



International
Specialised
Skills
Institute



Department of
Education & Training

DARING TO DREAM OF ALTERNATE FUTURES

An International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship.

ELIZABETH BONNER

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Table of contents

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
3. FELLOWSHIP BACKGROUND	4
4. FELLOWSHIP LEARNINGS	7
5. PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SECTORAL IMPACT	19
6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS	21
7. REFERENCES	27

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Fellow would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who generously gave their time and their expertise to assist, advise and guide her throughout her VET International Practitioner Fellowship.

Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

The ISS Institute plays a pivotal role in creating value and opportunity, encouraging new thinking and early adoption of ideas and practice by investing in individuals.

The overarching aim of the ISS Institute is to support the development of a 'Better Skilled Australia'. The Institute does this via the provision of Fellowships that provide the opportunity for Australians to undertake international skills development and applied research that will have a positive impact on Australian industry and the broader community.

The International Specialised Skills Institute was founded 29 years ago, by a small group of innovators including Sir James Gobbo AC, CVO, QC, and former Governor of Victoria, who had a vision of building a community of industry specialists who would lead the up-skilling of the Australian workforce. The Fellowship program builds shared learning, leadership and innovation across the broad range of industry sectors worked with. Fellows are supported to disseminate learning's and ideas, facilitate change and advocate for best practice through the sharing of their Fellowship learnings with peers, colleagues, government, industry and community. Since its establishment, ISS Institute has supported over 450 Fellows to undertake skill and knowledge enhancement across a wide range of sectors

which has led to positive change, the adoption of best practice approaches and new ways of working in Australia.

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Personal acknowledgements:

The Fellow wishes to acknowledge the following organisations:

- » ISS Institute
- » Department of Education and Training Victoria
- » ACFE Barwon Southwest Regional Office
- » Cloverdale Community Centre
- » The City of Greater Geelong
- » Neighbourhood Houses Barwon

In the USA:

- » Urban Neighbourhood Initiatives (UNI) Detroit
- » Southwest Detroit Community Justice, Detroit
- » Capuchin Community Centre and affiliated programs, Detroit
- » Hostel Detroit, Detroit
- » Homeboy/Homegirl Industries, Los Angeles

The Fellow would like to thank Wendy Draayers, Nick Johns and Ofelia Royo for assisting with all aspects of my Fellowship, preparations and report writing. Nathan and Caroline Freed, Danette and Craig Khol for sharing an honest Canadian experience with the Fellow's family. To the Detroit community for welcoming the Fellow's family like their own, especially to the UNI Detroit team; Christine Bell, Anna Herrmann, Lisa Marie Rodriguez, Phillip Patrick, Edgar Gomez, and Linuel Adkins. Billy and Sarah Dean for opening your home, providing a 'true' Detroit experience with our family, and linking us to programs in Los Angeles.

Liz would like to express her greatest gratitude is to the Cloverdale Community Centre staff, volunteers, participants and to the residents of Corio/Norlane for allowing her to work in creative ways. Without you, this Fellowship would never have been possible and because of you, we will create positive change.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How do we attract and engage priority cohorts into meaningful pre-accredited training and pathways, in communities facing growing social barriers and a decline in low skilled employment opportunities?

This Fellowship explores inclusion and equity in education, community engagement as a foundation pathway to life-long learning, the use of enterprise to sustain programs and model real-life employability skills, funding attitudes that don't limit the potential to create innovative solutions and the need to be intentional in the language we use in our professional practice, its purpose and power. It challenges working within our professional scope of practice to provide locally relevant, individualised community and education solutions to combat long term disadvantage.

Working only to the required compliance expectations, especially in areas of known disadvantage, severely limits the possibility of creating prosperity and inspiring life-long learning.

This Fellowship aimed to challenge siloed approaches and instead advocate for the formation of coalitions of multifaceted practitioners, working in non-traditional partnerships for the delivery of adult and community education, paired with community development to empower communities to realise their own potential, whilst avoiding deficit mindsets. To provide holistic, immediately available resources that aim to improve and nurture positive community participation as a foundational pathway to further education and employment. The result being improved education and employment potential.

It seeks to provide rationale for the creation of a connected education system within Victoria so educators and career counsellors can provide quality advice around appropriate pathways. To raise awareness of the unique nature of Learn Local pre-accredited training for providing creative bridging education solutions for the purpose of improving educational outcomes in the long term but to also recognise that community participation is often the most appropriate, foundation pathway.

3. FELLOWSHIP BACKGROUND

The methodology for achieving the Fellowship included:

- » Observation – Visits to organisations to observe how they operate.
- » Participation – Interacting as a community member would to experience programs from their perspective, an experience enriched by honest communication and shared experience with participants.
- » Immersive experiences – During the Fellowship time spent with UNI Detroit, the Fellow was able to film interviews with local community participants. This allowed them to share their lives for a moment with the Fellow, so she gained greater insight into the impacts of the organisation and the issues they faced.
- » Professional networking – meeting with professionals working within organisations.

Fellowship context

Cloverdale Community Centre is a Neighbourhood House and Learn Local Organisation (LLO) located in the northern suburbs of Geelong, Victoria. The Corio/Norlane area is most often described by its deficits and stereotypes, attracts large amounts of funding in the community services/welfare areas, yet the statistics that describe severe poverty and disadvantage are slow to change.

Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is an Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) product that ranks areas according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. Corio is placed on the fourth percentile in Australia and on the first percentile in Victoria. This means that compared to the rest of the nation, this community ranks as one of the most disadvantaged (Profile.id.com.au, 2019).

In the 2015 Dropping Off the Edge report (Vinson et al 2015), Corio is classified as a Band 1 postcode, meaning that the severity of disadvantage experienced by the Corio community is high and entrenched, with no significant change being observed over time. Key features of a Band 1 postcode include:

- » unemployment
- » child maltreatment
- » criminal convictions
- » family violence
- » disability
- » psychiatric admissions
- » low education

“As a society we cannot, and should not, turn away from the challenge of persistent and entrenched locational disadvantage, no matter how difficult it may be to solve the problem.” - - DOTE 2015

Neighbourhood Houses in Victoria make up approximately two thirds of the Learn Local sector. They provide a unique opportunity to work with communities using community development methodologies, most often within community owned and governed, not-for-profit organisations. They are the community and thus should work in collaboration with these communities to achieve all outcomes. This can and should extend to Learn Local course development.

Why focus on Detroit? The Fellow sought to experience innovative, community led engagement initiatives, looking to Detroit, USA, a motor city with cultural connections to the northern suburbs of Geelong. The aim being to invigorate and motivate learning along with social change. These ideas were then brought back to the Corio /Norlane area for a pilot and to share findings with the broader education sector.

The Fellow needed a story line and rationale that would resonate with the community they work within, a journey they could include them in and most importantly, trust to try new things based on something familiar. Detroit provided context to launch the pilot phase of Liz's Fellowship.

The “Not So Local” issue

Looking at traditional education systems, they tend to work in linear sequences, where you progress from one level to the next, generally under the assumption that progress will naturally occur. But what if this type of system doesn't fit the learner?

In most cases it works, learners adapt to challenges, have external supports and other resources when needed but, unfortunately, many fail to thrive. Their education experience takes them on a journey that twists and turns with the complexity and seasons of their life. This has been the case of many of the learners the Fellow has come into contact within the Corio /Norlane area of Geelong.

Their lives do not fit the linear progression of traditional education pathways approaches, they do not have the resources needed and they become disenfranchised with a sense of failure, many are left feeling incapable of learning, not worthy to sit in a classroom and often left with little hope of meaningful work.

Further to the education deficits, community members often become isolated. They have limited experiences of positive community and are disconnected from their own potential for prosperity. Lacking confidence, resilience, and harbouring resentment towards 'the system' that has failed them.

Cloverdale Community Centre aims to provide inclusive, community participation and high-quality adult education, that promotes a culture of life-long learning. So, what should inclusive education look like?

“Inclusive education is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non-formal educational settings. Rather than being a marginal theme on how some learners can be integrated in the mainstream education, inclusive education is an approach that investigates how to transform education systems in order to respond to the diversity of learners. It aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than a problem” (UNESCO).

The inclusion of education in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), highlights how much we should value education. It should start from infancy and continue through life. No one should feel excluded or unworthy, as a society we should seek to develop life-long learning culture, using creativity, perseverance and the resources made available to us. We should not stop seeking an education system that provides education solutions for all despite the individuals stage of life, including early school leavers and the most vulnerable within our communities.

Fellowship methodology

The Fellow was inspired by the UNESCO Four Pillars of Learning and “the concept of an education pursued throughout life, with all its advantages in terms of flexibility, diversity and availability at different times and in different places, should command wide support” (Delores, 1996). The Four Pillars of life-long learning includes:

- » learning to do
- » learning to be
- » learning to know
- » learning to live together

These 'pillars' along with an engagement and pathway planning framework such as the one the Fellow created; ENTER-ENGAGE-CONNECT, has the potential to provide a platform for success. This concept was developed with mentoring

support from Dr Jude Walker, a futurist and academic, as a part of an ACFE innovation project delivered by Melbourne based company, Foresight Lane.

“Victoria benefits when more of its citizens build skills and pathways into employment and a meaningful civic life” - Foresight Lane

The model places pathways planning in the learner's hands, it is driven by their aspirations and recognises that progress is at their own pace but aims to see them transition from one opportunity to the next. To grow as a learner in their own unique way, to become life-long learners. It can also work as an organisational planning tool answering the following questions:

- » ENTER – Why would someone walk through our doors?
- » ENGAGE – How will we develop a meaningful relationship?
- » CONNECT – What programs/courses do our community want /need and how can we inspire participation?

The countries visited by the Fellow were Canada and the United States, with an extended visit to Detroit and then briefly on to Los Angeles.

Fellowship period

This Fellowship was conducted during February/March 2019. This was followed by a period of reflection, trialling ideas, report writing and sharing findings with the broader sector.

Fellow biography

Liz Bonner is the coordinator of Cloverdale Community Centre; a Neighbourhood House and Learn Local organisation based in the North Geelong suburb of Corio.

The Fellow has worked across the education sector as a secondary school teacher, VET practitioner, adult education coordinator and Learn Local curriculum developer. She uses a compliance approached paired with creativity to develop unique local solutions, often in partnership, for learners with varied and often complex needs.

A diverse education and work background, ranging from science, education, music, media, and community sector management has helped inform her approach of creating innovative community participation and education solutions.

Abbreviations/acronyms/definitions

AOD	Alcohol and other drugs
ACFE	Adult Community and Further Education
ACE	Adult Community Education
CAIF	Capacity and Innovation Fund
VET	Vocational Education and Training
UNI	Urban Neighbourhood Initiatives
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
NHvic	Neighbourhood Houses Victoria
LLO	Learn Local Organisation
ISSI	International Specialised Skills Institute
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation

4. FELLOWSHIP LEARNINGS

The idea that business as usual will provide new outcomes is something that has challenged and troubled the Fellow for a long time. Resistance to change with funding being used as an excuse for inaction or inability to innovate has been a key theme of forums within the sector. That innovation is funded through grants alone, rather than being driven by creative practice using the resources already available to you seemed out of the realm of possibility for many.

Through the Fellow's travels, the sense of a need to advocate for education as a fundamental human right grew. We have flexible tools and resources at our disposal, supported by state funding that could be used in new ways to provide meaningful outcomes for communities experiencing disadvantage.

Conversation about the Fellowship would generally start with; what do you do, why are you here and what do you hope to learn? The Fellow would describe Learn Local and Neighbourhood Houses, its purpose and the funding models and would be met with statements such as, "if only we had that kind of government support!".

It became evident, even before the Fellow formally began her Fellowship travels that we have, here in Australia, an amazing education ecosystem. The question then shifted to; How do we get more out of the resources we already have at our disposal? Grants and project funding aside, what can we do better as a sector, knowing the reality of the crisis being faced in communities experiencing disadvantage and the need for societal change to be supported and nurtured through meaningful education engagement?

A brief Canadian story – Incidental Fellowship findings



As the ISSI Fellowship provided the Fellow a once in a life-time opportunity to travel to the USA, they decided as a family (the Fellow's husband and two young sons) to include Canada in the mix and take extended leave. Detroit is right on the USA /Canadian border and easily reached by rail.

Although not a formal part of the Fellowship, it provided the Fellow with a significant insight of the uniqueness of the Learn Local training and generally the VET sector. Learn Local, pre-accredited training has no equivalent in Canada, it's structure, flexibility, and funding were considered extraordinary by all who the Fellow shared it with.

The Fellow stayed with a friend in Edmonton, Alberta who works for the Education Department and they had no equivalent state funded program. They only could suggest local, independent, not-for-profit, or charitable organisations that may deliver similar education programs but without the funding and compliance structures of a government program.

The Fellow spoke with Don Mackay, Mayor of East Zorra-Tavistock, a small town in Ontario, Canada, on a train from Calgary about Learn Local. Again he said that there was no equivalent in his area, but he was looking to fund similar programs

and support community development initiatives in his town. He suggested that the Fellow observe the work of Lakeside Hope House, based in Guelph.

"The opposite of poverty is community" – Mayor Don Mackay quoting what resonated with him after engaging with Lakeside Hope House, Guelph, Canada.

Mayor Mackay was exploring new models of community education and firmly believed that positive change lies in how connected and purposed an individual was within their community. This idea set the tone of what was to follow for the Fellow.



Detroit: The Rise, Fall & Renewal Walking Tour – Downtown Detroit

To obtain some context and learn more about the complex history of Detroit, the Fellow began her time in Detroit by taking a walking tour with a long-time downtown resident, a lawyer, and historian, from Detroit Urban Adventures.

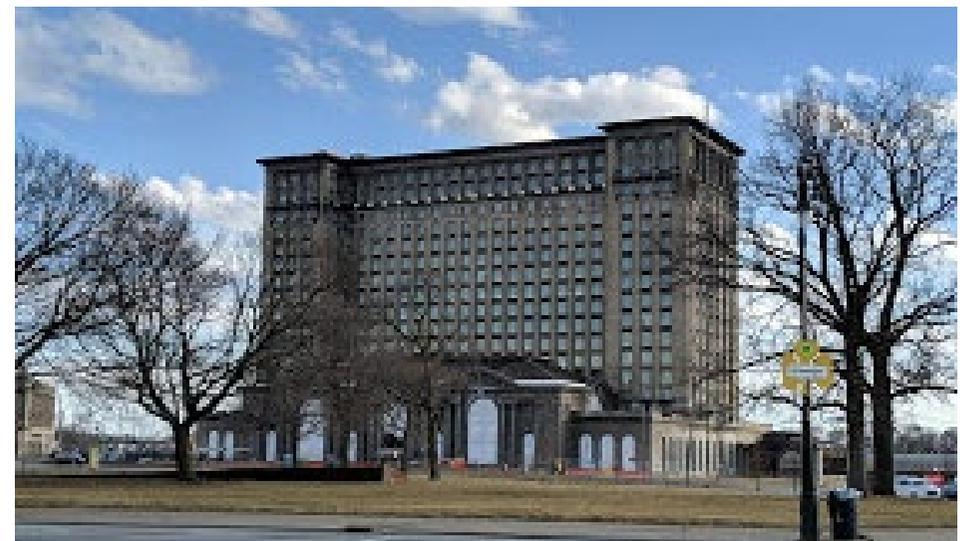
Despite Detroit's extremely negative reputation, their guide chose to focus on the positive points, only alluding to the negative when prompted. This proved to be just what they needed, unsure of what Detroit was really like, it would be easy to only listen to the negatives, something that started from the minute the Fellow mentioned where she was intending to travel.

The truth is that Detroit has had a rocky past, with the recent bankruptcy of the city, and a reputation of gang violence, race riots and more. Detroit has a history punctuated by periods of conflict and unrest.

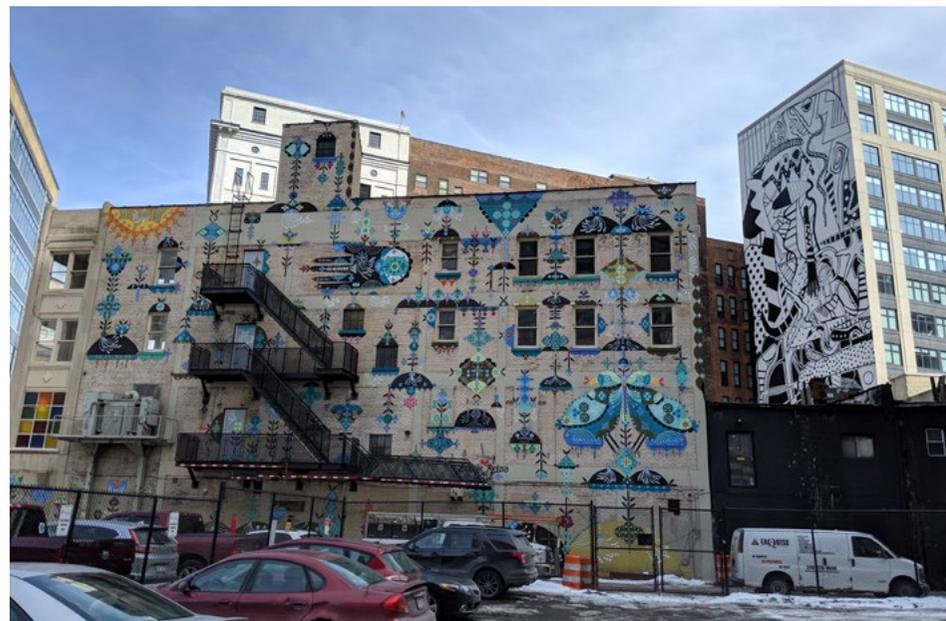
It has a strong connection to the unionised work force, thus making its history extremely significant. It welcomed an African American workforce and payed them well compared to the south, they now make up 80% of the local population (Smith, 2001).

It lies partially in ruin, with a population shift from 1.8 million to just over 670,000. This has resulted in what is termed 'urban blight', vast sections of the city lie in a derelict state after a mass exodus as the automotive industry declined (World Population Review, 2019).

Detroit is full of architecturally significant buildings and was once referred to as 'little Paris': You get a real sense as you explore the downtown area of its extravagant past, it is full of the ghosts of past boom times in various states of decay and revitalisation. It is reemerging from the ashes slowly and with it so are its people. This renewal is driven largely by community led, innovative and often artistic action, with vast murals on many buildings, festivals, arts events and urban farming. Community not-for-profits lead the push for a better future.



Gentrification is also an emerging issue, where wealthy outsiders redevelop real estate, often at the expense and detriment of the poorer residents. Out-pricing them, driving property prices and rents up.



UNI Detroit - Southwest Detroit

“Urban Neighbourhood Initiatives is a non-profit corporation that works with communities in urban neighbourhoods to build safe and thriving environments where people want to live, work, and play.

We believe every neighbourhood should be a healthy and safe place to live. To maximise our impact, we concentrate on a specific neighbourhood at a time to develop a plan that meets the community’s needs. UNI is based in the Springwell’s area of Southwest Detroit, a 1.3 square mile neighbourhood bounded by Fort, Dix and Waterman Streets. “ – UNI Detroit

UNI has three focus areas:

1. Youth Development
2. Land use & Economic Development
3. Education

The programs visited or participated in included:



SUAMP – Southwest Urban Arts Mural Project

Beginning in 2003, the project was described by the lead artist Phillip Patrick, as a “work of patience”, with the program progressing at “a slow crawl”. This, however, is a large part of its success, UNI’s demonstrated belief in the programs they have designed, through a continual improvement model. A demonstrated commitment to provide sustainable, dynamic, consistent programs is an example that we should embrace in Australia.



UNI remains committed to a belief in the programs they have developed, even with tight funding and other stresses threatening the long-term sustainability of the work they undertake. It is because of these uncertainties that many of their programs are social- enterprise based. SUAMP is no exception.

This program, aimed at youth aged 14-24, recruits through local high schools, with program applicants applying like they would for a job. The program aims to advocate for art as a vocation, improve participants employability prospects through the development of soft skills, resumes, professional conduct and behaviour. Through participation, each artist will also build a professional portfolio.

The participants must complete a series of classes that focus on the fundamentals of art before moving on to the team that engages with community stakeholders and local businesses to design and create large scale public art.

They use a social enterprise model to bring long-term sustainability, their programs are all about improving the liveability of the community. The result is urban beautification. The murals are a dominant feature of the Southwest area.



Southwest Rides Bikes and Board Shop – Apprenticeships/ Earn-A-Bike Program

Addressing issues of transportation in Detroit, Southwest Rides is a shop front-based enterprise that refurbishes and sells bikes to the community at an affordable price. The cost of keeping a car on the road in Detroit is prohibitive for many, with Detroit being listed in the top 10 most expensive cities to own a car. The state of Michigan has the highest insurance premiums in the USA (Cooney et al, 2019). Added to this are the high numbers of residents living in poverty. This enterprise addresses a significant social issue.

It also acts to revitalise a strip shopping precinct. This again, is supported and underpinned by UNI's objective "to create a safe and thriving environment where people want to live, work and play".

The shop was also used as a training site for the SUAMP program.



Land Use & Economic Development

UNI has developed a range of programs that are actively transforming the Southwest District into a thriving liveable precinct. These address issues of urban blight, safety, health, employment and lifestyle. They combine community development with education, using a social work driven model to collaborate with the local community to enrich and improve not only public spaces, but also their own properties.

The Fellow's first encounter with the UNI team was at a community event, the Land Fair. An event that featured easily applied environmental actions that could be used by the community along with advocacy and advice around prevention of crime/violence, advice on buying side lots (vacant land left behind due to blight) and migration support services. It served as a community engagement activity.

The highlight of the Land Stewardship program was hearing from the local Hispanic community about the difference this has made in their lives, assisting to reach beyond just land stewardship into dealing with the ever-present threat of the

deportation of undocumented migrants. It demonstrated that actions that are as simple as community rubbish collections, build trust and relationships that then create pathways for higher tiered engagement, advocacy and education



Internships & College Vacation Program

UNI demonstrated that funding limitations can be overcome using alternate resources such as college students. During the visit, the Fellow worked alongside college students in some community actions that included rubbish collections, forums and preparations of resources for community outreach.

The college students volunteer their time to do community service for a week at a time, travelling from across the nation for the opportunity. This culture of community service was unexpected but demonstrated that with an invitation to participate in positive action, a purpose and clear plan, there are gains to be made. This idea can be extended to corporate groups, schools etc.

This initiative was led by graduate intern, Anna Herrmann. Anna also worked as a host. Anna, although not earning a wage, was provided with support to cover all living expenses over the period of a year.



Youth Advisory Board (YAB)

UNI demonstrated a commitment to community members of all ages, but none were as impacting as their YAB.

Meeting regularly to focus on youth related issues and activities within the community, the YAB group demonstrated that with appropriate leadership and training, youth are capable of leading positive community change. During the meeting observed, the YAB were working on an advocacy action to prevent school aged children being removed from class to act as interpreters for family members.

This acts as training ground for future governance opportunities and helps keep UNI abreast of youth related issues. Cloverdale Community Centre is working to create its own YAB with youth experiencing unemployment as a key cohort to engage.



There was more to see than time permitted, but the take home message was, there is no excuse for inaction. Community development combined with professionally informed practice and education created an agency that was trusted and utilised by the local community. The development and use of local talent demonstrated that solutions to local issues are best led by invested local leaders with contextual experience.

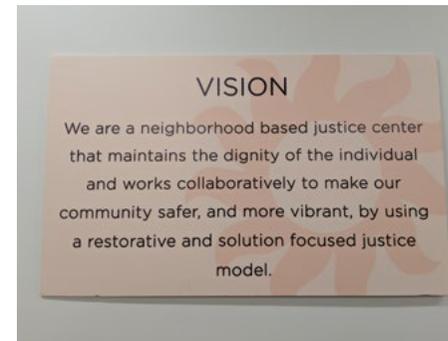
Southwest Detroit Community Justice

A community partner of UNI, Southwest Detroit Community Justice, provides frontline support to residents through the provision of a community court for a range of misdemeanours, social workers who provide support through their justice journey and seeks to use a restorative justice model. Conversations with staff highlighted both the tensions and positive nature of restorative justice, with limited resources and funding deficits, the program requires creative management.

Restorative justice is seen as “opportunities for persons to give back to the community through visible community service projects including painting over graffiti, sweeping streets, boarding up vacant homes, and cleaning local parks instead of jail and/or high fines”. This is similar to community correction orders but with a local area focus (within set postcodes). Social workers then work to address housing, employment, and mental health counselling as required.

The greatest insight obtained through this visit was; people are not problems; adversity happens and in response pathways need to be created that can deal with punitive outcomes, social stresses and provide education.

The other easily replicated example set by Southwest Detroit Community Justice was their commitment to creating a positive culture within their service through displaying and upholding their vision, mission and core values. From the minute you walk through the door, the culture is clear to all.



Capuchin Community Centre

“This is truly a story of what can happen when a community dreams of the impossible and believes in it. Miracles still happen!” – Br. Ray Stadmeier, OFM Cap (Capuchin Soup Kitchen, 2019)

The Capuchin Community Centre was a place of connection and information about an array of community engagement, welfare and restorative programs including Capuchin Soup Kitchen, On the Rise Bakery Café and Earthworks Urban Farm.

Realising that providing food alone was a missed opportunity to engage at a deep level with a community in need, they developed restorative programs that worked to assist people to transform their lives.

On the Rise Bakery Café

A fully operational bakery café that provides education and work experience to men who have recently been released from prison or who have completed a substance abuse treatment program. The program provides housing assistance, training, counselling, educational opportunities and self-help programs. There is a strong peer leadership focus, where participants actively support newer members.

The combination of education and community enterprise was very common throughout the Detroit community. Limited funding required creative enterprising to sustain the programs long-term. The sale of baked goods supports the program, with the quality of the products produced being of a very high standard.

Included in the complex that hosts the bakery are 11 affordable apartments and classrooms for the delivery of onsite training programs. This facility was constructed by the Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance.



Earthworks Urban Farm

A 2.5-acre, certified organic farm that aims to create “a just, beautiful food system through education, inspiration and community development”. The program works to educate the community about the origins of their food and build community. Initially started to help educate youth on nutrition, the program quickly grew to include an apiary, hot houses, a community orchard and community plots.

The program produces tons of produce annually, with the workforce supported by interns and volunteers, for the Capuchin Soup Kitchen and markets. The programs sustainability is largely due to there being a willingness to constantly evolve the program and innovate.



Signal-Return - Eastern Market Detroit

The diversity of community and social enterprises in Detroit was amazing. This made choosing where to visit difficult, but Signal Return provided a unique experience, appealing to the Fellows artistic tendencies and setting new standards for Cloverdale's Printing and Community Enterprise, Learn Local course, to aspire to.

Set in the Eastern Market precinct, Signal Return is one of many examples of social and community enterprise on show. The market hosts entrepreneurial locals, artisans and providers. It demonstrates the way in which income can be subsidised through hobbies.



“Letterpress printing is flourishing at Signal-Return as we build a Detroit non-profit centre for arts education, artists and arts enthusiasts” (Signal-Return, 2019).

The converted industrial space based in the Eastern Market precinct, houses a community letterpress printing workshop and store. The space is able to host workshops and a stable of talented artists who create high quality, original artwork that are for sale both in store and online.



Hostel Detroit

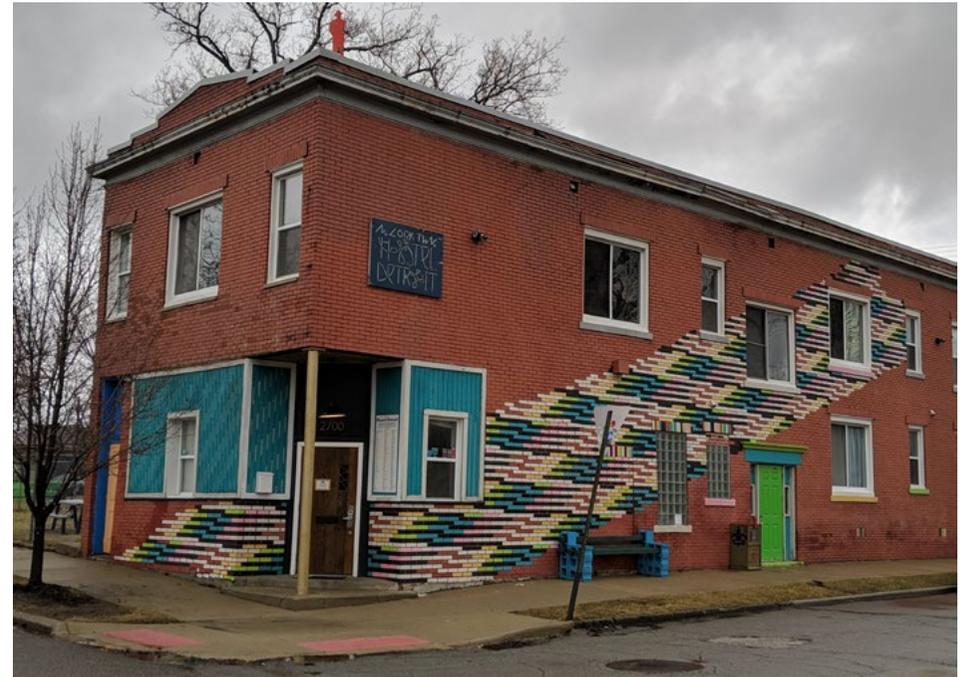
Demonstrating the strength of using a positive approach to community, Hostel Detroit provides affordable accommodation, educational tours and general advocacy for Detroit. Committed to exploring Detroit's past, present and future, they actively work to improve Detroit's reputation. This was a very innovative example of an educational not-for-profit, community enterprise.

The hostel aims to bridge the gap between visitors and Detroiters through the 'Ambassador Program'. Locals take visitors on tours exploring topics including:

- » Architecture
- » Music
- » Jazz
- » Blues
- » Motown
- » Electronic Music
- » History
- » Neighborhood Revitalization
- » Art
- » Urban Farming
- » Food and Beverage
- » The cultural diversity of Southeast Michigan
- » Innovative Housing Projects
- » Entrepreneurism

From initiating contact to visiting, it was evident that the Hostel provides a unique Detroit experience for guests along with affordable accommodation. Unfortunately, the Fellow was unable to stay but was grateful for their unique approach to demystifying Detroit. Without the advice given, planning our stay would have been much harder.

"Hostel Detroit is dedicated to being the catalyst for educational and cultural exchange between Detroit and the global community." – Hostel Detroit (About Us - Hostel Detroit, n.d.)



Homeboy/Homegirl Industries - Los Angeles

Homeboy /Homegirl Industries works to transform the lives of young people who have been caught up in the gang culture of Los Angeles. The enterprise produces a range of inhouse designed and printed casual apparel featuring affirming messages. Complimenting the enterprise are wellbeing programs and on-site support services including a free mobile medical clinic on the day of their visit. Complimenting Homeboy Industries is Homegirl Industries, a café and catering enterprise where they enjoyed a meal.

The Fellow was able to interact with participants and hear their personal stories of life as gang members and the transformative experiences of engaging in this program. Explaining the need to establish 'new' community as one of the greatest challenges they faced. Often needing to distance themselves from family in the hope of a new life.

Unexpected Detroit Links

Staying in an Airbnb in the Detroit suburb of New Center, the Fellow met artists, Billy and Sarah Dean. They have been gifted studio space in a renovated duplex in exchange for investing time to share their talents and arts practice with the local community. This is another example of how the not-for-profit sector is responding to both blight and social capital building.



5. PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SECTORAL IMPACT

Through her Fellowship travels the Fellow experienced:

- » Innovative funding in challenging financial climates.
- » Thriving social and community enterprises.
- » Sustainable practice using local talent and succession planning, engaging with community members in every stage of life.
- » Innovative community engagement strategies including low cost initiatives and actions.
- » A determined approach to creating education programs that actively addressed community disadvantage and boost a sense of united community.

The Fellow was challenged by:

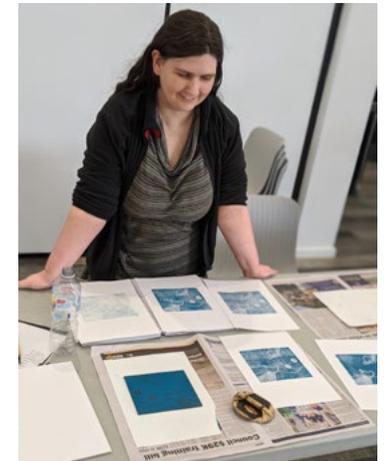
- » How we use and value our funding.
- » The need to build relational pathways with community that are underpinned by action and trust in communities already stressed.
- » That innovation does not always require extra funding.
- » The power of social and community enterprise.
- » Youth should be valued as the champions of tomorrow, engaging with young people helps to provide a secure future for them and you.
- » The need for broader professional wisdom to provide real-time assistance to community members and learners with complex and multiple needs.

The Fellow started to consider what “inclusive education” truly could or should look like. The social justice impact of positive community participation and more importantly, a meaningful education experience became a major influence in her planning processes. The realisation that life-long learning is a human right, yet many disadvantaged community members do not ever experience positive education. The Fellowship journey created an intentional plan to address this question, to seek innovative answers and challenge norms.

The most profound realisation was that the resources you have should and can be used in innovative ways. On her return to Australia, the Fellow was determined to gather the resources needed to create change for the community which they work with. A new, more determined approach was developed, none of which needed additional funding. Innovation is an attitude, a choice that any professional can make to create solutions with existing resources.

We have the resources to be creative, to customise education solutions and, we should. Within Victoria, Learn Local provides the perfect platform to change lives, a notion that grew as the Fellowship took shape. The realisation that we effectively have the ‘missing link’ in education, that is well funded and flexible but not widely understood by the broader education community.

‘Missing link’ because so many professionals that the Fellow networks with said, it is what is



missing from their state endorsed education systems. It is also apparent at a local level that local agencies still do not have a clear understanding of what Learn Local is, its purpose and funding source. We need to develop a greater understanding of Learn Local and its place within the VET system.

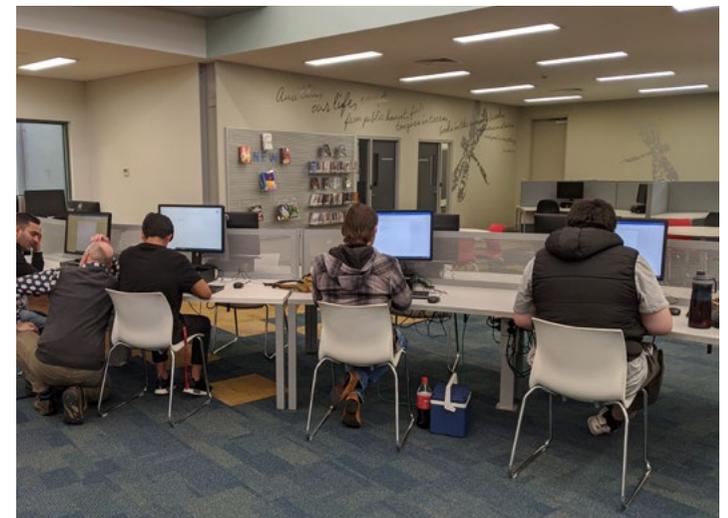
We have a system that provides a safety net for those transitioning into further education or employment, regardless of their previous experiences, levels of attainment, their sense of success or failure, and most importantly, their financial capacity. Many Learn Local courses are offered at a low cost or are free. All this yet, the Fellow is constantly needing to 'educate' their local networks about Learn Local. We need to link our education systems.

The flexibility of Learn Local means that it is perfect for diverse cohorts such as at Foundation 61, a residential rehabilitation facility on the Victorian Surf Coast. Addiction and life-controlling behaviours do not discriminate; education level attained, employment status, age etc. are not barriers to participation. Learn Local can provide a framework for the provision of quality education and is not affected by a person's history, whether they are an early school leaver or a tertiary graduate, it fits. Accredited training just does not fit neatly within this context.

Since returning, the Fellow has been engaged with the sector at a state level through NHVic and ACEVic. The Fellow provided feedback that was used to assist in the creation of recommendation statements to the State Minister for Training and Skills and Higher Education, Gayle Tierney, leading up to the release of the Ministerial Statement, The Future of Adult Education in Victoria 2020-2025 (Education.vic.gov.au, 2020).

The Fellow was asked to nominate and has subsequently become a member of the NHVic Board. This provides the Fellow the opportunity to build governance skills and further work towards creating a conversation that seeks to challenge long held ideas of best practice in communities experiencing disadvantage.

Cloverdale Community Centre is midway through delivering a Capacity and Innovation Fund (CAIF) 11 project; 'Collaboration between Learn Local Organisations and The Gordon TAFE'. This project is in partnership with the ACFE Barwon Southwest Regional Office of the Department of Education and Training, the Gordon TAFE and the local LLOs. This work has provided greater opportunity to pilot ideas from the Fellowship and collate findings using a social anthropologist that will help form content for the final report.



6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Funding

All too often a lack of funding or insufficient funding is cited as to why projects, programs etc cannot be done or at the very least, are limited. We see projects and programs come and go as sustainable approaches beyond funding periods are overlooked when they should be considered as a project design feature/outcome.

UNI demonstrated a determined approach that saw programs run for consecutive years. This was largely based in enterprising thinking, seeding projects with funding and building enterprise into the projects to ensure longevity wherever possible. A great example of this was the SAUMP, youth mural project which has run since 2003.

We need to show the way by demonstrating best practice in the use of existing funding. We need to advocate and create professional development opportunities that actively show capacity building methodologies and practices to the sector, evidence-based approaches that can easily be applied.

Further to development and capacity building is sustained approaches. Recommendations from the DOTE report include the need for longevity of programs and “perseverance – a firm commitment to staying the distance with a manageable number of highly disadvantaged communities” (Vinson et al, 2015).

Priority cohorts need funding priority & well-being support

“In Victoria: just 11 postcodes (1.6% of total) account for 13.7% of the most disadvantaged rank positions. Dominant factors include unemployment, criminal convictions, disability, low education and child maltreatment, family violence and psychiatric admissions” (Yule, 2015).

We know where the focus of effort is needed, and we have the tools to create change. Learn Local funding is a valuable tool when working with diverse, complex cohorts who are considered vulnerable job seekers, under employed, experiencing life complexity or have mental illness. Consideration of funding priority for these cohorts, especially in areas facing severe disadvantage, such as Corio/Norlane, where capacity is shown, would be beneficial. Capacity implies a demonstrated growth in delivery and program impact, that is evidence based and where appropriate support strategies are in place.

A risk managed approach is essential with cohort complexity, the well-being of both the learners and trainers is put at risk if it has not been identified. Incidental professional scope creep, trauma and burnout becomes a significant risk to manage. Poor funding and a lack of innovative practice to overcome these challenges further increases these risks.

UNI Detroit provided insight into a social work driven organisation that rallies to deal with the issues unique to their community. It demonstrated an informed,

professional approach and helped to highlight how, at times, we were working beyond our professional scope of practice.

As a result, Cloverdale Community Centre has addressed this through the development of a well-being coalition. Positive education and community participation outcomes are supported by four professional practice:

- » Community Development
- » Education
- » Social Work
- » Psychology

A trial of a well-being team is being conducted using tertiary social work students on placement. Immediately we have seen participation and retention rates improve with community members who would have previously drifted away due to a lack of the ongoing supports needed to address their barriers to participation.



We also trialled a ‘two in the room’ model consisting of an educator and a social wellbeing practitioner or used practitioners with qualifications in the well-being related fields. Our programs are less disrupted, educators can now work within their professional scope of practice, reducing the risk of incidental scope creep that could result in trauma to both the educators and learners.

The introduction of a targeted wellbeing focus has seen our capacity and retention rates increase significantly over the past twelve-month period. Our partnering organisations are responding and referring into our system with greater confidence and we are now seeking funding to provide wage support to develop a framework for the sector. We want to challenge the current best practice benchmarks and develop a sustainable, responsive model that is easily replicated within the Learn Local and Neighbourhood House sectors. The real challenge is a practice model that responds to the unique needs of different geographic areas.

“It allows our educators to educate. We are no longer juggling complexity that we are not trained to deal with, we have our educator’s hat on and our classes are more productive. It works” – Jeanette Anderson, Cloverdale Community Centre Adult Education & Community Participation Coordinator.

Power of tethering to children & youth – family pathways

Through the creation of meaningful outcomes for children and youth, you also may begin to see impacts in their extended families/communities. As a result of observing a Youth Advisory Board (YAB), Cloverdale is working towards establishing a YAB for the northern suburbs of Geelong.

The need for strong, local governance is a constant pressure in our organisation, a community owned not-for-profit. How do we counter this, through developing programs and courses that teach leadership and governance to local community members. We need contextual experts who provide a local resource and

perspective, driving our community development approach. Accountability from within the community is key to achieving locally significant and meaningful education outcomes.

Investing in children and youth within the community, does create better community connections. Cloverdale observed this through the Kids as Catalysts program run by Kids Thrive (Kids Thrive, 2019). We have been a community partner for the past two years, working alongside grade 6 students from local primary schools to develop philanthropic attitudes through sharing our ‘time, talent and treasure’. This initiative has given us a reason to invite families into our centre for significant events such as our building re-opening in 2019.

It is a foundation pathway into our programs and the YAB. We are now a place of significance to families through our engagement in community actions and activities. In 2020, we are looking to do rubbish collections and community action days. A simple step to be visible to our community, especially to local families. These activities were inspired by UNI Detroit and their deliberate and persistent, visible presence in their local community. Their community actions developed relationships that have led to increased trust and engagement with the local community.

Relational Pathways

Starting with relational engagement, community participation is a fundamental foundational pathway. A sense of positive community equals an increased capacity for formal pathways. It starts with trust, trust that we will not make the same mistakes community members have experienced in the past from other agencies; non-completion and failure to meet their needs.

Local leadership is a key area for development. Mentoring contextual experts has proven to be an easy, affordable way to directly deal with challenging cohort behaviours and to forge meaningful connections within community. An example

of this at Cloverdale is Luke Anderson, a former participant in the corrections system who wants to inspire others to come into community and make lasting changes in their lives.

Specialist Practitioners

Holistic, non-traditional partnerships engaging a multidisciplinary team, E.g. psychology, social workers, educators and community development practitioners, have been trialled at Cloverdale Community Centre. It started by recognising where our cohort pushed us to work at the boundaries or beyond our professional scope of practice.



On reflection, it presented a high risk to both our community participants and staff. They were engaging in incidental practice and sharing advice beyond a 'push to service' model. Understanding this then enabled us to consider the needs of our cohort and consider which professional practices would provide the best service outcomes.

This needs to be underpinned by organisational strategic direction. Your aims and purpose remain the same and these practitioners need to know and respect your purpose. In our example, we identify that healthy community participation, a sense of purpose, life-long learning and educational pathways are fundamental ideals that form our coalition practice.

Deficit Language

The use of deficit language has power and does impact communities and individuals. Beyond providing funding rationale, language which speaks only to highlight the negative issues faced by a community has no need for use when dealing with these communities.



Expanding pathways thinking

We need to consider pathways into community participation in our education pathways hierarchies. Community participation is a fundamental step towards education and employment. A sense of belonging and of community are a key measure of a healthy, balanced life.

Expecting people to leap from nothing into a classroom or employment is unrealistic and often sets vulnerable community members up to fail. Providing multiple entry points, soft entry points into community provides the appropriate building blocks. Neighbourhood House/LLOs are well placed to create these entry points as they are underpinned by community development principles and often run programs that encourage community participation.

Planning for success

Moving away from a deficit lens has provided a different view of community. We are no longer dwelling in the negative dialogue that is found within the statistics and attitudes towards our postcode. Our focus is on the potential that can be found and developed beyond the deficits, the opportunities for growth and learning.

Our community has responded to this approach. We now have a much more diverse range of participants engaged in our organisation. This is further enhanced by a very simple code of conduct that is on display throughout our building and introduced to all participants in our centre. The expectations of each individual is clear and uncomplicated.



Holistic approaches – working within your scope of professional practice

Cloverdale Community Centre has boldly embraced tertiary students on placement to trial a wellbeing coalition approach in the Neighbourhood House setting. The combination of psychology, social work, community development practice and education has produced amazing results.

This was inspired by the social work led model of UNI Detroit but also drew on the pastoral care approaches of both the Capuchin Soup Kitchen and Homeboy/Homegirl Industries. Each organisation presented a unique take on how to work within communities experiencing complexity. All were founded with a strong sense of the value and uniqueness of individuals; they were not seen as the problem just people experiencing problems.

This humanistic approach aligns to recommendation made by Delors (Delors, 1996) that speak to a humanism approach in education, an idea revisited again in 2015 by Elfert (Elfert, 2015). The Four Pillars of Learning bring to the fore the need to consider identity and community; “Learning to be emerges, once again, as a timeless priority. Being and becoming a whole person – fully entitled to the rights and duties, bearers of a human dignity beyond conditionalities – remain prime goals of every single educational endeavour. This pillar brings to life the road to self-fulfilment (Carneiro, 2015, p. 105).

“There is no us and them. Just Us!” – Homeboy Industries

Peer leadership

Drawing and developing your team from the local community creates a contextualised approach. Using an intentional relational or engagement approach is important when working towards addressing complex community issues.

It is important to build the trust and confidence of community members of all ages. This is where Neighbourhood House/Learn Local Organisations are well placed. They work in both a community development (Neighbourhood House Coordination Guidelines) and education compliance framework (Pre-accredited Quality Framework). Two complementary approaches.

This can be done without focusing on any known deficits. Community will, in time, address these needs but first must develop a trusting relationship with the organisation, its trainer/facilitators and its programs.



Concluding Comments

Quality adult education that meets the diverse needs of community experiencing barriers to participation needs to evolve and adapt in such a way that individual needs are identified, and unique local solutions are developed. There is no one model or approach, it requires local, tailored and dynamic systems that are responsive to change. A coalition of professional practice that emerges as needs are identified, led by innovative practitioners. One geographical area does not present an approach or solution for another. This report presents ideas that need to be adapted to align to ACFE expectations, community needs and organisational purpose.

Adult education “plays a significant role in economic growth and in social and personal development” (Faradova, 2019). It is important to build capacity from within communities, not for communities, using community development as an opportunity to co-design with community. There is a need to consider appropriate pathways; building from community participation through to more formal education in order to develop life-long learning culture. Where we start is critical; resilience, confidence and the ability to transition from one opportunity to another provides pathways planning insight.

Working in a considered, consistent manner, with tools such as Learn Local, sets the Victorian education system apart. We have a resource that has the potential to create prosperity in communities facing disadvantage and barriers to participation in education and employment. Learn Local can work to shift people from poverty into community.

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