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The Treasury
2021-22 Pre-Budget Submissions
By email: prebudgetsubs@treasury.gov.au

Infoxchange pre-budget submission

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission.

Infoxchange is a not-for-profit social enterprise that has been delivering technology for social justice for over 30 years. With 170 staff across Australia and New Zealand, we tackle the biggest social challenges through the smart and creative use of technology.

We work with community, government and corporate partners to solve issues around homelessness, family violence, mental health and disability, as well as supporting Indigenous communities, women, youth and families.

Our products and services are used by government and community services including existing contracts with the Department of Social Services, Services Australia and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

Through our work in digital inclusion and social innovation we use technology to empower people experiencing disadvantage, driving social inclusion and creating stronger communities. We believe no-one should be left behind in today's digital world.

We are writing to urge the Government to prioritise funding for two programs to address digital capability as the economy recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.
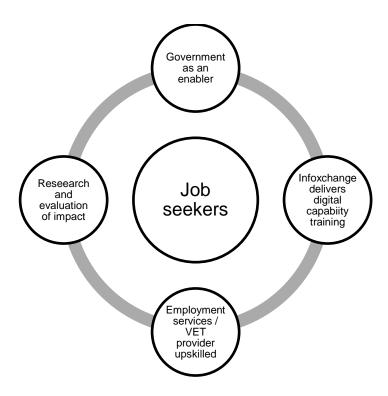
Digital capability building for job seekers

It is increasingly important for job seekers to have a range of digital skills. This is true across the economy. For example, aged care workers need digital skills to effectively manage client services, small businesses to engage customers online and tradespeople to manage the delivery of their work.

Infoxchange is seeking funding to scale delivery of an existing digital capability building program for job seekers and VET students. Taking a place-based approach, Infoxchange would extend its partnerships with community organisations such as learn locals, TAFEs and job support providers to deliver digital capability training to job seekers and/or VET students. Once training has been complete, we would track the progress of individuals to ascertain learning gain and impact.

For example:

The particular cohort of individuals, referred to as job seekers, may be selected to ensure the program is working with a more digitally excluded group such as low-income households or people living in regional areas. If the program proved successful, it may be appropriate for the Government to:

- direct employment service providers to require job seekers to engage in digital capabilities training; and/or
- work with TAFEs to promote digital capabilities training such as *Digital Springboard* as a complement to their TAFE qualification, where that qualification is not specifically in ICT - ie where digital capabilities support and extend competency and employability in other fields, whatever that might, from aged care to agriculture.

In terms of creating interest from individuals to be part of a program like this, working with local community organisations is an effective way to drive engagement. The cost, included in the cost outline above, is focussed on:

- building awareness of the program within those local community organisations;
- upskilling those in the community organisations to deliver the program;
- supporting the local community organisations through ongoing mentoring;
- funding the local community organisations to build awareness of the program and deliver the training.

The delivery costs for *Digital Springboard* would be:

- To reach 40,000 over 2 years - $5m
- To reach 100,000 over 4 years - $8m
- To reach 500,000 over 4 years - $20m
- To reach 1,000,000 over 4 years - $40m

Further information about *Digital Springboard* and an evaluation of program results to date is provided in the attachments.

Not for profit digital transformation and capability building hub

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the ongoing technology challenges faced by not-for-profit organisations as they have attempted to deliver services online and support their staff and volunteers to work remotely.

Infoxchange proposes to lead a cross-sector partnership to develop a digital transformation hub to support not-for-profits in addressing these challenges, as well as assisting them on a broader transformation journey which will build their capability and resilience for a post COVID-19 world.

The focus of the hub will be on digital technology as an enabler to support service transformation and new ways of working, addressing key barriers identified by the sector including:

- Access to affordable and fit for-for-purpose technology solutions
- Lack of skilled technical resources to advise on digital technology
- Resources and funding to assist with the implementation of digital transformation initiatives
- Staff and volunteer digital skills and capability
- Lack of awareness of the benefits of digital technology and a fear of making technology related decisions

The hub will be delivered as an integrated set of web-based resources, capacity building programs and tailored advice for organisations.

Infoxchange is seeking $2 million in seed funding to establish the hub, coordinate the cross-sector partnership and deliver content, capacity building programs and services to the sector over a 2-year period. This will include:

- Development and enhancement of online resources including incorporating content and training material from project partners
- Delivery of the expert bar, technology assessments and the digital transformation strategy on a plate program
- Regular scheduling of group events, webinars and training programs
- Undertaking mentoring for discrete transformation projects
- Reporting and evaluation

- Awareness raising and promotional activities
- Staff costs and technical expenditure for delivering the hub components including management of corporate partners and volunteers

After this two-year establishment period, Infoxchange would continue to operate the hub without further funding from the Government. It is expected that the ongoing operational costs would be covered by the income already received by Infoxchange through the operation of the Connecting Up platform. The surplus generated from the operation of the platform is used to deliver capacity building programs for the not-for-profit sector and would be used to cover the ongoing costs of the digital transformation hub.

Further information about the proposed hub is provided in the attachment.

We would be pleased to discuss these matters with you further.

Yours faithfully,

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Attachments:

- Digital Springboard November 2020
- Digital Springboard End of Year Aggregate Report 2019
- Not For Profit Digital Transformation Hub Proposal December 2020