

## How BADAC used Transition Assistance Funding to plan its NDIS business

*The [Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative](#) (BADAC) delivers health, social, welfare and community development programs to local Aboriginal people, including the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) and the Home and Community Care Program for Younger People (HACC-PYP). In October 2019, BADAC received Transition Assistance Funding from the [Boosting the Local Care Workforce Program](#) to help decide if they should go ahead as a provider in the NDIS. Mel Fox, Manager of CHSP, HACC-PYP and NDIS, and Jo Warren, Executive Officer, share their experience.*

### **How did you use the funds?**

Mel: We used the funds to decide whether it was worth going ahead as an NDIS provider (it was!). The funds paid for a consultant, who helped us develop a three-year business plan. The plan suggested we move forward as a core supports provider, offering our clients services like assistance with self-care or with social and community participation. It also told us what we needed to do to make the program successful.

One of the first suggestions was to get an NDIS Support Coordinator who would help our clients understand and use their NDIS support. The consultant's report said the position would eventually be self-funding from NDIS revenue. Because the position's hours will build up slowly, we're exploring a suggestion to use a contracted Support Coordinator rather than hiring someone full-time. Our next steps are to identify which clients will benefit most from NDIS, market ourselves, and get better known as an NDIS provider.

Jo: The consultant came up from Melbourne and interviewed everyone. The consultant was very good and really knowledgeable. To this day, she's always available if we have questions.

### **There aren't many Victorian First Nations organisations operating in the NDIS. Why did you decide to start?**

Jo: We thought it would be good for our clients. We found a lot of people who were on home support programs need extra disability supports. If they can claim from NDIS, our health funds will go further because they won't be spent on services that should be funded by the NDIS.

## What advice do you have for other First Nations organisations applying for funding?

Mel: Do your research. Get to know the ins and outs. You'll find lots of resources. Do some of the webinars.

Jo: Go for it! You just have to know what you want from that money. Really think about what you want to get out of it. Maybe talk to your local NDIA Local Area Coordinator or planners. These are the people you'll be working closely with when you become an NDIS provider.

### Top tips for other First Nations organisations

- Use this [Demand Map](#) to search by post code how much people have in their budgets, their primary diagnosis and how many people you'll need to support them.
- Check out the NDIS [Data & Insights Reports](#) and [Market Position Statements](#), which give you more detail by Local Government Area and highlight NDIS underspend that you could attract into your organisation.

## How Charters Towers moved to the cloud with NDIS Transition Assistance Funding

*Charters Towers Warringnu Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders Corporation was going through its NDIS registration renewal when it was awarded \$20,000 Transition Assistance Funding from the [Boosting the Local Care Workforce Program](#). Service Manager, Jennifer Huxley, talks about how they used the funding and what it's helped them achieve.*

### **Q: How did you prioritise what the funding would be used for?**

A: I spent a month looking for the issues and gaps and trying to decide how best to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability. I kept coming back to our clients. Systems play a large part in our every-day operations. I had a light bulb moment. First and foremost, our organisation needed a new data management system. At the time, we weren't in the cloud and our different systems (rostering, invoicing, etc) didn't talk to each other. It meant our day-to-day practices were quite complicated, messy and time consuming. There was a lot of manual handling and duplication.

We used the funding to upgrade to a cloud-based NDIS data management, client records, service delivery and reporting system specifically designed and built for our organisation. Everything feeds into the one system, so all our information is in one spot, and connects straight into NDIS.

### **Q: How did you choose the right provider?**

A: A non-profit accounting specialist we were working with suggested using a data solution firm that helps you find the right NDIS management solution. The data solution firm helped us decide what we needed, entered all our client information into the new system, integrated it with our financial management and rostering software, and took us through all the training.



*Charters Towers Warringnu Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders Corporation's logo. The butterfly represents new beginnings.*

## **Q: What did the funding help you achieve?**

A: We did an amazing amount with a small amount of money. That funding boost has created a major improvement for our whole organisation, from governance right down to service delivery, our financial management, internal operations – everything! I was so excited when we got our first end-of-month report. You can really see what's going on in your organisation. The data it produces is amazing.

We're now in a position to grow the business by accepting more referrals from clients and employing more staff. Our staff like the system because it texts them when there's a schedule change; whereas, before they had to come into the office to print out the roster or do case notes. Now we have an automated system and virtual meeting and teaming software, people can work from home.

Our founders were a group of Aboriginal women who identified people in the community who needed better services. If they were alive today, they'd be so proud to see how far we've come!

### **Top tips for other First Nations organisations**

- Look at your systems. Are they effective and efficient? We live in a world with technology all around us. You have to keep moving with the times. That's the only way you're going to grow.
- Look at your policies. Are they outdated? Do they need to be upgraded?
- Focus on the outcomes. It's not about what you do with the money, but what you achieve.

## How Congress used Transition Assistance Funding to support its NDIS registration

*Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (Congress) is the largest Aboriginal community controlled health organisation in the Northern Territory, providing \$60M of culturally-appropriate services to First Nations people living in and near Alice Springs. To get its NDIS registration across the line, Congress used \$20,000 of Transition Assistance Funding from the [Boosting the Local Care Workforce Program](#) to identify and implement new IT systems. Stephen Marshall, General Manager Business Services, explains what the funding has helped them achieve.*



*Congress's logo*

### **Q. Why did you decide to register as an NDIS provider?**

A. As an advocate for closing the gap on Aboriginal health disadvantage, it's our mission to make sure Aboriginal people get the services they are entitled to. Congress delivers primary health care services to 16,000 of the 18,000 people in Central Australia. A good number of these clients have NDIS requirements, but because with many of them English is not their first language, they have low or poor literacy levels, internet connections are non-existent or not reliable and they distrust or don't understand the system, they are missing out. We decided it was time to get in there and start advocating for them.

### **Q. How did you decide where to invest the funding to help your NDIS registration process?**

A. We used the [BLCW Readiness Assessment Tool](#) to help get ourselves NDIS ready. It was clear we had work to do on governance and systems. As an organisation, we were already on a journey to improve our governance. We had a client management system, but this managed our primary health care needs. We needed appropriate systems that could capture and record information and automatically make NDIS claims. We're a large organisation so the process of identifying and implementing a new system was complicated. We used the funding to employ a consultant. First, they reviewed the available systems and recommended a healthcare platform designed specifically for the disability industry that would make claiming fast and easy and help us meet our compliance needs. Then, they assisted us with the due diligence leading up to implementation of the system for us, including integrating it with our existing clinical system.

## **Q. What have you been able to achieve?**

A. The new system was ready to go live in December but we're still working through issues like making sure it's storing information in Australia – not overseas (an NDIS requirement). By February, we're confident we'll have an integrated system and automated billing to NDIS. The new system will remove a lot of duplication and manual processing and make us more efficient, with client information in one place and automated compliance reports. It will deliver benefits right across our broader organisation.

Implementing the system has made us much more confident about approaching NDIS registration. As we look five years down the track, we think NDIS could be huge for us if we implement it correctly, helping us deliver better services into the community, growing our business and increasing local employment.

### **Top tips for other First Nations organisations**

- Do your analysis first to work out your greatest area of need. Early on, if you'd asked me to pick where we should use the money, I wouldn't have said software. Once we did the analysis, it was a different story.
- Be aware that the NDIS has a very different funding model than most ACCHOs are used to. In the past, we had block funding of most of our programs paid quarterly in advance. The NDIS pays you afterwards. That means you need to be able to fund the first month (almost two) of operations out your existing cashflow.
- For example, be careful you don't jump in with only a 20-30% workload for your NDIS employee. You've still got to pay 100% of their salary. In our case, we're able to absorb that extra capacity in other parts of the business. But smaller organisations might not be able to do that. One answer may be to start by contracting your support coordinator rather than putting them on full-time.

## How GLAAS used Transition Assistance Funding to prepare for NDIS registration and get accredited

*Thanks to \$20,000 of Transition Assistance Funding from the [Boosting the Local Care Workforce Program](#), [Gippsland Latrobe Aboriginal Advocacy & Support](#) (GLAAS) achieved NDIS registration and grew its workforce by 500%. Today, GLAAS is proudly helping Gippsland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their families and carers to understand and make the most of NDIS support. GLAAS Business Manager, Tanisha Smitherson, talks about what happened when the funding came through and her advice for other First Nations organisations registering for the NDIS.*

### **Q. How important were the funds?**

A. This funding was key for us to hop into the market and start delivering services. Without it, we wouldn't be where we are today. We've grown from a team of one to a team of five. It's been amazing!

### **Q. What did you use the funding for?**

A. We hired a consultant to help us prepare for NDIS registration and accreditation. The consultant helped us understand what was required. You think you know. But then you realise you need to understand the NDIS practice standards, what's required to deliver a quality service – and you need to get all those policies and procedures in place. She really grew our knowledge. Going through each of the practice standards helps you understand what is required. The money stretched a long way to let her do an awesome job for us. It was just the right amount: not too much and not too little.

### **Q. How did you choose your consultant?**

A. I struggled with that. When the money arrived, I didn't want to get ripped off. It's like when you take your car to a mechanic. They know more than you do. How do you know you can trust them? So I shopped around. I asked for quotes and got feedback. Eventually, I found someone with clearly demonstrated NDIS experience – who was already working with NDIS providers in the region.

### **Q. What was your measure of success?**

A. When we got our accreditation standard back and it was better than I hoped! I was doubting myself a bit. It was so nerve wracking. It's not until you get that first mark on

the wall from a high-class auditing mob that you really know where you're at. That boosted my confidence. Now we're working on fixing the non-compliances. You don't have to be perfect. You just have to be willing to improve.

### **Top tips for other First Nations organisations**

- Use the free resources. I like the:
  - [Boosting the Local Care Workforce Readiness Assessment tool](#). I did it early on and it was so pleasing to go back and do it again and get a visual map of how much we'd grown.
  - [National Disability Services NDIS Provider Toolkit](#).
  - [Worksafe Victoria industry compliance kit for the disability industry](#), which has all the work health and safety information you need in one place.
- Ensure you understand and answer any grant questions accurately.
- Use a consultant to help you prepare for registration and accreditation. You can't do it on your own.
- Keep your readiness assessment front and centre and work to lift yourself up to a high standard.
- Link with your regional network of providers and supporters. For example, I worked with our [Boosting the Local Care Workforce](#) regional co-ordinator who was really helpful.
- Find out what services your community actually needs. In our naivety, we registered for everything before discovering our community only needs four key services!



## How Goobidi-Bamanga stretched Transition Assistance Funding to prepare for NDIS registration

*Goobidi-Bamanga Community Advancement Cooperative Society Limited provides accessible and culturally appropriate programs and services for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the Douglas Shire. As a small and very busy charity, they didn't have the resources to prepare for NDIS registration. But then \$20,000 of Transition Assistance Funding from the [Boosting the Local Care Workforce Program](#) made all the difference. Amy Bell explains how far the funding went.*



*Goobidi-Bamanga Community Advancement Cooperative Society staff. From left to right: Josh, Adrian, Matthew, Kearna, Helena and Vivienne.*

### **Q. Why did you decide to register for the NDIS?**

A. Some of our clients were eligible for NDIS services but hesitant to move onto a platform they didn't know much about. Now, we'll be able to help them move onto NDIS with people they know and trust to provide a quality and culturally appropriate service.

### **Q. How did you decide what you wanted to do with the funding?**

A. We engaged a consultant who specialises in NDIS readiness. They worked with us for six months to get our NDIS policies ready and train our core home care staff. The consultant was brilliant. We're still using them to onboard new staff. They also helped us identify other areas where we could use the money. Based on their recommendations, we hired a team to help us improve our governance and build financial sustainability. We also invested in NDIS-compliant service management software. Before, we were doing everything manually, including a lot of data entry. The new software gives us tools to manage clients, staff, scheduling and rostering. And it produces reports ready for both the NDIS and the Queensland Community Support Scheme, which we also deliver under. It's going to transform our business.

### **Q. What did you achieve?**

A. To start with, we achieved our main goal: we got our organisation ready for NDIS. Without that funding, it just wouldn't have been possible. But we did more than that.

Working with the consultant made us look at policies for all the other services we're providing and helped us strengthen governance in the rest of our business. It was the same with the strategic and business planning – every part of our organisation benefited. Meanwhile, our new software has eliminated unnecessary manual work and really streamlined our processes.

The whole funding process has been a great experience, empowering our clients, staff and organisation. We're now at a point where we're ready to look to the future – and we've got big dreams! In 5-10 years, we want to be the biggest provider of Indigenous jobs in the region.

### **Top tips for other First Nations organisations**

- Get expert help! The breadth of the NDIS registration is a lot. It goes into great detail at all levels. Don't be scared of the amount of work. It's a great opportunity to take your organisation to the next level. We originally thought NDIS wasn't for us. The funding made all the difference.
- Do your research. Find someone who's going to take the time to help you have a broad think about what you need as an organisation. It's not just about passing the audit. You need relationships, financial sustainability, governance models and staff training. When you find a provider you like, use their connections to link you to people who'll help in other areas.
- Be patient! The amount of work needed can be off putting. You need to focus on the goal. Know the impact it will have on the community and keep working towards your goals because it's important!
- Use the [BLCW Readiness Assessment Tool](#) to track how far you've come.

## How PAMS used Transition Assistance Funding to accelerate its NDIS registration

*Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service (PAMS) plays an important part in building strong communities and families in Newman, WA. With many health clients with disabilities, PAMS wanted to set up as a NDIS provider, but thought the process might take up to three years. CEO, Robby Chibawe, explains how \$20,000 of Transition Assistance Funding from the [Boosting the Local Care Workforce Program](#) made it a much shorter process.*

### **Q. Why did you decide to register for the NDIS?**

A. Newman is a desert region five hours drive from Port Hedland. We're the only service provider in a very remote location, which includes the Jigalong, Parnngurr, Punmu and Kunawarritji communities. The Commonwealth Government was keen for us to enter the NDIS – and we could really see the local need. The only problem was we had no knowledge of how to begin to set up for registration. It was taking us a long time to understand the NDIS and all its policies. We estimated several years! We needed help to get the services to our clients as quickly as possible.

### **Q. How did you use the funds?**

A. We hired a business consultant to help us get the NDIS policies right, explain the concept to our staff and train everyone up. They were very, very good at registration and compliance processes. They also helped us with business planning. With ongoing help from the consultants, we're now able to start looking at how to address a transient client base and even thinking about a software upgrade.

### **Q. What did you achieve?**

A. Rather than it taking two to three years to enter the NDIS, we got there much sooner. We learned important the lessons to make the transition quicker. We're now set up to deliver support coordination and some core supports, which we're planning to build out. It's great because our local people will get the benefit of the services sooner and we can grow the business.

Our NDIS policy review and staff training has helped us right across the business. We found clinical linkages between our medical and disability services. You can see how delivering both will improve client outcomes, especially where people have comorbidities.

Right now, we're reviewing our business case plan to build our NDIS business and recruiting new staff to manage NDIS cases. We're getting support from the Commonwealth to get going this year. Next year, we aim to be self-funded by our NDIS revenue.

### **Top tips for other First Nations organisations**

- Stop fluffing around and get expert help. Using a consultant was the quickly and easiest way to go.
- Getting on with delivering the NDIS will help your community. Your clients need the services.
- Be aware that ongoing staff training is a huge component of getting and staying registered for the NDIS. It needs to be done properly.

## How Kal'ang Respite Care used Transition Assistance Funding to achieve NDIS registration

*Thanks to \$20,000 of Transition Assistance Funding from the [Boosting the Local Care Workforce Program](#), Kal'ang Respite Care Centre Aboriginal*



*The Kal'ang Respite Care Centre Aboriginal Corporation logo*

*Corporation is now delivering services to plan and self-managed participants and is well on the journey to becoming a registered provider along the Fraser Coast. Manager, Bonnie Williams, explains how they used the funding and offers advice to others going through the NDIS registration process.*

### **Q. Why did you decide to register as an NDIS provider?**

A. We had an internal review of where we were going as an organisation. We were already offering home care packages and knew that some Indigenous people were on NDIS plans but not accessing them. Our community wanted to support us as an NDIS provider, so we decided that was our goal.

### **Q. How did you decide what to use the funding for?**

A. Kylie Hogan, the [Boosting the Local Care Workforce](#) Queensland Lead Regional Coordinator, advised us about the IT requirements needed for registration and we realised we needed an upgrade. At the time, we didn't have proper systems and were doing a lot of manual work.

We spent the money on better, faster and more secure computer systems. We knew we needed suitable IT systems to be able to connect with people and keep up with everyone's needs. The upgrade took six weeks, but it was well worth it! We now have the ability to capture, maintain data and connect with our clients through the web and social forums including contacting clients using video conferencing software.

### **Q. What difference has the funding made to your business?**

A. Getting registered was a real triumph. We were able to demonstrate to government what we can achieve. We're proud of ourselves!

Our new, high-quality IT systems mean we now have all our client information in one

place and are able to identify what our clients need. The upgrade has also reduced staff frustration! All the training means we are confident we can provide a high-quality service to our clients. They can rely on us to meet their needs.

## **Q. What's next?**

A. Right now, we're at the audit stage. We're talking with other local providers about collaborating to co-fund a Community Connector role. The other providers aren't really our competitors. We're unique because we know our Indigenous community and how to work with local people.

### **Top tips for other First Nations organisations**

- Be aware that you can start providing most NDIS services to self-managed participants without being registered. Check out participants' funding is self-managed or plan managed. This will determine if you can start services.
- Network with other organisations who are already NDIS providers. Get out of your office and connect with other people. You'll learn all sorts of information you weren't aware of.
- [Connect](#) with the NDIA Provider and Market Relations PME team or email [provider.support@ndis.gov.au](mailto:provider.support@ndis.gov.au)
- Find out about your competitors and learn who your clients are. Decide what you can offer the community that others can't. Don't be afraid to approach other providers and offer to share resources.