



Try, Test and Learn Fund

Initiative: *Sonder Employment Solutions*

Location: South Australia

Using insights from the Priority Investment Approach, the Try, Test and Learn Fund is gathering evidence on new or innovative approaches to addressing barriers to work.

The Try, Test and Learn Fund will help achieve the objectives of welfare reform—that is, to develop a modern welfare system that increases the capacity of individuals, reduces the risk of welfare dependency and maintains a strong welfare safety net.

What are we trying to achieve?

This project seeks to improve employment outcomes for migrants and refugees by supporting them to overcome complex psychosocial barriers to employment through culturally appropriate employment support and mental health support.

What is *Sonder Employment Solutions*?

A modified and culturally appropriate version of the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of vocational assistance to help vulnerable migrants and refugees overcome complex psychosocial barriers to employment.

Participants receive employment and vocational support from employment specialists who are integrated with a mental health service and trained in mental health first aid. Employment specialists use this training to identify signs or symptoms of unrecognised mental health problems or undiagnosed mental health conditions. Where relevant, employment specialists offer participants mental health services from one of Sonder's mental health clinicians, and coordinate employment support with these services and any other services received by participants.

A one-on-one and culturally appropriate employment support program, in conjunction with appropriate mental health support, improves the likelihood of participants transitioning smoothly into a workplace and maintaining long-term employment.

What does the evidence tell us?

- While many migrants and refugees successfully gain employment within the first few years of arrival, a small group continue to struggle and this group is at elevated risk of long-term welfare dependence.
- On average, migrants and refugees who currently receive income support are likely to be on income support in 30 years over their lifetime.
- If nothing changes, 56 per cent of this group will be receiving income support payments in 10 years, and 51 per cent will be receiving income support payments in 20 years.

How is this initiative new and innovative?

The key innovation of this project is modifying the evidenced-based IPS model of supported employment to specifically support vulnerable migrants and refugees who experience complex psychosocial barriers to employment. The modified model is culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of each participant, and offers access to mental health services as necessary.

Fast facts

Priority group: Migrants and refugees

Target participant number: 425

Location: Adelaide

Trial period: 29 months

Total funding: \$4.59 million

Service provider: Sonder Employment Solutions

Potential future saving: The purpose of these initiatives is to test whether an intervention works to reduce long-term reliance on welfare. If around 12 per cent (52) of participants move off income support because of this project, the savings to the welfare system are likely to outweigh the costs of the project.

Note: Due to changes in circumstances, adjustments have been made to target participant numbers, trial period and total funding.