



# A Successful Journey

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Defining the measures of success for  
young people in flexible learning programs

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			FLP	Flexible Learning Program
			FLV	Flexible Learning Victoria
			ILP	Individual Learning Plan
			LLEN	Local Learning and Employment Network
			NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
			PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
			SBAT	School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship
			TAFE	Technical and Further Education
			VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
			VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
			VET	Vocational Education and Training
			VETiS	Vocational Education and Training in Schools
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# Executive Summary

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The *A Successful Journey: Defining the measures of success for young people in flexible learning programs* research report was carried out from January 2016 to February 2017. This research was completed by Flexible Learning Victoria (FLV), a project created in October 2015 under the “Leading Practice and Leading Change in Youth Education” project funded by the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board. Consortium members overseeing the project are SkillsPlus (Lead), Narre Community Learning Centre, Melbourne City Mission and the Brotherhood of St Laurence, with project management by the Bayside Glen Eira Kingston LLEN (BGKLEN).

Young people in Flexible Learning Programs (FLPs) have often experienced significant trauma and have complex barriers to learning. As such, standard measures of success, such as completing Year 12, are largely insufficient. FLPs therefore define and measure success differently. The purpose of this research was to explore and define how providers of FLPs measure the success of the young people who attend their programs. It aimed to answer the question

‘What are the measures of success for young people participating in alternative and flexible learning organisations in southern metropolitan Melbourne?’.

The research was limited to the collection of data from FLPs within the southern metropolitan Melbourne region and was informed by data collected in four overlapping phases:

- 1. Survey of FLPs in southern metropolitan Melbourne:** an online survey was distributed to approximately thirty FLPs. There were 73 survey responses received, representing at least thirteen providers in the region.
- 2. Focus Group Interview:** Seven members of the FLV Steering Committee took part in a focus group. Questions were designed to stimulate in-depth information regarding measuring success in FLPs and to clarify data queries from the survey stage.
- 3. Telephone Interviews:** Eight FLPs were selected and approached to take part in phone interviews. Program managers were invited to be interviewed or to nominate an interviewee. Four questions were asked regarding measuring success in FLPs in conversations lasting 20–30 minutes.
- 4. Case Study Collation:** Eight FLPs were invited to write a case study of approximately 300–500 words in length regarding a young person who had experienced success in their setting. Each FLP was allocated a measure of success to base the case study on, based on data from the survey and focus group. Seven case studies were completed and then edited for inclusion in the final report.



## Measures of Success

Too often young people are set up to fail by being judged by the same benchmark, regardless of their life circumstances. Albert Einstein wrote, *“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”* This research looked at how success can be measured in a manner that ensures the characteristics and circumstances of the individual are considered. Thematic analysis revealed that a holistic approach to measuring success was common in FLPs. Ten initial categories of measures of success used within FLPs were summarised into the following four overarching groupings:

### 1 Wellbeing

Personal wellbeing and social wellbeing are considered highly important measures of success for young people. 96% of FLP staff reported that personal wellbeing was either very important or important as a measure of success for FLPs, making it the key way they evaluated the progress of young people attending their program. As wellbeing barriers were often the greatest obstacle to education progress, achieving growth in this area was crucial to improvement in other areas.

### 2 Engaging With The Program

Engagement and participation is a highly valued measure of success. Engagement was achieved by individualising curriculum and building positive relationships between staff and students. Positive engagement lead to more effective learning and better attendance. Programs put a high premium on attendance and achieved this by creating engaging programs.

### 3 Academic Outcomes

Academic improvement and skill development were also highly valued. Improved basic skills such as literacy and numeracy linked to increased confidence for young people and the ability to actively pursue career aspirations. Practical curriculum and applied learning techniques helped to achieve these. Certification was important but viewed as possible only when wellbeing challenges were overcome.

### 4 Community Connection

Community engagement and post-program destinations rated as either very important or important by 65% of participants. These two measures were interconnected, with positive community engagement often leading to and supporting a positive post program transition. Linking students to ‘the real world’ improved learning and engagement and helped them envision their future once they finished in the program.

A variety of tools were used to capture these broad measures of success. These ranged from standard academic tools such as issuing certificates through to highly individualised tools for more complex indicators such as wellbeing outcomes.


## Research Findings and Considerations

The research report identified seven key areas that require further consideration:

- 1 Raise the profile of and funding for wellbeing measures, including investing in the development of suitable tools to measure wellbeing progress
- 2 Enable academic opportunities for young people not in mainstream education by equitably supporting FLPs
- 3 Create better student engagement through more flexible curriculum design and relational implementation
- 4 Focus on real world learning to stimulate community involvement and post-program pathways
- 5 Facilitate student engagement by involving them in measuring their own success
- 6 Embrace a broader definition of success, and open dialogue about these broader measures
- 7 Give recognition to and acknowledgment of the specialist nature of FLPs

Broadening the definition and measures of success beyond the traditional academic measures is clearly in the best interests of young people. For staff working in FLPs, their ability to view a variety of outcomes as a success enabled them to look beyond the usual paradigm of judging success solely by academic measures. This was particularly significant for young people going through personal difficulties who were facing academic challenges. A more holistic approach to measuring success creates positives outcomes for disadvantaged young people, enabling them to experience success in education, often for the first time in many years.



An illustration of a person with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a purple long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, standing on a reddish-brown mountain peak. They are looking out over a vast, stylized landscape with rolling hills in shades of purple and red under a blue sky with soft white clouds. The person has their arms crossed and is looking towards the right side of the frame.

“Does one single measure, such as Year 12 attainment, capture success – and if so, success to what end?”

## Introduction

A recent Victorian Government media release reported that a record number of students had passed their Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in 2016. According to this release, “...a total of 49,765 students have now completed the final chapter in their school lives and obtained their VCE, which represents a record completion rate of 97.9 per cent of students. Of these students, 3804 will be awarded the VCE (Baccalaureate) and a further 13,050 students will receive their Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL)” (Victoria State Government, 2016).

Completing Year 12 is a very significant achievement. After thirteen years, each successful student has reached a major milestone in his or her life. However, while their achievement cannot be denied, this recognition of Year 12 success raises an important question that needs to be looked at – what is success? Is completion of VCE the best measure of educational achievement or are other measures equally valid? Does one single measure, such as Year 12 attainment, capture success – and if so, success to what end?

From a policy perspective, current education goals within Australia focus strongly on Year 12 completion rates. In 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) set a target to lift Australia's Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate from 83.5% to 90% by the year 2015. This has now been extended to 2020, as the goal was not met (Council of Australian Governments, 2016). This target fulfilled an economic imperative, with higher achievement rates clearly linked with developing national productivity and increasing human capital, as a way to ‘compete’ in the global knowledge economy (Keating, Savage and Polesel, 2012; Council of Australian Governments, 2009).

The mainstream media also focuses heavily on Year 12 pass rates and Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) scores as indicators of success. In 2015 The Conversation published an article titled ‘Year 12 results day: does the ATAR actually matter that much?’. In it, Shane Duggans (2015) challenges that every year when results are released, the “school league tables of winners and losers” are posted in the media with the “usual cast of schools in the usual handful of locations across the country that take top honours.” As he points out, however, the media misses out mentioning the fact that across the country over 25% of young people are not completing Year 12 or its equivalent (Lamb et al. 2015). Or that in Victoria over 10,000 young people in Years 9–11 are dropping out of school every year, with a further 6000 leaving TAFE in their first year (Cook, 2014). These are disturbing statistics.



What is also typically missing in mainstream media narratives are the stories about how many schools and providers of flexible learning options outside of school work tirelessly with disadvantaged young people to improve their results or how for many, even with all this work, top scores are still out of reach. However, does this mean that these young people are not successful in their learning journey? We know that young people from postcodes where there are higher levels of disadvantage fare far more poorly with education outcomes as compared to other more affluent postcodes. The Dropping Off the Edge 2015 report shows that complex and interwoven, hard-to-shift disadvantage influences multiple outcomes, including education (Vinson and Rawsthorne, 2015). We also know that many students struggle with debilitating anxiety and other mental health issues in completing Year 12. In the 2016 Mission Australia Annual Youth Report (Bailey et al. 2016), research showed that over one third of the 22,000 young people surveyed aged between 15 and 19 were “highly stressed” about school. Further, approximately one in seven school-age children have a mental health problem but only one in four gets the help they need (Kismatter, 2016).

Additionally we know that Year 12 success does not necessarily correlate to immediate career success after school. On average, it now takes an incredible **4.7 years** from when a young person leaves full time education to when they enter full time employment – in 1986, this was one year (Pope and Mutch, 2015). Many of the ‘enterprise’ skills needed by young people in a rapidly changing employment market such as high-level critical thinking, problem solving and teamwork, are not necessarily the focus of mainstream schooling, meaning that a positive school experience may not translate to gaining secure employment (AlphaBeta, 2016). So what is success?

For many young people, especially those with significant trauma in their childhood, we know that success cannot be measured merely by whether they pass their Year 12 or not. Young people with complex barriers to learning will often view completing their VCE as a pipedream. It is something they cannot even imagine in their current situation. For them, success may look like having a bed to sleep in or a roof over their head tonight. It could be developing sufficient literacy skills to just hold down a job and put food on the table. On the other hand, maybe it is working through entrenched drug and alcohol issues that are preventing them from moving forward in life.

Working with young people facing such barriers compels Flexible Learning Programs (FLPs) to view success in far more holistic terms. They support young people to remain engaged in education where, for whatever reason, this is not possible within mainstream school (DET, 2013). These programs work with over 70,000 young people studying in more than 900 flexible learning settings across Australia (te Riele, 2014). FLPs vary widely in size, structure and funding sources from small Learn Locals and not-for-profit community based programs through to larger State, Catholic and Independent schools. They all have a shared mission to reengage and educate young people that have stopped attending mainstream education. By their very definition, flexible learning providers work with young people who have not remained engaged in education in school and as such need a more flexible approach; more individualised, more nurturing and with different goals in mind. Logically this also requires a more nuanced approach to measuring success and progress for these young people.

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”

Flexible learning options are also delivered within mainstream schools, thereby enabling young people at risk of disengaging to stay connected to their school (Department of Education and Training, 2013). This report however will focus on measures of success evidenced within FLPs offered in the community. These community-based programs are aimed at young people “*who require more complex and intensive services and supports in order to re-engage with education*” (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010, p. 14).

This research aims to answer the following question: “*What are the measures of success for young people participating in alternative and flexible learning organisations in southern metropolitan Melbourne?*”. It will present:

- a. A review of recent literature on measures of success for young people completing their secondary education within FLPs.
- b. An analysis of data from a survey, focus group, phone interviews and case studies regarding the measures of success identified by staff from FLPs within the southern metropolitan Melbourne region.
- c. A discussion of definitions of measures of success, as seen within FLPs in southern metropolitan Melbourne and considerations for the sector based on these findings.

This research was completed by Flexible Learning Victoria (FLV), a project created in October 2015 under the “Leading Practice and Leading Change in Youth Education” project funded by the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board. Consortium members overseeing the project are SkillsPlus (Lead), Narre Community Learning Centre, Melbourne City Mission and the Brotherhood of St Laurence, with project management by the Bayside Glen Eira Kingston LLEN (BGKLEN).

As the third piece of research in this series, a strong voice is emerging regarding the value of locally delivered flexible learning. This research builds on two existing research reports completed in the southern metropolitan Melbourne region:

- ‘A Different Journey’ (Ellum and Longmuir, 2012) – a report on youth in Learn Locals in southern metropolitan Melbourne. This report is available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/research/acfepublications/diffjourneyllreport2013.pdf>
- ‘The Next Journey’ (Waugh, 2014) – a review of youth pathways and career development in alternative and flexible learning organisations in southern metropolitan Melbourne. The Next Journey was a collaborative paper with contributions by the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) within the southern metropolitan Melbourne region and the Department of Education Regional Career Development Officer. This report is available at <http://bgklen.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/The-Next-Journey-Report-2014.pdf>



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## Literature Review

### Terminology

The language used to describe programs running outside of mainstream schooling and the young people who attend them is widely contested (te Riele, 2012; Mills and McGregor, 2010). Programs may be referred to as alternative education, flexible learning, or re-engagement programs. In contrast, ‘mainstream’ schools and schooling is a commonly accepted term. Young people that attend flexible programs are referred to as disengaged, at risk, disadvantaged, marginalised and disenfranchised. Many of these terms are either deficit based or implicitly blame to the young person for their state rather than acknowledging wider structural and societal issues. Recognising that there are limitations to any chosen terms, this report uses the terms Flexible Learning Program (FLP) and disadvantaged young people.

### Defining Measures of Success

Defining measures of success is complex because, not surprisingly, young people are all different. The recording of attainment rates, attendance and similar standardised processes are typically used to measure success in mainstream education settings. Trends such as increased school accountability through *My School*, which uses ‘meaningful comparisons of NAPLAN results and other performance measures among schools across Australia’ (My School, 2016) and an increased focus on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results in the mainstream media keep the focus on standardised measures. If anything, as Australia’s performance continues to decline against PISA (Cook and Jacks, 2016),

these measures are gaining additional attention. Additionally, education policy places emphasis on the success of an education system and the individual school as opposed to the success of the individual (Bentley and Cazaly, 2015). Such an approach recognises the success of the school and the school leaders, as evidenced by end of year student results rather than the individual’s success.

When defining measures of success in FLPs, program success is different to individual success, although the two are often interwoven. A Different Journey (Ellum and Longmuir, 2012) looked at identifying ‘factors of success’ when defining FLP success. These factors included the young person being re-engaged in learning, achieved by adapting the curriculum and teaching practice being adapted to the young person’s needs and by identifying external supports required to meet these needs. The Next Journey (Waugh, 2014) identified that a successful FLP was one that achieved student engagement in the program, and supported the young person to identify and pursue a career pathway. To enable this, wellbeing issues needed to be supported and addressed in order for the young person to “*transition into anything successfully outside our program*” (Waugh, 2014, p.25).



“

Measuring and defining success in FLPs is not linear. Success in the FLP cannot be measured solely by completion rate or attainment (te Riele, 2014).”

The benefits of educational success as defined by Year 12 outcomes and its impact on personal, social and economic wellbeing both for young people and for society, are well documented (Deloitte Access Economics, 2008; te Riele, Davies, and Swain, 2015). However, it is well recognised that academic success alone does not guarantee a successful post school transition (Crump and Slee, 2015). Completion of Year 12 or equivalent in itself does not automatically equate to well-developed employability skills. Wilson, Stemp and McGinty (2011) identified “... *that students, their families, schools and outside institutions may all have different perceptions of ‘success’*” (p.34). Public perception of the educational program itself plays a part in their definition of success. Young people participating in FLPs, which historically are viewed as ‘alternative’ options (and by implication second class) to mainstream school, especially feel this.

### Measuring Success for Young People in Flexible Learning Programs

Measuring and defining success in FLPs is not linear. Success in the FLP cannot be measured solely by completion rate or attainment (te Riele, 2014). Rather success can be defined as evidence that a student demonstrates a wide range of more general attributes, such as respect, control, the ability to connect and a demonstrable ability to draw meaning or purpose from the learning (te Riele, Davies and Swain, 2015). According to te Reile, Davies, and Swain (2015) “*Different outcomes may be valuable and achievable for different young people and programs, and most outcomes are not easily measured. The concept of ‘distance travelled’ is valuable*” (p.14).

What the student determines to be a measure of success within a FLP is important. One study noted that initially “*students spoke about success in traditional terms: receiving certificates, being accepted into a tertiary education course, or securing a job*” (Plows, Bottrell, and te Riele, 2016, p.6). However, as the students engaged in the FLP they reflected more on the changes that they had seen within themselves as more intangible measures of success. There is a ‘... *complexity of successfully (re)-engaging students in learning*’ (p.5). That complexity makes measuring success a difficult proposition, especially where measures are ‘felt’, ‘observed’ and ‘heard’ but not formally recorded.

Research has identified the importance of achieving positive self-perception through education (te Riele, 2014; Smyth, McInerney, and Fish, 2013). For many students, enrolling in a FLP is the culmination of many ‘failures’ within the mainstream environment. The ability to turn that negative self-perception to a positive is therefore in itself a tangible success.

Successful learning is often viewed through the lens of how well the learner can negotiate assessment and demonstrate the learning expectations as set by the school curriculum. McGregor et al. (2015) however identified that there are other measures that may be more relevant to the young person, such as the ability to articulate goals, to see a future and be able to define what that future could be.

Te Riele (2014) highlights the need to look closer at the successes being demonstrated within FLPs. Good practice in FLP provision called for specific valued outcomes to be evidenced by the young person. These outcomes included the traditional credentials, completions and transitions to employment but also sought evidence of “*personal growth and wellbeing (emotional, behavioural, social and health outcomes), recognition from community (for programs, staff and students), [and] contribution to community (through volunteering as well as reduced costs)*” (p.13). A successful FLP was seen as one that engaged the young person and allowed them to set goals, self-direct, attain outcomes and achieve results in a supported environment. Measures for success were intrinsic to engagement in learning, and included the ability of a young person to develop mutual respect, trust and care for teachers, support workers and peers.

According to Mills and McGregor (2010), if the learning environment in a FLP is different then it should be recognised that the measures of success required would be different. They stated that re-engagement programs are delivered by “...*schools that were not so much concerned with changing the student, but instead concentrated on changing the environment and the kinds of teaching and learning that young people engage in*” (p.8). They highlighted many identifiable measures of success including the ability to put things in perspective, to reflect, to build trust and appropriate relationships/ friendships, the capacity to self-express and to self-identify and develop resilience, the development of internal strength and capacity to continue successfully beyond Year 12. A recent study (Plows, Bottrell, and te Riele, 2016) supports the notion that a range of measures of success are equal to the acquisition of credentials including sitting patiently, attending and participating in a classroom activity, engaging in a civil conversation with another student or teacher, completing a set task on time and believing in yourself.

In his final evaluation of a FLP Myconos (2014) drew on previous learning, concluding, “... *success cannot be expressed simply in terms of formal and quantifiable attainments*” (p.21). The evaluation found that outcomes achieved and measurable were twofold – initially informal, creating the conditions within which learning could happen and secondly more formal, resulting in academic achievement evidenced through completion, graduation and attendance data. The two were seen as being interdependent. “*There was little doubt among interviewees that formal and informal outcomes are closely related—and moreover, that the informal outcomes combine to provide preconditions to attainment of formal outcomes*” (Myconos, 2013, p.23).

Finally Myconos (2013) highlighted and recommended the need for FLPs to better define what success looks like for the students, with a need to articulate the attainment of outcomes beyond academic outcomes. By better defining what success looks like, FLPs can be give structure to the narrative about the value of such programs.



# Methodology

## Background

The *A Successful Journey: Defining the measures of success for young people in flexible learning programs* research was carried out from January 2016 to February 2017. Debra Parker, the initial Flexible Learning Victoria (FLV) Project Manager, began the research, carrying out the research design and original literature review. Nicholas Johns, the current FLV Project Manager, carried out the data collection, analysis and report writing. The concept for the research came about through discussions held with regional Flexible Learning Networks on student achievements. A consistent theme emerged that student success was being achieved in FLPs but not always being recognised through standard data collection and reporting. The recurring question “How do we define success for our young people?” was one that could not be clearly and concisely answered, leading to the research proposal.

## Research Participants

Participants in the research were primarily staff from FLPs in the southern metropolitan region of Melbourne. In total, there were 71 participants. These participants represented at least thirteen organisations, with sixteen respondents choosing not to disclose their organisation. This represents a strong coverage of FLPs in this area.

Eight key FLPs from the region were involved in multiple phases of the data collection, including the survey, the telephone interview and sharing case studies. Of these eight, six had also been involved with data collection in the last piece of research in this series, *The Next Journey*. This meant that they were familiar with the history of the research.

## Data Collection

### Survey of Flexible Learning Providers

Survey Monkey was used for online survey creation, distribution, collection and collation of results for analysis (see Appendix A). The survey was designed to collect a broad set of data directly from the providers about how they viewed measures of success in their setting. This survey was open for data collection between 15 October 2016 and 18 November 2016. It was distributed via direct email with a Survey Monkey link to the following organisations:

1. Twenty youth provider Learn Locals as identified by the South Eastern Victoria ACFE region head office (of these, five were directly involved with other aspects of data collection including telephone interviews and case studies).
2. Eight FLPs that formed part of the Steering Committee and Consortia Committee for FLV.
3. Four Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) Executive Officers (EOs) in the southern metropolitan Melbourne region, being Inner Eastern LLEN, South Eastern LLEN, Frankston Mornington Peninsula LLEN and Bayside Glen Eira Kingston LLEN. These EOs were asked to share an email with FLP staff in their regions with descriptive text and a link to the survey.

There were 73 survey responses received. Of these two were discounted from the original data set, as they did not answer any questions beyond initial demographic information. The 71 remaining responses represented at least thirteen providers including nine Learn Locals and one LLEN.

## Focus Group

Seven members of the FLV Steering Committee took part in a focus group on 5 October 2016. This group was asked several questions regarding measuring success in FLPs. Notes were taken during this focus group, which were then expanded on at a later date. In addition, discussion took place using a question template on which participants were invited to write their own notes (see Appendix B).

## Telephone Interviews

Eight FLPs were approached to take part in phone interviews between 15 October 2016 and 1 December 2016. All were identified as appropriate as they met the following eligibility criteria:

1. Learn Local youth provider or other youth education provider
2. Working with disadvantaged young people who have left mainstream education
3. Running programs aimed to both reengage and educate young people aged 12–25

In addition, six of the eight organisations approached had been involved with the data collection for the last piece of research in this series, *The Next Journey*.

Program managers/coordinators were emailed to invite their participation in the research. This was followed up with a phone call to interested staff to arrange a convenient time to undertake the telephone interview. Program managers/coordinators were invited to be interviewed or to nominate someone who could provide the information required, such as a classroom teacher or wellbeing worker.

An interview schedule was developed which included four specific questions designed to draw out broad themes around measures of success in FLPs whilst being open enough to generate conversation (see Appendix C). Notes were taken during the phone interview and expanded on after the interview.

## Case Study Collation

The FLPs that were approached to take part in the phone interview were also invited to write a case study of approximately 300–500 words in length between 1 November 2016 and 1 December 2016. They were sent a Case Study Template to give a framework (see Appendix D). Each FLP was allocated a measure of success to base the case study on, based on data from the survey and focus group. Seven case studies were completed and then edited for inclusion in the final report.

## Quality

### Consent

The voluntary nature of the online survey was clearly articulated both in the email inviting participation and in the introductory page of the survey. An email was sent to FLP staff explaining the telephone interview and case study process, with a plain language and consent form attached to be signed prior to participation (see Appendix E & F). The Case Study template explained the voluntary nature and context of the project. In some organisations, where the person completing the case study was different to the person who had carried out the phone interview, consent was obtained from both parties.

### Scope

This research was carried out in southern metropolitan Melbourne. It focused on collecting data from staff at FLPs working with young people aged 12–25. These programs were invited to participate directly, invited to participate by a LLEN EO, or were referred for participation by the ACFE Regional Manager for the survey focus area.

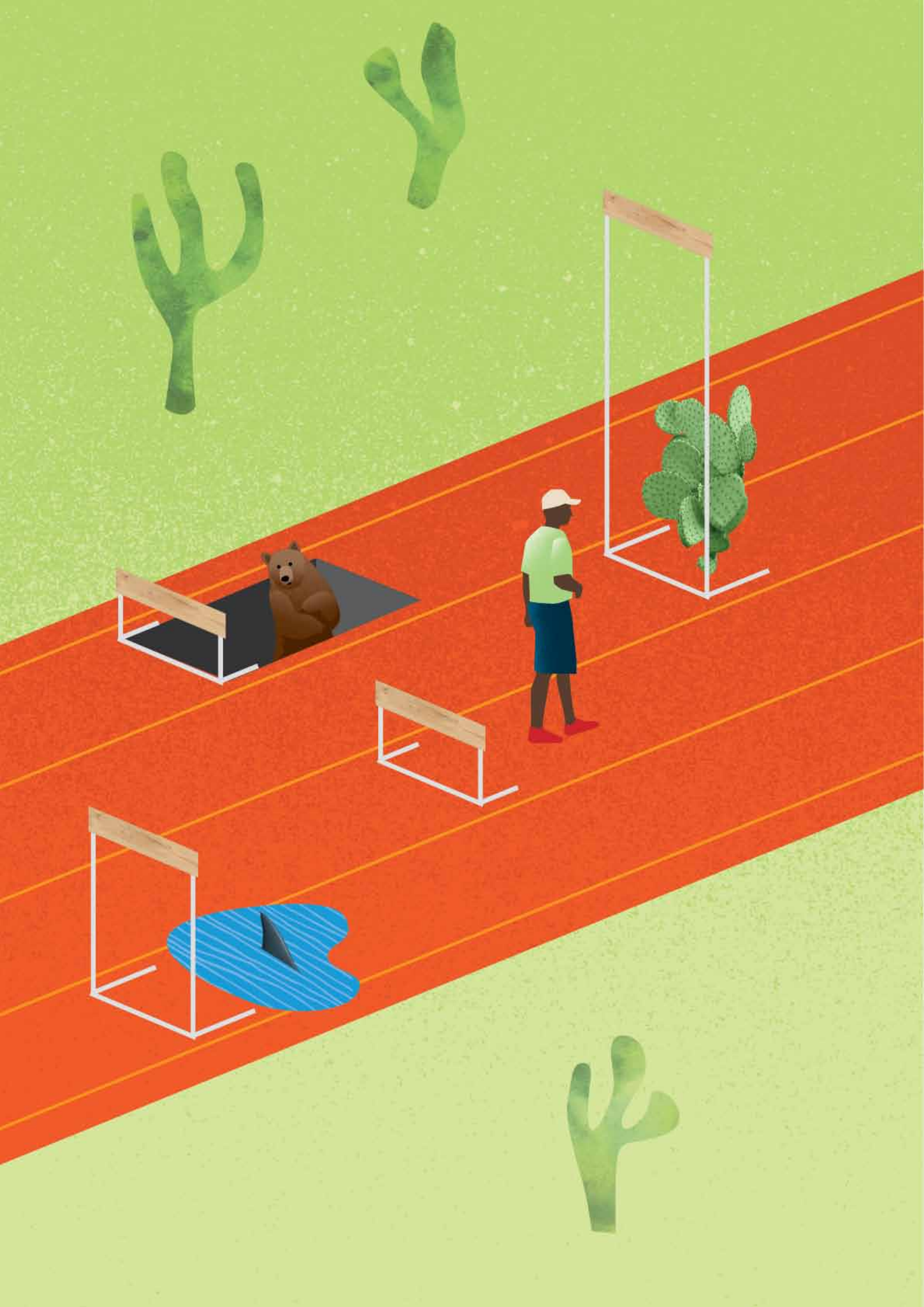
### Limitations of Research

This research was limited to the collection of data from FLPs within the southern metropolitan Melbourne region. Approximately half of the providers in the area did not provide data; hence, findings may be limited in generalisability. Different measures of success may be found in other local government areas and FLPs, due to differences in FLP philosophies and practices, teacher and student personal perceptions of success, and socio-economic indicators including student diversity and demographics.



The recurring question “How do we define success for our young people?” was one that could not be clearly and concisely answered, leading to the research proposal.





# Results

## Introduction

Young people in FLPs have a wide variety of complex needs that have often acted as barriers to a successful learning journey. Traumatic experiences such as having to care for a sick parent, bullying, being removed from the family home or experiencing homelessness, to name a few, interrupt a young person's learning and their ability to stay engaged with education.

Within this context, staff working within FLPs have learnt to take into account a wider definition of what success is for these young people. Staff identified that it is important to value soft outcomes as much as academic outcomes and took a “*micro and macro approach*”. When asked to summarise the concept of success in a FLP, some staff stated that singling out particular measures goes against the ethos of flexible learning. One participant stated, “*I don't believe measures should be prioritised as each young person is different and has different measures of success. By providing a flexible learning program we are acknowledging learning and outcomes are individual so a mix of different measurements will be applicable to different students*”.

A core concept of distance travelled was common across a number of programs as exemplified by this quote “*You need to look at it case by case, taking into account where the young person was at personally when they first began with you and look at where they are now*”. Another essential concept was the importance of individualising both the approach to each student and defining what success looked like for that young person. This came through repeatedly in the research data. As one participant stated, the need to have “*no blanket rules*” and be client driven was central.

Finally, the concept of a holistic approach was common. One participant described the need to move away from benchmarks so that success was not a result driven concept for their young people. Another described how it was different if the young person was in or out of class, and that for those out of class wellbeing improvement should be the focus and therefore the key measure of success. A focus on strengths and celebrating wins, even small ones, to create more success was important. This success was created through positive relationships and enabling a sense of belonging for the young person.

“  
Young people in FLPs have a wide variety of complex needs that have often acted as barriers to a successful learning journey.”



The Stakeholder Survey – respondent overview

In this section, I will give some background information about the participants including what type of setting they were from; their role and the length of time worked in the sector.

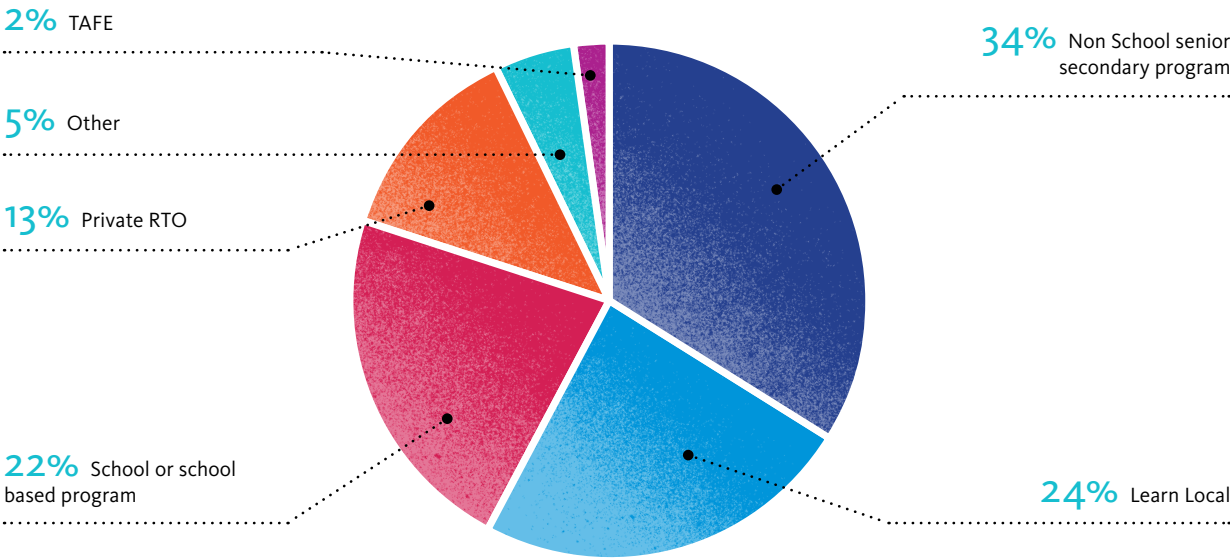


Figure 1 – Type of FLP Respondent Worked In

Figure 1 shows that participants were from various settings with the three most common settings being non-school senior secondary programs (such as Community VCAL programs), Learn Locals and school or school-based programs. Collectively these accounted for 80% of responses. Private RTOs accounted for 13% and TAFEs accounted for 2% of respondents. Five respondents listed their setting as

other – these participants answered a community not-for-profit, a LLEN run Young Parents program, a non-school senior secondary registered in their own right, a VCAL program and a VET in Schools program. The diversity of settings that responded to the survey is a strength of the research as it gives a wider perspective and adds validity to the findings.

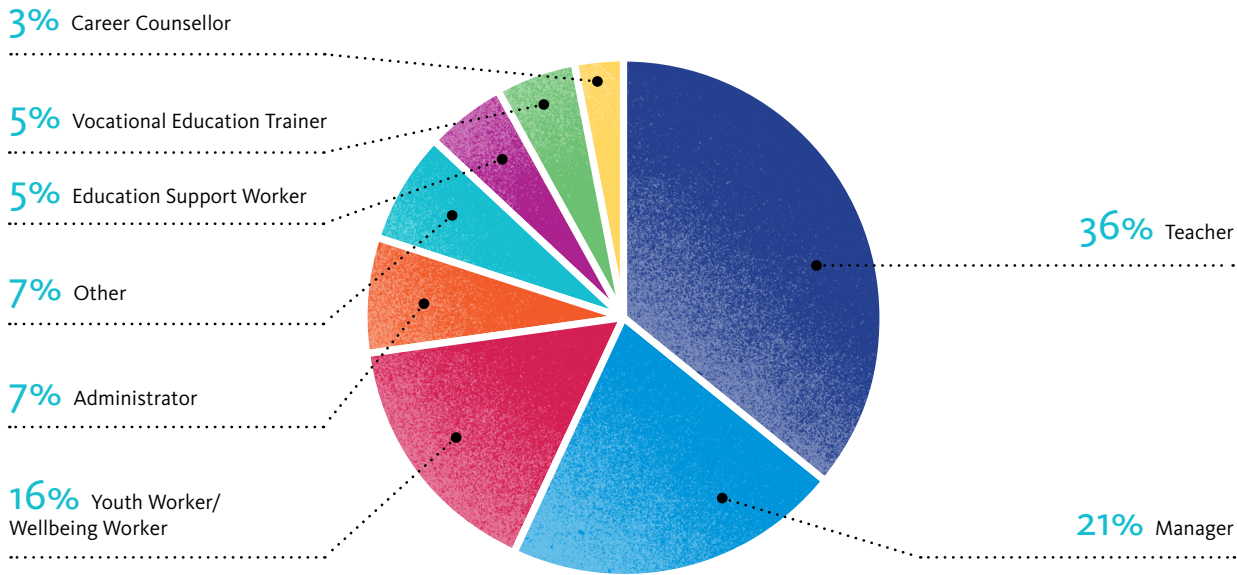


Figure 2 – Role of Respondents

Figure 2 shows the roles of participants. The survey asked, “How would you describe your role at work?”. We can see that the largest category of participants was teachers, followed by managers and youth worker/ wellbeing workers. 7% described their role as other – these participants answered a staff member

responsible for development/research/advocacy, a pathways coordinator/VETiS Coordinator, a PEO and two program coordinators. Again, the diversity of roles is a strength for the research, as this means that the data gathered is from a range of professional perspectives.

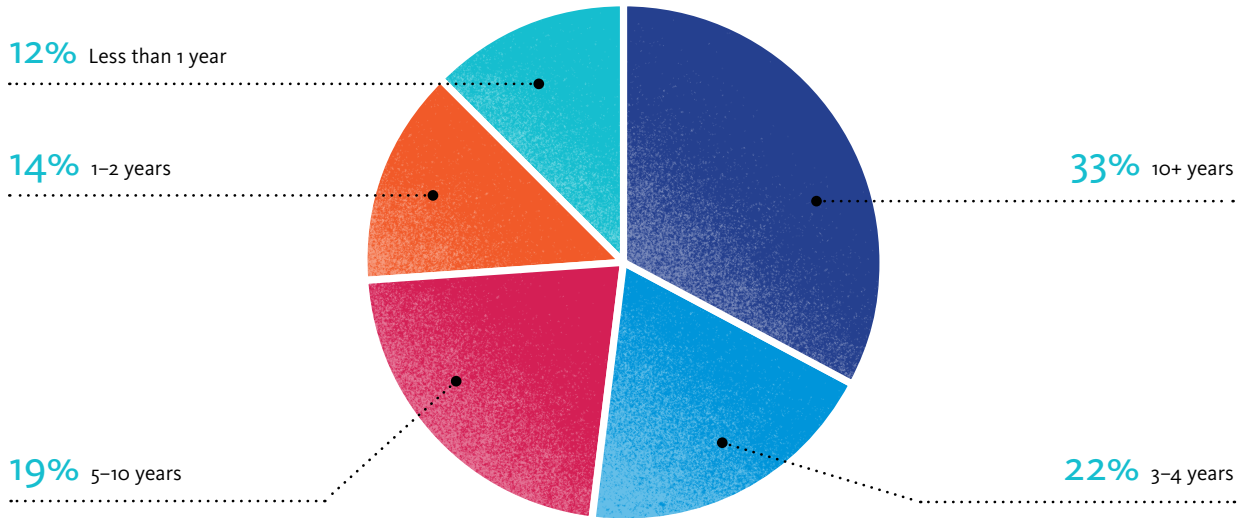


Figure 3 – Number of Years Worked in Flexible Learning Programs/ Schools

Figure 3 outlines the number of years worked in FLPs/schools by participants. As we can see the largest category of responses fell into the ten plus years (33%), followed by three to four years (22%) and five to ten years (19%). This was followed by one to two years (14%) and less than one year (12%). Hence we can say that the participants filling in the

survey generally had a good level of experience and knowledge of the sector, with over 50% of respondents having worked in the sector for five years or more. This would enable them to have a more informed perspective on how to best measure success within FLPs.



Figure 4 – Measures of Success Used by FLPs

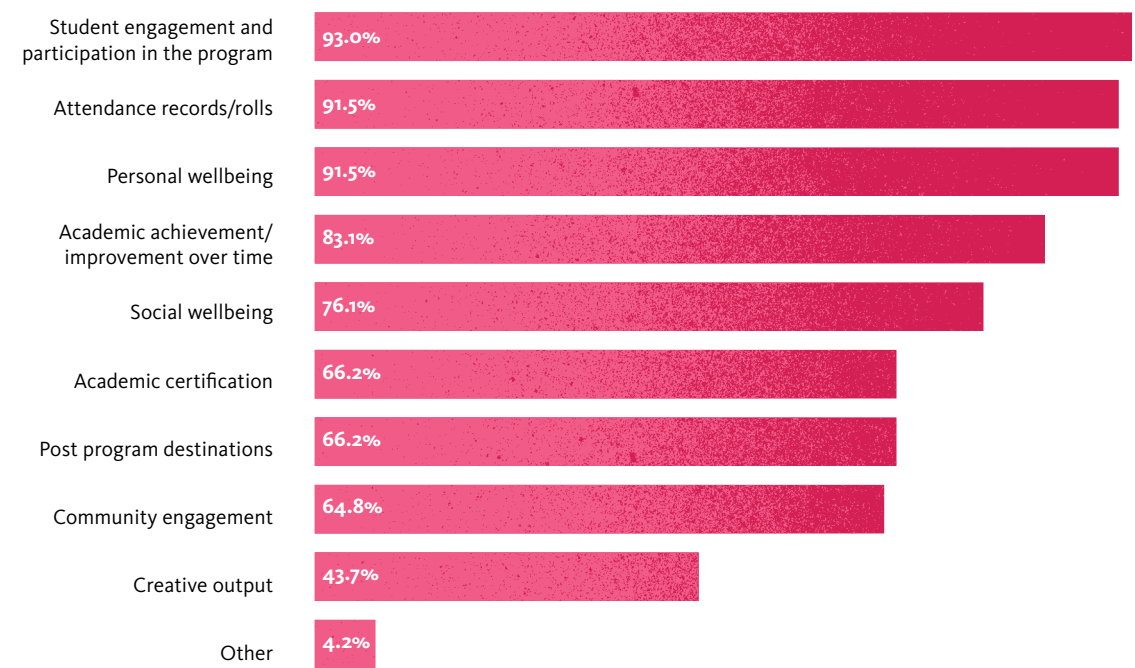
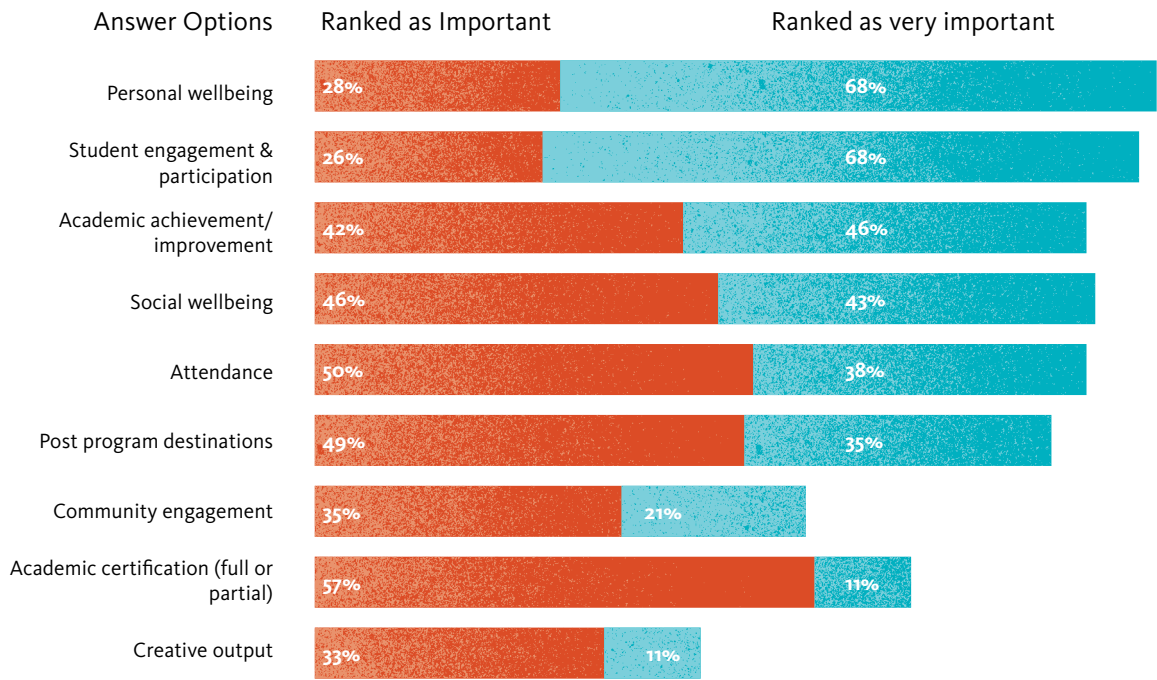


Figure 5 – Measures of Success Ranked by Perceived Importance by FLP Staff



Measuring Success – how it’s done and what’s considered important

There are a range of methods used by education organisations to measure and judge the success of young people attending their programs. Some of these measures work well in FLPs whilst others are less accurate or do not quite tell the whole story. The survey asked respondents to describe the way their program measured the success of young people attending.

As Figure 4 illustrates, data collected demonstrated that ‘soft skills’ are highly valued within FLPs, with 93% of respondents citing *Engagement and participation* being the most commonly used measure of success. *Personal Wellbeing* and *Social Wellbeing* came in third and fifth, with *Attendance* and *Academic Achievement* coming in second and fourth.

Participants were asked to reflect on the tracking methods they used to record the progress of a student in their program, and whether there were any specific measures of success that were more important to the program than others. When asked to rate the perceived importance of measures of success, again the development of soft skills featured highly. Combining the score for very important and important, the following five measures of success were the highest ranked:

- 1. Personal wellbeing – 96%
- 2. Student engagement and participation – 94%
- 3. Academic achievement/improvement over time – 88%
- 4. Social wellbeing – 89%
- 5. Attendance – 88%

Interestingly academic certification ranked only eighth as very important. As shown in commentary later, this reflects FLP staff acknowledgment that the need for wellbeing issues to be tackled first was crucial to enabling academic success later. Figure 5 shows the measures of success ranked by importance, with categories ranking highly as very important listed first.

Inductive thematic analysis was carried out on the text based survey questions, summaries of transcripts from phone interviews, the focus group and case studies. Through this process, the following ten categories of success measures were identified:

- 1. Personal wellbeing
- 2. Social wellbeing
- 3. Engagement and participation
- 4. Attendance
- 5. Academic achievement/improvement over time
- 6. Skills development
- 7. Academic certification
- 8. Personal Development
- 9. Basic life skills
- 10. Community engagement

These were reduced to four categories by combining these themes into logical groupings around the following overarching themes – wellbeing, engaging with the program, academic outcomes and community connection. Each of these are described in more detail below and illustrated by a case study. These case studies are all examples of a young person’s journey provided by FLPs. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the young people involved.



“

For students with significant mental health issues, just getting to school is success.”

### WELLBEING – Personal Wellbeing and Social Wellbeing

Personal wellbeing and social wellbeing were considered a highly important outcome for young people. 96% of participants reported that personal wellbeing was either very important or important as a measure of success for FLPs, making it the key way to judge the progress of young people attending their program in the eyes of FLP staff. Participants spoke of the importance of considering wellbeing within the context of ‘why’ the young person was in a flexible learning setting. Mental health was mentioned as a common barrier. As one FLP staff member said, *“for students with significant mental health issues, just getting to school is success”*. For such young people accessing wellbeing support, such as external housing support or drug and alcohol support, was seen as a key measure of success in itself.

A range of personal attributes developed by the young person were seen as significant measures of success; including improved confidence, self-belief and self-esteem, developing persistence to stay in the program, overcoming wellbeing issues such as drug and alcohol problems and improving the ability to socialise and connect with those around them. Additionally, the ability to form friendships was a significant measure of success for some young

people, particularly where they had entered the program highly anxious and unable to connect with others. One participant described witnessing a young person’s disposition change dramatically from being unable to even look an adult in the eye to being able to thank them at the end of an excursion. Another described how the young person was more confident at home as reported back by parents. The ability to control one’s emotions was also highly valued – one participant described how the student ‘not lashing out’ was a clear measure of success.

Developing basic life skills was another measure of success. These included getting out of bed in the morning, the ability to catch a train, improving personal hygiene or being able to sit at a table in a restaurant. Improved health was noted as significant, linked to a number of benefits including socialising, the hope of a positive future and the ability to establish positive routines.

Case Study 1 and 2 clearly demonstrate the interconnectedness of improving personal and social wellbeing with progress in other areas such as academic improvement and post-program pathways.

### CASE STUDY 1

#### Social Wellbeing

Annabel\* (now 14 years old) commenced in the program in 2012 when she was just ten. She had not attended school for a number of years. Socially and academically, she had dramatically fallen behind her peers. Annabel initially attended once a week – this has now increased to four days a week. Previously, she was withdrawn, disinterested, and had trouble connecting with people around her. Better attendance has allowed her to discover the worth of education in a way that suited her needs and improved her socialisation. Within this tailored program, she was free to explore and expand on learning and improve socialisation whilst finding a connection to her community.

Annabel engaged in a broad range of integrated curriculum activities. By addressing learning in a variety of ways, Annabel was able to build her confidence by exploring her strengths and addressing areas of improvement. Annabel made several new friends and is now actively participating in a number of community events. She has also established goals for her future learning.

Many service providers worked together to support Annabel’s education and wellbeing. When younger, Annabel was removed from the family home. After a significant period in out of home care, she is now in the care of a relative. Since this turning point Annabel has made dramatic improvements in all aspects of her learning and social wellbeing. She involves herself in class discussions, has the ability to focus for long periods and has displayed pride and initiative in her own learning. Her attendance in class is consistently good and most importantly she is eager to learn. Her demeanour has also changed, now seeming happy, relaxed, and well rested with a vast improvement in her personal hygiene. In 2017, Annabel will be supported to transition into the VCAL program with the support of a Student Support Aide.





## CASE STUDY 2

### Personal Wellbeing

Renee\* (16 years old) was encouraged to explore Community VCAL after being disengaged from school for six months. Taking into consideration severe mental and physical health issues, her timetable was adapted to suit her personal circumstances and learning styles. Wellbeing support staff provided counselling, coaching and ensured monitoring of Renee's wellbeing. This included linking her with external mental health support services and supporting her on a path of re-establishing relationships with her family. This holistic support filled the gaps that her mainstream schooling was unable to provide.

Making small, realistic and achievable steps forward was crucial for Renee to remain engaged and progress effectively. Recognising her interpersonal and mental health capacity, she was linked with a supportive School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (SBAT) workplace, providing an appropriate learning

environment to fulfil her work experience course requirements. There, she undertook and completed a Certificate III in Warehousing and received an income. This event provided a stepping-stone for her to be able to explore work experience at a hair salon. It also improved her subsequent attendance and work ethic.

These real-world opportunities, alongside the continued wellbeing support and flexible learning environment, enabled Renee to develop more resilience with a radical change in her interpersonal engagement. She is now a more confident individual who can speak her mind and participate in activities and excursions. With increased self-belief, she now values herself and has higher self-esteem. She has transformed from a passive individual into one who has hope and a passion for the future. Renee is now undertaking further tertiary studies in her field of choice whilst completing the final requirements of her Year 12 certificate.

## ENGAGING WITH THE PROGRAM – Engagement & Participation in the Program and Attendance

Engagement and participation is a highly valued measure of success for FLPs, with 94% of participants rating it as very important or important. FLP staff talked about the impact of positive engagement on learning, describing the journey taken by many young people now confident to participate in learning. This willingness to join in was linked with the ability to connect with the curriculum, often delivered in a class group as projects relevant to the young person. Regularly participating in class was important as this enabled growth in a number of areas.

Engagement and participation were spoken about in relation to the wellbeing challenges that young people attending FLPs often have to overcome before they could increase their participation in the program. One FLP staff member spoke of establishing '*mini mini mini goals*' with a young person to enable better participation and engagement, such as coming back after lunch, and not checking their phone for an hour.

The majority of participants (88%) also reported that attendance was a key measure of success. One FLP staff member phrased it this way "*We put a high premium on attendance... if you're not here we can't help you*". It was common for young people to have very low attendance when starting in the program, sometimes having been out of school all together for a period of months to years. Over time, however this tended to improve due to the tone and focus of the program.

Attendance facilitates learning and relationships. One participant said, "*...just connecting is huge. Success is building a relationship that creates student engagement*". Once young people were connected with the program, the results 'followed on'. For some students just being able to settle, focus and stay in class was considered remarkable and as such a measure of success.

Case Study 3 and 4 illustrate how improved attendance was achieved via strategies to increase the students' participation and engagement in the program.



## CASE STUDY 3

### Engagement and Participation

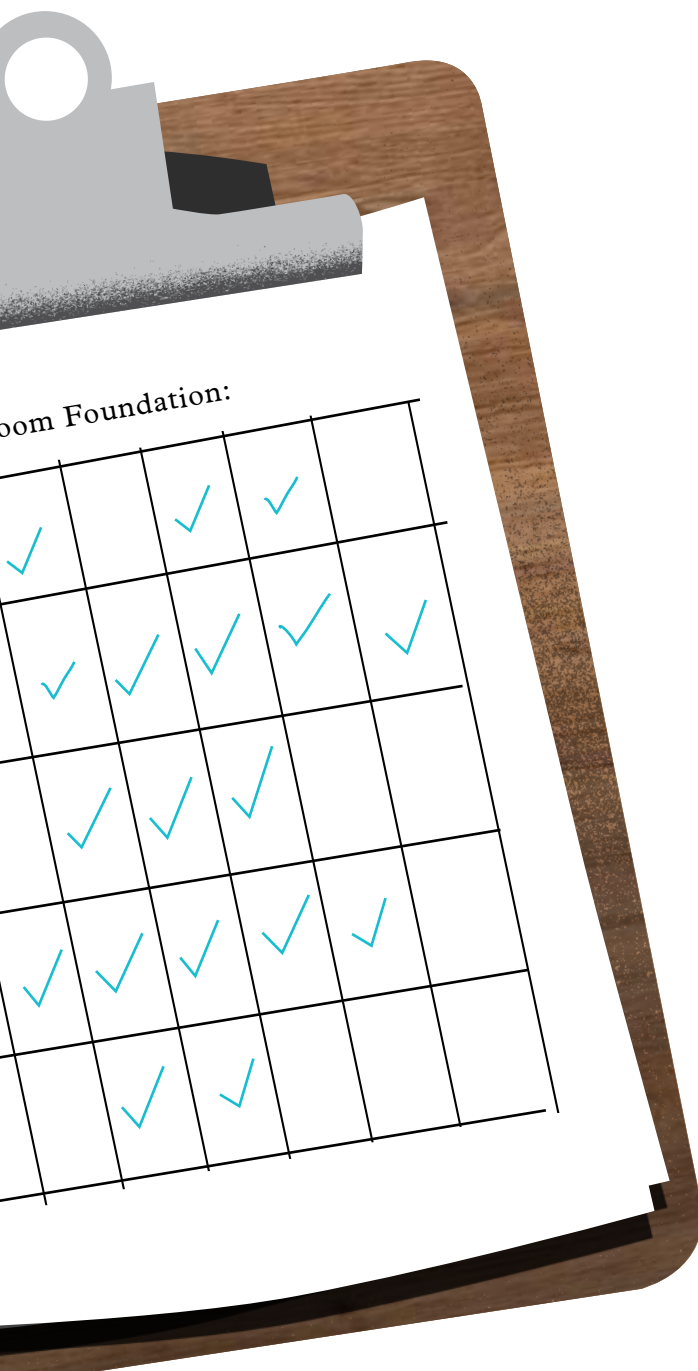
Damien\* started in the program in February 2016. Prior to attending the program Damien was highly disengaged from school for several years extending back to Year 7. He experienced school refusal and was sitting at home for the majority of four and a half years. During this period, he repeated Year 9.

Damien has a diagnosis of ASD/Asperger's Syndrome. He also has a number of additional learning needs including dysgraphia, generalised anxiety disorder and a number of behavioural issues of concern. Damien receives Level 2 Disability funding to help support his needs and education. This funding gave him the additional assistance in the classroom to be successful through an ASD Behavioural Support worker. They worked with him one on one to help him understand what was going on in the classroom. Program staff worked with him to support his relationships with other students. This included carrying out mediation with three other students over a number of issues. This was extremely positive and their relationship from then on was harmonious.

Damien is now engaging very well in the program. His attendance in 2016 was 92%. He is completing his class work. He has made friendships with others and is engaging in classroom activities. His family believe that he would not have been this successful had he remained at his local high school. With support, Damien completed his VCAL Foundation and his Certificate II in Business. Damien is enrolled in VCAL Intermediate in 2017 and will be doing a Certificate II in Community Services. In the future he is hoping to work with other people who have challenges with ASD and mental health.







## CASE STUDY 4

### Attendance

Prior to commencing in the program in 2016 John\* had been enrolled at several different mainstream schools. He became disengaged due to a lack of attendance, behavioural problems and the pressure of keeping up with work. His most recent mainstream school commented that John would be absent for weeks at a time.

At first, John would occasionally have a couple of days off but would always respect the rules and text to notify of his absence. Over the next couple of months, John's attitude and willingness to engage with the program changed. He was always the first one to attend class and the last one to leave. There was still times when John had to be spoken to in regards to his behaviour; however, he appreciated that teachers would speak to him privately rather than in front of the whole class. Once back inside the room John would change his behaviour and concentrate on the task that needed to be completed.

The teachers focussed on building a strong relationship with him. He became comfortable enough to let them know when he could not concentrate and needed to work elsewhere to be able to complete his work. He learnt to trust his teachers through their patient and consistent approach and began to express his thoughts about school, direction and life. This supported John's learning needs enabling him to stay focused on what had to finish.

From the beginning to the end of the year, there was a dramatic change in John's attitude, work ethic, attendance, self-confidence, and self-esteem. John commented that he felt accepted and safe in the program with the connection he had made with staff and the flexibility of the program. He no longer felt like a failure and knew his parents would be proud of him. John has progressed from a student that never attended school to attending every single class, enabling him to complete his Intermediate VCAL and VET certificates and develop a strong sense of self-esteem.

## ACADEMIC OUTCOMES – Academic Improvement, Certification and Skill Development

Academic improvement over time was highly valued by participants, with 88% of participants rating it as very important or important as a measure of success for FLPs. Several participants spoke about the importance of improved literacy and numeracy, linking improvements in these areas to increased confidence for young people and the ability to actively pursue career aspirations. These improvements were seen where curriculum was linked to the students' own lived experiences, using applied learning techniques. Participants spoke of the need for students to achieving the academic foundation to move forward.

Developing vocational skills through Vocational Education and Training (VET) competencies and work readiness skills were noted as central to success, such as the ability to manage time and hand work in on time. These skills prepared students for the world of work and life beyond the program. They were achieved through a practical skills focused curriculum, such as studying VET subjects and gaining real world knowledge through work experience activities. Creativity was also identified as important, with creating art and music mentioned as measures of success in this area. These creative acts were both engaging and built skills for the young person.

Interestingly academic certification was considered less important with only 68% of participants rating it as very important or important as a measure of success for FLPs. This is notable as it ranked second last overall of the measures listed. This is in sharp contrast to the importance given to achieving an

academic certificate within mainstream education as outlined in the introductory chapter of this report. Participants described that whilst academic certification was considered important, many other barriers or factors needed to be addressed first in most instances. One participant stated that most young people have a goal to get a certificate; however, where there are significant wellbeing challenges then their goal might be just to engage in a modified program initially. Another spoke of completing a qualification as an end goal but not an immediate goal.

Nonetheless, several FLP staff spoke of the importance of achieving learning outcomes and completing the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning or other qualifications where possible. Staff worked in a variety of innovative ways to make this achievable for young people. Wherever possible, achieving these outcomes was linked to the life and career goals of the young person. As educators, all recognised the importance of gaining qualifications to enable a positive pathway. It was evident from a number of comments that students were similarly enthusiastic to gain qualifications – for many young people, they saw 'getting their Year 12' as an important step forwards in their life. There was also a significant 'normalising' sense of aiming for, and hopefully achieving, what their peers were aiming for. Overcoming wellbeing issues was seen not only as positive for their general welfare but also as a way of enabling learning to occur, leading to achieving qualifications.

Case Study 5 demonstrates how overcoming obstacles to achieve a qualification has allowed this young person to pursue her chosen pathway.

“Most young people have a goal to get a certificate; however, where there are significant wellbeing challenges then their goal might be just to engage in a modified program initially.”



## CASE STUDY 5

### Academic Achievement/ Certification

Rebecca\* had been out of school for 12 months when she started in the program. She had depression, a lack of self-esteem and low confidence from experiencing emotional abuse. Over the time she was in the program she became a confident and happy young woman. Rebecca thrived in the program. She made good friends and supported other students' in her class when they were struggling, quickly taking on a leadership role. She has recently graduated with her Senior VCAL Certificate. During her senior year, Rebecca explained that she felt like she was having a breakdown, not knowing what she wanted to do with her life. She had always wanted to become a hairdresser, but was no longer feeling that this was the right path for her.

Around the same time, her class started volunteering at a special school for children with disabilities. She explained that the school was a place filled with happiness and beautiful people. She loved volunteering there and started to imagine herself working there. She decided that after her graduation, she would continue to study with a goal to become a Disability Support Worker. In 2016, Rebecca enrolled in a Certificate IV in Disability. During her studies to become a Disability Support Worker, she completed practical placement with the special school. On completion of her course she was offered a job there. She loves her job and is forever thankful for the support and encouragement she received during her journey.

In her 2015 graduation speech, she summed up her journey with these words. *"Everyone is raving about leaving school, but for me, I am leaving my family. This program was the last resort for me. I had been out of school for 12 months raising my three younger siblings. Every morning I woke up, got them ready for school, cleaned, cooked, and got them ready for bed. Obviously, there was no time for school so I dropped out. I fell into a really bad state of depression, because there was no time to go see friends and I was constantly at home. In October 2014, I started seeing the teacher who worked really hard to get me into the ... program. This place is my family. I have never met a more amazing group of people. Without their support I wouldn't be the person that I am today".*

“

One participant spoke of how students were “often taking a huge turn away from previous family and life experiences”. ”

### COMMUNITY CONNECTION – Community Engagement and Post- program Destinations

The fourth thematic category of measures of success was community engagement and post-program destinations. About 65% of participants rated both of these categories as either very important or important as a measure of success for FLPs. These two measures were interconnected, with positive community engagement often leading to and supporting a positive post school transition. Participants spoke of the importance of breaking the welfare cycle and overcoming generational poverty. One participant spoke of how students were “often taking a huge turn away from previous family and life experiences”. Others spoke of the significance of seeing young people become part of society and contributing to their community.

Community engagement was facilitated in a variety of ways, often by linking students with projects that connected them to the community. Students volunteered with specific groups within the community such as sick children. Students also did hand-on projects that benefited the community such as livening up a drab area with a graffiti wall, creating paper poppies for ANZAC day or building planter boxes for a community garden. External stakeholders were invited to awards events and at times were presented with awards for their service to the young people. All of these activities both made learning come alive, giving students positive self-esteem when they saw the results and its impact on people in the community.

Some participants identified the importance of young people having positive work experience opportunities, which could result in connecting with community in a way that would lead to employment. Of key importance here was that this also created the opportunity for the young person to ‘see themselves’ in the workforce, creating self-assurance to get a part time job. The need for young people to imagine a positive future for themselves was significant. In some instances, this included exploring going back to mainstream education. In other instances, it included supporting young people into employment or further training. Young people moving into their chosen pathway with confidence was particularly noteworthy where they had overcome significant wellbeing barriers.

Several programs recorded and measured student pathway destinations, however this was done differently in each case. Some recorded more formally, contacting students to capture their post-program destination six and twelve months after the program to form part of longitudinal post school completion data. Other programs just recorded pathways anecdotally as ex-students touched based with them. Many programs spoke of young people connecting after several months to proudly update the staff who had helped them to get to where they were. Case Study 6 and 7 demonstrate the link between constructive community engagement and a successful and positive post school transition.





## CASE STUDY 6

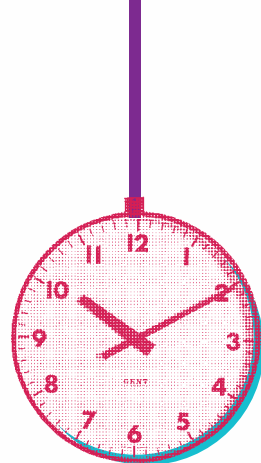
### Post-program Destination

Ryan\* left Year 9 mainstream education in 2015 and enrolled in the Foundation VCAL program within the same month. When he started, he was opposed to the rigidity of mainstream rules such as attendance and uniform. The lack of flexibility at a mainstream setting did not allow him the independence that he craved, resulting in a lack of motivation and commitment to education. Ryan's father was very unwell, consequentially Ryan became his primary caregiver. It became necessary for him to seek an alternative to mainstream education to cater for this burden of responsibility.

Upon commencement, Ryan showed an immediate improvement in attendance. He found it easier to attend to his responsibilities due to the flexibility of the program, including being able to complete work at home when necessary. To assist, the teacher sent him work to complete if he was unable to attend. In class, regular breaks were negotiated. Class duration of four hours per day also assisted to uphold Ryan's ability to stay on task. Listening to and working with Ryan has increased his motivation to succeed as well as giving him the ability to attend to his responsibilities.

The flexibility of the programs allowed Ryan to thrive, completing his qualifications in approximately half the time. Post Foundation studies, he is now enrolled in VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education) with a desire to attain a Bachelor of Education and become a teacher. He has also gained casual employment as a pick-packer in conjunction with employment as a disability caregiver.

Ryan's ability to achieve further education and employment was supported by pathway planning and transitioning support. Teachers continually mentored him on a one-to-one basis, and regular meetings with the pathways coordinator added to his success. He was also supported to access career and resume advice from Student Support Services. These interactions had a direct impact on his post program destination. Through this program, improvements were evident in the areas of attendance, engagement, academic certification, personal wellbeing, academic achievement and employment.



## CASE STUDY 7

### Community Engagement

Ana\* initially engaged in our flexible VCAL program in 2014 after being excluded from her mainstream school due to a perceived lack of engagement. Ana found the program herself, as she understood that an education would provide her with options.

At the time Ana was excluded from her mainstream school she was living with her father, two siblings and a cousin who were all prolific drug users, making it an unsafe and unstable environment. Ana was also holding down a part time job and was absolutely committed to completing her education and moving on to further study. Ana was suffering with depression, had a significant Centrelink debt accrued due to her mother providing them with false information and outstanding public transport fines. Whilst Ana has always been determined to complete her education, these factors were making this incredibly difficult.

In the initial months of engagement, the youth worker in the program was able to refer Ana to a mental health specialist to assist with managing her depression, a housing worker to help navigate housing options including private rental, Youth Law to assist with the Centrelink debt and outstanding fines and found options for funded family mediation.

Over the last two years, Ana has maintained that dedication to her learning journey and, with the support of the youth workers and educators attached to the program, has been able to complete her Senior VCAL certificate, improving her attendance to over 90%. She has taken on a leadership role through the Student Representative Council and secured ongoing and supported housing. Ana has also found more secure employment and has recently been accepted into a Diploma of Youth Work.

When Ana first commenced in the program she lacked confidence, doubted her abilities and was dealing with considerable disruption in her life. Now she is a confident, resilient, insightful and very proud young woman. Ana is passionate about improving outcomes for young people that enter the homelessness system and is excited to undertake her Diploma next year.





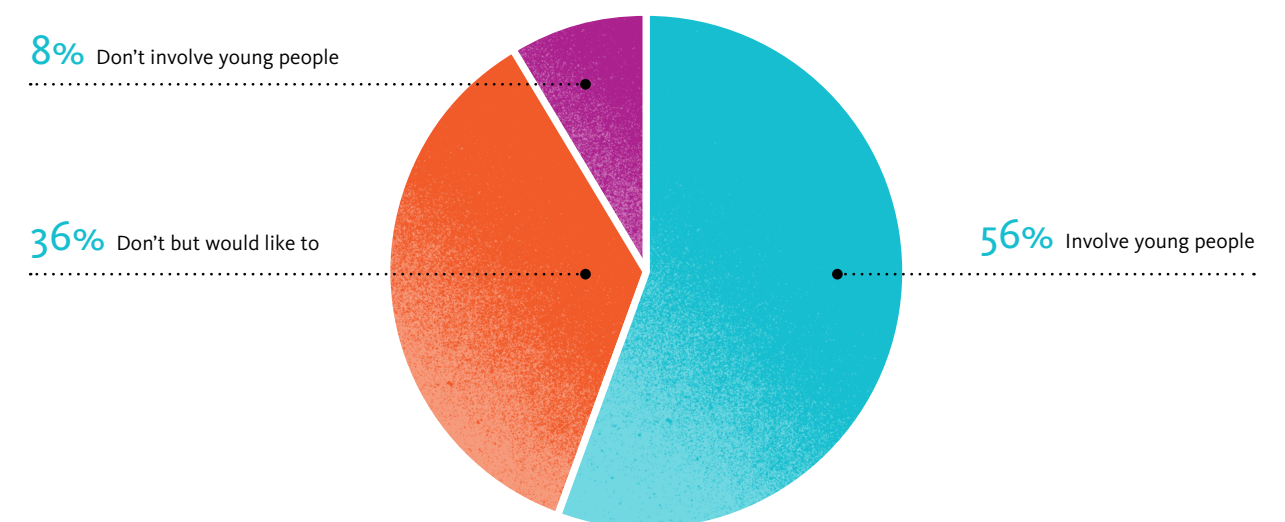
As demonstrated by the above thematic commentary and case studies, the measures of success for young people studying in FLPs are many and varied. The overarching themes of student wellbeing, engagement with the program, academic outcomes and community connection demonstrate that FLP staff measure success in a far more holistic manner than is expected by classroom teachers in mainstream settings. The complex and interwoven wellbeing and education barriers that face the majority of young people who attend such settings necessitate this. Such an approach takes time, a nurturing attitude towards each individual who enters the program and a willingness to think outside the box.

## Tools Used for Measuring and Recording Success

FLPs used a wide variety of tools to capture the measures of success. This was necessitated by the diversity of measures of success program staff were attempting to capture. Tools included standardised tools for measuring student progress, such as recording attendance, using rubrics and matrixes to measure academic progress and issuing certificates of attainment/completion.

At the other end of the spectrum, some FLPs used highly individualised tools specific to the FLP to measure more complex, hard to quantify indicators. For example, when tracking wellbeing outcomes, participants discussed using wellbeing meeting notes, wellbeing databases, a wellbeing specific Individual Learning Plan (ILP), case noting and informal observations. Staff also held and recorded collegiate conversations to track progress.

Academic ILPs were seen as important to allow goal setting by the young person. The majority of FLP staff mentioned using these in one format or another. ILPs also allowed for the interplay between wellbeing and academic outcomes to be investigated and openly discussed. Most FLPs also used pathway-planning documents to map out students' goals and career pathways. A number of FLPs used continual communication effectively, noting the importance of creating a regular feedback loop with the student to keep them informed regarding their progress. Informal progress meetings were held with students as well as more formal meetings with parents to discuss progress.



**Figure 6 – FLPs Involving Young People in Measuring Success**

Involving young people in measuring their own success was also considered important. As shown in Figure 6, survey results showed that 56% of participants' FLPs involve young people in measuring their own success, with a further 36% stating that they do not currently but would like to. Where this was not happening, key barriers identified were student willingness to participate and time.

One participant stated that by having students defining, and then hopefully reaching a goal, the level of ownership helped to improve outcomes. This process started at intake with a meeting to look at individual goals. Throughout the year, these goals are then revisited and revised. It was noted that it is important when setting goals that barriers to achieving the goals were identified and risk management strategies considered. One FLP gave students their own outcomes list so that they were aware of their progress against the VCAL outcomes. Another FLP had a similar approach with VET outcomes, while a different program used a star reward system creating a sense of incentive for progress through the course. In all cases, making progress tangible and visible was important.

Finally, FLP staff spoke of involving students in choice of curriculum as a tool for success. Good conversations about what curriculum would interest the student was viewed as both a success in itself and created further success. Staff in each setting surveyed students regularly so that their views could be integrated, allowing an ever-evolving program that would shape itself to the student's needs. This ownership in their personal learning journey was seen as a critical element to young people experiencing success in FLPs.

The range of tools and methods described above demonstrate that the very structures of measuring success and progress within a FLP need to be wider than that of a mainstream setting. They are nuanced and take into account progress over a long period across a range of indicators. They need to be responsive to the fact that young people in FLPs often relapse into negative behaviours for a time, only to then make further progress six months later. In other words, success is not linear. By having flexible tools and approaches that consider this young people attending FLPs are able to maintain hope and get there, one step at a time. Additionally, involving young people in the conversation at every step ensures that they feel empowered and have ownership over their learning journey, rather than being at the mercy of the pathway prescribed by the institution.



# Discussion & Considerations

This research clearly demonstrates that broadening the definition and measures of success beyond the traditional academic measures is in the best interests of young people. For staff working in FLPs, their ability to view a variety of outcomes as a success enabled them to look beyond the usual paradigm of judging success solely by academic measures. This was particularly significant for young people going through personal difficulties who were facing academic challenges. Staff were able to frame a young person's progress in a different light and were able to support successful outcomes via a range of measures, even where attendance was sporadic and little academic progress was being seen.

The research shows that measures used to evaluate success in FLPs varied. A more holistic approach to learning was central to engaging students in these programs. Staff from FLPs clearly articulated the significance of wellbeing measures, both personal and social wellbeing related. The importance of the so-called 'soft skills' were seen as critical as these paved the way to academic progress and post program success.

The interviews and the case studies illustrated that it was never one measure that worked on its own – rather many things worked in conjunction to create success for a young person. For example, prioritisation of wellbeing support led to better engagement, which in turn allowed a greater level of learning to occur. Individualised curriculum lead to better results and attainable certificate completion, through the recognition of learner needs.

Relationships grew over time between students and staff, and students and their peers – this was crucial to engagement, acceptance and participation. Community involvement and workplace experience was also seen as crucial to post-program success, giving hope and direction to the young person while building their aspirations.

These factors are summarised in Figure 7, illustrating what worked together to create success in the eyes of FLP staff.



Figure 7 – Enabling Success for Young People in FLPs



The results from this research inform the following considerations for action. The first five all relate to the key measures of success that create success, as illustrated in Figure 7. The final two are broader considerations.

## Considerations for action

### 1 Raise the importance of wellbeing measures

The research made it clear that wellbeing is critical to young people succeeding, both educationally and more broadly. We know that childhood trauma seriously inhibits the brain’s ability to learn and to focus in class (Australian Childhood Foundation, 2010). By ensuring that wellbeing interventions are prioritised, young people will be well supported during what is often a turbulent time. This is important for the young person’s wellbeing and to enable learning to occur.

**Action:** Consideration needs to be given to wellbeing measures being adequately recognised and funded to support young people for whom wellbeing is their key barrier to learning. Tools need to be developed to measure wellbeing that can be used widely but still individualised.

### 4 Focus on community connection and post-program pathways

This research highlighted that giving a ‘real world’ context within which success can occur made learning more meaningful for the young people studying. It is important for education programs to link the curriculum to authentic experiences and pathway goals as a way of motivating and making real the learning that young people are engaging in.

**Action:** Consideration needs to be given to ways to better link young people to opportunities for real world learning outside the classroom setting.

### 5 Involve young people in measuring their own success

The research demonstrates that empowering young people to set and aspire to the goals that are important and meaningful to them, both academic and personal, increases ownership of their learning journey. In turn, this increases motivation and engagement with learning.

**Action:** Consideration needs to be given to the ways that students’ input can be incorporated into the processes judging and measuring their success to understand where their education is taking them e.g. being involved in goal setting.

### 2 Enable academic opportunities for young people not in mainstream education

The research found that young people who have dropped out or have been excluded from mainstream education still felt it was important to achieve academic milestones such as completing their Year 12. Staff from FLPs identified that the young people’s journey to achieve academic success was more complex; however, with support they were able to complete a qualification. FLP staff provided the opportunity, nurturing attitude, wellbeing support and time for young people to achieve these accomplishments.

**Action:** Consideration needs to be given to adequately resourcing programs that will enable students to progress towards completing senior secondary education within a flexible timeframe.

### 3 Better engagement equals better attendance

The research shows that young people’s attendance is clearly linked to their engagement with the program. With new research showing that an incredible 40% of students are disengaged from learning in Australian schools (Goss, Sonnemann, and Griffiths, 2017), thought should be given to ways to deliver education differently to young people. This report clearly shows the impact of individualised curriculum, goal setting and an emphasis on establishing positive relationships to better engage young people.

**Action:** Consideration needs to be given to increase engagement for students through strategies such as individualising the curriculum and giving emphasis to building positive relationships.

### 6 Broaden the definition of success used in education

This research demonstrates the importance of a broad, holistic definition of success. By broadening the definitions of success, more young people will in turn feel successful. This will increase their self-esteem, their aspirations and their level of resilience in challenging times. Seeing success through a lens that looks for the strengths of a young person is important. The research clearly supported that not all success can be measured by a standardised test.

**Action:** Consideration needs to be given to the way that success in secondary education is defined and discussed in schools and in the mainstream media. This needs to be broadened to genuinely include non-academic successes.

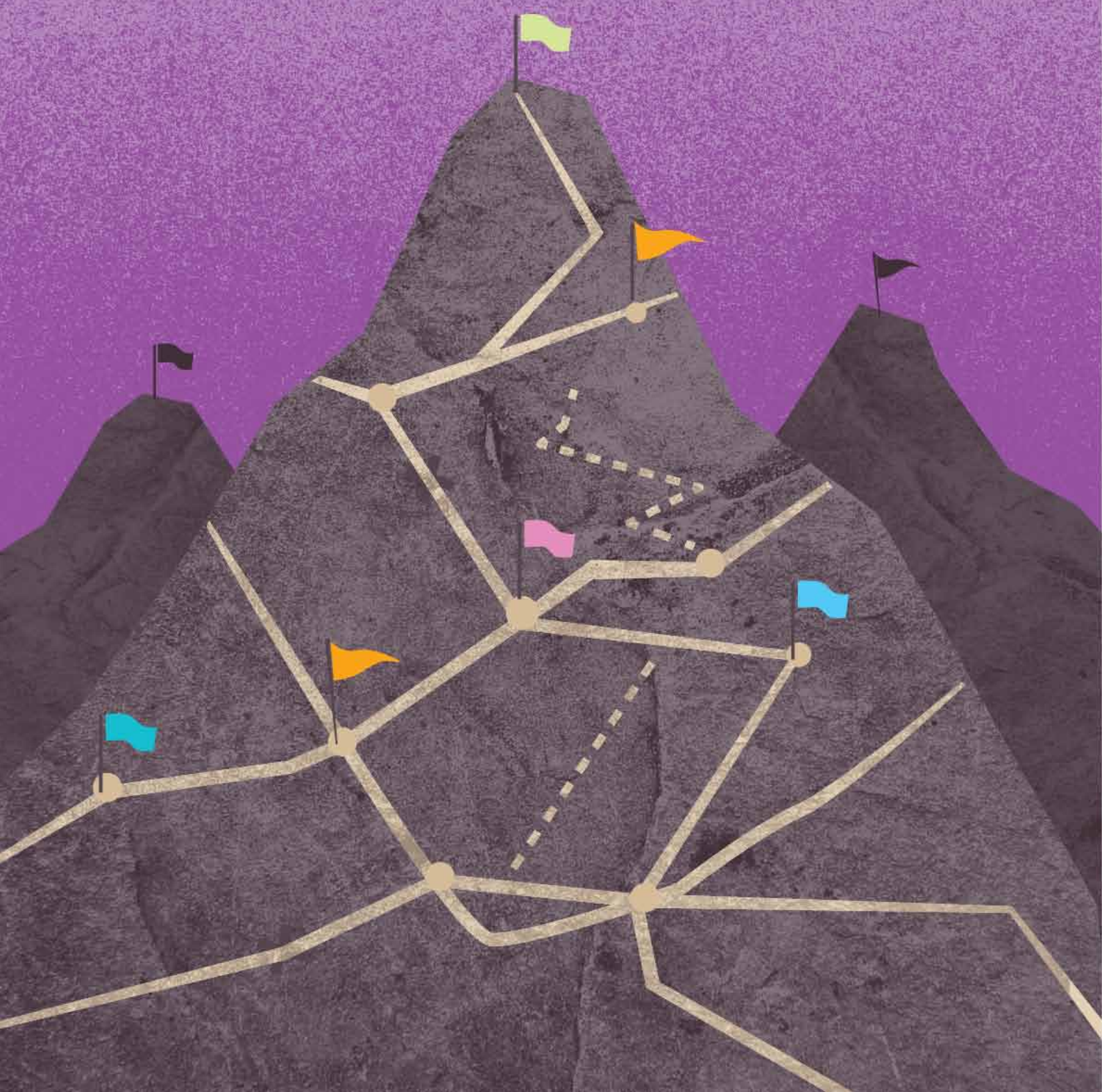
### 7 Recognise the specialist provision offered by FLPs

Staff members within FLPs are specialists at working with young people with complex issues, enabling these young people to experience success. They are specialists at giving hope to and educating young people who have experienced trauma and exclusion. This specialism needs to be recognised, celebrated and adequately resourced. Recognition and support will allow these staff to continue to educate young people to experience success, often for the first time in their schooling journey.

**Action:** Consideration needs to be given to acknowledging the specialist nature of FLPs rather than viewing them as second-class programs or dumping grounds. Funding these programs sufficiently and equitably is essential.



“Staff members from FLPs embrace a wider definition of success, which in turn perpetuates more success.”



## Conclusion

Success is hard to define, but as this research demonstrates, there are many ways to think about and measure success.

As stated by Cameron (1963) *“It would be nice if all of the data ... require[d] could be enumerated because then we could run them through IBM machines and draw charts as the economists do. However, not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted”* (p.13).

Definitions of success and the measures used to capture these need to focus on what success means for every individual, taking into account their specific needs, life circumstances and goals. When we define success too narrowly, such as completing Year 12 in a linear fashion, it means that inevitably we exclude those young people for whom this is simply not feasible due to their life circumstances. A more holistic definition than this is needed.

Young people love to succeed in education. Young people in FLPs are no different. Often the reasons that they have not had success in school are related to issues that are beyond their control, such as childhood trauma, housing insecurity, mental health or bullying. When they are given the opportunity and support to succeed, they usually do. Part of the strategy that FLPs use to enable success is to create the right environment within which young people can succeed. Factors that enable this are higher levels of wellbeing support, nuanced and individualised curriculum, an emphasis on engaging the student and connecting the student to their community and post-program pathways.

As previously stated, COAG set a goal to raise Year 12 completion from 83.5% to 90% by the year 2015, now extended to 2020, to raise the standard of successful school completions and through that post school outcomes (Council of Australian Governments, 2016). This research has shown the important role that FLPs play in achieving this, by redefining what success looks like, re-engaging young people and increasing the likelihood of school completion.

If we consider the alternative – that FLPs did not exist, that mainstream school was the only option available to young people – we can predict that many young people who have disengaged from learning would be unlikely to return to education. This research has demonstrated that without the supportive environment offered by FLPs many young people's life opportunities would be severely narrowed when based solely on academic measures of success.

This report demonstrates that staff members from FLPs embrace a wider definition of success, which in turn perpetuates more success. The case studies clearly demonstrate that many young people who had given up on mainstream education, or felt that mainstream education had given up on them, were able to not only succeed academically in FLPs but also overcome a huge range of wellbeing challenges that had previously prevented them from experiencing success. These positive outcomes led to many young people experiencing positive post-program outcomes and transitions, becoming productive members of their community. This is no small feat given where many young people within FLPs start.

Albert Einstein wrote, *“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”* Too often young people are set up to fail by being judged by the same benchmark, regardless of their life circumstances. This research demonstrates a more holistic approach to measuring success is needed to help disadvantaged young people experience educational success, often for the first time in many years.



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# Appendices

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## Appendix A – Survey of Flexible Learning Programs

### Introduction – A Successful Journey

You are invited to participate in a survey which will inform research being carried out by Flexible Learning Victoria – A Successful Journey. Flexible Learning Victoria is an Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) funded project that aims to support advocacy, networking, partnerships, resource sharing and research in the flexible learning sector.

This research aims to answer the following question:

**“What are the measures of success for young people participating in alternative and flexible learning organisations in southern metropolitan Melbourne?”.**

This research builds on existing research completed in the southern metropolitan Melbourne region:

- A Different Journey (2013) – a report on youth in Learn Locals in southern metropolitan Melbourne – [Click here](#) for report
- The Next Journey (2014) – a review of youth pathways and career development in alternative and flexible learning organisations in southern metropolitan Melbourne – [Click here](#) for report

Measuring the success of a young person's progression through a flexible learning program can be hard to define. Research shows that young people in such settings often face a range of complex challenges in their life. These can create barriers to achieving well educationally. When judging student progress, whilst traditional academic measures are often more accepted, it can be argued that other measures such as wellbeing improvement are just as important. For this and many other reasons, the measures of success are often thought of more broadly in such programs.

We would like to ask you some questions about your experience of what success 'looks like' for young people in your program. As someone who has worked in this sector we believe that you are in a privileged position to understand this issue and that your views should be considered when analysing this issue.

Taking part is purely voluntary. We would appreciate you answering these questions as the information you provide will be very useful to us. We would appreciate you answering all questions. However, if you feel that you do not want to answer a question, we will gladly accept your decision. We can assure you that your responses will be completely anonymous and will not be used for any other purpose.

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Please click the NEXT button on the bottom of the page to start.



Background Information

Now we would like to ask you some questions about you and your work in the youth and/or education sector. The type of work that you do and the length of time that you have worked in the sector informs your understanding of the issues we are exploring in this research. Again, we assure you of the complete anonymity of your responses.

Note – any question with a star must be completed.

1. Organisation name (optional). Note – even if this information is provided, no organisations will be identified in final report by name.

2. What type of learning environment do you work in? Tick \* as many as apply.

- ☐ Learn Local
- ☐ TAFE
- ☐ Private RTO
- ☐ School or school based program
- ☐ Non School senior secondary program (such as Community VCAL attached to a Secondary School)

Other (please specify)

3. \*Does your organisation work with young people (aged 15–25)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (note – no will take you to the end of the survey)

4. \*How would you describe your role at work?

- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Youth Worker/Wellbeing Worker
- ☐ Education Support Worker
- ☐ Vocational Education Trainer
- ☐ Career Counsellor
- ☐ Administrator
- ☐ Manager

Other (please specify)

5. How many years have you worked in/with flexible learning \* programs/schools?

- ☐ <1 year
- ☐ 1–2 years
- ☐ 3–4 years
- ☐ 5–10 years
- ☐ 10+ years

Comments

6. \*How many years have you worked in the youth and/or education sector?

- ☐ <1 year
- ☐ 1–2 years
- ☐ 3–4 years
- ☐ 5–10 years
- ☐ 10+ years

Comments

Ways of Measuring Success

There are a wide range of ways that education organisations measure and judge the success of young people attending their programs. Some of these work very well in flexible learning settings whilst others are less accurate or don’t quite tell the whole story. We would like to ask you some questions about how your program measures the success of young people attending your program.

Note – any question with a star must be completed.

7. \*When tracking the progress of a young person in your program, which of the following measures of success does your program use? Tick as many as apply.

- ☐ Attendance records/rolls
- ☐ Student engagement and participation in the program
- ☐ Academic certification (full or partial)
- ☐ Academic achievement/improvement over time (such as improved literacy and numeracy)
- ☐ Post program destinations (such as progressing to further education or employment)
- ☐ Personal wellbeing (such as improved physical and /or mental health)
- ☐ Social wellbeing (such as improved socialisation)
- ☐ Community engagement (such as involvement in local community projects)
- ☐ Creative output (such as involvement in music and arts projects)

Other (please specify)

8. \*When tracking the progress of a student in your program, certain measures of success will be more important to your program than others. Please rank the importance of these measures below. If you don’t use one measure, please tick N/A.

	N/A	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important
Attendance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student engagement and participation in the program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic certification (full or partial)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic achievement/improvement over time (such as improved literacy and numeracy)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Post program destinations (such as progressing to further education or employment)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal wellbeing (such as improved physical and /or mental health)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social wellbeing (such as improved socialisation)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community engagement (such as involvement in local community projects)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creative output (such as involvement in music and arts projects)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)



9. Do you think certain measures of success for young people in flexible learning programs should be prioritised over others? In other words are there some measures that capture what success for young people ‘looks like’ in flexible settings better than others? Please answer below – maximum 200 words.

Tools Used to Measure Success

There are a range of tools that different programs use to measure the success of young people that attend their program, from traditional tools such as attendance rolls through to locally developed tools to measure improvements in well-being. In this section we would like to ask you some questions about what tools your program uses to measure success.

Note – questions with a star must be completed.

10. \*On the previous page the following potential areas of measuring students’ progress were identified:

- Attendance
- Student engagement – participation in the program
- Academic certification (full or partial)
- Academic achievement/improvement over time (eg. improved literacy and numeracy)
- Post program destinations (eg.progressing to further education or employment)
- Personal wellbeing (eg. improved physical and/or mental health)
- Social wellbeing (eg. improved socialisation)
- Community engagement (eg. involvement in local community projects)
- Creative output (eg. involvement in music and arts projects)

For the above what tools/instruments does your program use to measure students’ progress? Tick as many as apply.

- ☐ Attendance
- ☐ Academic testing – standardised or State based
- ☐ Academic testing – self developed/ in house
- ☐ Academic certifications (eg. full/partial VCAL pass, VET statement of attainment)
- ☐ Individual learning plans
- ☐ Wellbeing measurement tools (eg. ICAN matrix)
- ☐ Student engagement targets
- ☐ Case notes
- ☐ Post Program destination data

Other (please specify)

11. \*Are the tools/instruments used in your program to measure students’ progress self developed, standardised (externally developed) or a mixture? Please provide details at bottom.

- ☐ Self developed tools
- ☐ Standardised tools
- ☐ Mixture of self developed and standardised

Please give details below (max 100 words).

Incorporating Young People’s Views

Young people are often able to describe their own success and progress in terms that we may not use. In this section we would like to find out more about your organisation’s approach to incorporating young people’s views regarding success.

Note – questions with a star must be completed.

12. \*How important do you think it is to incorporate student feedback when measuring their progress?

	N/A	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important
Importance of Student Feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. \*Does your program currently involve students in measuring \* their own progress?

- ☐ No
- ☐ No but would like to.
- ☐ Yes. If yes, please explain how (max 150 words).



14. \*What are the key challenges in implementing student feedback when measuring their own progress?  
Tick as many as apply.
- ☐ Time
  - ☐ Student willingness
  - ☐ Staff willingness
  - ☐ Staff skill level to administer
- Other (please specify)

Anything else you would like to tell us?

If you have anything else that you would like to tell us that you think might help to answer the question  
“What are the measures of success for young people participating in alternative and flexible learning organisations in southern metropolitan Melbourne?” please write below.

15. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about what the measures of success are for young people participating in alternative and flexible learning organisations?

Thank you for your time and responses. We sincerely appreciate your opinions and input to this research.  
To make sure your responses count, just hit the SUBMIT SURVEY button below.

Appendix B – Focus Group Interview Questions

You are invited to participate in a focus group that will inform research being carried out by Flexible Learning Victoria named A Successful Journey. Flexible Learning Victoria is an Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) funded project that aims to support advocacy, networking, partnerships, resource sharing and research in the flexible learning sector. This research aims to answer the following question:

“What are the measures of success for young people participating in alternative and flexible learning organisations in southern metropolitan Melbourne?”.

FLV may draw on your anonymised response for a report that will be publicly available as well as other publications. **Please note you do not have to give your feedback – taking part is entirely voluntary.** If you have any questions please contact: Nick Johns, FLV Project Manager: flv@bgkllen.org.au, 03 9584 8845.

16. When you hear the phrase “success in education” what does it mean to you?

17. What are the key measures of success used in your context?

18. Do you think this is any different to measures of success that are used in mainstream education contexts?

19. When measuring success which of the following measures are important in your setting?

- Student engagement – participation in the program
- Academic certification (full or partial)
- Academic achievement/improvement over time (such as improved literacy and numeracy)
- Post program destinations (such as progressing to further education or employment)
- Personal wellbeing (such as improved physical and /or mental health)
- Social wellbeing (such as improved socialisation)
- Community engagement (such as involvement in local community projects)
- Creative output (such as involvement in music and arts projects)
- Other?

- 20.What indicators or tools do you use to measure success?

21. Do you currently involve young people in measuring their own success in your setting? If yes, please explain how.

22. Any other comments?



## Appendix C – Phone Interview Questions

### Preamble – read through at start of phone call

- Introduce my role and myself.
- Describe purpose of the research – to explore the range of ways that FLPs measure success, to increase understanding of and support for the sector. It is a follow on from 2013 research **A Different Journey** and 2014 research **The Next Journey**.
- **Research question is – What are the measures of success for young people participating in alternative and flexible learning organisations in southern metropolitan Melbourne?**
- Data collection methods include:
  - Quantitative instruments to **survey** a wide range of views across the sector
  - Qualitative instruments to gather in-depth information from key stakeholders including interviews / focus groups.
- Describe the purpose of these 20 minutes – to capture the views and feedback from interviewee regarding measures of success for young people in flexible learning settings.
- Describe how the data will be used from today – notes will be typed as we speak which I then revisit to type up in more detail, all notes depersonalised in final report.
- Reminder re the research scope:
  - Focus on southern metropolitan Melbourne.
  - Data collected from flexible learning providers working with young people outside of mainstream schools aged 12–25.
  - Case Studies' template to be dispersed shortly.
  - Goal is to launch research in Feb/March.

### Interview questions / topic areas for discussion

1. What does success for a young person mean to you/ your program?
2. What are the key measures of success used in your context? For those measures, what indicators or tools do you use to capture them?
3. Do you currently involve young people in measuring their own success in your setting? If yes, please explain how.
4. Is there anything else you'd like to comment on today?

## Appendix D – Case Study – A Successful Journey

### Background

Your organisation has agreed to write a short case study (approximately 300–500 words in length). This case study will form part of research aiming to explore the following question: **“What are the measures of success for young people participating in alternative and flexible learning organisations in southern metropolitan Melbourne?”**.

### What is involved?

Your organisation has been invited to take part in the following data collection methods:

1. Distribution and completion of a **short survey** by your staff (completed)
2. A 20-minute **phone interview** with a program coordinator/ manager (completed)
3. Creating **1 case study** reflecting success from your organisation by filling in a template

With stages 1 & 2 complete, you are now being asked to complete the third stage.

Each organisation involved in completing a Case Study is being asked to write one around one of the following measures of success:

- Attendance
- Student engagement – participation in the program
- Academic certification (full or partial)
- Academic achievement/improvement over time (such as improved literacy and numeracy)
- Post program destinations (such as progressing to further education or employment)
- Personal wellbeing (such as improved physical and /or mental health)
- Social wellbeing (such as improved socialisation)
- Community engagement (such as involvement in local community projects)

### How will my organisation's confidentiality be protected?

- Any information you give will be kept in a password-protected computer file.
- In the final report, participants and settings will be anonymised.
- FLV will remove any personal information, however, you should note that as the number of organisations surveyed is very small, it is possible that your organisation may be identified.

**Please aim to complete and return this Case Study no later than Friday 2 December.**

Please contact **Nick Johns (FLV Project Manager)** if you have any questions or if you would like more information about the project on P: 03 9584 8845 or via email [flv@bgkllen.org.au](mailto:flv@bgkllen.org.au).



CASE STUDY TEMPLATE

Please fill in the following details

\*Program Name

\*Program address

\*Brief overview – e.g. date started, governance, type of program, student population

Case Study Measure of Success Topic for organisation

Please highlight measure of success demonstrated by this case study from following list as allocated in email (**Attendance, Student engagement, Academic certification, Post program destinations, Personal wellbeing, Social wellbeing, Academic achievement, Community engagement**)

Case study

- Please write approximately 300–500 words below describing the success of a young person that captures the measure of success allocated for your program e.g. Attendance.
- Please choose a pseudonym for young person e.g. (**Sam\* (not real name) struggled with drug and alcohol issues when he first enrolled...**).
- Please describe the change/progress you have seen with this young person and how they encapsulate the change that can occur in this area in flexible settings.

Appendix E – Plain Language Statement

PROJECT TITLE: A SUCCESSFUL JOURNEY: defining success in flexible learning programs

My name is Nick Johns. I am the Project Manager for Flexible Learning Victoria. As a flexible learning organisation who has previously contributed to A Different Journey (Ellum & Longmuir, 2013) and The Next Journey (Waugh, 2014) I would like to invite you to participate in the third piece of research in this series – A Successful Journey. This research aims to explore the following question: **“What are the measures of success for young people participating in alternative and flexible learning organisations in southern metropolitan Melbourne?”**.

What is involved?

Your organisation will be invited to take part in the following data collection methods:

1. Distribution and completion of a **short survey** by your staff
2. A 20-minute **phone interview** with a program coordinator/ manager
3. Creating **1 case study** reflecting success from your organisation by filling in a template

How will my/my organisation’s confidentiality be protected?

- I intend to protect the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent.
- Any information you give will be kept in a password-protected computer file.
- In the final report, participants and programs will be anonymised.
- FLV will remove any personal information, however, you should note that as the number of organisations surveyed is very small, it is possible that your organisation may be identified.

How will I/my organisation get any feedback?

At the end of the research, if you wish, a summary will also be sent to you. Verbal feedback on the research will be offered to yourself.

Do I have to take part?

**No. Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary.** You can pull out of the research at any stage, or withdraw any information you have supplied, without any consequences.

Are there any risks to you or your organisation?

Risks are considered to be very minimal. However, it is important to understand that:

- Whilst unlikely, a survey or interview question may make you/ a staff member uncomfortable. To minimise this, any question that concerns you/ a staff member may be skipped.
- Although your organisational name will not be used in any report or publication, someone might guess that the information is about your organisation because of the information given. To minimise this risk, you can also ask the researcher not to use the information given in any answer if you think it might identify your organisation.

Please contact **Nick Johns (FLV Project Manager)** if you have any questions or if would like more information about the project on P: 03 9584 8845 or via email flv@bgklle.org.au.



# Appendix F – Consent Form

## PROJECT TITLE: A SUCCESSFUL JOURNEY: defining success in flexible learning programs

Name of participant:

Name of researcher:

Nick Johns, Project Manager Flexible Learning Victoria

- 1. I consent to participate in this project. The details of the data collection have been explained to me. I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.
- 2. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form the researcher will keep it.
- 3. I understand that my participation will involve some or all of the following:
  - a. completing a survey
  - b. a phone interview
  - c. writing up a case study into a template

I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.

- 4. I acknowledge that:
  - a. the possible effects of participating have been explained to my satisfaction;
  - b. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any information I have provided;
  - c. the project is for the purpose of research;
  - d. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
  - e. I have been informed that, with my consent, notes will be taken during the interview;
  - f. all research will be anonymized and I will be referred to by a pseudonym (a fake name) in any publications arising from the research;
  - g. I have been informed that a copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I agree to this.

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings

Please tick: ☐ YES ☐ NO

Participant signature:

Date:



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