This presentation is a reflection on delivery and practice drawing on our combined experience of running programs and projects in the NT over the past 30 years.

Includes periods living and working in remote indigenous locations for 20 years and delivering LLN programs from the Central Desert Region to the Top End.

A portion of this work involved federally funded projects and programs delivered into regional and remote communities (some of which was done under the NT intervention).

Challenges that were presented in undertaking this work and well as possible solutions will be discussed.
Demographics – The Northern Territory is the third largest state in Australia covering 1,346,000 million square kilometres.

Indigenous Population – The last census showed that there were 35,012 Indigenous persons 15yrs and over. 2,966 of these have completed year 12, 10,808 completed year 8 or below and 2,518 have never attended school. The status of the remainder is unclear. The NT has the smallest population and lowest population density.

Employment/ workforce - Of the population, 11,659 are employed (including 5,281 CDEP workers - 45% of the workforce); 1,956 registered as unemployed and a further 17,451 listed as not in the workforce. 14.4% of the population 15 years and over are not engaged in employment.

Income - 72% of the 15 years and over workforce earn $399 per week or less.

Housing - 11,199 dwellings reported that at least one member of the household was Indigenous. Of these 1,050 dwellings had 10 or more persons residing in them.
Regions - The Northern Territory can be divided into three distinct regions: Central Desert, Barkly Tablelands and Tropical North. These three regions are further divided into 17 local government areas.

Communities - Outside the major centres of Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy there are 83 towns large enough to support a school. Ten of these larger communities have been identified as Territory Growth Towns under the NT Government's ‘A Working Future initiative’. – however there may be changes to this initiative due to recent change of NT Government to CLP.

Languages - There are over 100 Indigenous languages spoken across the Northern Territory and often an Indigenous person will speak English as their third or fourth language. Very few of the Indigenous languages have written forms and even fewer are taught in formal educational settings.

Infrastructure - Facilities in each community vary greatly. Many communities are serviced by a regional council with a general business manager onsite for day to day decision making. Training facilities range from using the Council meeting room to working in the student’s workplace. Often there are insufficient chairs and table space for all participants.

Technology - NBN is just starting to be available in some remote communities, however the hardware is not always available or maintained. Dust, dirt and heat are the norm. A small number of the larger communities have facilities owned and maintained by NT DET or Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education College (BIITE).

Accessibility - Most communities have road access for at least some of the year. Some communities have a commercial air service while others are serviced through charter flights. Accessibility can be affected by climatic conditions and cultural activities. Communities are usually closed from outside visitation during the ceremonial season and for funerals.
Community Dynamics

• Historic legacies
• Community/workplace politics
• NT Intervention - effects
• “Ownership” of training
• Learner perspectives on training/what it produces
• Selection of candidates for employment/impacts on training

Historic legacies - Promises made, courses incomplete, promise of work not fulfilled (e.g. “if you study XX course it will assist you to get a job”)

Community and workplace politics - effect on individual workers and program success

NT Intervention – some positive and some negative effects. Issue for training i.e. increased mobility affected stability in communities – some people left jobs; training incomplete due to displacement

Ownership of training – i.e. to support the Indigenous workforce e.g. (head office taking a macro approach which doesn’t filter down to micro level with supervisor/s in the workplace). Lines of responsibility become blurred.

Learner perspectives - students have grown up in a vacuum – what impact does this have on the way they approach training/work/study and decision making process? Lack of models of success in their own community may lead to a lack of ownership of their own learning.

Selection of candidates for employment - people are commonly employed in community into jobs based on other criteria than suitability and without qualifications, then expected to obtain them without any consideration of their ability to study at that level - hence people rated at pre ACSF level 1 attempting to complete Certificate III level training.
Ongoing mapping project – outline why and how this has been done (2004 – 2011).

Has it been measured? Use the stats from the database to show 86% at ACSF 1 or below.

Why? To assist in forward planning for community development.

Is an ACSF rating an accurate reflection of ability to learn new skills? No – but a low ACSF rating forms a significant barrier to full engagement in mainstream training.

What if the gap between current level and required level is too large?

Some models of L&N assume people are print literate in their own language/s. Indigenous people come from an oral/visual tradition.

People’s perceptions of how well they speak English can be skewed by their own circumstances/experience. E.g. ABS data indicates that 23% Indigenous people believed they spoke English very well. This belief is reinforced because they are managing to survive in their own environment with what English LLN they possess. Refer to similar findings by the ALLS.

Various approaches used in the NT e.g. CAAVS/team teaching Learner Support. Effectiveness is limited at the pre-level ACSF 1 and ACSF level 1

A push in the NT to enrol at Cert III or above means people may be enrolled at too high a level for their existing LLN skills.

Dilemma – people already employed into job roles but unable to progress and/or obtain qualifications. Employed due to who they are not what skills they possess. Communities have a limited pool to select candidates from.
* Note re use of NRS
A challenge in the NT is to build capacity within communities for people to become confident and competent users of LLN – however this is labour intensive and requires investment of both time and funding.

The language/s spoken in the community’s workplace is likely to be an Indigenous language or dialect.

Learners need an opportunity to practice skills learnt, however in daily life English may only be used sporadically – i.e. when interacting with non-Indigenous people.

Support needed from family to encourage LLN acquisition.
Turnover in key positions is a fact of life (non-Indigenous and Indigenous). Turnover of non-Indigenous personnel in key positions can have a significant flow on effect (worker loyalty is to the person not the job).

Workplace expectations are that employees will have some level of LLN and will be able to handle the basic functions in the workplace, e.g. taking telephone messages, completing time sheets, understanding OHS etc. as minimum.

Inflexibility of the workplace to cater for absences due to cultural obligations. Absences can impact on support for training programs (time release).

Community and workplace politics can have an effect on individual workers and program success.

Workers must see a benefit so that they want to achieve the required skill level.
Funding impacts:
Short term funding contributes to destabilisation of staff (3 months – 12 months on contract).

Funding tied to “nominal Hours” – not the amount of time that learners will need to acquire and consolidate LLN skills.

Affects consistency of training.

Impairs the building up of trust in the lecturer within communities – the “revolving door” syndrome.

Cost versus investment in LLN
Deliver to whom - individuals/small uneconomical groups?

Deliver where - inadequate facilities/accommodation?

Deliver how – funding does not allow time to fully understand learning styles/adjust practice re methodologies/gaining learner trust/culturally sensitive?

Deliver how well - best practice/staff shortage, experience, qualifications, cultural awareness, resilience to cope with setbacks and sudden change, ability to cope?
Typical training venues – remote NT

Training room at Kабuwaranyoo

Lecturer setting up at Nympl
Strengthening delivery:
Growing the LLN workforce – a positive is the introduction of the Vocational Graduate Certificate in LLN Practices, providing a way of training more LLN specialists

Building the capacity among the local Indigenous workforce - by engaging local community members who have completed some teacher training, providing PD in adult education and employing them as tutors.

Employing local community members - as facilitators to maintain facilities and liaise between the community and the RTO’s and act as a cultural broker/but who employs/who pays?

Funding:
Change in NT Government - provides an opportunity to open a conversation around more funding for LLN delivery

Technology:
Develop some innovative strategies to make the best use of computers and the internet

Different approaches in using IT may be required for different communities
Example: CDU is experimenting with a mixed mode delivery where the lecturer visits the community and engages the students then follows up the delivery by using a drop box to exchange worksheets/ booklets etc. and contact the students via skype. – it is simple to set up, easy to use and less problematic than other platforms like blackboard.

Projects need to allow funding for an enabler in remote communities, to provide IT support for learners and to maintain the equipment and trouble-shoot problems.
Ideas for creating better cohesion

3. Exploiting technology

- Optimise/innovate in use of technology to “reach” students
- Which form of IT?
- Train IT support “trouble-shooters” in remote communities
- Access to and availability of IT may be limited in some communities
Key participants /corner stones to the puzzle – learner 1, trainers 2, community 3, employer 4

Critical support From the community – infrastructure 5 and facilities for accommodation and delivery, Access 6 to the community, workplace and students, and cooperative workplaces 7 as partners

Expectations – It is essential that learner expectations 8, employer expectations 9 are supported by the selection process for employees 10 family and community 11.

Policy and funding – Policy needs to be well informed about local issues and problems "one size does not fit all" 12 and funding 13 should be allocated for as long as is needed not tied to financial years etc

Delivery – It requires creative ways of delivering training 14 accounting for the Literacy/numeracy levels of the learners. 15

But with a combined will to succeed cohesion can be achieved.
Thank you for your attention
Are there any questions?

Contact us:
lorraine.suahames@cdu.edu.au
wendy.kennedy@cdu.edu.au