing 'employment disadvantage' prior to recruitment for the project.
- In the *Manager Survey*, 96 per cent agreed that WfV staff have become more employable, and 92 per cent agreed that WfV employees developed new skills.
- In the *WfV Employee Exit Survey*, 88.5 per cent agreed that ongoing training while in the WfV position provided them with opportunities to develop professionally.
- In their comments, *WfV employees* expressed feeling supported, working as a team, seeing positive outcomes for people assisted, having a good learning experience, and gaining knowledge about local communities and organisations.

Factors underpinning the success of the project included:

- the trusting relationships, commitment, good will, collegiality and flexible responsiveness of all involved, including CISVic staff, the WfV team, Managers at member agencies, and the new recruits
- the high quality and skill level of WfV staff, including members of the WfV team itself, notably mature women with years of training and experience
- the focus by the WfV team on nurturing and mentoring recruits to enhance their ongoing employment prospects.

Difficulties encountered in the project included:

- the very short time frame and low level of resourcing for such a large recruitment
- some initial breakdown in communication between CISVic and agencies regarding roles and responsibilities and other administration matters
- reportedly time-consuming bureaucratic processes
- the 'two track' employment arrangements at CISVic, which necessitated a lot of detailed administration (whereby some agencies employed directly, while CISVic employed others who were placed in agencies).

The project highlighted the vital nature of the support that CISVic member agencies provide in local communities. While COVID showed how fragile volunteer-reliant services are, the WfV project also demonstrated how absolutely valuable and necessary paid support staff are. Resourcing for professional staff in all agencies would assist them to address increasingly complex issues and ensure their ongoing viability.

Thus a key recommendation from this evaluation is that the state government provides funding for professional support staff at every CISVic member agency.

Introduction

Background

At this point in time, there is little need to explain the phenomenon of the COVID-19 pandemic which took hold in 2020. Its' devastating and life-changing effects for communities worldwide and in Australia and Victoria are well known. Hundreds of people have died, and many more have lost their livelihoods and capacity to survive or maintain health and wellbeing. While Australia has had much fewer deaths², the lockdowns that have safeguarded the population from the virus, have also led to loss of employment and income, collapse of businesses, and profound social isolation for many.

For CISVic member agencies and branches, the pandemic meant the loss of their volunteer workforce almost overnight, from the first lockdown in March 2020. This had a major and immediate effect, given the ratio of paid workers to volunteers pre-pandemic i.e. 1: 10. Important to note, about 30 per cent of CISVic member agencies are volunteer-only. At the same time, the lockdown came with highly demanding and time-intensive requirements to change operations and modes of service delivery. As the year proceeded many Managers and paid staff became fatigued and on the verge of burnout. The drawn-out pandemic and the second lockdown in July was evidently taking a toll on the mental health of both staff and community members. Those presenting for assistance reportedly had more complex, inter-related issues as the year moved on, and many seeking help were unfamiliar with the social and material support system. (See Borrell & Evans 2021 for more information).

Working for Victoria project

Within this context, the availability of funds to employ staff to replace the depleted volunteer workforce was highly welcome.

In March 2020, the Victorian Government announced a \$1.7 billion economic survival and jobs package, including a \$500 million Working for Victoria Fund (WfV) to assist those impacted by COVID-19 job losses, job seekers looking for work, and employers looking for suitable employees in the context of the pandemic.³ CISVic applied for funding under this scheme to support interested member agencies to employ staff, including the three 'branch' agencies it directly manages. In July, CISVic learnt that it had been successful in its tender, and this news was welcomed by the relevant agencies (25 in all). Specifically, funding of \$2.1 million was granted to employ 51 workers for six months, including 32 Support Workers, 17 Case Workers, and two Project Coordinators. The funding was to enable CISVic member agencies to continue

² 910 deaths from COVID-19 in Australia up to 28 June 2021, with 3,899,172 deaths globally. See the World Health Organisation website for comparisons by country:

<https://covid19.who.int/table>

³ This was administered by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) which aims for the state economy to benefit all Victorians 'by creating more jobs for more people, building thriving places and regions, and supporting inclusive communities'. Viewed 30 June 2021 on the Department's website at: <https://djpr.vic.gov.au/about-us>

supporting communities in the absence of the usual volunteer workforce, and was taken as: ‘...recognition of the value of our work supporting the community while recognising the vulnerabilities of a predominantly volunteer workforce in a pandemic’ (Email communication from CISVic Executive Officer, July 2020). Subsequently 13 agencies chose to employ staff directly while eight left formal recruitment and employment of their new staff to CISVic. The remaining staff were employed directly into CISVic programs and Branches.

At a sector level, this funding provided a much-needed boost for CISVic member agencies from July 2020 well into 2021, enabling them to continue supporting communities. More detail is provided in the tables below.

Table 1: Type of WFV staff by commencement period (N=56)

Type of staff	No. staff	Commencement period
Caseworker	15	28/7/20 – 16/11/20
Project Coordinator	3	27/8/20 – 30/11/20
Community Support Worker	34	7/9/20 – 11/1/20
Administration/support	4	4/11/20 – 5/1/21

Table 2: Months of commencement of WFV staff (N=56)

Month of commencement		No. staff
2020	July	1
	August	2
	September	9
	October	25
	November	17
2021	January	2

The evaluation

It was considered important to evaluate this project – a rather novel project brought in through extraordinary circumstances. For a peak body directly employing about six EFT⁴ staff pre-pandemic (including branch Managers), this was a huge commitment to rapid recruitment, induction, training, placement, and ongoing support of over 50 staff. We wanted to gather learnings about this, including the project’s effects for agencies, communities, people seeking help, and for the WfV employees themselves.

⁴ One EFT is equivalent to full-time hours of work, but not necessarily by one person.

The aim of this evaluation was to assess the value of the project against WfV aims as outlined in the contract with the Victorian Government, and its value in general, and to make recommendations for the design and implementation of similar initiatives in the future.

Outline of this report

More information about the evaluation design is provided in the following Methodology section. This precedes sections descriptively titled: Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendations (in that order).

Methodology

CISVic Working for Victoria project aims

CISVic was funded to shore up and rebuild the capacity of member agencies in local communities so they could continue to provide critical support services during the pandemic in the absence of the usual volunteer workforce. Specifically, CISVic agreed to create and employ 51 full-time positions for a six-month period to:

4. deliver information, referral, advocacy and support services in local centres to people in need, particularly those affected by COVID-19
5. build a backup workforce
6. meet immediate needs and respond to community needs.

This was to eventually involve the recruitment, induction, training, placement supervision and support of 56 staff for 51 EFT positions over the course of the project.

Evaluation aim and topics

The aim of this evaluation was to assess the value of the project - against the WfV aims (above), and in general, and to make recommendations for future project design and implementation. In line with this aim, the investigation addressed the following questions and topics.

-
1. Were employment targets met?
-
2. What worked well in recruitment, induction, training, placement, and ongoing support of WfV personnel, if anything?
 3. What didn't work so well in the recruitment, induction, training, placement, and ongoing support of WfV personnel, if anything?
-
4. Was the capacity of CISVic and member agencies increased to deliver information, referral, advocacy and support services in local centres to people in need, particularly those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?
 5. Were immediate individual needs and community needs met because of WfV?
-
6. What worked well in the design and implementation of the WfV project as a whole, if anything?
 7. What didn't work so well in the design and implementation of WfV project as a whole, if anything?
-
8. Suggestions and recommendations for the future.
-

Evaluation activities

Evaluation activities gathered both quantitative and qualitative data and included the following.

6. Integration of personnel data collected by WfV management at CISVic.
7. WfV employee exit survey (N=27)
8. CISVic member Manager survey (of participating agencies) (N=26, from 25 agencies)
9. CISVic staff focus group (including two branch Managers) (N=6)
10. WfV team focus group (+ one interview) (N=4)
11. Reference to stories and case studies from WfV personnel for the overall analysis⁵

The Survey Monkey platform was used for the surveys, to enable remote participation.

The CISVic focus group was carried out in person at the CBD office, with some participating remotely (via Microsoft Teams).

The WfV team focus group was carried out remotely (also via Microsoft Teams). One team member could not participate in the focus group and was later interviewed by phone.

See Attachment A for the survey questions and focus group schedules.

⁵ Conducted by a Social Work student on placement with CISVic. The actual stories are not included in this report due to space but also due to some redundancy as they tend to repeat the feedback from the WfV Employee Survey.

Findings

This Findings section is divided into four main parts. Firstly, data and feedback about the recruitment, induction, training, placement, and ongoing support of Working for Victoria (WfV) personnel, is examined. This includes some description of employee retention, outcomes and satisfaction. Secondly, information from the consultations for this study is analysed to ascertain whether the WfV project increased the capacity of agencies to deliver support to people in their local areas. The third part looks at operational dimensions in delivering the WfV project, including what worked well overall and what might have been done differently. Fourthly, suggestions from those consulted are outlined.

Employing WfV staff: recruitment, induction, training, placement, and support

The first person employed for the WfV project at CISVic was the Project Manager, who was redeployed from the role of Case Worker at a CISVic branch.⁶ CISVic covered the cost of this position and supervision was provided by the Executive Officer. The CISVic team as a whole provided the infrastructure for the WfV project, including administration, bookkeeping, 'trouble shooting', and also training especially designed and delivered for the WfV recruits.

Recruitment and employment data

The data for this subsection largely reflects the work of the WfV team, which directly oversaw the project and consisted of the Project Manager, two Project Coordinators and an Administration Officer. Excluding the Project Manager, these staff were especially recruited for the project. The achievements of the team were evidentially substantial, especially given the very short time frame. While all employment targets were met, as a consequence of how the project was delivered there were outstanding and unexpected outcomes such as high rates of staff retention and employment post-WfV.

Firstly some basic employment data is provided here. WfV staff were employed across 25 member agencies and branches and located across metropolitan Melbourne and one regional site. Some also worked remotely from home. Appointed staff were: 14 Case Workers, 35 Support Workers, four Administrators and three Project Coordinators.

The WfV team created and posted 57 job advertisements and reviewed more than 1,850 applications before shortlisting 260 candidates for the positions. This work included almost 300 phone screens, over 170 panel interviews with member agencies, and more than 115 reference checks.

⁶ CISVic directly manages three agencies, referred to as 'branches'.

Description of recruits

Nearly two thirds (63%) of staff employed for the WfV project were experiencing employment disadvantage.⁷ In addition:

- 46% were aged over 45 years
- 43% were women aged over 45 years, with 46% of these women aged between 50 and 60 years, and 21% aged over 60
- 7% were young people aged under 25, with 20% aged from 25 to 29 years
- 3 recruits were newly arrived migrants from a CALD background.

There was a focus on recruiting new graduates and creating opportunities for less experienced workers. This included seven new Social Work graduates entering their very first paid position in the field. Five of these were offered extended employment with their agencies on completion of their WfV contracts.

Nearly a third (29%) of recruits were existing volunteers working within a CISVic member agency, obtaining their new roles on merit and providing them with a pathway into employment in the community services field. For nearly sixty per cent (59%) of WfV staff, it was their first paid role in the sector.

‘The four of us have never met in person. We’ve all worked from home to deliver the project. Super passionate, hard-working, like minded and outcome focused, we went above and beyond...’ (WfV Project team)

Training

Online intensive training was offered to all new staff. Fourteen people undertook CISVic’s *Community Support Worker* training which was accredited. This included the following key learning components: *Interpersonal communication, Interview and client assessment, Agency procedures, Practice guidelines, Ethics and the law, and Complex situations*.⁸ Additional online learning resources were provided in direct response to feedback from WfV staff around areas of interest and need.

⁷ Defined as jobseekers who are accessing employment services and are either unemployed or underemployed and in receipt of Government income support payments.

⁸ In addition, 17 of the staff who were assessed for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), completed *Emergency Relief Support Worker* training, which covered three of the key learning components: *Assisting Clients, Guiding Practice and Complex Situations*.

Training topics included:

Working with the LGBTIQ+ community
Working with Interpreters
AVERT Family Violence
Family Violence Foundations
DV Alert
QPR Suicide Prevention
Indigenous Cultural Awareness
Energy Simplified
DoFoodSafely
Conducting Effective Telephone Interviews

Professional Development Webinars

Working with African Families in Mental Wellbeing Support (African Family Services)
Collaborative Approaches to Supporting Women Survivors Seeking Asylum
(*Jesuit Refugee Services Australia*)
Supporting a Survivor (Anti Violence Project)

Supervision

The WfV team facilitated 235 *individual* supervision sessions with staff. This supervision provided WfV recruits with guidance and support from more experienced workers, giving them opportunities for ongoing professional development and ensuring the welfare of community members seeking help. Supervision sessions went for an hour on average, and were conducted online.

Eight *group* supervision sessions (1.5 hours in length) were also organised in response to needs and issues raised by WfV recruits arising in their everyday work at agencies. Topics included *Mental health, Self care, COVID-19, Centrelink, and AOD* (alcohol and other drugs). The team collaborated with other community organisations, and representatives were invited to present to WfV staff on specific subjects. In addition to professional development the sessions provided opportunities for peer learning and support, and some WfV personnel continued to connect, support each other and share information outside the group supervision space.

Support for future employment

The WfV project at CISVic placed a high priority on supporting recruits into their future employment and career development. For example, a career planning workshop titled '*Where to from here?*' was designed and offered to staff in direct response to their high level of anxiety about the short-term nature of their employment.

Job search support also included the following:

- career-specific advice and support through approximately 100 calls and emails
- 21 resume reviews and tailored recommendations
- 8 interview preparation meetings
- 7 external references
- 2 LinkedIn testimonials for staff.

Employee retention

The level of employee engagement and retention was high, with 96 per cent of WfV staff either: completing their six-month contract, leaving early due to obtaining more permanent work, or commencing formal studies in Social Work.

Post-project employment outcomes

Employment outcomes for exiting staff were impressive, especially given that nearly two thirds had been experiencing employment disadvantage prior to recruitment for the WfV project. To date, of the 56 staff recruited:

- 75% obtained further employment
- 68% secured ongoing work in the community services sector (with 43% at their current organisation, and 25% in new organisations)
- 7% secured new roles outside the community services sector (i.e. administration, fashion, retail)
- 9% started or continued with formal studies in the sector (i.e. Social Work).

Comments from WfV employees

'I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the WfV project. It has been an amazing experience and entry into paid work in the industry I am most passionate about.'

'I have enjoyed the opportunity very much, have gained new skills and increased my knowledge of the community sector. I feel as though I have made a valuable contribution to CISVic and it has been a very positive contract professionally and personally.'

'I think CISVic staff and in particular [NAME REDACTED] have been wonderful to work with. I have felt supported and valued by the staff.'

'I really appreciated the opportunity to work with CISVic and their amazing team of dedicated workers. I also appreciate the support and encouragement I received and thank the team I worked closely with.'

'I have appreciated the opportunity to work during such a difficult COVID job market. This experience has left me in a much better position to apply for other roles within community service and I feel confident in applying for my next role. Thanks for all of your hard work supporting us WfV staff.'

What worked well?

It was unanimous across all consultations that the recruitment and quality of WfV staff was a great success, especially as carried out in a very tight timeframe, and with outstanding results for recruits, CISVic, participating member agencies and, most importantly community members seeking assistance.

This began with recruitment of the WfV team itself, which was to oversee the implementation of the project. All agreed that the self-funded Project Manager (the very first recruit) was pivotal to the success of the project. The WfV team was also to comprise two Project Coordinators, and an Administration Officer.⁹ Each was highly skilled and experienced, and the team reportedly worked very much like a 'well oiled machine', with a high level of goodwill, collaboration, mutual support and flexibility in meeting a wide range of unexpected demands and circumstances. Unfamiliar IT systems were mastered, and processes were developed to serve the requirements of a dramatically expanded work force. Near the end of the project, all WfV team members expressed a high level of personal and professional fulfilment arising from the project, and a close bond with team members who they had evidently achieved so much with, while working to tight deadlines. One highlighted that the achievements of the project provided compelling testimony of the capabilities of mature age, female professionals who made up the team.

As already noted, WfV team members spoke highly of the support provided by the Project Manager throughout the project, reflecting her intent to not only have the right people in the right roles, but to understand their strengths and passions and facilitate their optimal contributions to delivery of the project. The collegiate, 'can do' approach of the WfV team extended to the relationships built with member agencies where new WfV employees were placed. Apparently, this was very much needed given the high volume of invoicing and paperwork required for placements as well as imbursements for those agencies choosing to employ WfV staff directly.

The success of the WfV team's work was also attributed to the core, stable CISVic staff and management, said to be actively supportive and responsive.

'...It was getting the right staff but also having the core stable of CISVic staff... knowing I could ring any of (them) and (they) would respond in a timely way, respond to questions and help me. Having that core staff who was there. [The Executive Officer] said the team will be with you every step of the way and it was true. I would ring up [NAME REDACTED] and they would respond... nothing was an issue. No one said I can't help you. They would say I will find out and get back to you. Yes, I had a dream team but if I hadn't had the CISVic team it wouldn't have worked. It wouldn't have happened.' (WfV team)

⁹ To be precise, 'Administration Officer' was not a position at the commencement of the WfV project. When an initial Project Coordinator left early, the team reassessed current needs and due to the heavy administration successfully applied to the Department (of Jobs, Precincts and Regions) to split the second Project Coordinator role into two positions (0.4EFT Project Coordination and 0.6EFT Administration Support). Both subsequent recruits were reportedly a better fit for the WfV team.

All of this enabled the WfV team to recruit high quality, and suitable staff in the vast majority of cases. This was consistently reported throughout consultations for this evaluation - with CISVic staff, CISVic branches and participating member agencies.

Comments from consultations

'I think the appointment of ... Project Manager was critical. And recruitment of the Project Coordinator... She came with all that recruitment experience. She had the perfect blend of qualification and experience and with that massive recruitment. She took it to a level that we wouldn't have gotten to on our own. Shame with false start with the other Coordinator. But certainly, getting the right people is what made it work well.' (CISVic staff)

'... (The WfV project) has allowed us to restore a regularity of service to our clients due to the Full Time Community Support Worker. One direct result was over the busy Christmas period, when other community agencies such as the Salvation Army take a break - the Full Time presence of the WfV staff member allowed us to continue opening our door to the community in spite of the lack of volunteers. This continuity has created a sense of trust in the community. Internally, the WfV Community Support Worker has been a huge asset - agile and skilled in assisting to update procedures and manuals for service delivery in the new 'COVID Normal' environment with flow-on impact into the community and clients.' (Manager survey)

WfV team members, as well as relevant CISVic staff, were justifiably proud of the extensive support and professional development provided to WfV employees, with their skill development and future employment prospects very much front of mind.

While the data presented in the previous subsection very much substantiate this, it was also amply reflected in the feedback from the Manager Survey and the WfV Employee Survey.

To illustrate, in the member agency Manager Survey:

- 96% agreed that WfV staff have become more employable
- 92% agreed that WfV employees developed new skills. (See figures and comments in Attachment B)

In addition, comments were made about the high quality of WfV recruits, when Managers were asked about the effects of the WfV project on their agency's work in the community.

Similar positive sentiments were evident in the WfV Employee Exit Survey:

- 88.5% agreed that ongoing training while in the WfV position provided them with opportunities to develop professionally
- 88.5% agreed they felt well supported in the workplace
- 88.0% agreed that the content and format of their *individual* supervision met their needs
- 84.0% agreed that the content and format of *group* supervision met their support needs
- 81.5% agreed that initial training assisted them in gaining skills and knowledge to perform the role. (See figures and comments in Attachment B)

When asked about positive aspects of their work with the member agency where they were placed, numerous, effusive comments were made about: being actively supported, working as a team, seeing positive outcomes for people assisted, having a good learning experience, and gaining knowledge about local communities and organisations.

Comments from consultations

'I'm really proud of the fact that we gave a lot of people the opportunity to get employment and get experience especially when they were just starting in the sector, and that they hadn't had it and would have struggled otherwise.' (CISVic staff-Branch Manager)

'Across the board, the WfV has done lots for the sector. I'm pleased people had job opportunities and training and experience. I'm a big believer that our sector is a good place to start for going on to family violence (support) etc. It's good to know that more people are out there that have a sense around what can be done and have been indoctrinated into our way of working. It wasn't me that did it – the training that [NAME REDACTED] did has transformed things. I'm proud of that.' (CISVic staff)

'... The benefits to volunteers in our agencies has been incredible. We want to continue to have quality volunteers delivering quality service.' (CISVic staff)

'I took great satisfaction seeing the growth of the people we employed, to see their confidence and experience grow, to reinforce their learning. Their success showed in our data. Three out of four people went on to get further employment. Also, the training we offered, and individual personal growth as workers.' (WfV team)

'People were anxious about contracts finishing. We're supporting people with that process. It was a value-add that impacted the outcomes in the end... I'm proud of the people I've supervised; they've developed greater self-esteem; they're work ready. And I'm proud of how well they've done in their job and then to go on to get work.' (WfV team)

'I was able to learn a lot and gain more hands-on experience in assisting vulnerable clients. My agency and its members supported me well through their advice, encouragement and mentoring which helped me confidently grow in my role.' (WfV employee survey)

'It was great to work in a team environment. Meeting clients face to face after having assessments on the phone was good. I learnt a lot about the community and the local organisations that can provide support.' (WfV employee survey)

'I found myself in a diverse team, with a range of backgrounds and skill sets, which I was able to access to assist my clients. Furthermore, it has been a great start in the industry and valuable learning opportunity.' (WfV employee survey)

What didn't work well?

While research participants had much less to say about what *didn't* work well with the recruitment and placement of WfV employees, or their ongoing training and support, a few themes did emerge, as follows:

- unrealistic timelines for recruitment and bringing new staff on board
- a very high level of administration associated with the two employment arrangements i.e. (i) direct employment by CISVic, (ii) employment by the member agency requiring regular invoicing by the agency to CISVic to release the funds
- limited Human Resources (HR) capacity in the peak body to manage an additional 51 EFT positions
- some breakdowns in communication in the swift implementation of the project, including clarity about particular roles and responsibilities, and the provision of CSW training for new WfV employees
- concern in a couple of instances that there was not the HR capacity to follow up on staff concerns about risk and safety in a particular agency. (The capacity to deal with staff concerns was said to depend on the particular agency Manager involved)
- suggested unrealistic expectations of a couple of WfV employees regarding the nature of frontline work in branch agencies, and with this, the need for an unrealistic level of support
- the funding agreement requirement that new WfV employees be Full Time, when some agencies would have preferred Part Time (even if in a share arrangement with another agency) – especially when the agency was not open Full Time
- unsuitable WfV recruit at one agency, said to require an unreasonably high level of support and direction.

Comments from consultations

'Timeframes for getting people recruited and onboarded were unrealistic timelines. There was a lack of resources. Roles were administration heavy. We really needed a Full Time administrator... ' (WfV team)

'Communication lines (were unclear). Who do I speak to about what? And who picks up on... (safety issues), now that we're not around because these issues still remain.' (WfV team)

'Should have all staff employed by CISVic in the future – have uniform CISVic policies –and pay workers at the same rates etc... (*describes complications of working with agencies that have different administration processes*)... I wouldn't do it this way in the future. We wanted to be flexible but did not have the 'manpower' to do it this way...' (WfV team)

'The open-door policy means that we can be extremely busy one day and not so the next. It can make it hard to offer in-depth support and can be very tiring.' (WfV employee survey)

Agency and community support

What worked well

According to those consulted, the WfV project and the new staff provided enormous and invaluable benefit to participating agencies. Certainly, the branches appreciated having consistent and reliable staff for service delivery, and the chance this provided to re-think and 'strategise' the shape and design of the service into the future. It was proposed that one branch – Yarra Ranges, would not have been able to stay open without the WfV project and the associated resourcing of paid staff. Thus, it was able to continue a much-needed service to people in crisis in that area.

The WfV project was said to improve the community information and support sector. Overall, the quality of service at agencies employing WfV staff improved, providing good outcomes for people seeking help, and also for volunteers who were supported to expand their skill set and approach.

In addition to bringing in a new professionalism to many services, agency Managers (and probably paid staff for agencies that had them) received some welcome relief after many months of supporting community members through the COVID crisis, with reduced or no volunteers as well as many difficult changes forced by circumstances of the pandemic (Borrell & Evans 2021). Consequently, the WfV project was said to have improved or salvaged the mental health of Managers who desperately needed additional resources and support to keep aiding struggling community members. This is probably reflected in the results of CISVic's annual member satisfaction survey; member satisfaction with CISVic as a peak body increased by eight per cent from the previous year (CISVic 2021). Member satisfaction was also reflected in the WfV Manager Survey for this study.

All agreed (100%) that *'employing staff through WfV funding enabled our agency to address critical needs in the community during the COVID-19 crisis'*.

In addition, 77 per cent agreed that the WfV project will have long term benefits for the community (with a little reservation due to the time-limited nature of the project). (See Attachment B for figures and comments).

When asked about the effect of the WfV project on their agency and their agency's work in the community, 24 out of 26 comments described somewhat effusively how they were assisted to help the community and people seeking help. Some comments elaborated that the project had helped provide a new type of service and/or address the needs of a new cohort of people. Others mentioned improvements to the agency to better support community members into the future, for example: *'It has brought a professionalism to the way we work that we didn't have before...'*

The WfV Employee Exit Survey reflected similar sentiments, with the majority (92.3%) agreeing with the statement: *'I believe I added to my agency's capacity to deliver support services to vulnerable clients during the pandemic'*. (See Attachment B for more detail). When asked about any positive aspects of their work in an open question, many spoke of seeing positive outcomes, adding to the capacity of the agency, and gaining satisfaction their work supporting service users.

Comments from consultations

'Every day I have a positive result, by implementing and instigating a streamlined process to provide hampers to individuals, couples and families in need - knowing many people have a healthy food options for the next few days. When I first started, we were providing approx. 30 hampers per month now we provide up to 150-200 per month. It's a great feeling.' (Employee survey)

'It helped us continue our work in a season when skilled volunteers have been hard to find.' (Manager survey)

'Having the Working for Vic staff meant we were well-resourced staffing-wise. They brought commitment and valuable skills that increased our ability to reach more members of the community, to engage in more in-depth assessment, and improved the quality of support provided.' (Manager survey)

'Additional staff capacity at a time when clients' needs were more complex and many services (such as housing services) were not available to individuals who... could be assessed by support workers. This staff was essential and highly beneficial.' (Manager survey)

'The program was a very worthwhile initiative for us. It brought it a valuable new worker who had much to contribute when were otherwise a bit short staffed. There is no doubt that we were able to help more people than would have been the case without him.' (Manager survey)

'The WfV project allowed our agency to continue to operate, and not only that, to grow and develop it's services to meet the need of the community that was in desperate need of an agency like ours.' (Manager survey)

'[Branch Manager] has completely redesigned the service and that wouldn't have happened without WfV staff. Ongoing benefits – all of our agencies have seen some. I see them thinking - 'Oh this is what it might mean when you have consistency...', 'Maybe we can jiggle our figures to have staffing in some way.' It's gotten everyone to think outside the box.' (CISVic staff)

We were able to establish a new service because of the WfV staff member. Because [NAME REDACTED] was Full Time she was able to develop our new Community Hamper service, which during and after the COVID -19 lockdowns has enabled us to provide critical support to highly vulnerable members of our community. It's been a very effective program, brilliant! (Manager survey)

'We were able to undertake a really great food relief outreach program with the WfV staff at my agency. I love doing food relief because it's a chance to give people things (as opposed to often having to say no to financial relief). A positive aspect of my work was that I was able to offer more specialised casework, which my agency cannot usually offer, because of my full-time role. This was particularly helpful in assisting a family violence client to obtain funding to improve her quality of life and keep her safe.' (Employee survey)

What didn't work well

Again, negative reflections were much fewer than positive ones, in this instance relating to agency and community support provided through the WfV project at branches and member organisations. Some feedback referred to operational factors, such as breakdowns in communication from CISVic to branches about the adapted Community Support Worker training WfV employees were expected to have. Reportedly, there was also some initial confusion about the roles and responsibilities of different personnel.

One Manager had not immediately understood she was to be a 'Task Supervisor', but was satisfied when this was clarified.

Also, as already noted, Full Time rather than Part Time staff would have better suited the needs of some agencies, especially if Part Time staff could have been employed over a longer period of time. This view emerged in one focus group and also through the WfV Manager Survey, with several reflecting that the temporary nature of the employment arrangement was a problem. A respondent to the WfV Employee Exit Survey also reflected that the project should have been designed to be extended given the local need and the time taken to create and build trust in the community. Conversely, this all highlights the value of the project for workers, agencies and communities, in that they lament its ending.

Another point already noted is the suggestion that a couple of WfV employees may have had unrealistic expectations of the level of HR (Human Resource) support that could be provided to them given the limited resources.

Finally, a couple of WfV employees reflected on the difficulty of being confronted with the troubling or distressing circumstances of some people seeking help, or their challenging behaviours, especially in the absence of easy remedy.

Comments from consultations

'Some situations that community members find themselves in are quite troubling and often there is a limited response that the agency could provide to said community members.' (Employee survey)

'There were times where certain clients were challenging but that helped me learn how to present in front of distressed and challenging clients better.' (Employee survey)

'It was a fantastic addition to our service delivery and we sincerely hoped that the funding would continue. We have now made some great contacts with other agencies who have referred clients for casework support and raised expectations that this will be an ongoing service. After May we will then have to absorb the casework into our existing overstretched team and pull back with our availability to provide this more intensive support unless we can secure funding to re-establish this program. The caseworker achieved some outstanding outcomes.' (Manager survey)

'Humungous! (*referring to the effects of the WfV project on the agency*) These members of staff filled a gaping hole in our ability to provide basic services to our community members and were able to contribute to the rebuilding and transitioning stages of COVID. The support that the organisation and the community received through this program was crucial to enable us to continue our work, build on our work, be flexible through our work and support our work. With the project now preparing to wind up, it is still a great loss as many volunteers have not been able to return, new volunteer recruited are missing the consistency of support structures due to the ever changing environment of the staffing structures, staff are still working remotely meaning that 'on the ground' personnel remain crucial to service delivery.' (Manager survey)

'...In terms of the training – it was a bit of a struggle to get (WfV employees in agencies) trained. They felt they didn't need training. Maybe there was a disconnect with agencies telling them whether they needed it. Miscommunication there? But when we got people in and we started - we got good feedback about the training. I found them all to be really great. I benefitted from having WfV people.' (CISVic staff)

Overall design and operation of the project

While previous sections focus on issues and outcomes for agencies, communities and WfV personnel, this section refers more to operational aspects of the project at an organisational level. It draws from consultations with CISVic staff and management, branch Managers, and the WfV team appointed to implement the WfV project at CISVic.

What worked well

From an operational viewpoint, the success of the project was largely attributed to trusting relationships, commitment and good will held by all involved – namely participating member agencies, the WfV team, and CISVic Managers and staff. In this vein, a CISVic staff member said: *‘I think it could have kept going with natural progression of the model. The goodwill of our members, their willingness to try something new and trust, that made it work’*. Similarly, a WfV team member said: *‘All the stakeholders were really willing to work in partnership with us; while there was diversity in the Managers, everyone was excited’*.

CISVic’s support, responsiveness, communication and consultation were appreciated by both branch agencies and the WfV team. In turn, the WfV team worked hard to reduce the administrative burden for CISVic, and the Project Manager saw this as a core part of her role. All recognised the magnitude of what was achieved by CISVic and the WfV team with relatively few resources. As well as strong commitment and goodwill, this was enabled by the high skill level of key staff. As already noted, one WfV team member thought the project showcased what mature, experienced and skilled women can achieve, despite some societal views to the contrary. Appreciation for this evaluation was also expressed, with a WfV team member saying: *‘It’s valuable that you want our opinion and there’s a forum to do that’*.

Technology played an important role too, with good systems said to be in place from the beginning of the project, such as Sharepoint for sharing files and information, and Microsoft Teams for remote meetings. While some missed face-to-face meetings, it was also noted that the ability to work remotely from home increased operational capacity, and made carriage of the volume of work possible. (A WfV team member pointed out that if she had to travel to all her meetings, she would not have had time to complete all the tasks required by her role).

Interestingly, a CISVic team member nominated the ‘two-track’ employment arrangements with member agencies as something that ‘worked well’, whereas this was seen as creating an unnecessary and complicated administration burden within the WfV team.

Comments from consultations

'Something that's been really profound for me – when they talk about vulnerable mature-age women and employability, I think our team really exemplifies the positivity of our experience... [NAME REDACTED] said this morning it's just been amazing how we all ran with it... as Social Workers of 20, 30 years experience and [NAME REDACTED] with admin... I think you just do it, and I think it's a bit of a success story, and an achievement for mature-age women. Fly the banner a bit!' (WfV team)

'I think what worked well was CISVic being so quick to respond to my desperate call-out for staff.... That worked really well. Pretty much all of it worked well. It worked fine. There was a lot of communication and consultation about it. I think there was a lot of consultation which I quite liked. A lot of consultation about what we needed. A lot of understanding about what our service was and what the best fit was. [NAME REDACTED] did that recruiting and that was good. I got to pick my three. There was a lot of challenging me on the staff which was actually good. It was a collaborative process that I really enjoyed.'

(CISVic staff-Branch Manager)

'Often I'd work regular extra days. That was my commitment to the project... I did it because it was short term... I think working from home helped me as I could concentrate. In office environment it would be hard with so many distractions. You need time to concentrate. An open plan office wouldn't have worked. I miss seeing people but everything just aligned for this...'

(WfV team)

What didn't work well

When asked what didn't work well from an operational perspective, lack of adequate time to carry out a range of new and complex tasks was highlighted. A huge recruitment was required in a short time frame, and sometimes it felt to staff that they were doing this work by 'the seat of their pants'. On the other hand, if it was not for the crisis of the pandemic and the COVID lockdowns, the project would not have been necessitated in the first place i.e. lack of time is characteristic to necessarily responding quickly in times of unexpected crisis. With this in mind, high demands were placed on CISVic's internal systems, not designed for recruitment for 51 new EFT positions, and the associated HR activities. Also severely stretched for the WfV project was CISVic's administration and coordination capacity. This was mirrored in the WfV team itself, with the Project Manager employed for two days, but in reality working across the week, apparently by necessity and due to her strong personal and professional commitment. (It is likely that other staff employed by CISVic worked beyond their agreed hours as well to meet the demands of the project).

At an administrative level, one felt that HR processes could have been streamlined if there was more delegation of responsibility by the Executive Officer to other staff. Apparently, the absence of such delegation '*slowed things down sometimes*'.

In addition, there was some initial uncertainty around different roles and responsibilities related to the project, and instances of communication breakdown related to the training of new recruits, and a requirement for new staff to take their leave before the end of their contracts. In addition, many bureaucratic demands by the Department were experienced as onerous and repetitive or redundant. When necessarily passed on to participating member agencies, these demands were experienced as onerous and time-consuming by them as well.

Finally, the 'Sidekicker' recruitment platform prescribed by the Department was found to be limiting to reach the most suitable recruits, especially toward the end of the recruitment process when the best candidates had already been employed.

Comments from consultations

Inadequate resourcing and time

'My focus on this is bringing a good outcome for the sector. I think the changing situations – changes with COVID, the government, within the team... was certainly a barrier. Although the department pushed us on the resourcing, we didn't get as much as we wanted – we wanted 10 project coordinators, but we ended up with two. It meant as a tiny organisation we would have had to do so much more than we would have liked to.' (CISVic staff)

'I feel like it was a bit of an unknown – the plane is flying but we are still putting it together. I think even though we coped really well, probably because we had the Coordinator, we were flying by the seat of our pants at some points. (However) the benefits to volunteers in our agencies has been incredible. We want to continue to have quality volunteers delivering quality service.' (CISVic staff)

'... that was the challenge, not having done a major recruitment like this before. It was the intricacies... We did a lot of planning at the start, but it was moving so quickly that that it changed from week to week.' (CISVic staff)

'Initially, it all happened so fast. I wasn't clear what the roles were, who to contact. Some of the documentation... I didn't know the training session was happening. I didn't have to know, but it would have been really nice. I wasn't completely clear on how to use these people, especially in the beginning. I'm not laying the blame on anyone. If we had not got people, it would have been really tough. If we did it again - some more forward planning, some more clarity on what the processes are (would be good). We've done it and done it really well. I know we've all picked up so much more. A little better planning would have been perfect if we had the time and knowledge.' (CISVic staff-Branch Manager)

'Bureaucracy of dealing with the Department - we had four contract Managers in seven or eight months. One after the other. Because it was such a huge project for the government, they were bringing in staff from other depts temporarily. Knowledge or conversations were lost. The system for fortnightly reports seemed to be a waste of administration time - we were sending in good case studies, but they weren't really reading them. It's had a detrimental effect on the organisations because of the bureaucracy. The department rang last week and asked for information they had already got.' (CISVic staff)

Ideas for future projects

All consulted, including agency Managers, WfV recruits, the WfV team and the CISVic team, were asked for suggestions for similar projects in the future, or for responding to pandemics in general. The ideas they offered are outlined below.

For government

- Resource more supervisors/coordinators.
- Resource a Full Time Project Manager.
- Resource dedicated HR admin staff/Full Time HR role.
- Organise longer contracts; allow Part Time WfV employees over a longer period of time, rather than requiring all recruits to be Full Time over a relatively short period of time.
- Allow use of a professional recruitment platform from the start (without restricting all recruitment to a platform such as 'Sidekicker').
- The Department to provide more resourcing to implement the project e.g.
 - convene a forum for coordinators to share information and resources
 - provide a pack of resources to help with speedy set up and roll out of the project (e.g. HR templates).

For CISVic

- Negotiate more time to set up and implement the project
- Provide clearer communication to agencies e.g about the various roles and responsibilities (from CISVic)
- Have one employee arrangement i.e. *direct* employment from CISVic to streamline processes, and reduce the administration load.
- Streamline and minimise bureaucratic demands on agencies e.g. related to invoicing.
- Have uniform HR practices and systems in place.
- Have more face-to-face supervision where possible.

The following points were nominated one or two times by WfV employees through the survey.

- More professional development for working with people with different situations and behaviours.
- More support from agency management.
- Earlier supervision; Better induction, supervision and debriefing.
- Formal shadowing of experienced worker.
- More challenging work beyond distributing ER
- More engagement and validation by CISVic as the peak body

NB: While the last set of points were raised by few, they are worth noting as support that employees value, and notice when felt to be absent.

Suggestions from consultations

'WfV restored lost capacity to many agencies operating in our sector, certainly ours, after funding cuts in recent years from government. It is clear to us that capacity needs to be increased to our sector generally, but in the face (of a) growing body of need it is urgent. We would urge the state government to consider a continuation of the WfV arrangements for 6 - 12 months.' (Manager survey)

'There's a need for paid staff in these member agencies. We've off-loaded all these people and agencies are struggling. It's a wake-up to what resources these agencies should be allocated. Agencies operating at a level of risk that is dangerous.' (WfV team)

'It would have been better for a small agency with limited staff to have this valuable resource for three days per week over a twelve month period to provide longer term change.' (Manager survey)

'Requiring WfV staff to work Full Time meant that many people with appropriate skills did not apply - so options for Part Time WfV staff would have worked better and supported the agency over an extended period... As a result of the requirement by WfV for all staff to work Full Time it disadvantaged a large cohort of potential staff - particularly women caring for children and those unable to work Full Time in demanding community sector roles...' (Manager survey)

Summary and conclusion

The WfV project at CISVic, funded by the Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, was evidently a great success for participating branch and member agencies and, most importantly, the local people and communities they continued to support during the worst of the pandemic. Contract targets were met and even exceeded in many ways. CISVic created and employed 56 staff for 51 full-time positions over a six-month period, enabling it to build a backup workforce to replace a severe loss of volunteers. The new recruits certainly provided a great deal of referral, advocacy and support services to local people in need, particularly those affected by COVID-19. According to agency Managers, the most frequent types of work performed at agencies were (in order):

1. Emergency Relief (including assessment)
2. Community Support Work (including assessment, information, referral, advocacy, and support)
3. Case Work (involving holistic assessment and developing case plans in partnership with clients)
4. Food and grocery parcels (involving the monitoring, sorting, packing, and delivering of perishable and non-perishable stock).

The new recruits enhanced the quality and professionalism of the ongoing support work at agencies, assisting volunteers, providing relief for paid staff and Managers, and no doubt saving some from 'burn out' during the pandemic. (See Borrell & Evans 2021).

In addition, broader aims of the government's WfV project were met i.e. to assist those who had lost jobs due to COVID-19, and to assist employers looking for suitable employees in the context of the pandemic. Many of the 56 people recruited by CISVic were supported into ongoing employment on completion of their contracts, despite two thirds experiencing 'employment disadvantage' prior to recruitment. Impressively, of the 56 staff recruited: 75 per cent found further employment, 68 per cent secured ongoing work in the community services sector, and seven per cent secured new roles outside the community services sector. Nine per cent started or continued with formal studies in the sector.

Certainly participating agency Managers believed the employment prospects of WfV employees improved due to the project. In the *Manager Survey*: 96 per cent agreed that WfV staff have become more employable, and 92 per cent agreed that WfV employees developed new skills. Similarly, in the *WfV Employee Exit Survey*: 88.5 per cent agreed that ongoing training while in the WfV position provided them with opportunities to develop professionally. Their comments add rich detail to this statistic, for example they expressed feeling supported, working as a team, seeing positive outcomes for people assisted, having a good learning experience, and gaining knowledge about local communities and organisations.

Feedback from agencies provided powerful testimony that they could not have continued to support local people and communities with the absence of most volunteers due to the pandemic, and given the considerable operational challenges and changes in community need i.e. the crucial service could not have continued without the personnel recruited through the WfV project (Borrell & Evans 2021; CISVic & VCOSS

2021; Evans & Borrell 2020). According to the consultations for this study, the project was a huge success for people and communities in need, as well as for the employees themselves.

Illustrating this, all Managers surveyed (100%) agreed that *'employing staff through WfV funding enabled our agency to address critical needs in the community during the COVID-19 crisis'*. When asked about the effect of the WfV project on their agency and their agency's work, 24 out of 26 comments described how they were supported to help the community and people seeking assistance. The WfV Employee Exit Survey reflected similar sentiments, with the vast majority (92.3%) agreeing with the statement: *'I believe I added to my agency's capacity to deliver support services to vulnerable clients during the pandemic'*.

This much-needed back up happened while people with more complex, multi-faceted and entrenched problems were presenting to agencies, as well as new service users who had never sought assistance before and needed help navigating the service system. It also happened at a time when many specialist services closed their doors for a while, only exacerbating the ongoing problem that many specialist services are chronically under-resourced. In this context, it is important to note that CISVic's service delivery model goes beyond handing over food or material aid, with all frontline staff and volunteers trained in holistic assessment, information, support and referral (Evans & Borrell 2021). In addition, Case Workers in many agencies give support to volunteers and provide some guidance and debriefing for volunteers when they are helping people with complex problems. This was certainly the case with the WfV Case Workers. Managers commented on how they enhanced the service and assisted volunteers, especially in agencies that are usually run totally by volunteers.

According to those consulted for this study, namely agency Managers, the WfV team, CISVic staff and new recruits, a few factors underpinned the success of the project. Firstly, there was the commitment, trust, good will and collegiality of all involved. With the health and wellbeing of many vulnerable community members at stake, staff just did what was required while constantly adapting to a changing environment and demands. Secondly, recruits were generally of a very high quality – beginning with the WfV Project Manager herself who had been redeployed from another CISVic role. Supported by the Executive Officer and less directly by CISVic staff, she oversaw a competent and skilled team comprised of two Project Coordinators and an Administration Officer. This team was responsible for recruiting more than 50 staff and, from the feedback for this evaluation, placements were very successful in the vast majority of cases. This 'success' not only relates to the people in local communities being supported by participating agencies, it relates to the employees themselves most of whose job and career prospects improved considerably. The WfV team were understandably proud of this achievement, as a great deal of effort was put into nurturing and mentoring them toward this end.

There were, however, some difficulties along the way in implementing this project. They included the very short time frame and low level of resourcing for such a large recruitment. There was also some initial breakdown in communication between CISVic and agencies regarding roles and responsibilities and other administration matters.

With the low level of resourcing to roll out the project, some highlighted the time-consuming level of bureaucracy as a problem – not only from the Department of Jobs,

Precincts and Regions but also that self-imposed by CISVic in its 'two track' employment arrangements.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, some agencies lamented that processes were too bureaucratic and time consuming.

Finally, the WfV project highlighted the vital nature of the support that CISVic member agencies provide in their local area. While COVID showed us how fragile volunteer-reliant services are, the WfV project demonstrated how absolutely valuable and necessary paid support staff are too - not just during a crisis but in general. Resourcing for professional staff would assist agencies to address the increasingly complex issues of people seeking help, and ensure the ongoing sustainability of the agencies themselves. Certainly, CISVic member agencies play a rather unique role in local communities, often as the first (or only) 'port of call' for people needing help, providing support and connection to other services in a context of respect and empathy.

Final endorsements from Managers

'The WfV project is amazing and has ensured our agency can fully facilitate the wide variety of programs and services we offer and ensured we are able to assist our disadvantaged community in the most thorough and comprehensive manner possible.' (Manager survey)

'This has been a great project, recognising that our sector relies so heavily on volunteers. We are very grateful for this assistance.' (Manager survey)

'Having a support worker has given other staff the opportunity to recover from the extra hours they did during that time (of the pandemic).' (Manager survey)

'It is envisaged that we may be required to reduce our opening hours once the program ceases as the sustainability of our current workforce remains challenging. I cannot express enough how much having these members of staff have meant to our organisation during this time! It has been truly awesome!' (Manager survey)

Thank you comments from WfV employees

'Thank you CISVic, because without your grant I may not have ever found my happy place to grow, learn and to be given such latitude to implement new processes to create a great product 'Community Pantry' Hampers without judgement.'

'Thank you for the opportunity to have been given paid work in the sector I want to build my career in.'

'I would like to thank the WfV team for the opportunity to work within such a great and positive environment.'

'I really appreciated the opportunity to work with CISVic and their amazing team of dedicated workers. I also appreciate the support and encouragement I received and thank the team I worked closely with.'

¹⁰ whereby some agencies directly employed recruits and invoiced CISVic to cover wages, while CISVic directly employed others who were placed at agencies.

Recommendations

General (for government):

1. State government provide resourcing for the community information and support sector so that all agencies can have paid, professional support staff and the necessary infrastructure on an ongoing basis.
2. Focus on streamlining bureaucratic processes and minimising 'paper work' for organisations receiving funding, especially in times of crisis when resources are even thinly stretched.

General (for CISVic)

3. Explore ways to make the work of CISVic agencies and the 'CISVic model' better known, especially the crucial role it plays in supporting local people and communities. Raise the profile of the sector's work with government and funding bodies, to attract more resourcing in the future, particularly to employ paid staff who can support the public directly but also act as a resource for volunteer Community Support Workers.
4. Explore optimal ways to publicise this report, and other reports profiling CISVic's holistic service model and the work that branches and member agencies do in communities.

WfV or similar projects in the future (for government):

5. Enable flexibility in employment arrangements to meet the requirements of local agencies and the communities they serve.¹¹
6. Provide adequate resourcing for the true cost of administration, and Human Resource provision and management in future funding arrangements.

WfV or similar projects in the future (for CISVic):

7. Offer one employment arrangement only to participating member agencies i.e. direct employment by CISVic., in order to streamline administration processes.
8. Provide agencies with uniform paperwork and templates, to streamline administration processes related to new employment arrangements.
9. Ensure new project management requirements are adequately resourced, including staffing.

¹¹ This may translate to part time staff for a longer period, rather than full time staff for a shorter period. It may also enable choosing appropriate platforms for certain types of recruitment.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Survey questions and focus group schedules

Manager survey

Welcome to the survey

Thank you for participating in our survey. Your feedback is very important. This survey will form part of the Working for Victoria (WFV) Project Evaluation, which aims to assess the value of the project and make recommendations for future project design and implementation. The project evaluation will include information gathered from a range of sources including employment and service data, focus groups, interviews, stories and reports. The name of your agency will not appear in any reporting, except in the initial acknowledgements.

1. What is your agency name?
2. What is your position title?

Effects of COVID-19 on staffing

3. What was the reduction in volunteers at your agency due to COVID-19 during the first lockdown up to May 2020, if any? (Please give approximate percentage if you don't have an exact figure).
4. What was the reduction in paid staff at your agency due to COVID-19 during the first lockdown up to May 2020, if any? (Please give approximate percentage if you don't have an exact figure).
5. How many new staff members were employed at your agency through the WFV project (either part time or full time)?

WFV job roles

6. What type of work did the staff you employed through WFV perform? (Rank in order of frequency of this work, with 1 being most frequent).
 - Community support work - assessment, information, referral, advocacy and support.
 - Emergency Relief - assess for and provide ER.
 - Food and grocery parcels - monitor/sort/pack/deliver perishable and non-perishable stock e.g. toiletries, pet food, bread, nappies.
 - Case work - provide holistic assessments and develop case plans in partnership with clients.
 - Data management - maintain accurate records in various platforms including the client management system, portal, Excel spreadsheets etc
 - Networking - develop collaborative networks and partnerships with external services.
 - Administration and office support
 - Other (please explain below)
7. If you used 'Other' please explain.

Possible impacts of WFV project

12. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the WFV project? (NB: options for each statement were: Strongly agree/ Agree/ Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree)

- Employing staff through WFV funding enabled our agency to address critical needs in the community during the COVID-19 crisis.
- The WFV project will have long term benefits for the community.
- Formal induction and health & safety processes were provided for new WFV employees at our agency.
- Staff employed through WFV funding developed new skills.
- Staff employed through WFV funding have become more employable.

Comments

General feedback and suggestions

9. Overall, what was the effect of the WFV project on your agency and your agency's work in the community, if any?

10. Are there any additional comments or suggestions you would like to make? (Please elaborate).

Thank-you!

Employee exit survey

Welcome to the survey

Thank you for participating in our survey. Your feedback is very important. This survey will form part of the Working for Victoria Project Evaluation, which aims to assess the value of the project and make recommendations for future project design and implementation. The project evaluation will include information gathered from a range of sources including employment and service data, focus groups, interviews, stories and reports. Responses to this survey will be received by the researcher engaged to do the evaluation. We do not require your name for this survey and every effort will be made to remove any identifying information from reporting. Confidentiality will be maintained and most information will be reported as generic or aggregate data by the researcher.

Initial support

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the initial support you received. (NB: options for each statement were: Strongly agree/ Agree/ Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree)
- The initial training I received from CISVic assisted me in gaining necessary skills and knowledge to better understand and perform the duties of my role.
 - The recruitment process was easy to navigate and was conducted in a timely and professional manner.
 - The induction process was clear and comprehensive, helping me to transition into my role with the organisation.

Comments

Ongoing support

2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the level of ongoing support you received. (NB: options for each statement were: Strongly agree/ Agree/ Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree)

- The ongoing training I received throughout my employment provided me with opportunities to develop professionally.
- The *timing* of individual supervision sessions met my support needs.
- The *content and format* of individual supervision sessions met my support needs.
- The *timing* of group supervision sessions met my support needs.
- The *content and format* of group supervision sessions met my support needs.
- I felt well supported in the workplace during my period of employment.
- My work placement met my expectations, and my responsibilities were a true representation of my formal Position Description.
- I believe I added to my agency's capacity to deliver support services to vulnerable clients during the pandemic.

Comments

General feedback

3. What were the positive aspects of your work with the agency, if any?
4. What were the negative aspects of your work with the agency, if any?

Suggestions

5. Is there any way your work with the agency could have been improved? (Please elaborate)
6. Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank-you!

CISVic staff and management focus group schedule

Welcome. Introduction including purpose of research, timeline of report, parameters of confidentiality, and statement that all views are welcomed and there is no obligation to agree on everything.

1. Can each of you briefly tell me about your role and the main things you did in relation to the WFV project?
2. Did the shape of your work change in different phases of the project? (please elaborate)
3. What worked well in the roll out and implementation of the project from your point of view, if anything?
4. What are you most proud of in your work with the WFV program?
5. What didn't work so well in the rollout and implementation of the WFV program, if anything?
6. What were the barriers or impediments, if any?
7. Can you suggest any ways the WFV project could be improved if it was implemented again?
8. Do you have any other comments or recommendations?

Thank-you!

WfV team focus group schedule

Welcome. Introduction including purpose of research, timeline of report, parameters of confidentiality, and statement that all views are welcomed and there is no obligation to agree on everything.

1. Can each of you briefly introduce yourself and tell me about your role and the main things you did with the WFV project?
2. Did the shape of your work change in different phases of the project? (please elaborate)
3. What worked well in the roll out and implementation of the project from your point of view, if anything?
4. What are you most proud of in your work with the WFV program?
5. What didn't work so well in the rollout and implementation of the WFV program, if anything?
6. What were the barriers or impediments, if any?
7. Can you suggest any ways the WFV project could be improved if it was implemented again?
8. Do you have any other comments or recommendations?

Thank-you!

Attachment B: Full survey responses

Manager survey – quantitative data

Figure 1: Reduction in volunteers due to COVID-19 by number of agencies (N=26)

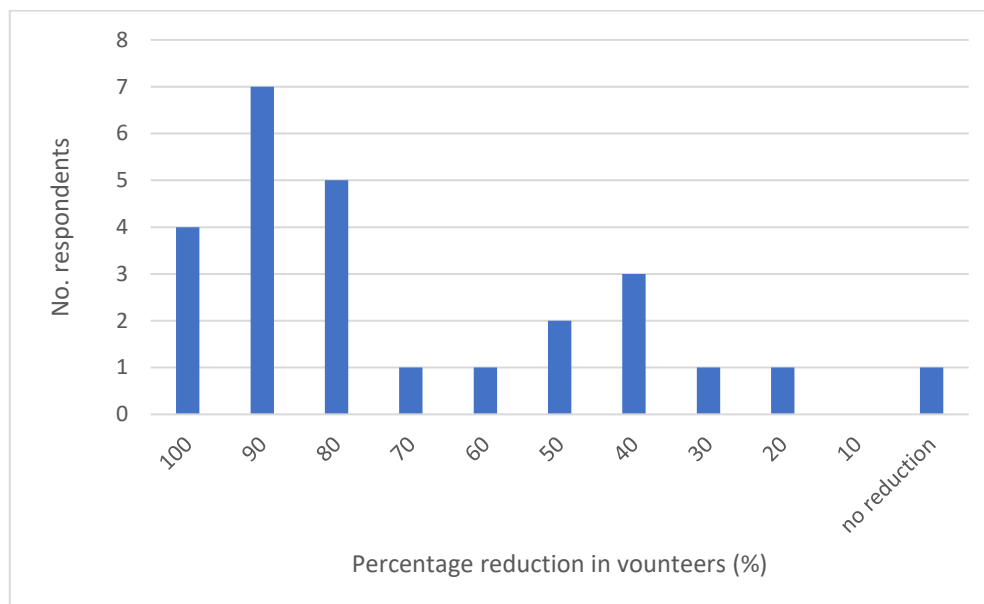


Table 3: Reduction in volunteers due to COVID-19 by number of agencies (N=26)

Percentage reduction in volunteers	No. respondents	Proportion of respondents
100%	4	15.4%
90%	7	26.9%
80%	5	19.2%
70%	1	3.8%
60%	1	3.8%
50%	2	7.7%
40%	3	11.5%
30%	1	3.8%
20%	1	3.8%
10%	0	0.0%
no reduction	1	3.8%

Reduction in paid staff (N=26)

There was no reduction in paid staff due to COVID-19, in the agencies of 23 respondents. For the remaining three respondents who answered this question, there was a 10 per cent, 20 per cent, and 40 per cent reduction in staff.

Figure 2: Number of new WFV staff employed at agencies (N=26)



Table 4: Number of new WFV staff employed at agencies (N=26)

No. WFV staff	No. respondents	Proportion of respondents
1	10	38.5%
2	11	42.3%
3	0	0.0%
4	3	11.5%
5	2	7.7%

Figure 3: Weighted score of type of work performed by WFV staff (N=26)

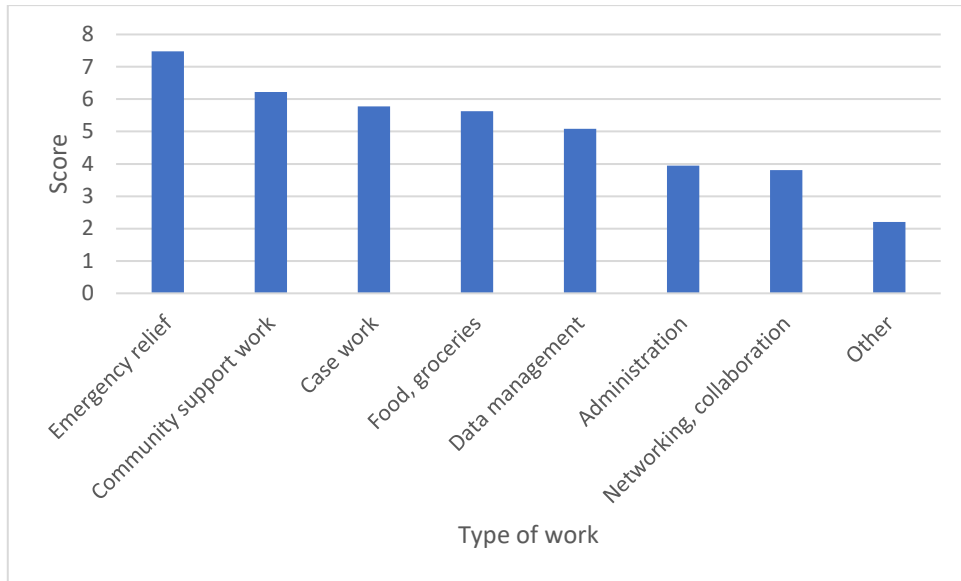


Table 5: Weighted score of type of work performed by WFV staff (N=26)

	Type of work	Weighted score
1	Emergency Relief - assess for and provide ER.	7.48
2	Community support work - assessment, information, referral, advocacy and support	6.22
3	Case work – provide holistic assessments and develop case plans in partnership with clients	5.78
4	Food and grocery parcels - monitor/sort/pack/deliver perishable and non-perishable stock e.g. toiletries, pet food, bread, nappies.	5.63
5	Data management - maintain accurate records in various platforms including the client management system, portal, Excel spreadsheets etc	5.08
6	Administration and office support	3.95
7	Networking – develop collaborative networks and partnerships with external services	3.81
8	Other ¹²	2.2

¹² 'Other' included: 'supporting/training/inducting/debriefing volunteers, 'Back to School' program, support for new integrated intake system and information for enquiries, aspects of Branch Coordination, research for website, marketing/social media/publicity, and project work/community development.

Table 6: Most frequent type of work performed by WFV staff (N=26)

Type of work	Ranked most frequent	Ranked 2 nd most frequent	Ranked 3 rd most frequent
Emergency Relief - assess for and provide ER.	13	8	2
Community support work - assessment, information, referral, advocacy and support	7	6	4
Case work – provide holistic assessments and develop case plans in partnership with clients	3	6	1
Food and grocery parcels - monitor/sort/pack/deliver perishable and non-perishable stock e.g. toiletries, pet food, bread, nappies.	1	5	5
Data management - maintain accurate records in various platforms including the client management system, portal, Excel spreadsheets etc	0	1	11
Administration and office support	1	0	1
Networking – develop collaborative networks and partnerships with external services	1	0	1
Other	0	0	1

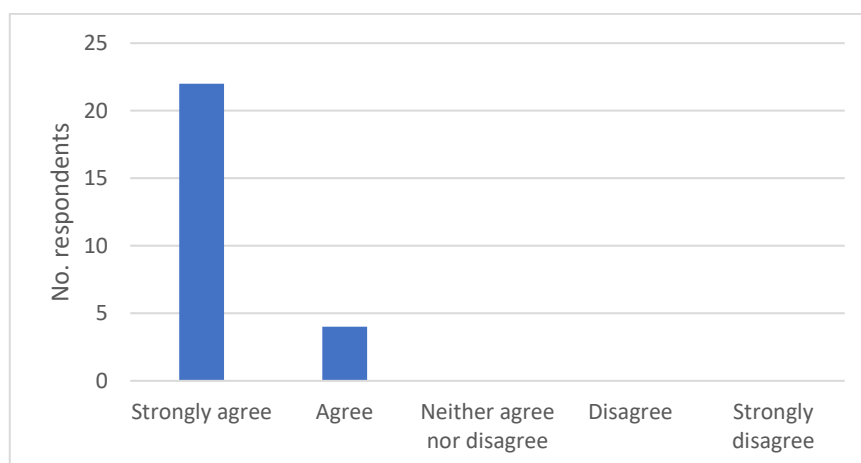
According to half of the Managers (13), the type of work that WFV staff were engaged in most often was Emergency Relief.

Overall, the most common type of work that WFV staff were engaged in, beside Emergency Relief, was Community Support Work, Case work, and the provision of food and groceries.

Impacts of the WFV program on agencies, communities and new employees

Survey respondents were asked about the impacts of the WFV program on agencies, communities and the people employed through the program. All respondents except one answered these questions (26 out of 27 total survey respondents).

Figure 4: Level of agreement that employing staff through WFV funding enabled the agency to address critical community needs (N=26)



All Managers agreed or strongly agreed that: *'employing staff through WFV funding enabled our agency to address critical needs in the community during the COVID-19 crisis'*, with 22 (84.6%) strongly agreeing. Comments included the following.

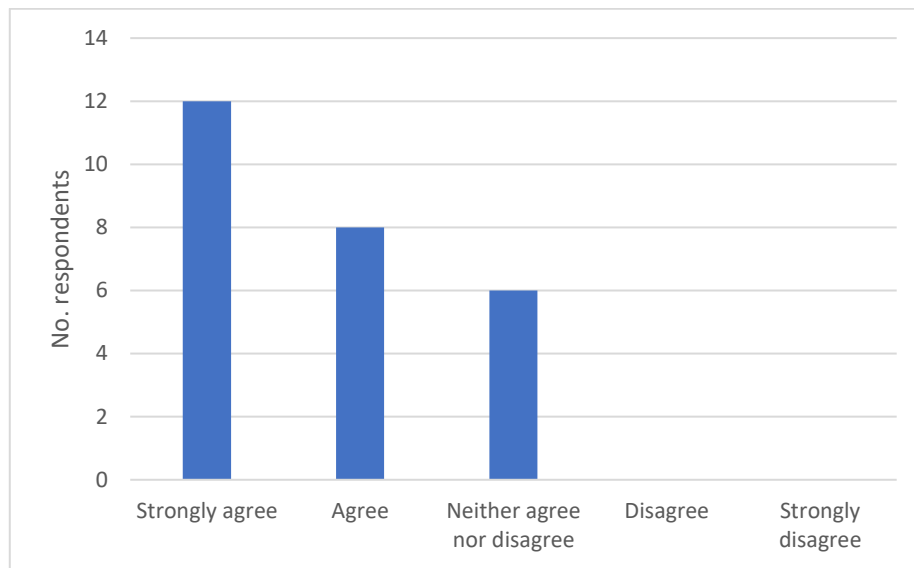
'(It) has been one of the most valuable initiatives (to) come from COVID recovery and the huge contribution provided to small organisations to respond to the huge increase of demand/need.'

'The staff we employed through this program were fantastic and certainly contributed significantly to our program - not sure how we will fill the gap when they go!!'

'This six month tenure allowed our agency to re-open to normal hours. The capability of the employee gave much needed assistance to the management of the agency.'

'We found our WFV employee very valuable. At a time when quite a few of our volunteers stopped coming in, he was very useful to us. We are an entirely volunteer organisation and our volunteers are all people of retiring age. Since we don't pay anyone, we don't get volunteers aged in their 40s or 50s such as our WFV person. Our WFV person was much younger with a different skill set, especially in regard to the use of computers and online applications such as social media. He contributed a whole new focus onto our operations...'

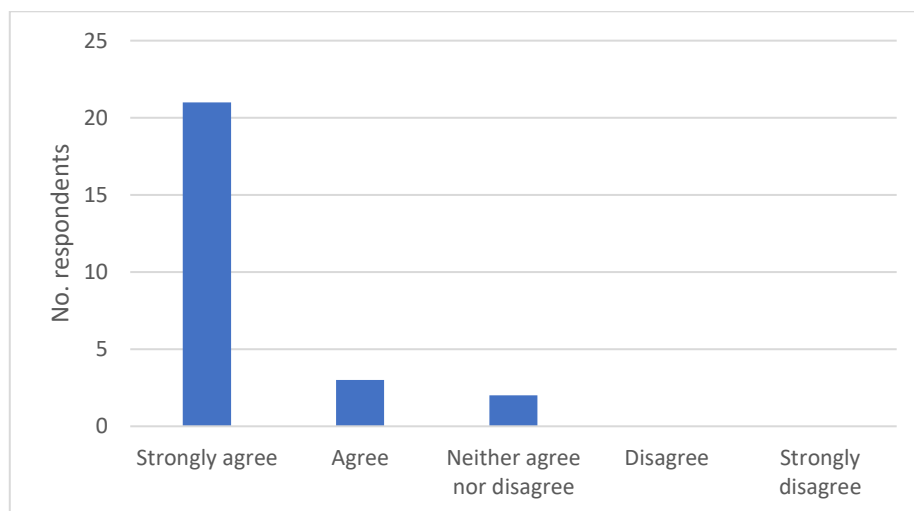
Figure 5: Level of agreement that the WFV project will have long term benefits for the community (N=26)



Twenty of the 26 respondents (77%) agreed or strongly agreed that: *'the WFV project will have long term benefits for the community'*. Six respondents (23%) neither agreed nor disagreed, which is probably not surprising given the relatively short term nature of WFV employment arrangements. One commented:

'We have answered neither agree or disagree in relation to long term benefits because from an agency perspective we cannot afford to continue the casework role without adequate funding - so the community only benefited from this role for six months. From an individual perspective, those supported by the casework certainly have long term benefits and have been able to move out of crisis...'

Figure 6: Level of agreement that staff employed through WFV funding developed new skills (N=26)

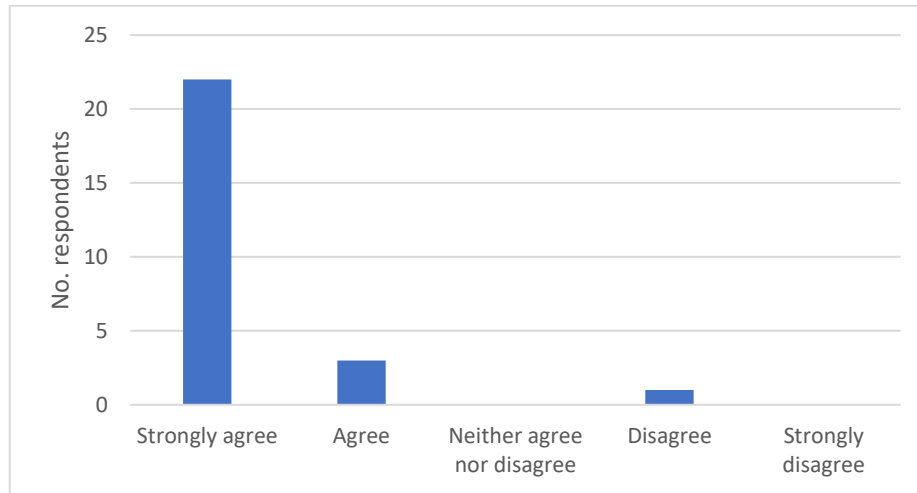


Twenty-four respondents (92%) agreed or strongly agreed that *'Staff employed through WFV funding developed new skills'*. Twenty-one (81%) *strongly* agreed. Three respondents (8%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Relevant comments included the following:

'Both WFV staff members have been able to expand and diversify their existing skills and have opportunity to assist a wide variety of clients. Our CSW staff member in particular has been able to consolidate through frontline experience the knowledge he has learnt through his formal education.'

'... The caseworker that we employed already had well developed casework skills and really did not learn anything new from us except to gain experience in the welfare sector and learn our processes...'

Figure 7: Level of agreement that staff employed through WFV funding have become more employable (N=26)



Twenty-five Managers who answered this question (96%) agreed or strongly agreed that *'Staff employed through WFV funding have become more employable'*. Twenty-two (85%) *strongly* agreed. One respondent disagreed with the statement. Relevant comments were:

'... It was great that our WFV person who was very conscientious and quick to learn was able to diversify his skill set, he has since gone onto more permanent employment in a related field elsewhere.'

'... The caseworker will certainly be more employable within the welfare sector because of the experience gained, but she came to us with well developed casework skills that we benefited from - not sure we were able to reciprocate.'

Manager survey – qualitative data (comments)

Responses to Q9: ‘Overall, what was the effect of the WfV project on your agency and your agency’s work in the community, if any?’ (N=26)

It helped us continue our work in a season when skilled volunteers have been hard to find.
Additional staff capacity at a time when clients' needs were more complex and many services (such as housing services) were not available to individuals who added their support due to COVID workloads, but could be assessed by support workers. This staff was essential and highly beneficial.
Allowed us to focus on service delivery as we knew that we could resource the programs necessary.
As a volunteer-only agency, we were able to remain open to clients on a telephone only basis with the assistance of the CSW.
Assisted the agency to review programs and activities and to develop a better overall service for our clients.
Community members able to access emergency relief five days per week (increased days of assistance). Community able to receive instant advice, information and referral on initial contact with agency.
Due to Covid, there were many new clients who needs support and help. We were fortunate to have extra staff from WfV project to enable us to meet community needs.
Having the WfV team onboard enabled the service to continue operating through 2020 and early 2021.
Having the Working for Vic staff meant we were well-resourced staffing-wise. They brought commitment and valuable skills that increased our ability to reach more members of the community, to engage in more in-depth assessment, and improved the quality of support provided.
Helped cover our loss of volunteer support workers providing emergency relief and boosted our ability to deal with increasingly complex clients.
Humungous! These members of staff filled a gaping hole in our ability to provide basic services to our community members and were able to contribute to the rebuilding and transitioning stages of COVID. The support that the organisation and the community received through this program was crucial to enable us to continue our work, build on our work, be flexible through our work and support our work. With the project now preparing to wind up, it is still a great loss as many volunteers have not been able to return, new volunteer recruited are missing the consistency of support structures due to the ever changing environment of the staffing structures, staff are still working remotely meaning that 'on the ground' personnel remain crucial to service delivery.
It provided a capacity to continue to meet increasing client need; and it provided a 'safety net' ensuring that we continued to be able to remain open throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic period. It also supported this organisation's capacity to expand the number and type of services offered to the community given that some other providers closed or reduced services during 2020.
It was a fantastic addition to our service delivery and we sincerely hoped that the funding would continue. We have now made some great contacts with other agencies who have referred clients for casework support and raised expectations that this will be an ongoing service. After May we will then have to absorb the casework into our existing overstretched team and pull back with our availability to provide this more intensive support unless we can secure funding to re-establish this program. The caseworker achieved some outstanding outcomes.

Overall, this WfV has allowed [AGENCY REDACTED] to re-establish the much depleted Emergency Relief Program, restore guidelines and procedures that had eroded with the loss of the trained and skilled over 70 years old volunteers who had to leave during the Covid -19 Lockdowns. It has allowed us to restore a regularity of service to our clients due to the full time Community Support Worker. One direct result was over the busy Christmas period, when other community agencies such as the Salvation Army take a break - the full time presence of the WfV staff member allowed us to continue opening our door to the community in spite of the lack of volunteers. This continuity has created a sense of trust in the community. Internally, the WfV Community Support Worker has been a huge asset - agile and skilled in assisting to update procedures and manuals for service delivery in the new Covid Normal environment with flow-on impact into the community and clients.

Provided much needed person power to assist with the packing and distribution of food and other essential items to the most vulnerable members of our community including new and emerging cohorts via job keeper and to those who in lock down without the means and supports to access these as well as for newly emerging cohorts in need and for those who were falling between the cracks for e.g. international students.

WfV staff were largely unskilled/lacked work experience and in some instances initiative. (AGENCY REDACTED) had pivoted its services and available (AGENCY) staff and between April - December 2020 (1st & 2nd) lock downs provided over \$1 million worth of food and other essential items to its current clients, new and emerging cohorts as a direct result of COVID-19 and also supported up to 45 agencies across the City of Port Phillip LGA and neighboring LGAs based on a safe and secure model of distribution using (AGENCY) staff, volunteers and agencies (to address related agency direct clients).

WfV staff provided some relief to already over stretched staff and volunteers - noting that the majority of WfV staff required significant support and direction - due largely to the salary levels at which the roles were pitched and the type of applicants attracted.

WfV processes and requirements added another layer of bureaucracy and reporting (could have been much more streamlined and responsive during the unprecedented pandemic).

The program was a very worthwhile initiative for us. It brought in a valuable new worker who had much to contribute when we were otherwise a bit short staffed. There is no doubt that we were able to help more people than would have been the case without him.

The WfV project allowed our agency to continue to operate, and not only that, to grow and develop its services to meet the need of the community that was in desperate need of an agency like ours.

The WfV project has enabled our agency to provide comprehensive and thorough support at a time when the majority of experienced volunteers had retreated. The WfV project has ensured existing staff are able to continue their roles without having to fill the gaps traditionally covered by volunteers. Our case worker has been instrumental in assisting the complex clients who have increased in number over the past six months.

The WfV project meant we could continue to provide our services during COVID which we otherwise couldn't have done.

The WfV project was an outstanding success in our view because:

1. by providing a skilled resource to replace very skilled volunteers;
2. guaranteeing a continuity of support for some of the most disadvantaged people in our community;
3. released staff to work on new service models - we created a home delivery service for our clients that required relocating staff offsite to a specialist facility;
4. it allowed more staff time to be allocated to our rough sleeper program allowing to expand which it needed to do as it was the only outreach program operating in our area for a lot of the COVID lockdowns.

<p>We ended up employing two people for the same support worker position because our first worker left the area to live elsewhere. Both workers were fantastic and provided us with much needed stability and continuity throughout a very difficult period as volunteers very slowly returned to the Centre. It would have been difficult for us to operate during this time without them.</p>
<p>We were able to establish a new service because of the WFV staff member. Because [NAME REDACTED] was full time she was able to develop out new Community Hamper service, which during and after the Coved -19 lockdowns has enabled us to provide critical support to highly vulnerable members of our community. It's been a very effective program, brilliant!</p>
<p>WfV project allowed greater access to the vulnerable clients within our community. We would have liked to see the project continue for another three months at least.</p>
<p>WfV project gave our agency the opportunity to provide ongoing therapeutic interventions to the clients accessing our service at an incredibly difficult point in time; it also allowed us to keep the agency running after losing most of our volunteer team.</p>
<p>Without the new staff member our service would have stopped, this included additional funding we were given and the outcomes needing to be achieved. The staff member (was) able to form new relationships with stakeholders to support the outcome, while providing an ongoing service to potential volunteers and Volunteer-Involving Organisations across Banyule</p>
<p>Without the WfV project employee,[AGENCY REDACTED] would have struggled to continue to support the community throughout the COVID lockdown period. No volunteers were available to provide onsite service delivery, therefore without the addition of paid staff, service delivery would have been significantly reduced, thereby impacting those requiring ongoing support throughout the COVID lockdown period. Following the lifting of restrictions, and the slow return of volunteers, the WfV worker was able to provide ongoing guidance and support to those returning volunteers. The assistance from the WfV staff member has been invaluable.</p>

Responses to Q10: ‘Are there any additional comments or suggestions you would like to make?’ (N=20)

<p>Amazing worker with the right skills for the role. Hit the ground running.</p>
<p>Having a support worker has given other staff the opportunity to recover from the extra hours they did during that time.</p>
<p>How are we going to manage without this additional full time role??!</p>
<p>In general we found the program very worthwhile. We could have done more with it if we had greater flexibility. We were initially approved to have a Case Worker as well as a Community Support Worker. The Case worker would have been very useful to us but we don't have enough work for a full time position, we are only open three days a week. We had to let the Case Worker go because we were not allowed to have someone part time or to share them with another agency.</p>
<p>It has been a very valuable program and we would love it to continue. We are having trouble re-engaging volunteers and the program is still very much needed</p>
<p>It is envisaged that we may be required to reduce our opening hours once the program ceases as the sustainability of our current workforce remains challenging. I cannot express enough how much having these members of staff have meant to our organisation during this time! It has been truly awesome!</p>
<p>It was challenging having a full time worker in an agency that is only open four days a week and all the other staff are part-time between 12 - 30 hrs p.w. We would have much preferred a part time role over a 12 month period as we originally requested. The setting of work to be done when the centre was closed required a certain type of person to carry it out fully.</p>

<p>It would have been beneficial that roles could have been part-time allowing more choice of participants and potentially employing more people.</p>
<p>It would have been better for a small agency with limited staff to have this valuable resource for three days per week over a twelve month period to provide longer term change.</p>
<p>Our volunteers have not fully returned and so an extension of WfV contracts would have been helpful especially given the removal of JobKeeper and the Covid supplements just as these contracts are finishing. We are expecting a significant increase in demand after the end of March.</p>
<p>Prefer a simpler reporting process. For example: provide Payroll Summary and one invoice for each pay period for all employees rather than one invoice per employee per pay; listing leave taken, leave loading pay etc.. (very time consuming).</p>
<p>Reflecting on the recruitment process: This worked well for the graduate entry position (Community Support Worker). There quality applicants through Sidekicker. However, for the higher level professional position of Caseworker, there was a paucity of applicants suitably qualified for the role - we received only one applicant. Suggestion : to expand advertising for roles requiring professional qualifications to other platforms such as Ethical Jobs etc to ensure that applicants with suitable qualifications apply. It appears that professionals do not register much on Sidekicker. Due to the fact that only one applicant was available for interview without the required qualification, we selected the applicant in the hope that there were transferable skills which could have been developed through on the job supervision and training. The learning for us has been that this was not a good fit.</p>
<p>Requiring WfV staff to work full time meant that many people with appropriate skills did not apply - so options for part time WfV staff would have worked better and supported the agency over an extended period. As a suggestion the contracts for WfV could have been provided on pro rata basis between 0.6 - 1.0 FTE (EFT) and hence this would have provided the host agency with a more even and additional workforce with extended coverage during this time of high need and resource intensive requirements (and as we know 2021 continues to bring COVID challenges).</p> <p>As a result of the requirement by WfV for all staff to work full time it disadvantaged a large cohort of potential staff - particularly women caring for children and those unable to work full time in demanding community sector roles; those that did apply and work full time took significant unplanned (paid sick leave) during this period and paid training leave to attend to WfV training requirements - hence while funded for 1.0 FTE most WfV staff in reality worked 0.7 - 0.8 FTE and were paid at 1.0 FTE role.</p> <p>The considerable amount of training required for staff employed under WfV to engage in with WfV fund holders was not linked back to the host organisation (or shared); and saw staff spend a considerable amount of paid work time in external training plus internal induction, orientation and training - all impacted heavily (and negatively) on short term contracted work requirements. WfV staff were also looking for their next paid role as soon as they commenced in their role which in some instances impacted their commitment, performance, focus and interest in their role.</p> <p>Two out of our four allocated staff (50%) left before the end of their WfV contract - with one leaving two months prior to the end of the contract and neither WfV vacancy was able to be back filled - even though as an agency that employs predominantly part time staff (due to budget constraints) there was the opportunity to back fill some agency substantive part time positions to enable the important and pivoted support work required by agencies such as [AGENCY REDACTED] during this time; this was a rigid and unnecessary withholding of government funds for the community sectors doing it tough during COVID-19 to respond to the needs of its most vulnerable clients as well as to address the myriad of new and emerging needs of the broader community.</p>
<p>Thank you!</p>
<p>The WfV project is amazing and has ensured our agency can fully facilitate the wide variety of programs and services we offer and ensured we are able to assist our disadvantaged community in the most thorough and comprehensive manner possible.</p>

The WfV team (two people) were busy throughout their employment and made a positive difference to the lives of those people that they supported. However upon reflection this team, at this site, needed more guidance, direction and a hands-on approach from management. This was not something that management had capacity to do however, which resulted in perhaps a less effective use of the resource than could have been achieved. That said, the team were wonderful and the support they offered volunteers and clients tremendous.

This has been a great project, recognising that our sector relies so heavily on volunteers. We are very grateful for this assistance.

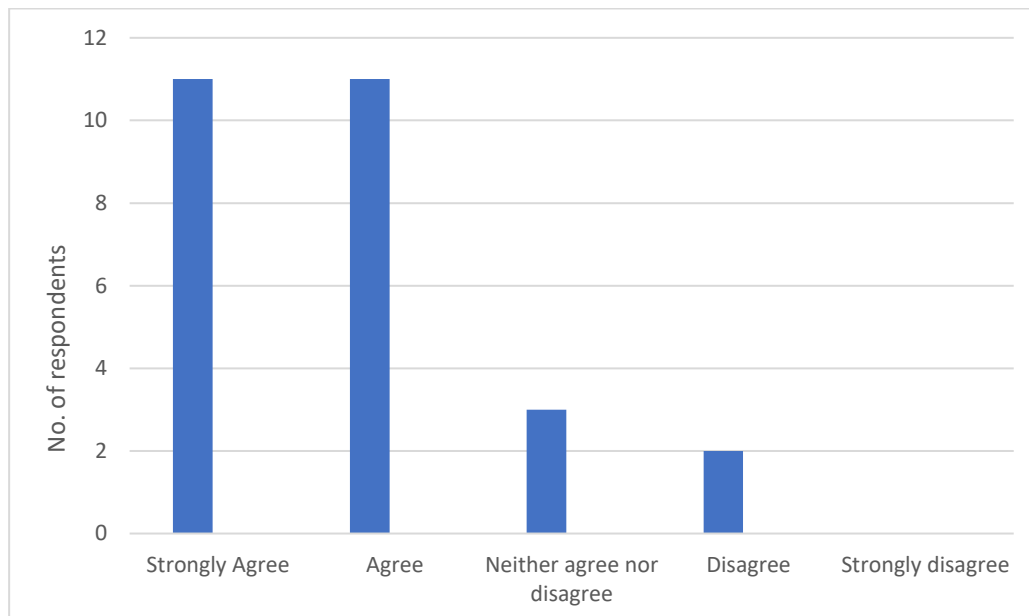
We would like a similar program to be running all the time. It has enabled (our WFV participant) to gain new skills and develop her capacity to work in this sector. In fact she has done such a great job, we have agreed to offer her full time ongoing work.

We would love it if the program was extended.

'WfV restored lost capacity to many agencies operating in our sector, certainly ours, after funding cuts in recent years from government. It is clear to us that capacity needs to be increased to our sector generally, but in the face (of a) growing body of need it is urgent. We would urge the state government to consider a continuation of the WfV arrangements for 6 - 12 months.'

WfV employee exit survey – quantitative data

Figure 8: Level of agreement that initial training assisted in gaining necessary skills and knowledge for the role (N= 27)



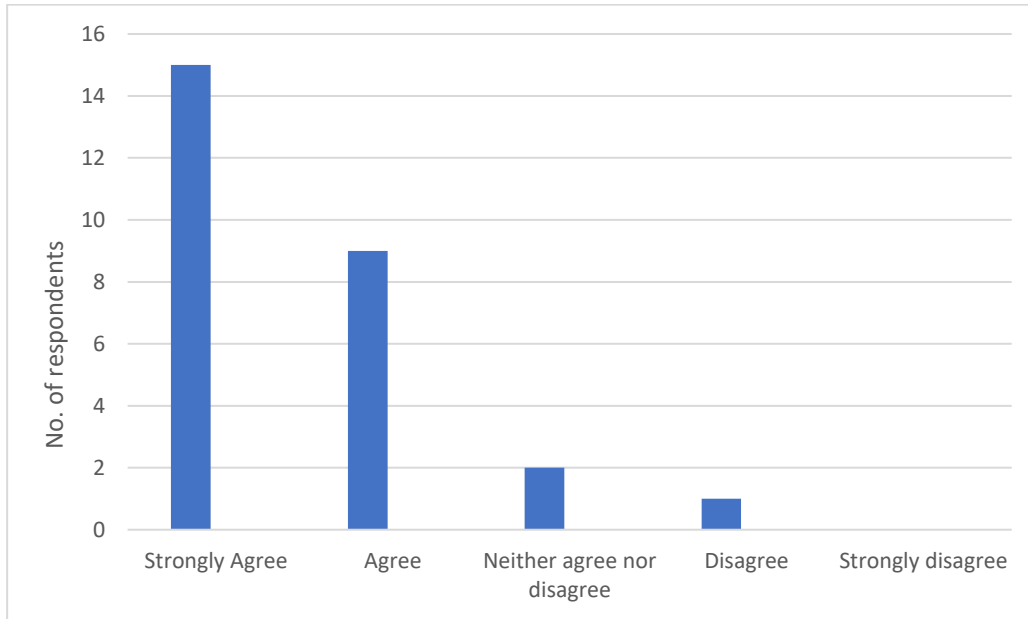
Twenty-two employees (81.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that: *'the initial training I received from CISVic assisted me in gaining necessary skills and knowledge to better understand and perform the duties of my role,'* with 11 (40.7%) *strongly* agreeing and an equal amount selecting *agree*. A further three respondents (11.1%) neither agreed nor disagreed and two respondents (7.4%) disagreed with the statement. Comments included the following:

'I cannot comment on the initial training nor induction process given that I had already been part of the organisation prior to my WfV role.'

'The initial training was a repeat of training that I had just completed. I felt that it was a good idea to revisit the ideas but get that for people who weren't just out of a course it's probably really good.'

'The material supplied was clear and concise. The information on CISVic gave me a good understanding of the roles and responsibility of the team.'

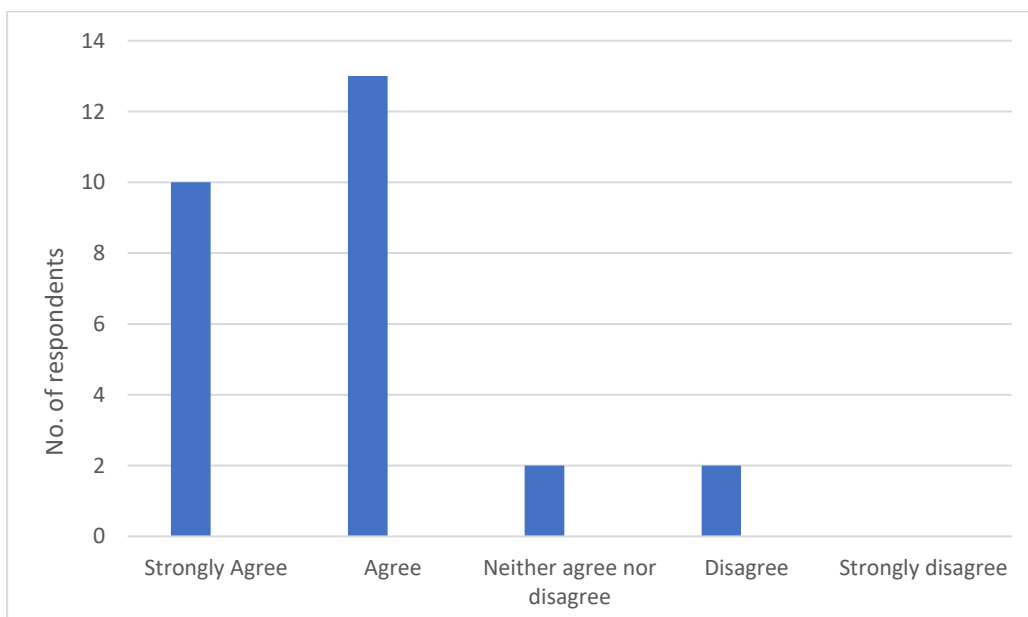
Figure 9: Level of agreement that the recruitment process was easy to navigate, timely and professional (N=27)



Twenty-four employees (88.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that: *'the recruitment process was easy to navigate and was conducted in a timely and professional manner,'* with 15 (55.6%) respondents *strongly* agreeing. Only one person (3.7%) disagreed with the statement. Comments included the following:

'The recruitment process was thorough and quick - I appreciated this response as a candidate applying for the role.'

Figure 10: Level of agreement that the induction process was clear, comprehensive, and helpful for the role (N=27)



Twenty-three respondents (85.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that: *'the induction process was clear and comprehensive, helping to transition into the role with the organisation.'* Notably, 13 respondents (48.2%) agreed while 10 respondents (37.0%) strongly agreed. Comments included the following:

'The induction process could have been more detailed.'

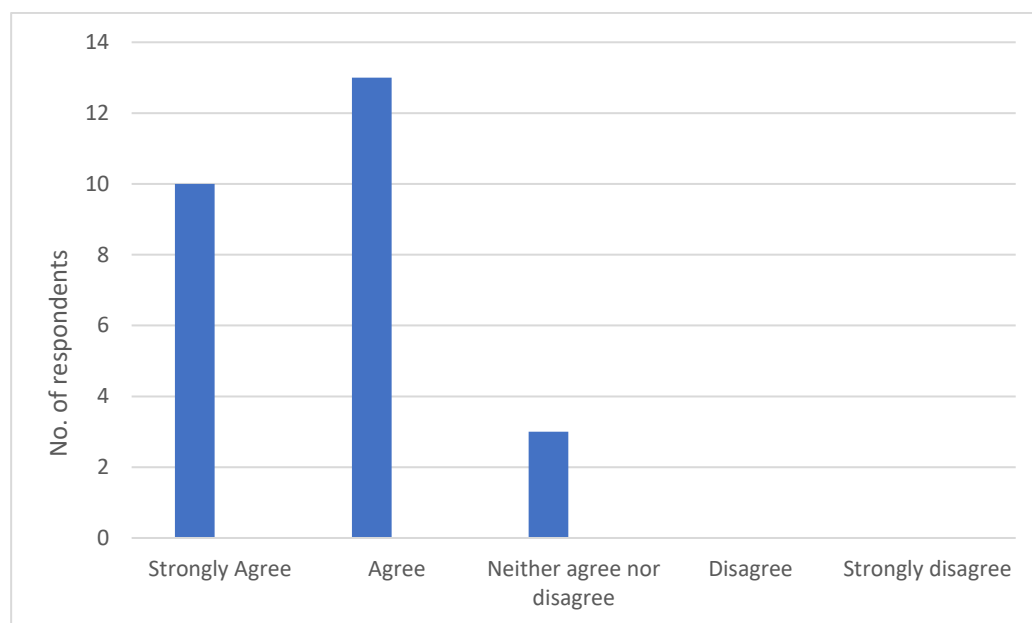
Other comments associated with the above three questions are presented below:

'The Project Manager and Colleagues were incredibly welcoming and conveyed as much information as they could. They also made themselves available for any future queries during the entire duration of the project.'

'Thorough and welcoming.'

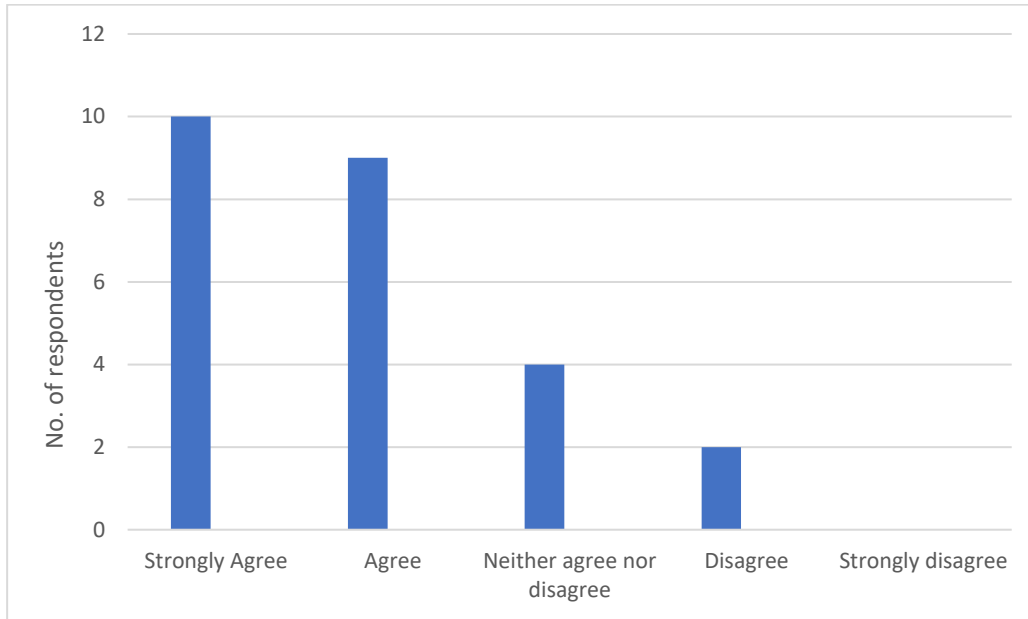
'Love the whole process, so sad it is ending.'

Figure 11: Level of agreement that the ongoing training provided opportunities for professional development (N=26)



Twenty-three employees (88.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that: *'the ongoing training I received throughout my employment provided me with opportunities to develop professionally.'* Thirteen agreed (50.0%) and 10 strongly agreed (38.5%) to the statement. No one disagreed or strongly disagreed.

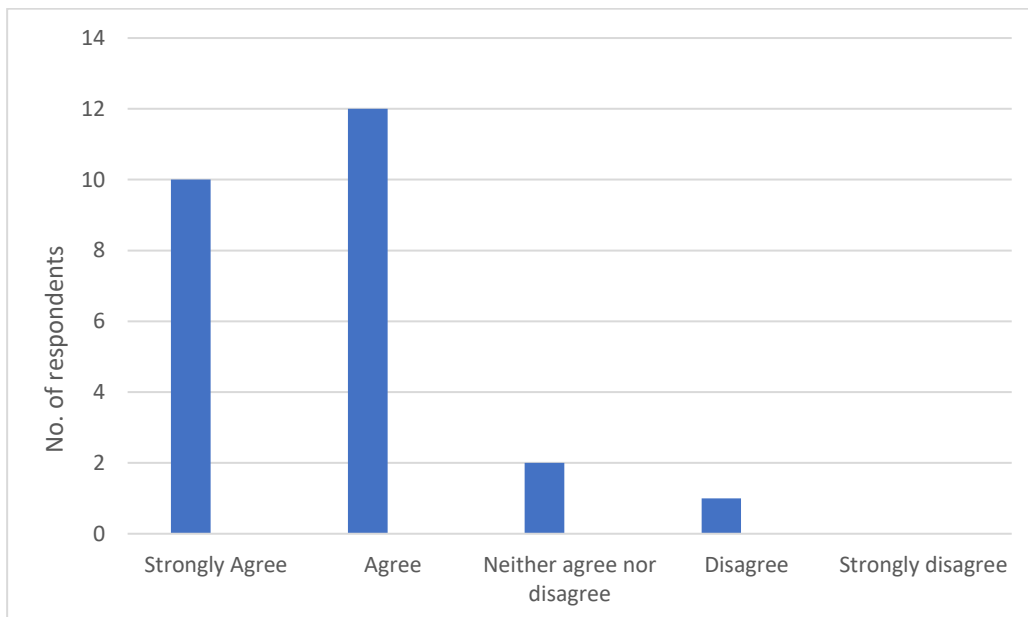
Figure 12: Level of agreement that the timing of individual supervision sessions met support needs (N=25)



Nineteen (76.0%) of the 25 people answering this question agreed or strongly agreed that: *'the timing of individual supervision sessions met my support needs,'* with 10 of these (40.0%) people *strongly* agreeing. Two people (8.0%) disagreed with the statement. Four people (16.0%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Comments included the following:

'My first individual supervision began three months into my contract and so that was later than what I would have liked...'

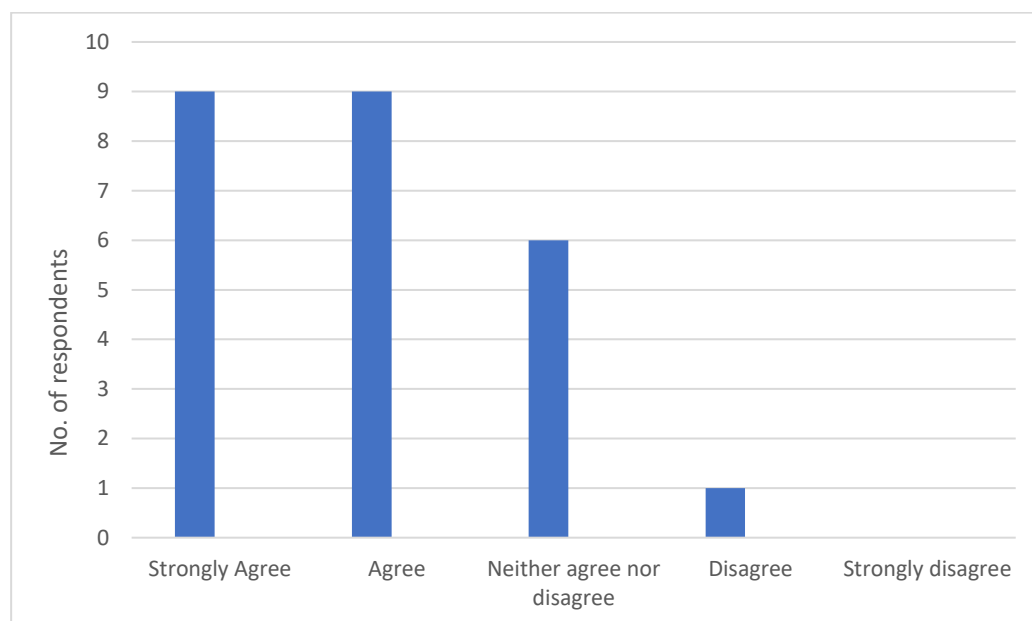
Figure 13: Level of agreement that individual supervision sessions met support needs (N=25)



Twenty-two (88.0%) out of 25 employees answering the relevant question agreed or strongly agreed that: *'the content and format of individual supervision sessions met my support needs.'* Twelve people (48.0%) said they agreed and 10 people (40.0%) said they strongly agreed. Comments included the following:

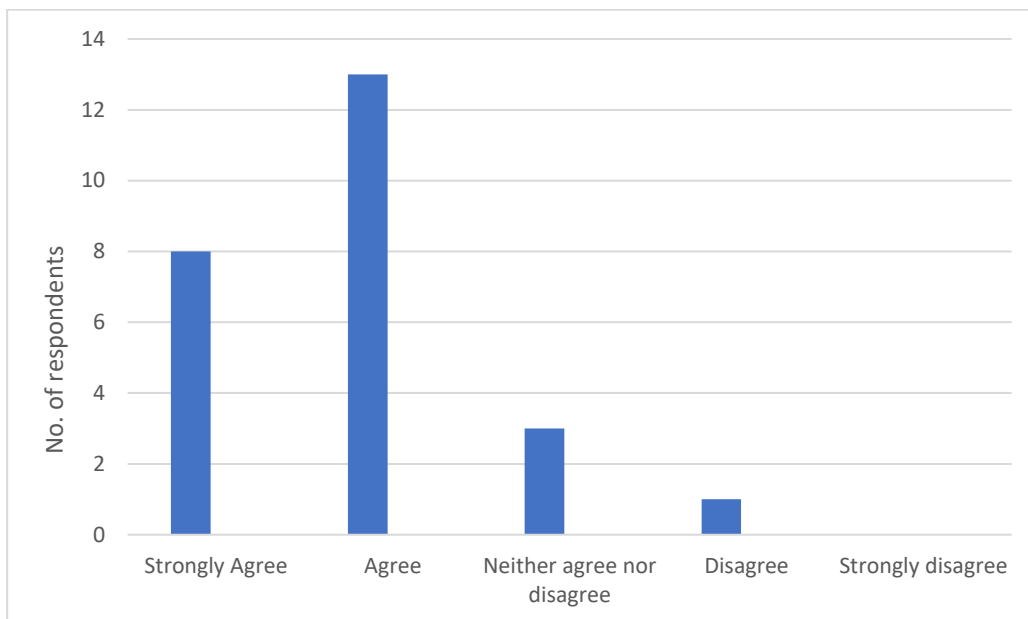
'... I also felt my individual supervision was useful. My supervisor was a good advocate for my needs...'

Figure 14: Level of agreement that the timing of group supervision met support needs (N=25)



Eighteen people (72.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that: *'the timing of group supervision sessions met my support need.'* Twenty-four per cent of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Only one disagreed.

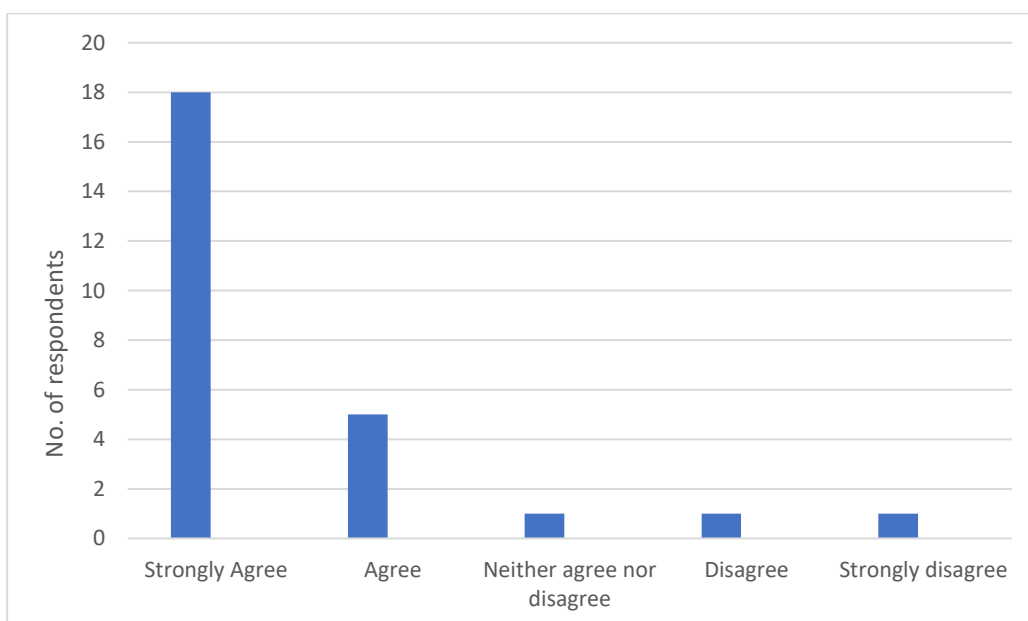
Figure 15: Level of agreement that the content and format of group supervision met support needs (N=25)



Twenty-one employees (84.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that: *'the content and format of group supervision sessions met my support needs.'* Three people (24.0%) per cent neither agreed nor disagreed. Comments included the following:

'... I especially enjoyed the supervision workshop about finding jobs...'

Figure 16: Level of agreement that employees felt well supported in the workplace (N=26)

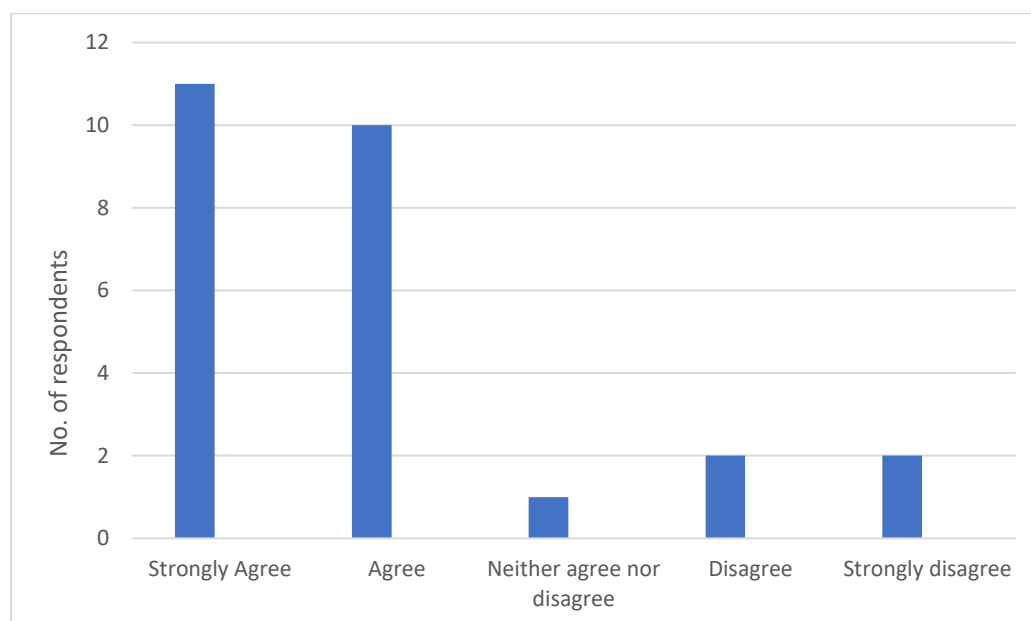


Twenty-three people (88.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that: *'the I felt well supported in the workplace during my period of employment.'* While most respondents (69.2%) strongly agreed, it is notable that one respondent disagreed and one respondent strongly disagreed with the statement. Comments included the following:

'The overall support I received was incredible...'

'... Being a small service, there were times where I didn't feel supported and had to navigate things without any guidance.'

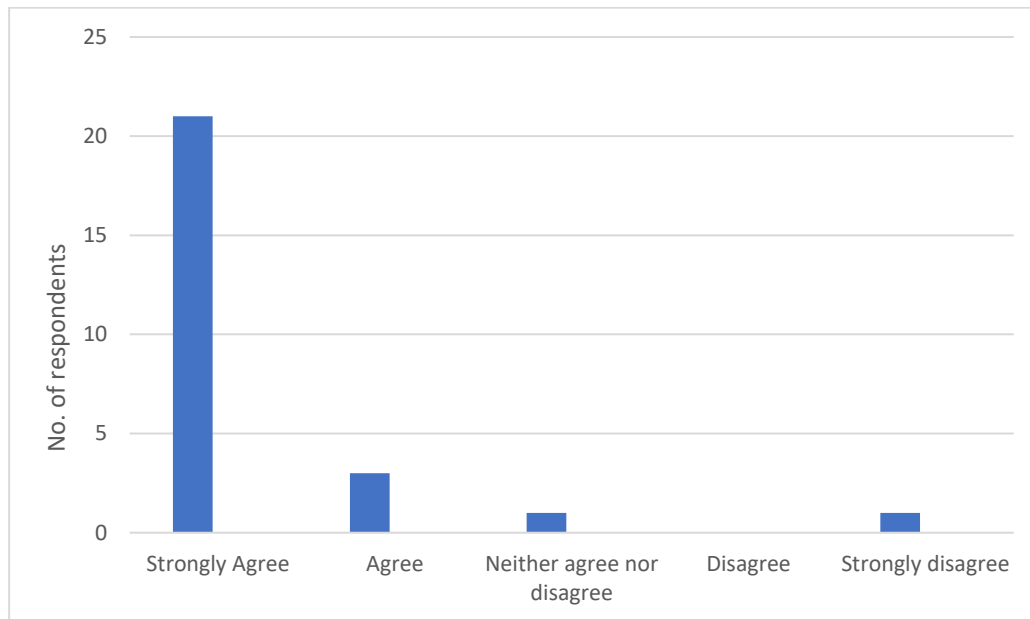
Figure 17: Level of agreement that the work placement met employees' expectations, and responsibilities reflected the Position Description (N=26)



Twenty-one employees (80.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that: *'the work placement met employees' expectations, and responsibilities were a true representation of the formal Position Description,'* with 11 respondents (42.3%) strongly agreeing. Conversely, four people disagreed or strongly disagreed. Comments included the following:

'My work place responsibilities were greater than my formal position description and I added a great deal of value/skill/expertise to both the running of the Homelessness & Housing Program, it's scope and the outcomes achieved. Whilst my role was generalist case management, I have brought: • generalist skills, • skills in Intensive case management and management and support of complex needs and high risk clients, • Care Co-Ordination and advanced assessment skills, • assertive and generalist outreach, • Crisis Intervention, • public housing knowledge, • connection and liaison with local real estate businesses • liaison with local rooming houses and management of various clients, • was invited to form part of a consortium managing transitional housing • Have provided secondary consultation re housing & crisis intervention and general case management. • liaised extensively with local services/public sector bodies i.e. Police, Foreshore committee and Ranger and assisted the Senior Social Planner - Housing Justice and Advocacy from our local shire with addressing local social/housing issues. • Furthermore I provided an extensive brief to CISVic regarding local housing issues to inform executive management and other government parties as needed.'

Figure 18: Level of agreement that employees added to their agency’s capacity to deliver support services to vulnerable clients during the pandemic (N=26)



Twenty-four employees (92.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that: *‘I believe I added to my agency’s capacity to deliver support services to vulnerable clients during the pandemic.’* In fact, the vast majority (80.8%) of respondents *strongly* agreed. Only one person *strongly* disagreed. Comments included the following:

‘Question on support services to vulnerable clients did not apply to my role.’

‘... I felt extremely useful and valuable, and I believe I did add capacity in a meaningful way.’

Other comments include:

‘I haven't responded to questions relating to individual and group supervision as this was not required as part of my role.’

‘As I did not participate in individual or group supervision sessions I answered this by neither agreeing or disagreeing as it was not applicable to me.’

‘This was an enormously gratifying aspect of my work

WfV employee exit survey – qualitative data (comments)

Responses to Q3: *'What were the positive aspects of your work with the agency, if any?'* (N=24)

Everyday I have a positive result, by implementing and instigating a streamlined process to provide hampers to individuals, couples and families in need - knowing many people have a healthy food options for the next few days . When I first started we were providing approximately 30 hampers per month; now we provide up to 150-200 per month.. It's a great feeling.
Great support and training sessions.
Highly supportive, enthusiastic and encouraging, empathy and sincere understanding of the difficulties in working with certain risks/needs and in circumstances where resources are lacking.
I am enjoying the variety of work within the organisation and the learning experiences.
I found myself in a diverse team, with a range of backgrounds and skill sets, which I was able to access to assist my clients. Furthermore, it has been a great start in the industry and valuable learning opportunity.
I had a great team that I worked with. We were very supportive of each other. I learnt a lot about the different services available to people in the area and how to access them.
I was able to learn a lot and gain more hands-on experience in assisting vulnerable clients. My agency and its members supported me well through their advice, encouragement and mentoring which helped me confidently grow in my role.
I was to assist many vulnerable clients face to face. I have had experience with a wide range of client needs such as homeless, low income, family violence, age and disabilities.
it was a job with a good salary.
It was great to work in a team environment. Meeting clients face to face after having assessments on the phone was good. I learnt a lot about the community and the local organisations that can provide support.
Making a positive difference.
Supportive and passionate colleagues who were a pleasure to work with. The 'people' aspects of the role and leadership opportunities I enjoyed the most - dealing with stakeholders, supporting staff and providing supervision. Thoroughly enjoyed the recruitment and HR related parts of the role and being able to assess the value and positive impact of the project on community. I also appreciated the workplace flexibility and support of my direct Manager.
Supportive colleagues with a genuine commitment to social justice and community development.
The collegiate support, ability to see the positives outcomes that came out of the project implementation and the opportunity to work effectively and equitably as a team.
The culture at CIS Yarra Ranges so amazing.
The people the clients and the amazing work we could do.
The spirit of the workers, the willingness to share information/knowledge and support for workers from management.
The staff and volunteers were extremely supportive. Learning new things, and given the opportunity to step up. Helping clients in different and difficult times.
The staff members and the work being done; feeling like I and the agency have made a difference to the community
The support I received from my agency was amazing. They were with me every step of the way.

To be able to bring the service back to it's original operating hours and serve the local community. To oversee the day to day running of the service and bring some consistency throughout the week. To learn more about ER supports and community referrals in the area and to use these while interviewing clients. To update some areas in the service so that they can be used by others going forward.
We were able to undertake a really great food relief outreach program with the WfV staff at my agency. I love doing food relief because it's a chance to give people things (as opposed to often having to say no to financial relief). A positive aspect of my work was that I was able to offer more specialised casework, which my agency cannot usually offer, because of my full-time role. This was particularly helpful in assisting a family violence client to obtain funding to improve her quality of life and keep her safe.
Working in a close-knit team, really appreciated the dedication of the team and support I received.
Working with a strong group of people who share a common goal. Being able to positively impact practices by creating and introducing new processes/new approaches.

Responses to Q4: 'What were the negative aspects of your work with the agency, if any?'
(N=20)

All aspects were very positive.
At the beginning I felt a little lost and overwhelmed. I had no idea how to help the people who phoned because I had not yet built up a good knowledge of the services in our area to refer people to. I'm now keeping a list of all the places I refer people to or use to apply for grants and funding, to pass onto the next person who does my role.
At times waiting on answers from above which impacted on and delayed my work. Not having control over some aspects of the day to day work.
Funding ended- case management is essential for [AGENCY REDACTED]
I did not feel I had the skills or the training to deal with conflict or to de-escalate certain situations that would arise within our workplace from clients coming to the service. This was at times very stressful to try and manage.
Lack of support throughout and when needed most on site.
Low remuneration in contrast to skills and actual job role.
No negative at all.
None. There were times where certain clients were challenging but that helped me learn how to present in front of distressed and challenging clients better.
Not really sure that there is a negative in context of the agency. I have managed to identify some lacks in my education and also the need to make connections better.
Nothing to report. I was in the position for a short time and did not encounter any negative experiences worth noting.
Personally, none. As a peak organisation, however, I was a bit surprised that there was no Human Resources department to follow-up on employee matters.
Recruitment process took a long time.

Some situations that community members find themselves in are quite troubling and often there is a limited response that the agency could provide to said community members.
The agency did not need a caseworker but requested a caseworker 'just in case'; there was no real justification for the position. Therefore, I was left with very little to do and told to go and promote the service to clients in order to find people. There was no structure in the role. Everything was ad hoc and chaotic. There are no procedures guiding the ER casework. The Manager gave me tasks according to the needs of the hour such as unpacking boxes, filling in at reception or writing content for the website. I was mainly concerned because of the lack of process. If there was a process it was not written any where and I was only told about it when I did something wrong.
The open-door policy means that we can be extremely busy one day and not so the next. It can make it hard to offer in-depth support & can be very tiring.
There are no negative aspects as everyday I learn something new and feel very valued.
There aren't any negatives.
There were none.
Viktor database used by [AGENCY REDACTED] not a good fit for the work of the organisation. Lack of support by Banyule council for Volunteers of Banyule.

Responses to Q5: 'Is there any way your work with the agency could have been improved? (please elaborate)' (N=22)

Again, personally I had a very positive experience. Possibly, an even more enhanced one would have been to see the peak organisation more engaged and validating of the management and implementation successes of the project.
Covid 19 caused so many services to change how services were provided and I found it hard to adapt as am a people person. Looking forward to the last few weeks with seeing people face to face again.
Having a formal shadowing process when starting the role. This would make sure new staff had the opportunity to learn from the existing staff.
Having senior management or a senior position filled, given the industry, would have improved my work with the agency.
I always look for a better way to do things and have the support of my Manager, colleagues along with a great group of volunteers. My workplace is very collaborative with a wealth of experience to tap into.
I do not believe there could be any improvements to my time here.
Individual supervision introduced at the beginning of my contract.
More access to relevant training . More structured processes put in place for debriefing within the workplace, not just in supervision.
More personal development sessions e.g. working with difficult clients, working with domestic violence clients.
More time in the office/Less time working from home -More support from management and supervisors at the organisation -Clear role descriptions on what my responsibilities/job are.
No
N/A

No
No
No
No, I think my agency helped grow my roles and responsibilities in a way that I always felt like I was contributing positively and effectively while learning more.
No, I've engaged myself in various ways and management have supported me 100% making improvements in my work.
No. Everything is as good as it is. The only thing would be, if the contract could have been extended beyond the job keeper finishing, job seeker reducing and the rent and mortgage payments all needing to be paid back or at full cost.
The agency needs to really improve their processes and have an actual induction where they are shown where to find these processes. The agency should need to provide a clear justification for the position. The complex layers of management and structure meant that there was no clear guidance as to which organisation I was actually working for. There were three organisations overlaid in the day to day operations. Not one of them had any clear responsibility for the supervision or oversight of the position. The caseworker was plonked into the midst of a chaotic environment and left to work on the whims of the people around. The agency should have a clear structure in place where the caseworker knows who to report to, and what is expected.
Would have been good to have more time in a work environment around other people, to bounce ideas off and collaborate (rather than virtually) although understanding in current climate this was unavoidable.
Yes longer contract
Yes. I could have been asked to do more challenging projects or have appointments with clients who need further support. I worked alongside one other volunteer each day and filled the role that most volunteers do. Being the constant support worker at the front door five days a week became exhausting and I don't feel as though I developed my skills as much as what I would have liked to. I understand that I was there to meet the needs of the service as other volunteers were unable to come in. But I do feel as though I have missed some opportunities of growth as the ER support here can become a little repetitive.

Responses to Q6: 'Is there anything you would like to add?' (N=22)

A positive experience full of learnings and knowledge.
I am grateful for this opportunity and am happy to the way it has contributed to my professional development.
I applaud the Working for Victoria program. Although my experience at this particular agency was not great, I am very grateful for the job which gave me a chance to rent a home and set myself up in Melbourne. If it wasn't for the Working for Victoria Program I would have been unemployed for much longer. I also have gained new skills and exposure to set me up in a new career that has more employment opportunities. I consider it a brilliant program overall. I understand that in these early stages of the program submissions for positions might not have required detailed justification to get funding for a position. Therefore some community based organisations may have not needed a full-time worker. It is challenging to feel useful or gain skills in a role where there is nothing to do. The money for these positions could have been put into training or traineeships for long term unemployed people.
I felt well supported in my role.

I have appreciated the opportunity to work during such a difficult Covid jobmarket. This experience has left me in a much better position to apply for other roles within community service and I feel confident in applying for me next role. Thanks for all of your hard work supporting us WfVic staff.
I have enjoyed the opportunity very much, have gained new skills and increased my knowledge of the community sector. I feel as though I have made a valuable contribution to CISVic and it has been a very positive contract professionally and personally.
I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the WfV project. It has been an amazing experience and entry into paid work in the industry i am most passionate about.
I really appreciated the opportunity to work with CISVic and their amazing team of dedicated workers. I also appreciate the support and encouragement I received and thank the team I worked closely with.
I really love(d) the team at my agency. Everyone worked together so well and supported each other. I felt safe with them. I am so grateful for the opportunity to work with this whole organisation. I was fortunate enough to get experience in many areas. All the staff (at all levels) were very supportive. I always felt appreciated. It's just a lovely working environment.
I think CISVic staff and in particular [NAME REDACTED] have been wonderful to work with. I have felt supported and valued by the staff.
I think this six months contract is criminal due to the time to create and built trust in the community, then for it to be taken away and clients left without support, recovering from Covid - Now is the time the clients desperately need case management and support. I am truly upset for the community/clients as I have seen the need first hand and the effects of Covid. Shame Shame Shame - Working for Victoria - I wish this program had been thoroughly thought through properly!!!!
I would like to thank the WfV team for the opportunity to work within such a great and positive environment.
Its a great place to work and appreciate the passion that people in the team have for helping the agencies and clients. I am grateful for the opportunity to have been part of it for the short term.
I've been very privileged to work here and appreciate the experience from interview and on-boarding with [NAME REDACTED] right the way through my time in the agency.
N/A
No
No
No
Thank you for the opportunity to have been given paid work in the sector I want to build my career in.
Thank you for the opportunity!
Thank you for the opportunity, I love what I do!
Thankyou CISVic, because without your grant I may not have ever found my happy place to grow, learn and to be given such latitude to implement new processes to create a great product 'Community Pantry' Hampers without judgement.