

# ENGAGING THE NEXT WAVE OF CIVIL WORKERS

**Full project name:** Civil Skills Cadetship Program

**Lead organisation:** Civil Contractors Federation

**Collaborators:** Lendlease, Winslow Constructors, BrilliantFit, KontentLab, Bendigo Kangan Institute, Chisholm Skills and Jobs Centre

**Completion date:** July 2020

The program engages industry mentors to tackle the retention problem. Each participant is assigned a mentor and that relationship continues through six months of apprenticeship after they complete the program.

## WHAT'S THE WICKED PROBLEM? – THE CONTEXT

The civil construction industry is struggling to find enough entry-level employees as it races to deliver a swathe of major infrastructure projects in Victoria. About one in five civil workers are due to retire in the next decade, making the problem still more urgent. This project aims to improve the traditional Cert III in Civil Construction, and lift the current completion rate.

## SMART SELECTION, SMART RETENTION – THE INNOVATION

The cadetship program takes an innovative approach right from the selection stage. It recruits people from all walks of life, such as mature job seekers, school leavers, and people on community corrections orders. It then uses BrilliantFit, a career assessment technology platform, to help make sure they are cut out for the demands of the industry.

From there, they undergo 25 days of blended training that includes 12 core units of competency from the cert III course.

The program places great emphasis on making the training engaging. Participants are issued with tablets, use simulators that teach them to operate machinery, and learn about the use of drones and locator technology. They also spend time on building sites to get practical experience.

## THE FIRST COHORT: GETTING ON SITE

**Case study: Bendigo Kangan Institute**

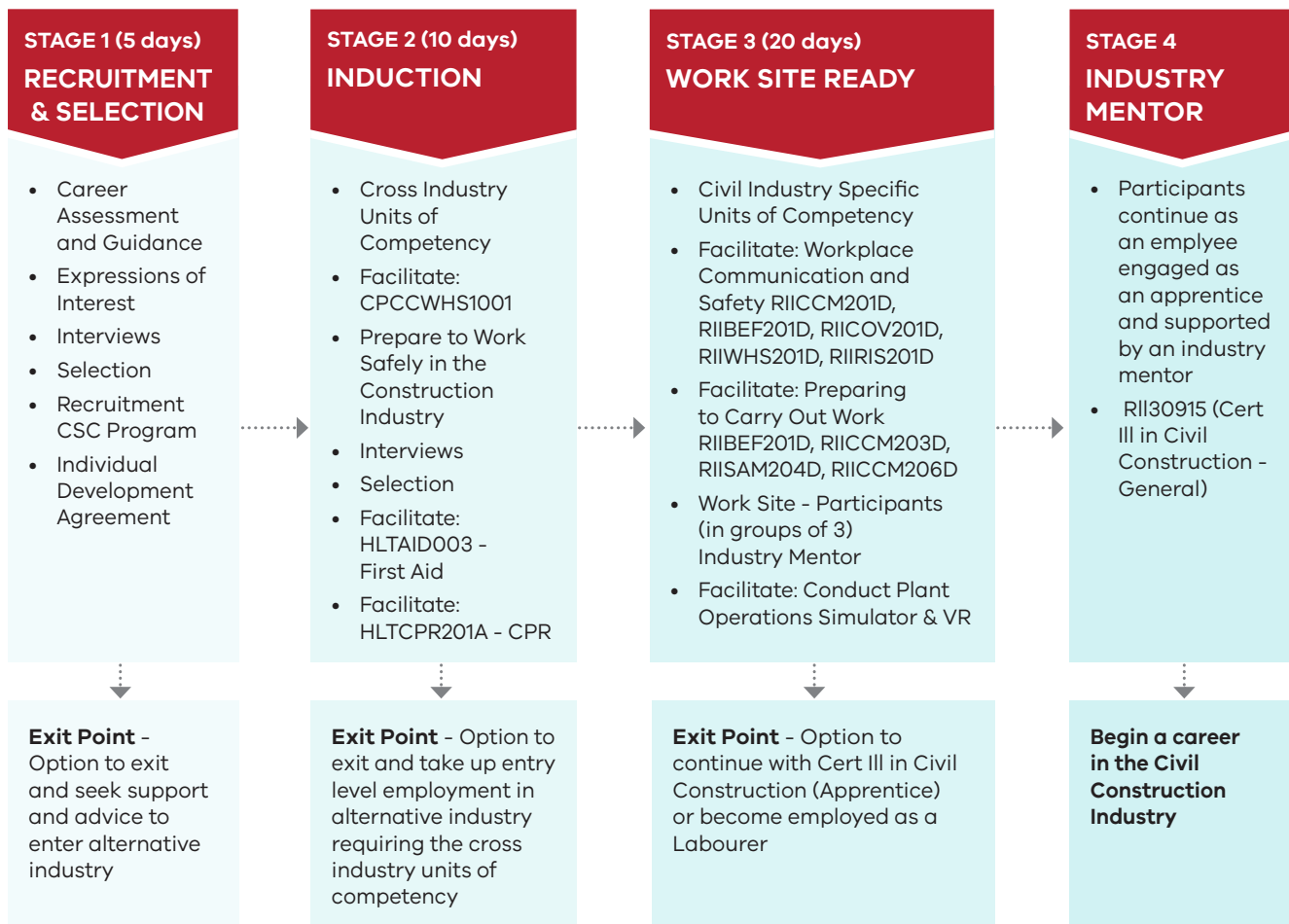


The program's inaugural cohort began at Kangan Institute earlier this year. Of the 15 participants, two were transitioning from working in warehouses, three were on community corrections orders, and many of the others were with a job services agency.

They completed training in May and the results are encouraging. The program offers exit points after each of its four stages – one of these is for a participant who wishes to work as an entry-level labourer to leave once they have the requisite skills and safety awareness. One of the participants took this route. Another had to withdraw for health reasons.

The other 13 went on to complete the program. Four have begun an apprenticeship in civil construction, one has taken a plumbing apprenticeship, and six are working on sites.

## Civil Skills Cadetship Program – Stages and Exits



## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT – LESSONS LEARNED

- A project such as this one, which is a departure from traditional approaches, can require a big mindset change from trainers and facilitators, says Sonya Casey, CCF Victoria's workforce development manager. *"It's an opportunity for them to develop, as well as the students,"* she says.
- Plan as much as possible – and be prepared for things to still go wrong. For example, Bendigo Kangan Institute's network wasn't stable enough for the tablets that participants were issued with to be used to full effect.

- Such lessons are invaluable. *"That first program was very tricky, but the one at Chisholm (that began in June) is rolling out exactly as we planned,"* Ms Casey says. *"That's because of what we learned from the pilot."*

## STRENGTH TO STRENGTH – WHAT'S NEXT

The program is expanding and aims to provide 120 entry-level employees by about this time next year. A second group of 15 started at Broadmeadows in July. The program is now also up and running at the Chisholm Skills and Jobs Centre, where 13 students were due to finish in late July. Another cohort is expected to get off the ground at Victoria University Polytechnic this month and courses are planned for two other locations. Ms Casey expects strong employment outcomes by the end of the year, with recruitment tending to spike in the drier months.

Founded in 2017, the Workforce Training Innovation Fund (WTIF) is a targeted *Skills First* funding stream. WTIF creates opportunities for partnerships between industry and the TAFE and training system and encourages them to explore bold, innovative approaches that challenge existing practices in skills development and training methods.

Ultimately, these new ideas and solutions aim to enhance workplace productivity, particularly in Victorian Government priority sectors. More than \$90 million of funding has been committed to date.

The next round of WTIF funding is now open for applications.

To find out more visit [www.education.vic.gov.au/training/providers/funding/Pages/wtif.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/training/providers/funding/Pages/wtif.aspx) or email the WTIF team at [wtif@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:wtif@edumail.vic.gov.au)