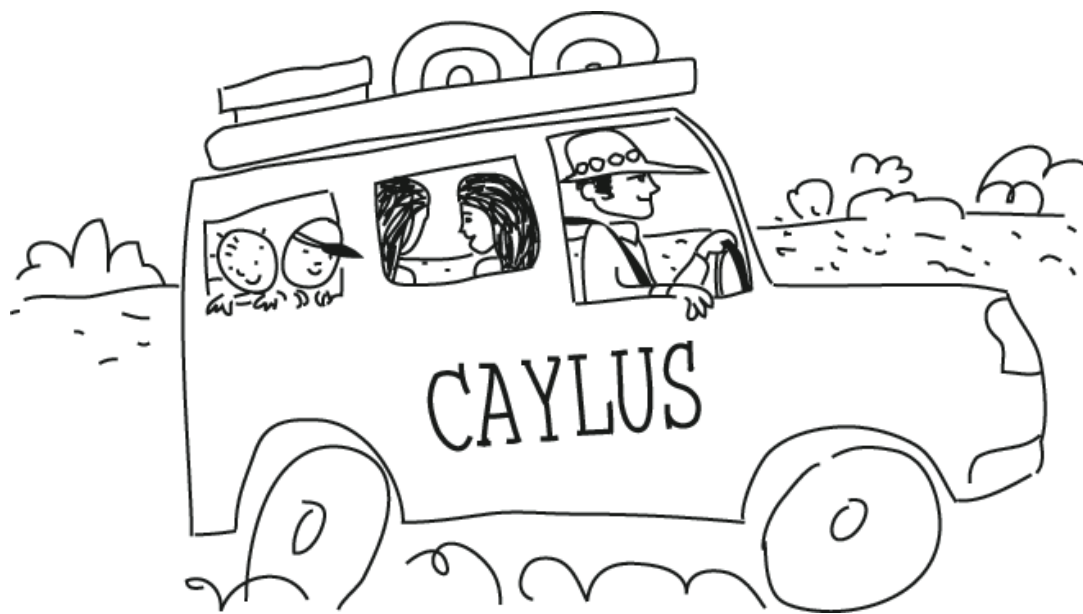


**Submission to the House Standing Committee on  
Indigenous Affairs Inquiry into Pathways and  
Participation Opportunities for Indigenous Australians in  
Employment and Business**



Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service  
July 2021

This is a submission from Central Australian Youth Link Up Service (CAYLUS) a division of Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation . CAYLUS is a federally funded program that has run in the Southern NT since 2002. We work to reduce inhalant misuse such as petrol sniffing through supply reduction (promoting the widespread roll out of Opal Low Aromatic Fuel fuel) and demand reduction (supporting positive alternatives to sniffing and other risky behaviours) and harm reduction (education, casework, rehab). We work using a community development centred approach. Details of our activities and evaluations of our work are available on our website [www.caylus.org.au](http://www.caylus.org.au).

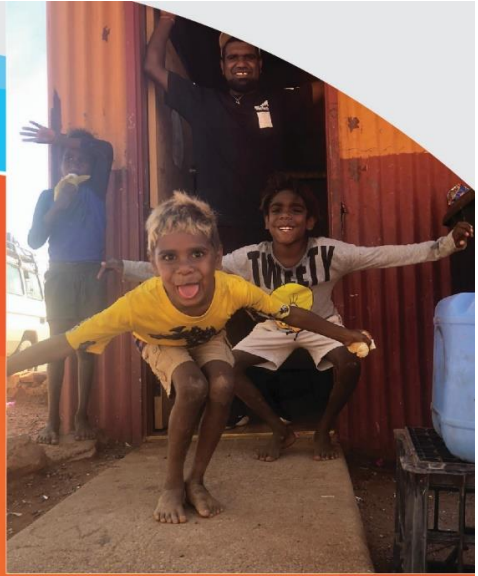
CAYLUS is well regarded as a successful program, that has achieved good results for communities in our region over nearly 20 years. We have learned from this experience, and it informed a successful initiative Called Meeting the Youth Gap (MTYG) which provided employment, intensive training, and personal support to 80 young people from remote communities in our region. This project was a pilot and has recently wound up as federal government funding ceased.

Meeting the Youth Gap was funded the DSS Try, Test and Learn Fund - a program designed to trial targeted intervention amongst demographics where long-term welfare reliance was is prevalent. Remote indigenous youth in our region are one such demographic. An evaluation of the program by Nous Group follows. In essence, our approach was employing participants as Youth Workers in remote communities where the young people live, with targeted support for the trainees and the organisations that hosted them and appropriate training resources.

We note that the submission to this inquiry from Tjanpi Desert Weavers identifies a number of barriers to employment, including lack of job readiness, identity documents, resourcing for businesses and organisations to provide support and appropriate training, geographic remoteness and lack of infrastructure, the ability to work with cultural obligations. The MTYG model addressed all these barriers.

The program was a success, ran for 20 months and provided 17900 hours of employment to 80 young people. 11 of these people moved into full time work independent of the program and many more could have done this if the program had been extended. Although it was a success and demonstrated a better approach to addressing long term welfare dependence, we could not find ongoing funding from DSS nor NIAA.

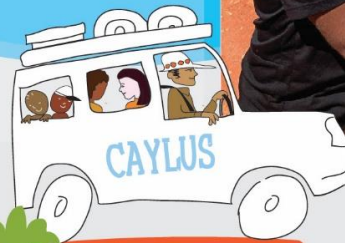
We propose that some important lessons can be learned from the project and the model could also be adapted to health workers and environmental health workers, rangers, art project and more and could provide meaningful employment for remote Indigenous Australians.



# Meeting the Youth Gap Final Evaluation | Final report

Central Australian  
Youth Link up Service

25 May 2021



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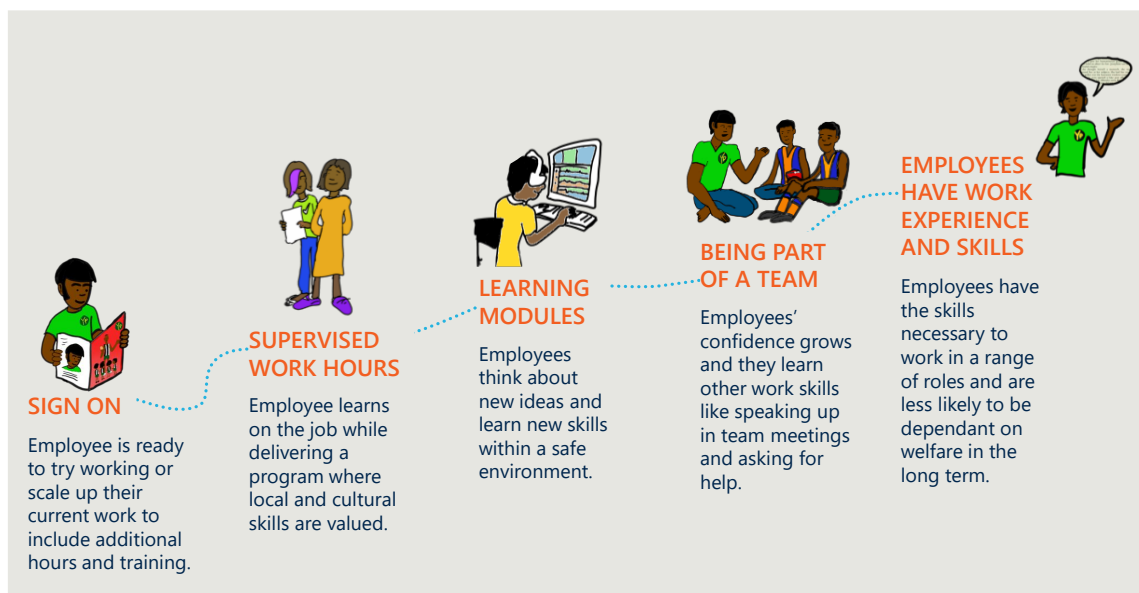
# 1 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The Meeting the Youth Gap program created opportunities for young people to experience employment in a safe environment

Meeting the Youth Gap (MTYG) is an initiative of the Central Australian Youth Link Up Service (CAYLUS). Its purpose is to provide young people living in 13 remote Indigenous communities with opportunities for employment and skills development in their local youth programs. The program has employed 80 participants and has allowed 11 of these young people (14% of employees in the program) to increase their valuable employability skills such that they are now engaged in ongoing, full- or part-time work.

The terms of employment are designed as an entry level into the job market. Hours are very flexible, and expectations of performance are tailored to each individual employee. Every program participant, known as an employee, works through a semi-structured learning program that covers issues ranging from how to be a good youth worker to how to set up and run a bank account. The design of the program creates an opportunity for young people to experience paid work in an environment in which they are highly likely to succeed. The intention is that direct employment experience in an accessible and culturally relevant field is likely to give them the skills and support they need to be able to access paid work in an ongoing way. Figure 1 presents the intended pathway for employees in the MTYG program.

Figure 1 | Employee journey through the program to improved employment outcomes



MTYG is funded through the Department of Social Services' Try, Test and Learn (TTL) fund, which supports innovative program approaches that encourage people to move away from long-term welfare dependency. Funding for MTYG began in June 2019 and continued until March 2021, following a successful bid for a funding extension.

CAYLUS administers the funds for the MTYG program and contracts two program partners to deliver the activities within each participating community. The program partners are the MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC) and the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC). Both organisations deliver youth programs in their respective communities and MTYG is delivered in addition to their core operations. The funding available through MTYG has created the opportunity for both program partners to employ more local staff.

The average cost per employee for delivery of the MTYG program across its duration was \$13,429. The cost of delivering the program to one employee is directly related to the number of hours that employee completes. For the 11 participants who are now in ongoing, part- or full-time employment, the median

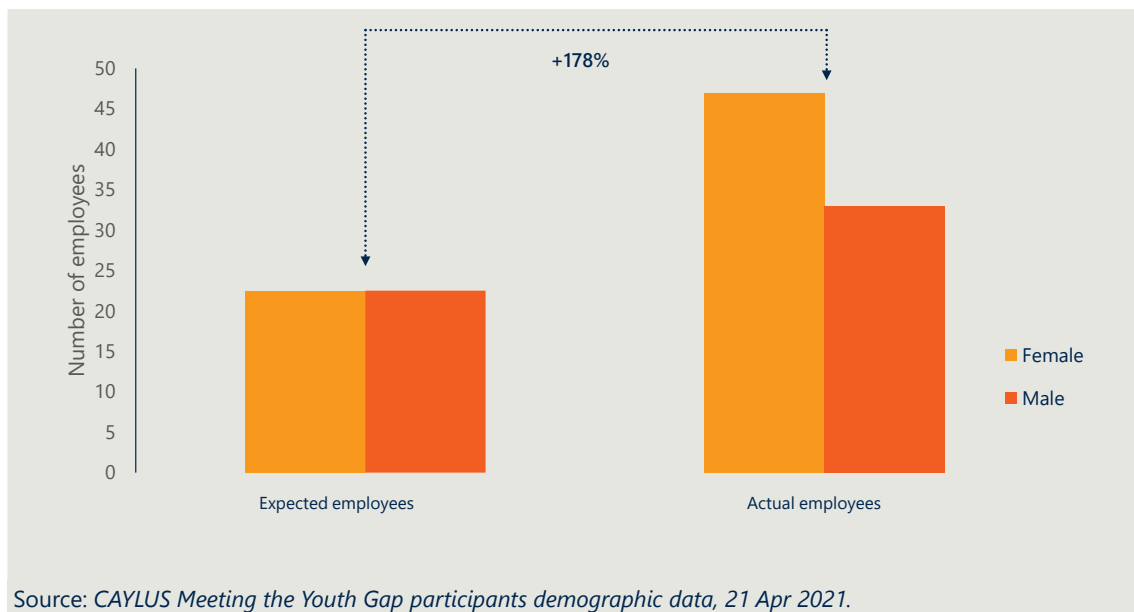
cost per participant was \$19,515. This is very efficient compared to a similar employment program that aims to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in aged care through a subsidy of \$36,840<sup>1</sup>.

CAYLUS has been heavily involved in the creation and implementation of the MTYG program. They have:

- Administered the MTYG funds
- Developed infrastructure to support the program's success
- Created a semi-structured learning program comprised of twelve sessions including accessible resources and delivery options
- Supported both program partners in program delivery by assisting in running structured learning and support sessions
- Created and hosted a database to collect required employee data
- Trained CAYLUS and program partner staff in the use of the database
- Troubleshoot and resolved delivery issues as they arose.

The MTYG program runs across thirteen remote communities in Central Australia. At the time of the final evaluation, the program had employed 80 young people aged 16 – 30 years. This is well above the target of 30 employees set at the outset of the program and the additional 15-20 employees expected to join the extension of the program. There is a roughly even gender balance across employees with 47 females and 33 males. Their self-reported level of education varies with most having completed year 10 or above. The cohort represent a typical picture of young people who live in remote Indigenous communities in Central Australia. Figure 2 shows the expected number of employees in the MTYG program and the actual number of employees.

**Figure 2 | Expected and actual number of MTYG employees**



This report presents the final evaluation of the MTYG program. Quantitative data has been gathered through reports submitted by the program partners and the SCORE system that is part of the TTL program data collection. Qualitative data was collected during program implementation through interviews with CAYLUS and program partner staff and some young people employed through the program.

<sup>1</sup> Australian Government Grant Connect. 2020. *Indigenous Employment Initiative 2020-21 to 2022-23*. Available at: <https://www.grants.gov.au/?event=public.GO.show&GOUUID=62484309-C9D7-664E-EA7D0115203CF1E0>



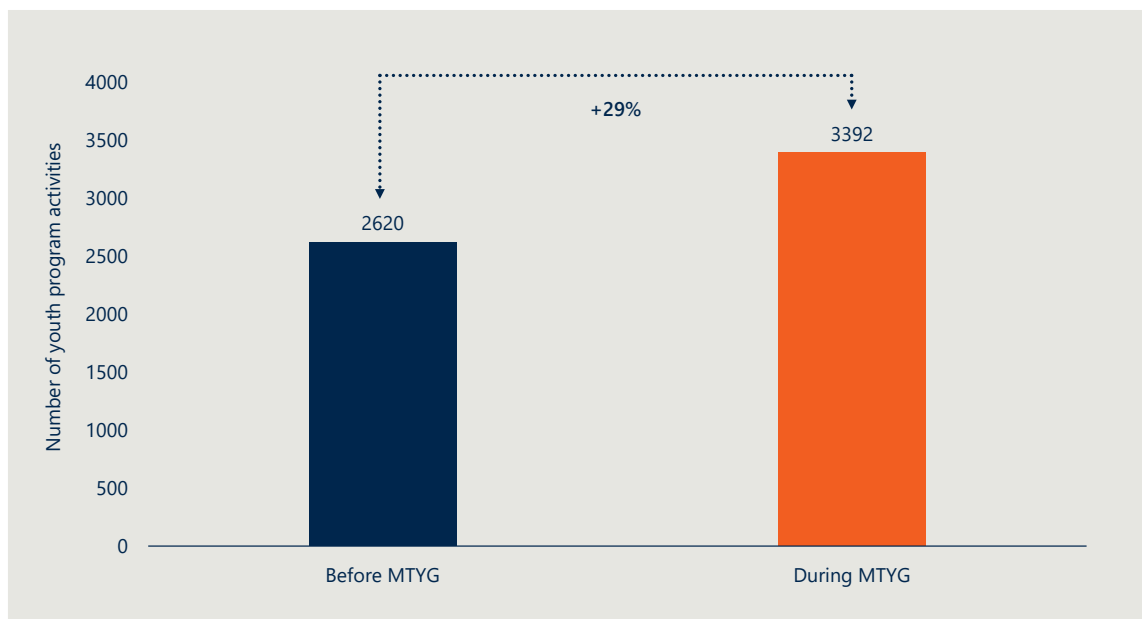
## The program is generating positive employment outcomes and stronger youth programs

The evaluation has found that the key beneficial outcome of the program is employment of the 80 young people in the participating communities. They have each received support and supervision from senior youth workers and have participated in the semi-structured learning program. They also learnt valuable employment skills through their everyday interactions with colleagues. Feedback clearly shows that young people are benefitting from these experiences; they are becoming more confident and are building their set of work skills.

An additional benefit identified by the evaluation is that the MTYG program is also creating opportunities for senior youth workers and employees to sit and talk about goals, life skills and how to manage particular situations. In some instances, this has prompted senior youth workers to take on a case management role in helping individuals achieve their goals. For example, one young man commented that he had always wanted to work as a Ranger, so the senior youth worker facilitated him connecting with the Ranger program to discuss work options and he is now successfully employed as a Ranger.

MTYG is benefitting the participating communities by providing more youth workers to deliver their youth programs, meaning more youth activities can be run. Figure 3 shows the number of youth programs run between August 2018 and February 2019, before the MTYG program began, and the number of programs run between August 2019 and February 2020 which includes standard youth program activities and the additional MTYG activities. These activities are run by youth program workers and include activities such as basketball games and bush trips.

Figure 3 | Number of youth service activities before and during MTYG program



The high participation of males in the MTYG program means it is now more likely that communities' youth worker teams will comprise both male and female youth workers. This means that more gender specific activities can now be run. Typically, when gender specific activities cannot be run, girls will miss out on important programs, however this challenge has been mitigated by the diversity provided by the MTYG program. Senior youth workers also report that having more local youth workers connects the program more closely to families within the communities, which enables the youth program to meet families' needs more closely.

## The program's semi-structured learning approach is effective and appropriate

MTYG provides a semi-structured learning program through a set of 12 structured learning and support sessions that are delivered to employees by supervising youth workers. The sessions provide information and activities on life skills, youth work skills and issues that affect young people such as drugs, alcohol and mental health. A senior youth worker goes through each session with employees, either individually or in a group. Some follow the suggested order of the sessions and others pick and choose according to the issues that are most relevant to their employees. Senior youth workers have also used the sessions to respond to specific situations in their community. For example, in one community where the behaviour of a youth was causing concern in the youth team and for other staff, the senior youth worker did the Mental Health session, which explained the cause of the youth's troubling behaviour and gave the team some skills to deal with it more effectively.



Each structured learning and support session has accompanying resources including an employee workbook and facilitation guidance for the senior youth workers. Feedback on the session has been extraordinarily positive. Several senior youth workers have commented that the resources that accompany the sessions have become essential resources for their team. Working through the resources facilitates discussion on a range of issues that benefit everyone involved. In several communities the sessions have been run with a wider group of young people because there is widespread interest in learning their content. The session on life skills and budgeting has been particularly popular in the wider communities.

The MTYG program has created the opportunity to develop these sessions across the lifetime of the program. The resources have filled a long-standing gap in support for training of youth workers. They have generated interest from well beyond the two program partners and been downloaded from the CAYLUS website by other youth programs including two remote campuses of the Batchelor Institute of Education, the AFL Northern Territory peak body for their youth work in Youth Detention facilities and Waltja Tjutanku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation for use in alcohol and other drug education in the Northern Territory. They will have an ongoing impact on the quality of youth programs across remote Australia and the quality of Indigenous youth workers.

CAYLUS has taken great care to pitch the sessions appropriately. They are highly visual, engaging and often funny. Senior youth workers have appreciated their style and give feedback that they could be even more interactive. Many of the sessions have graphic versions of the resources to suit employees with low literacy levels.

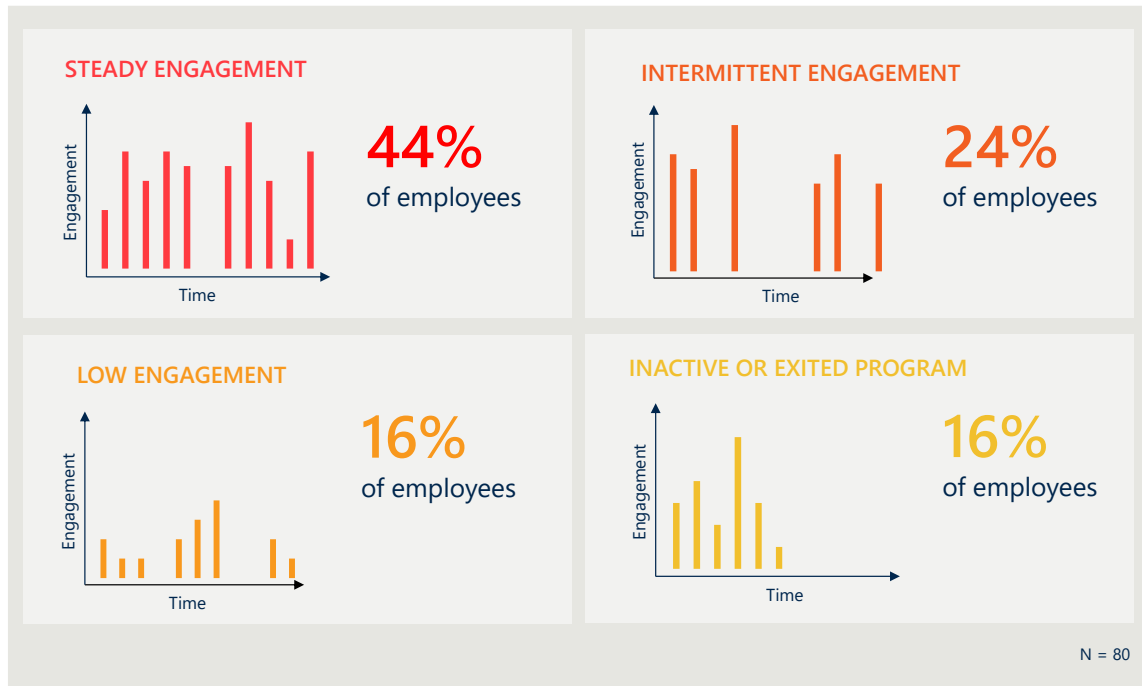
In the words of one program partner who was previously a public servant: "I worked in the Community Development Program for four years and this project Try, Test and Learn provides exactly what was missing there - appropriate training in life skill and work skills".

## The design of Meeting the Youth Gap is a significant factor in its success

Feedback indicates that the key element of the program design is its flexibility for employees and program partners. For employees this means that there are no specific expectations of the number of hours they will work or the training in which they will participate. The intention is that they will develop the work habits that are appropriate for them at each point in time and that they will experience success in what they achieve. There are clear patterns in participation, with the highest proportion choosing to have a steady involvement with the program. There are also many employees who engage with the program intermittently and may take breaks of three or more months but return to the program when they are able to, a number of these, both male and female, took time off around the arrival of a new baby and were able to later re-enter and continue the program. A small number of employees have completed fewer than 50 hours in total and are considered to have low engagement. A small number of employees have not engaged in the last three or more months or have undertaken an early exit from the program. Figure 4

presents the patterns of engagement in the MTYG program and demonstrates that the program is being used flexibly by employees.

**Figure 4 | Patterns of engagement in the MTYG program**



The flexibility of MTYG means that program partners can implement the program in their own way. MRC and WYDAC are paid for the number of work hours and learning sessions completed by each employee in their participating communities. These two program partners have implemented MTYG slightly differently: one has employed an additional, dedicated staff member to support the MTYG program and the other has extended the roles of existing employees.

Another key element in the design is the structure of the program delivery. CAYLUS oversees the project, develops the necessary resources and structure, liaises with government and subcontracts on the ground delivery to the program partners. Importantly CAYLUS has been able to step in and support delivery as needed throughout the program including providing training to staff in how to deliver the program and record necessary data, and by providing on the ground support by delivering the program in communities.

### Meeting the Youth Gap is succeeding in impacting a demographic that are often hard to engage

The MTYG program has proven very popular with employees and their broader communities. The initial intention was that 30 young people would participate in the first stage of the program and a further 15-20 were expected to join the program when it was extended. However, the program has included 80 employees across its duration. This demonstrates that the design and implementation of the program are clearly fit for purpose and resonate with the participating communities. It is also interesting that only four employees have undertaken an early exit from the program after it was identified that the program did not meet either their interests or their needs. Some employees have returned after an absence of several months and have then re-engaged in the program. Rather than seeing this as a failure, the program views this approach as a success because those employees have re-engaged and will continue to



benefit from the program in a way that suits their personal and cultural obligations. The feedback presented in this report indicates that the design and delivery of the program are indeed meeting a gap in youth support, and that employees and the youth programs they work for are substantial beneficiaries.

Across the MTYG program, a small number of employees moved between participating communities. The flexible design of the program meant these employees could continue to participate in the program in their new community.

### **Meeting the Youth Gap is increasing the ability of the youth sector in Central Australia to gather data and present a case for its impact**

A secondary benefit of the MTYG program is being realised through its participation in the data gathering system of the Try, Test and Learn program. CAYLUS has developed a database to gather accurate program data and for the first time is gathering individual-level data on the impact of the program. This has prompted consideration of the potential to collect more sophisticated data than has previously been recorded. The data presented in this report is among the most comprehensive available for any element of a remote area youth program. This is the first step in demonstrating an impact that has been intuitively known, but historically difficult to develop a solid evidence base around.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1** Given the success of the program, seek further funding to continue providing employment opportunities in participating communities.
- 2** Continue promoting training resources more broadly for youth programs in remote Indigenous communities across Australia.



# 2

## INTRODUCTION

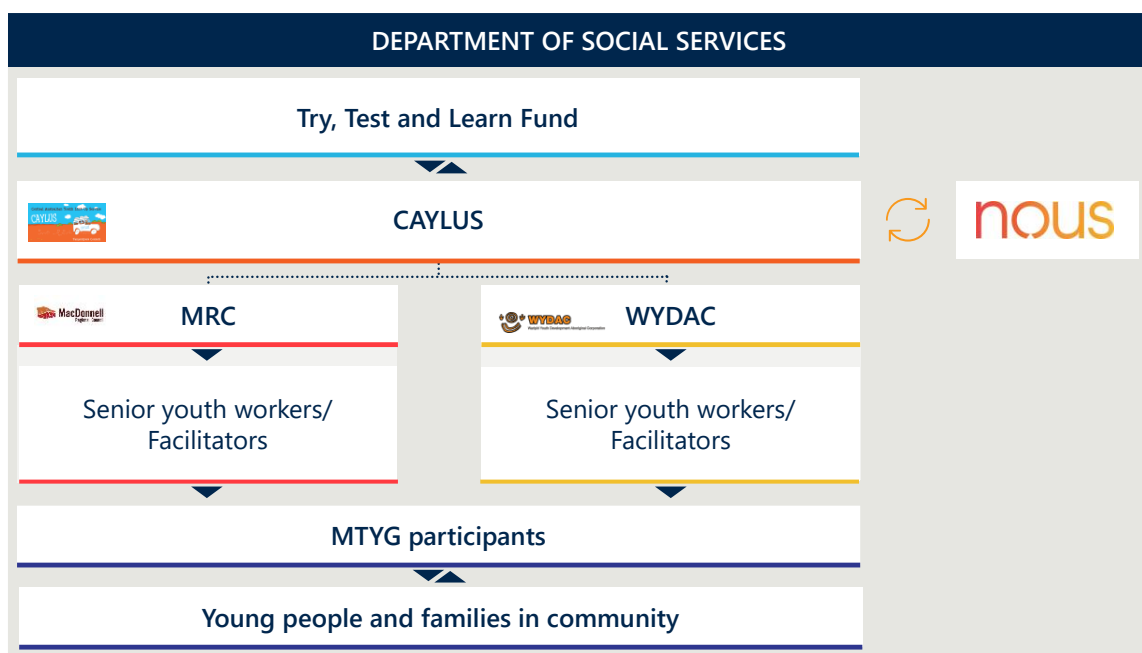


## Meeting the Youth Gap employs Aboriginal young people

The Meeting the Youth Gap (MTYG) program was funded by the Department of Social Services' (DSS) 'Try, Test and Learn' (TTL) Fund. The aim of the Fund was to trial *'new or innovative approaches to assist some of the most vulnerable in society onto a path towards stable, sustainable independence'*<sup>2</sup>. The target cohort for the MTYG program was Aboriginal young people (approximately 16 – 25 years) who live across 13 remote communities in Central Australia. The program began in July 2019 and will finish in May 2021.

The Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service (CAYLUS), a division of Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation, was the grantee for the MTYG program. It was supported by its technical partner, Nous Group (Nous). CAYLUS contracted its program partners, MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC) and Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC), to deliver the program in their participating communities. Figure 5 illustrates the program model and shows the relationship between involved organisations.

Figure 5 | MTYG program Model



This report presents the final evaluation of the program and builds on the work of the interim evaluation report that cover the period from inception of the program in July 2019 to August 2020. The purpose of the evaluation is to understand the impact of MTYG on the individual employees and the local youth programs in MacDonnell Shire and Warlpiri communities. It will also assess how the design of the program has facilitated or been a barrier to those impacts. of this and similar programs.

The program evaluation plan and extension evaluation plan, both endorsed by DSS, identified the intended impacts for employees and communities. Table 1 details those intended impacts. The extension evaluation plan is provided in Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Social Services. 2019. *Try, Test and Learn Fund*. Available at: <https://www.dss.gov.au/review-of-australias-welfare-system/australian-priority-investment-approach-to-welfare/try-test-and-learn-fund>

Table 1 | Intended impacts and evaluation questions for the MTYG program

INTENDED IMPACTS FOR EMPLOYEES	INTENDED IMPACTS FOR COMMUNITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support employees to get requisite documents for employment</li> <li>• develop employees' "job ready" skills</li> <li>• provide opportunities for at-risk young people to engage in their community through youth work</li> <li>• show at-risk young people a pathway to longer term jobs to reduce dependency on welfare.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the local youth workers are beneficial to the youth program</li> <li>• the impact of MTYG on the youth program's senior youth workers/facilitators/administrators</li> <li>• the impact of additional funding to administer the youth program</li> <li>• the impact of the MTYG session resources on the youth program</li> <li>• changes to the impact of the youth programs during the time that they are participating in MTYG.</li> </ul>
KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent CAYLUS and service providers have built internal capacity through administering MTYG?</li> <li>• The impact on program quality of CAYLUS' procurement and support to local organisations as a part of MTYG?</li> <li>• The effectiveness of the procurement model used by CAYLUS to deliver MTYG?</li> <li>• How effective CAYLUS was in partnering with other Aboriginal organisations to provide support and build capacity?</li> </ul>	



# 3 | HOW THE PROGRAM OPERATES





This section presents details of the operation of the MTYG program. It includes information about the purpose and scope of the program, service delivery structure, supporting resources and employee demographics.

## Meeting the Youth Gap creates the opportunity for employees to experience consistent paid work

The MTYG program primarily aims to reduce current and future welfare dependence by creating opportunities for young people in the target cohort and region experience paid work and simultaneously receive on-the-job training in a field that they are highly likely to know and understand, specifically their communities' youth programs. The program seeks to develop employees' work capacity in a way that will be sustained across their life and will increase their lifelong workforce participation. Using existing youth programs as the vehicle for the program generates an entry point into the working world that is both culturally accessible and highly valued. Additionally, youth work is an area of employment that harnesses the skills and strengths of the employees who have connections to local families, knowledge of local cultures, and who speak local languages.

The project's secondary aim is to help young people come off income support and into employment as youth workers or in other roles in their communities. Through the program, they receive support to address and accommodate underlying psycho-social, environmental or cultural issues that may previously have been barriers to their ongoing employment.

After completing the program, it is anticipated that employees who have increased their employment skills we be well placed to be employed as permanent staff of the participating youth programs, or with other agencies in the region. Figure 6 illustrates the employee journey though the MTYG program and into ongoing employment.

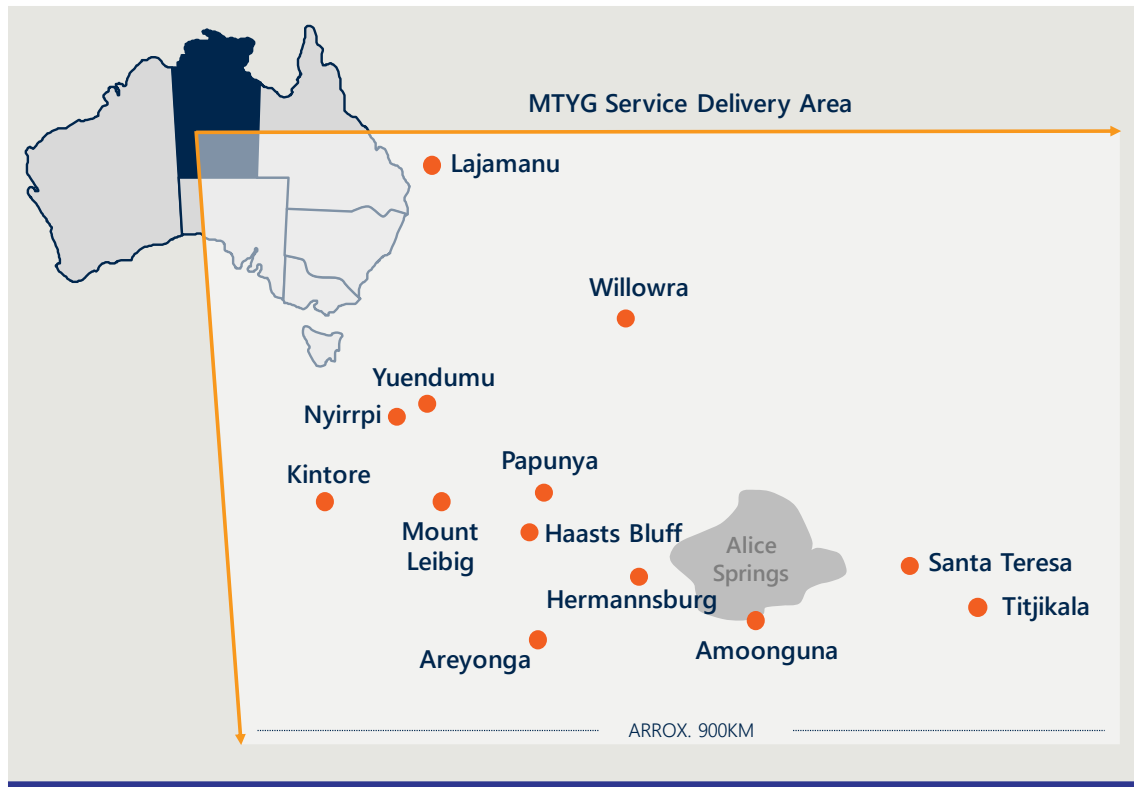
Figure 6 | Employee journey through the program to improved employment outcomes



## The Meeting the Youth Gap program covers much of Central Australia

MTYG is run in 13 communities across Central Australia, primarily in the region surrounding Alice Spring. Figure 7 presents a map of the area covered by the MTYG program.

Figure 7 | MTYG Service Delivery Area



### The program model uses existing organisations with strong relationships in the host communities to deliver the services

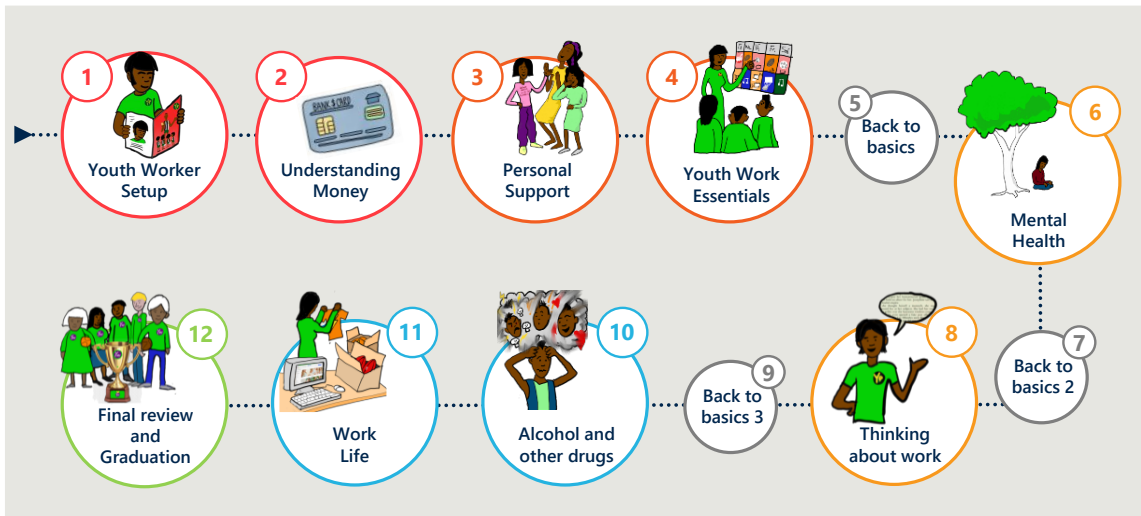
MTYG program activities are delivered by its program partners, MRC and WYDAC. These organisations collectively run youth programs across all 13 participating remote communities, all of which have been involved in the MTYG program. CAYLUS holds and manages the funds for the program, coordinates reporting, trouble shoots and oversees the project. CAYLUS developed contracts with MRC and WYDAC to employ employees and deliver the supervision, support and training for each individual. Payments are calibrated according to achievement of minimum standards agreed with each program partner and are based on the number of hours of supervised employment and the number of training sessions completed by employees in each program partners' youth programs. The payments made by CAYLUS to the program partners are sufficient to support effective delivery of the program, and to incentivise the two partner organisations to participate in the MTYG program. This structure creates space for MRC and WYDAC to deliver the program in the way that best suits their organisation, while meeting the requirements of the MTYG program.

### Employees are involved in structured learning and support sessions that complement supervised work

Employees complete sessions on specific topics that are relevant to youth work. The topics are progressive and build on some previous learning but have a high degree of flexibility and can be completed in an order that suits employees and their supervising youth workers. Some topics provide information and skills specific to youth work, others provide information on work behaviours and life administration, including

how to manage having a regular wage and some sessions provide an opportunity to review previous learning. Figure 8 shows the suggested employee learning journey through the structured learning and support sessions.

Figure 8 | Employee learning journey



### The CAYLUS team developed targeted program resources for employees

MTYG requires employees to undertake supervised work hours through assisting to run existing local youth programs. Employees are expected to perform tasks such as organising and running basketball games, assisting with the planning and running bush trips, or undertaking specific activities that create opportunities to talk about issues such as mental health with their supervising youth worker.

To underpin this hands-on work, CAYLUS has developed a suite of learning resources that employees work through with their supervising youth worker. These resources cover a range of issues from basic work skills, such as managing a regular pay packet and understanding pay slips, to suggestions on managing conflict that might occur at a youth program. The resources are highly visual and appropriate for people with a range of literacy levels.

Figure 9 | MTYG includes structured learning through program resources



The resources have been designed with a loose progression in mind but retain a high degree of flexibility that means they can complete them in an order and at a pace that makes sense for employees.

### Employees can graduate from the program after completing at least the core components

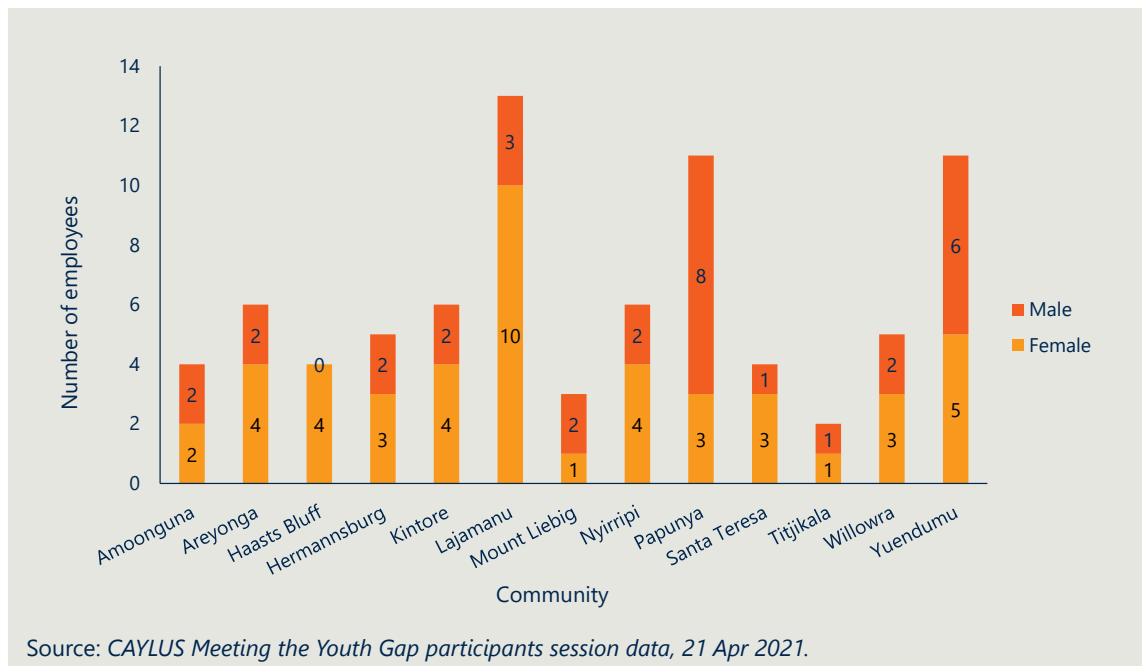
Employees who are actively engaged in the program can have their effort recognised by formally graduating from the program. Readiness for graduation is determined on a case-by-case basis but in order to graduate they must fulfil at least the core components of the program which include:

- At least 200 hours of supervised work sessions
- At least three of the six review basics sessions
- At least the Mental Health, Money Management, Alcohol and Other Drugs and Youth work themed sessions.

### The program has enrolled more employees than originally envisaged

The MTYG program has supported MRC and WYDAC to employ 80 employees as youth workers in their community of residence. Employees come from all 13 participating communities and represent a balance mix of both men and women, as shown in Figure 10.

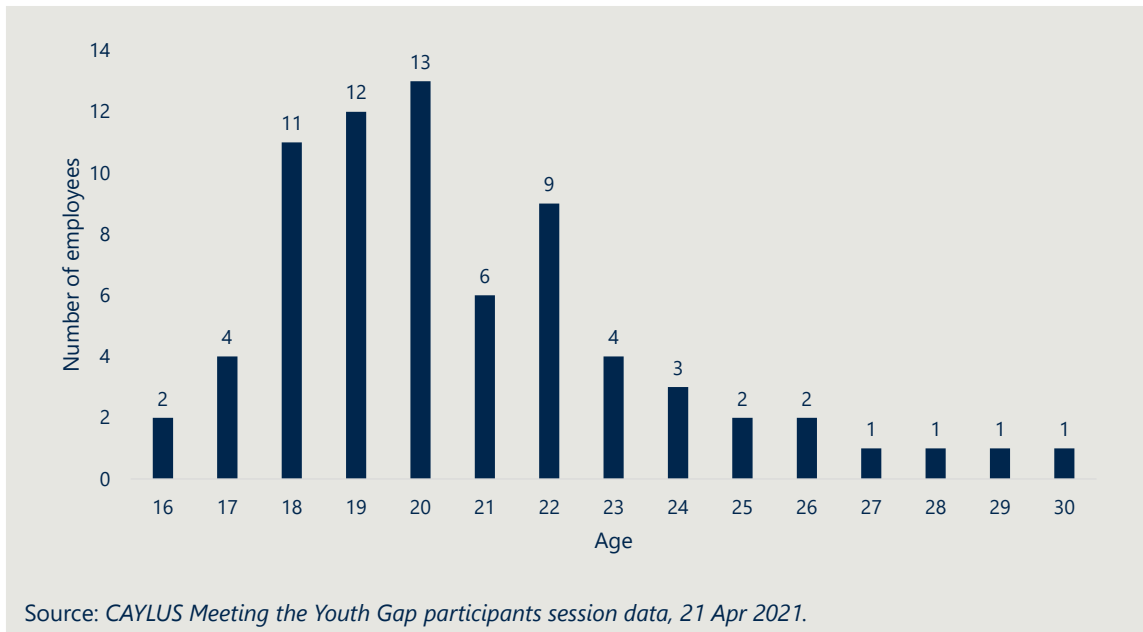
Figure 10 | Program employees by community and gender



### Employees are young and have varying levels of education

The MTYG program has employees who ages range from 16 to 30 years with most of the cohort aged 20 or younger. This suggests that for many employees, their employment in the program is likely to be their first job. Almost half of employees with known education status had completed year 10 and almost 90% had completed year 12. Figure 11 shows the ages of employees in the MTYG program.

Figure 11 | Program employees by age



More detailed demographic information is available in Appendix D.

Karla Lister, Cassie Dalton & Claire Sutterby 11



# 4 | FINDINGS



This section presents the findings of the evaluation. The section is presented under four major themes:

1. Program impact for employees
2. Program impacts for host communities
3. Program design and the extent to which it has facilitated the intended program outcomes
4. Program resources and their use.

## 4.1 MTYG delivers benefits for employees

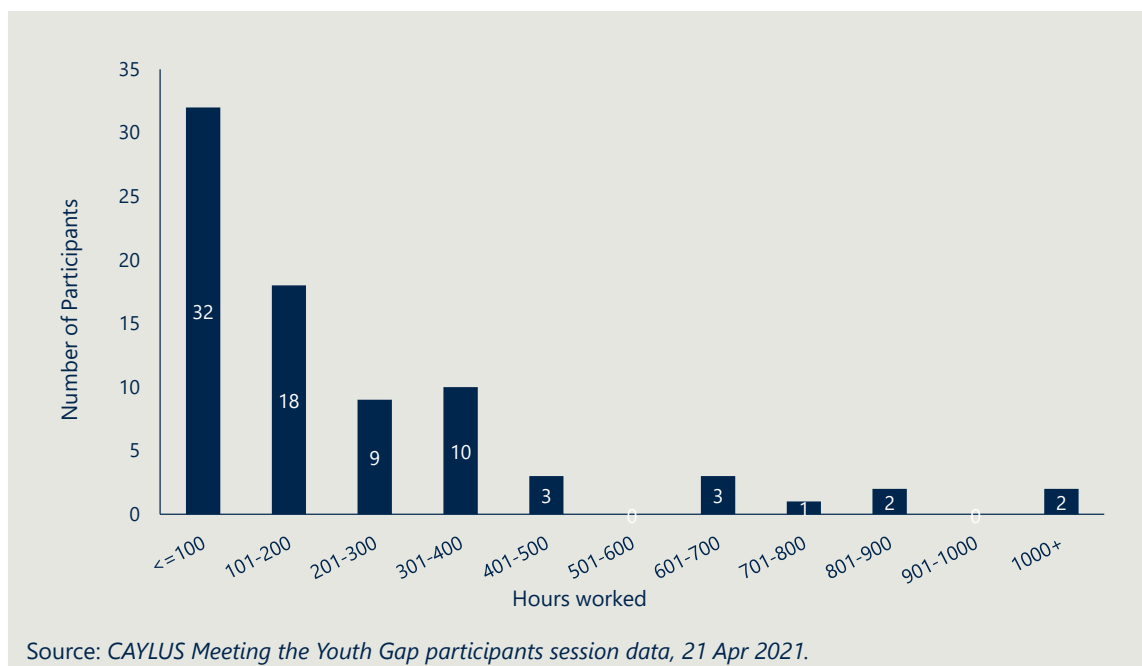
This section of the report details the programs impact on employees. The program has been evaluated against the following intended outcomes:

- Support employees to get requisite documents for employment.
- Develop employees' "job ready" skills.
- Provide opportunities for at-risk young people to engage in their community through youth work.
- Show at-risk young people a pathway to longer term jobs to reduce dependency on welfare.

### Employees undertake significant hours of supervised work

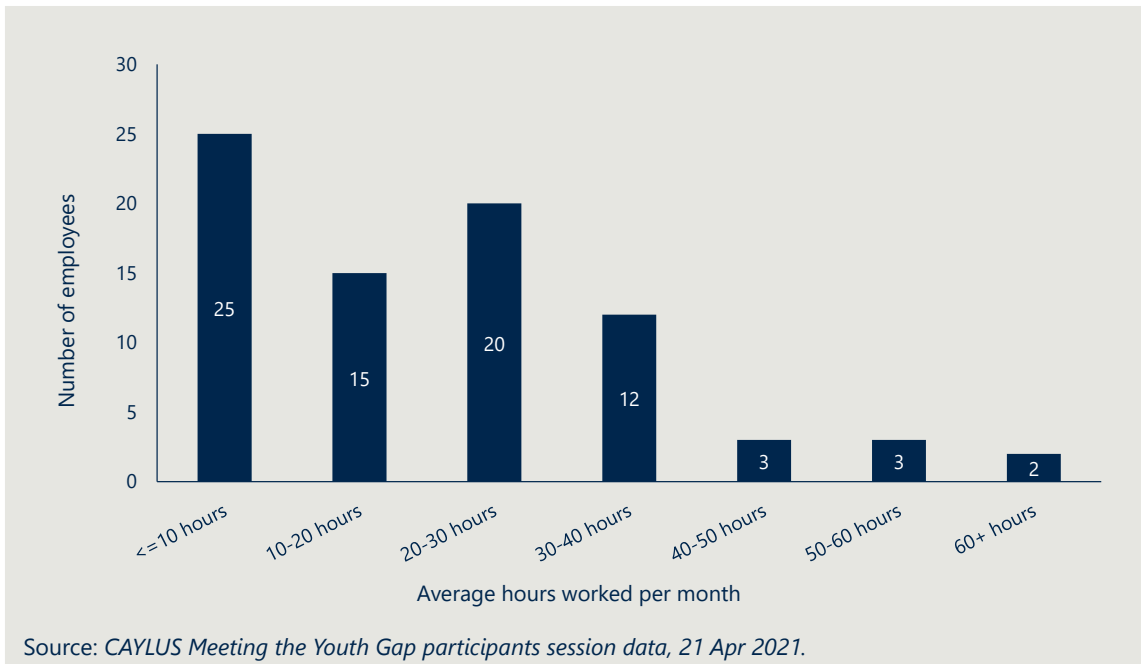
The MTYG program has delivered a total of 17,900 hours of supervised work placements across the 80 employees. Of these employees, two have completed over 1000 hours each, with one having completed 1296 hours. Just over one third or 38% of employees have completed over 200 hours and have therefore satisfied the core hours component of the program. Some employees have completed a smaller number of hours, with 25% of employees having completed 50 hours or fewer and 15% having completed 51-100 hours. Many of the participants who have completed a smaller number of hours have recently joined the program or have undertaken an early exit. Figure 12 shows the number of hours worked by employees across the entire MTYG program.

Figure 12 | Hours worked by employees across the MTYG program



On average employees in the program worked 21 hours per month. Engagement in the program is flexible and there are no requirements to work a specified number of hours in any time period. This allows employees to engage with the program as much or as little as they would like. For months in which employees completed supervised work hours, 50% of employees worked on average 20 hours per month or fewer, 25% worked on average 20-30 hours per month and 25% worked on average 30 or more hours per month. This indicates that employees value part-time involvement in the program. Figure 13 shows the average number of hours employees completed per month, where the average excludes months in which employees did not complete any supervised work hours.

**Figure 13 | Average number of hours worked per month**



### Participants engaged well in structured learning and support sessions

During the MTYG program, 369 structured learning and support sessions have been conducted with employees. Employees are engaging actively with learning sessions. Engagement in structured learning and support sessions has been high with 75 employees having engaged with at least one session and on average employees have engaged with four sessions. The number of sessions employees have completed varies across communities and does not necessarily align with the number of supervised hours completed as some communities have prioritised work experience and others have focused on structured learning. This indicates that the program is being tailored to the capability and needs of each community, as was expected and intended by the program’s flexible design.

### Delivery of structured learning and support sessions is tailored to employees’ needs

Supervising youth workers use a range of approaches to deliver the MTYG program. Consultation in communities identified several methods of delivering supervised work hours and structured learning and support sessions. One supervising youth worker chose to deliver learning sessions one-on-one for the initial sessions, then move to small group delivery for later sessions that are less individual focused. Other supervising youth workers deliver learning sessions during youth program team meetings. Some take a more opportunistic approach and deliver a session when free time becomes available.

The speed of employee progression through the sessions varies depending on the employee’s level of engagement with the program, their interest in structured learning, their maturity and their lived experience with session content. For example, in one community, two employees started at the same time



and one progressed quickly through the sessions while the other has stepped through them slowly. The supervising youth worker in this community commented that it was a strength of the MTYG program that there was no pressure to use the resources in a particular way, and that the key principle to guide resource use is to consider what will suit the individual employee.

### **The structured learning and support sessions deliver benefit beyond their content**

A significant benefit of the structured learning and support sessions is providing employees with opportunities to engage with the whole youth work team. The sessions give them the chance to speak in a group of people who are not their close family. For many this is the first time they have engaged in a formal work environment, and with non-Indigenous co-workers. Many young people find this intimidating, so the chance to de-mystify this experience and practice their communication skills is invaluable. Other associated benefits include the development of basic work skills. For example, employees develop reliable commitment to their role, practice working in a team, learn how to understand rosters, and how to fill in timesheets and reports.

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**“Employees get a more in depth understanding of youth work, they also learn computer skills, and overall, they learn to engage more with the youth worker team.”**

**- MRC Senior Youth Worker**

### **Staff report that employees are gaining confidence**

The interim evaluation involved interviews with five senior youth workers who were in strong agreement that the process of going through the resources helped to develop their employees' confidence. They reported that employees gained confidence by going through the resources and that this translates into them being more confident youth workers. Employees then begin to have confidence to be proactive in looking for opportunities to run activities in their youth programs.

Another supervising youth worker provided the following example of an opportunity created by the MTYG program. A program employee was in Alice Springs on unrelated business and made herself available to work in the program headquarters. This gave the employee a chance to see another side of working life and understand how their employment as a youth worker was contributing to a larger goal. The confidence that this employee demonstrated by reaching out to other employees is an important component of job readiness. Supervising youth workers commented that they believe the MTYG program has improved employees' job readiness, and that their employability will continue to grow as they continue participating in the program.

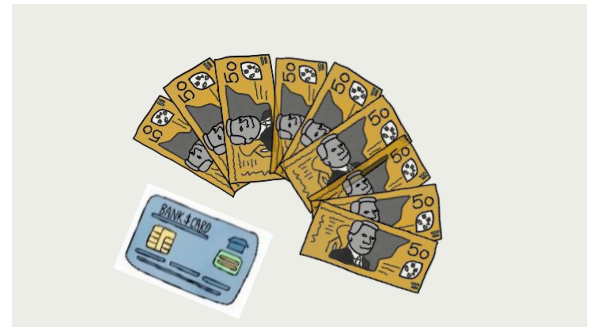
### **Benefits of the program to employees are tracked through SCORE data**

The MTYG program is part of the Try, Test and Learn funding program and is therefore obliged to collect data through the SCORE assessment tool. This tool includes four domains that were specified by DSS and nuanced through engagement between CAYLUS, Nous and DSS to generate project-specific definitions and questions within each domain. The program aims to collect SCORE data when each employee enters and exits the program and every three months they are actively engaged in the program.

There has been some inconsistency in the timing of SCORE collection due to constraints on supervising youth workers' time and the intermittent engagement style that many employees favour. Care should therefore be taken in drawing strong conclusions from SCORE data analysis. For further detail on the SCORE assessment process, see the method in Appendix B.

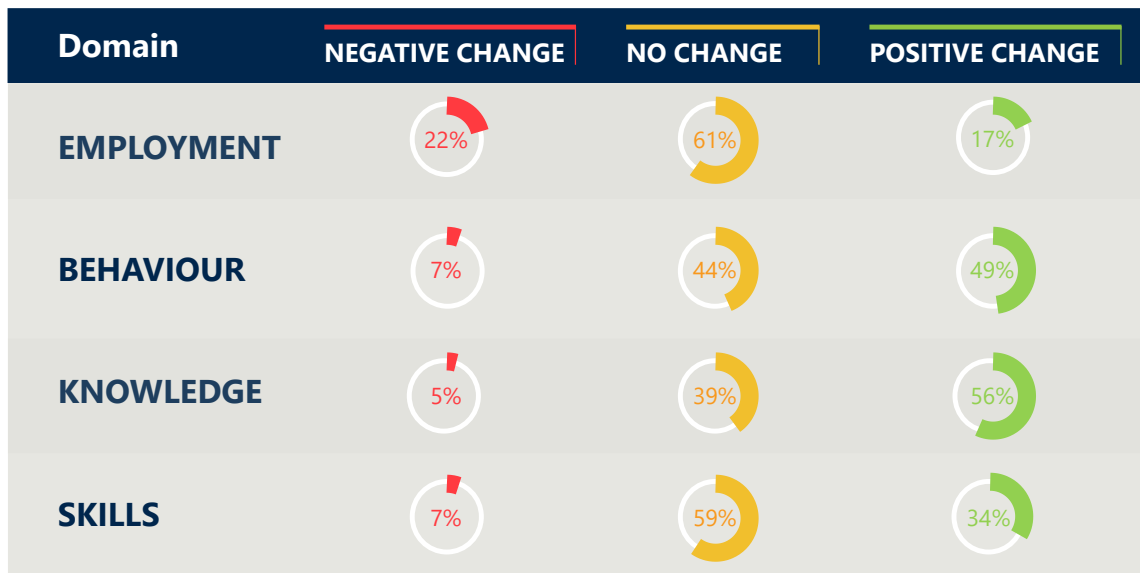
The SCORE assessment tool collects data across the following four domains:

- **Employment domain** considers the impact of employment status on the employee’s life
- **Behaviour domain** considers the workplace behaviour of the employee
- **Knowledge domain** considers the employee’s knowledge of youth work information
- **Skills domain** considers the employee’s workplace skills.



Analysis was conducted to understand the change in employees’ SCORE ratings across the program by assessing the difference between their SCORE assessment at commencement of the program, and the most recent assessment conducted. Figure 14 shows the changes in employees’ SCORE assessment across each domain.

Figure 14 | Change in SCORE result across employees’ involvement in the program



High level analysis of SCORE changes is provided below. For detailed analysis of the change in employees’ SCORE results and limitations of the SCORE assessment approach, see Appendix C.

The **employment domain** measures the impact of employees’ employment status on their life. For 61% of employees, there was no change in the impact of employment on their life. 17% were assessed as having experienced a positive change to the way employment impacts their life, while 22% were assessed as having experienced a negative change to the way employment impacts their life. This unexpected result may be impacted by external factors such as family pressure to share money earned or to participate in family and cultural commitments instead of attending work.



The **behaviour domain** measures the effectiveness of employees' workplace behaviour and includes assessment of how reliable the employee turns up for work, how they interact with colleagues, how effectively they seek assistance and the extent to which they show work seeking behaviours. 49% of employees showed positive change in behaviour results and 44% showed a neutral impact. This suggests that for many employees the chance to be employed and to participate in team meetings, sessions and delivering youth program activities is creating opportunities to learn how to behave positively at work.

The **knowledge domain** measures employees' knowledge of information relevant to their work and specifically assess employees' knowledge of money management, mental health issues, skills required in youth work and of Alcohol and Other Drugs as they relate to youth work. 56% of the employees' knowledge results increased over the program. This demonstrates that the structured

learning and support sessions, which focus on these themes, are a successful method of increasing employees' knowledge of relevant youth worker information.

The **skills domain** measures employees' work skills and assesses their verbal communication, written communication, basic computer and life administration skills. 59% employees were assessed as having no change in their skill level and 34% showed a positive change. As many employees entered the program with very low skill levels, their skill improvement is likely to be more evident over a longer assessment period.



#### CASE-STUDY | CONSISTENT ENGAGEMENT SUPPORTS EMPLOYEE TO MAKE STEADY IMPROVEMENTS

Raymond (name has been changed to protect employees' privacy) is an employee in his late teens who joined the program near its inception. Since joining he has engaged at a consistently high level. He has been participated actively with both structured learning and support sessions, and in supervised work placements. By working in the program, Raymond has been able to develop his job readiness. When asked about the program, he said:

**"It's good to look at my job in different ways – talking and learning new things"**

Raymond's consistency has paid off as he has built skills more quickly than his peers. His improvements are strong across all SCORE domains, particularly in the knowledge domain.

### The program has been successful for many employees

In total, four employees have officially graduated from the program and have become ongoing employees of the youth programs they participated in. Graduation from the program included a graduation ceremony and awarding of certificates. The graduation process included structured conversations about next steps for the employees and how they would transition to ongoing employment with the program partners.

A further seven participants have completed the core component of the program and would likely graduate very soon if the program were to continue.

Across its duration, four employees (5%) have undertaken an early exit from the program. Three of these employees had low engagement levels and were not interested in continuing to work towards the program goals. The fourth gained full-time employment elsewhere and no longer needed the program to develop their employability skills.

## 4.2 Meeting the Youth Gap supports host communities and existing youth programs

This section of the report details the programs impact on participating communities. The program has been evaluated against the following intended outcomes:

- The additional local youth workers are beneficial to the youth program
- The impact of MTYG on the youth program's senior youth workers/facilitators/administrators
- The impact of additional funding to administer the youth program
- The impact of the MTYG session resources on the youth program.
- Changes to the impact of the youth programs during the time that they are participating in MTYG.

### **MTYG is working to develop stronger relationships between youth workers and communities.**

Participation in MTYG has varied across communities, with some generating more engagement than others, as shown above in Figure 10. While participation does vary, all communities except Haasts Bluff included at least one female and one male employee. This gender balance means that they can engage effectively with both the boys and girls within almost all communities and has allowed them to offer more gender specific activities

Communities also like having the local workers because it helps youth programs to communicate better with their host community. Experiencing being a valued member of a team because of your personal cultural knowledge, language skills and community knowledge is a valuable experience for employee employees. It helps them to realise their value in the job market. It also provided local examples for younger community members to aspire to. Having local role models can support the next generation of young people to progress into full time work after school. Those local workers also begin with a greater understanding of the local community, and the particular challenges that their community faces.

### **MTYG is effective at supporting program partners to expand their offerings in some sites**

Many of the youth workers in the participating communities are time poor and having additional workers and staff time has allowed them to continue offering the programs, while ensuring that their existing staff do not experience burnout.

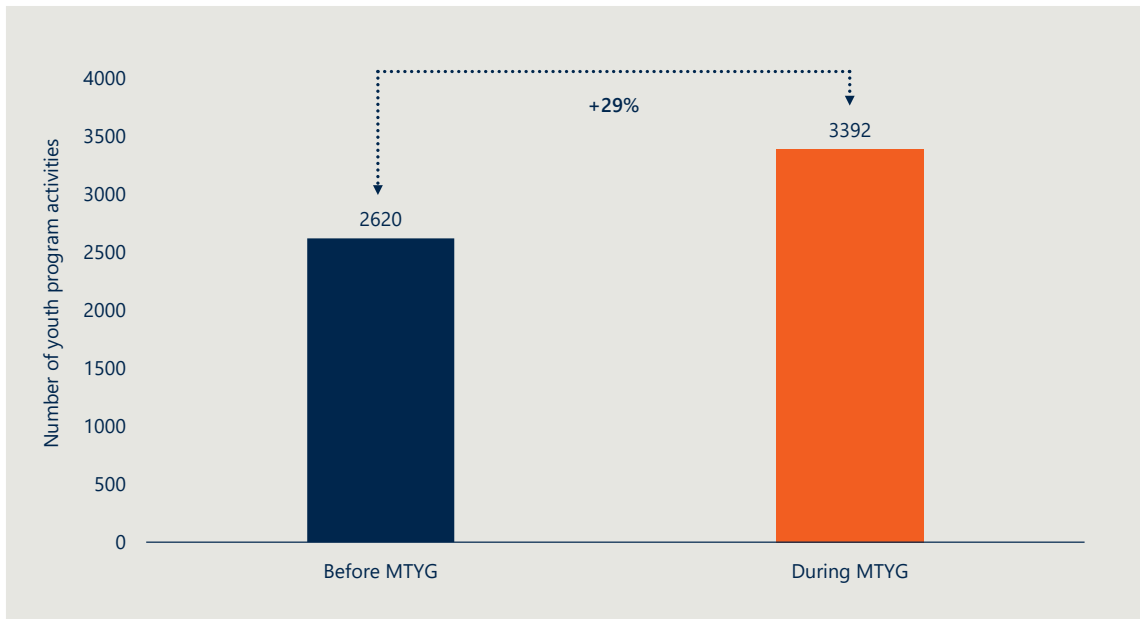
Some senior youth workers also indicated that going through the resources with employees has been a learning opportunity for them. They were able to learn more about youth work and develop their skills in delivering content and developing others.

The additional support from employee employees has allowed MRC to increase the number of youth program activities conducted by 29%<sup>3</sup>. Figure 15 illustrates the number of activities conducted between August 2018 and February 2019, prior to MTYG, and the number of activities conducted between August 2019 and February 2020, while MTYG was running. An 'activity' is a discrete activity offered to youth program participants and includes activities such as a bush trip or a basketball game.

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<sup>3</sup> MRC supports the following communities: Amoonguna, Areyonga, Haasts Bluff, Hermannsburg, Kintore, Mount Liebig, Papunya, Santa Teresa, Titjikala.

Figure 15 | Number of youth service activities before and during MTYG program



### 4.3 Program design is working well

This section of the report details the programs' design and outlines the success of program implementation. The program has been evaluated against the following intended outcomes:

- The impact on program quality of CAYLUS' procurement and support to local organisations as a part of MTYG.
- The effectiveness of the procurement model used by CAYLUS to deliver MTYG.
- How effective CAYLUS was in partnering with other Aboriginal organisations to provide support and build capacity.
- The extent to which CAYLUS and service providers have built internal capacity through administering MTYG.

#### The MTYG program is designed to fit with existing local youth services

The MTYG program was designed by CAYLUS in consultation with the program partners and remote community stakeholders in response to the Try Test and Learn Fund's call for innovative approaches. The MTYG program was specifically designed to be implemented by existing local youth services. CAYLUS has a detailed knowledge of both youth service providers, MRC and WYDAC, having worked with them and the communities they serve for many years. This meant that they have been able to design the MTYG program so that it will cause minimal disruption to the youth service providers' functioning and to add to their strengths. Both the MRC and WYDAC have appreciated this. They have found that the MTYG program supports their way of operating and has allowed them to expand on work that they already do, as well as introducing new tasks and skills such as highly structured data collection.

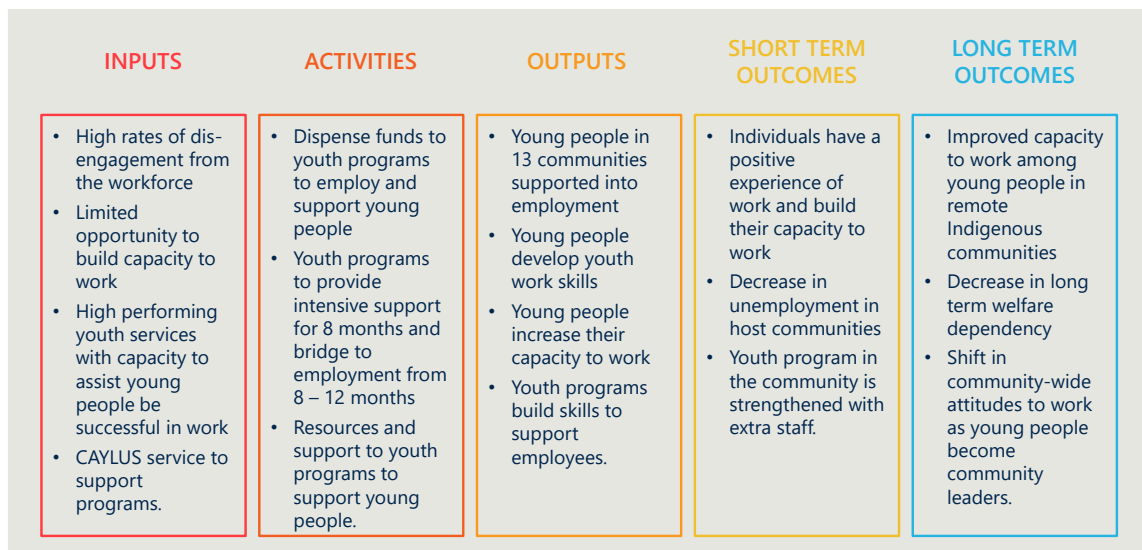
They report that the new tasks have been constructive and have introduced their staff to new ways of working, and new ways of interacting with employees. For example, some senior youth workers commented that while they dislike aspects of the program's setup (for example, completing the DSS managed TTL survey), they have really appreciated the opportunity the structured program setup session creates to talk one-to-one with employees about their goals. This has directly resulted in two highly positive outcomes. The first was where an employee reported that they had not engaged with school for

two years but would like to go back. The youth worker facilitated their return to school where the employee is still engaging regularly. The second is a young man disclosing that his life goal in employment was to be work with the Central Land Council as a Ranger. The youth worker has facilitated the introduction, and that employee is now regularly engaging with the Ranger program.

### The program is designed for flexible service delivery

CAYLUS have designed the program to suit the Central Australian environment. This includes understanding the impact of high staff turnover in their program partners, and a highly mobile population of Indigenous young people. Figure 16 shows the program logic for MTYG and its high degree of flexibility.

Figure 16 | MTYG program logic



**“We designed it so that it would be a smooth response and operate almost as business as usual.”**

**- Tristan Ray, Program Manager**

Contracts between CAYLUS and their program partners revolve around output payments geared to achievement of agreed standards and the number of sessions and supervised hours they deliver. Apart from eligibility criteria on the age of employees, the contracts make few stipulations on the manner in which program should be delivered.

This has allowed each program partner to deliver it in a way that best suits their operations and staffing structures. One program partner has employed an additional staff member to support the program across their region, while the other has shared that responsibility across existing staff members. The latter organisation is using some of the funds to employ an

additional youth worker who will have responsibility for training across two communities as well as delivering the youth program to older employees. Both program partners have assigned day to day delivery responsibilities to the resident senior youth workers. Additionally, both program partners report appreciating the flexibility they are given to implement the program in the way that best fits their needs.

The program design also provides flexibility for employees to participate in the youth program in ways beyond supervision of activities. One program partner for example used the fact that an employee was in Alice Springs to offer them half a day’s work to do non-face to face work connected to the youth service and took the opportunity to do a session as well. The fact that there is no barrier to this kind of flexibility allows the program to be very responsive to their employees lives and circumstances.

The flexibility of the program also means that each program partner can recruit employees based on their assessment of who will benefit from the program, and their knowledge of who is available. In practice,

both program partners have drawn some of their employees from young people who were already working, so the program functions to give them a chance to work more hours or to access more intensive training and support than they otherwise could have accessed. They report that this has been very satisfactory. The increased funding allows them to offer more consistent employment and means that employees can experience something closer to a 'real job'.

The risk with the degree of flexibility in the program design is that the effectiveness of the program is dependent on the effectiveness of program partners and the capacity they have in each site to implement the program. CAYLUS has mitigated this risk by keeping in close contact with the program partners and acting to support delivery. They have informal contact with both partners at least once a week and a formal review around the bi-monthly payments. Some examples of the troubleshooting and delivery support that CAYLUS has been able to provide as a regional partner include:

- CAYLUS directly delivering some of the structured support sessions in the early days of the program and using this as a training opportunity to train senior youth workers in how to deliver these sessions
- CAYLUS youth workers travelling to project communities to fill gaps in staffing, deliver day to day programs and deliver TTL sessions

During the COVID-19 lockdown, CAYLUS assisted service providers and government in negotiating recruitment, staffing and service delivery issues while complying with changing quarantine, biosecurity and other public health measures.

Both program partners report being very satisfied with the support they have received and the responsiveness of CAYLUS. This indicates that CAYLUS has been able to support the program partners whenever required.

### **The program is designed to be flexible for employees**

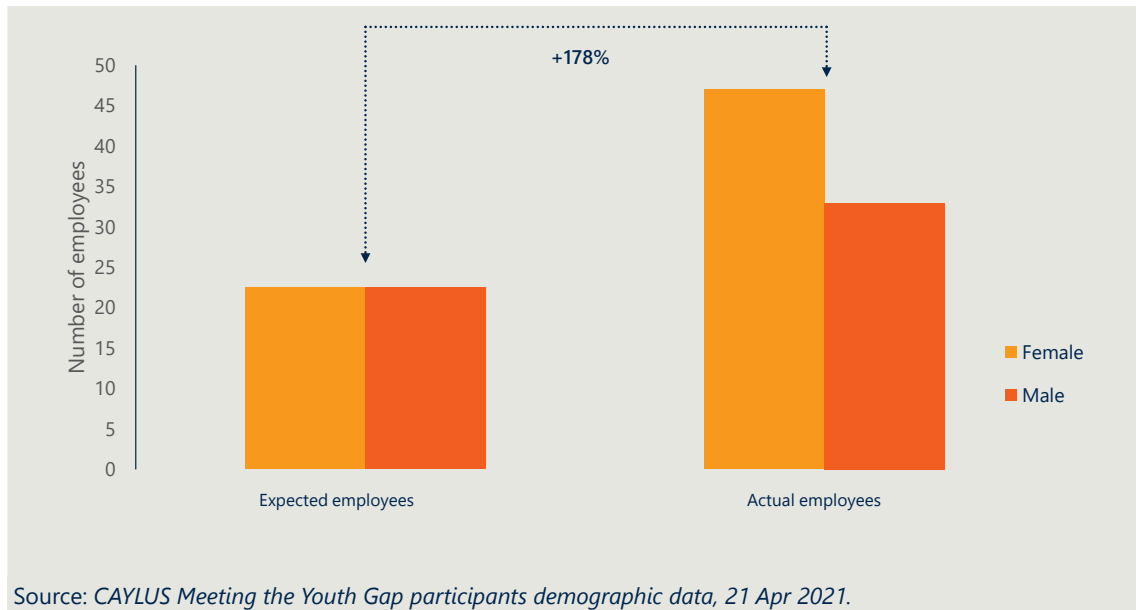
CAYLUS report that potential employees face a range of cultural pressures and obligations as well as other circumstances that can make participating in regular work difficult. They have therefore made the program as flexible for employees as possible. This means that, unlike most training programs, it does not include requirements such as minimum hours of engagement per week; participation in sequential weeks of activity; specified rate at which the employees move through the program resources; pass/fail assessment at any stage of the program.

CAYLUS reports this highly flexible approach makes the program as attractive and non-threatening as possible. It is intended as a very gentle first step on the employment ladder.

### **High employee numbers indicate the effectiveness of the flexible approach**

The program was intended to enrol 30 employees across the thirteen participating communities in its first stage and a further 15-20 following the program's extension. The program has exceeded this target by more than one third (38%), with 80 employees participating in the program, including employees from all target communities. Figure 17 shows the expected and actual number of MTYG employees.

Figure 17 | Expected versus actual number of employees



The higher-than-expected enrolment is partially due to COVID-19 which meant more employees were available to join and be engaged in the program. However, they also engaged less intensely than initially expected due to reduction youth program services that could be safely offered.

The lack of pressure to complete the program within a specific timeframe and intensity has allowed employees to engage with the program in a range of ways that suit their needs. Employees engage with the program in the following ways:

- **Steady engagement** – these employees engage at consistent levels throughout the program and have recorded hours in most of the months during their participation in the program. These participants do not necessarily record the most hours, but their engagement has been consistent across several months.
- **Intermittent engagement** – these employees engage with the program intermittently and have taken a break of three months or more during their participation in the program.
- **Low engagement** – these employees engage in the program at a low level and have recorded 50 hours or fewer across their participation in the program. Some of these participants have been in the program for only a few months and may develop a pattern of steady or intermittent engagement if they were to participate in the program for longer.
- **Inactive or exited program** – these employees are no longer engaging with the program and have either been marked as inactive if that have not engaged in the past three months or have undertaken an early exit from the program. Some of the inactive participants may develop a pattern of intermittent engagement if they were to participate in the program for longer.

Figure 18 presents the four main modes of participation through an analysis of the number and timing of supervised work hours by individual employees.



Figure 18 | Employees engaged flexibly with the program



Analysis of program data shows that 44% of employees are steadily engaging with the program and are recording hours most months. 24% of employees are engaging intermittently and may not record any hours for several months before returning to the program. Many of these employees take a break from the program because it is not a priority in their life for a short time. Some reasons why employees have taken a break from MTYG and then returned to the program are outlined below:

- Employee was required to undertake caring duties for family members
- Employee or their partner had a baby and needed to focus on their caring responsibilities
- Employee needed to focus on community responsibilities
- Employee needed to attend men’s business
- Employee attended boarding school during term time and engaged in MTYG during school holidays
- Employee shifted their focus to sport during the football seasons and engaged in MTYG during the off season.

The level of flexibility of the MTYG program is an enormous strength. A more formal program would likely not allow employees to re-engage after a gap of several months, as they would have missed content that is structured to be cumulative. However, the design of MTYG accounts for intermittent engagement and can pick up where any employee left off.

During their engagement with the program, 8 employees (10% of the cohort) moved between participating communities. The flexible design of the program meant these employees could continue to participate in supervised work hours and structured learning and support sessions in their new community with no interruption to their progress through the program. The centralisation of data collection and reporting through CAYLUS meant that employees who moved between communities that are covered by different program partners were able to be accommodated and continue their employment uninterrupted.

### The cost per MTYG employee is very low

Flexible program design has also allowed MTYG to keep program costs low. CAYLUS paid program partners based on the number of hours worked by employees. On average across the entire MTYG

program, CAYLUS paid \$13,429 per employee. The program has assisted 11 employees (14%) to gain sufficient workplace skills that they are now participating in ongoing, part- or full-time employment. The median cost across these participants was \$19,515. This compares favourably to other employment programs targeted at Indigenous Australians. For example, the Indigenous Employment Initiative 2021 – 2022/23<sup>4</sup>, which is part of the Australian government Health Workforce Program and aims to introduce Indigenous people into the Aged Care workforce, offers a grant of \$36,840 per employee.

By allowing employees to engage flexibly, CAYLUS was able to direct funds to those that will most benefit from them. For example, more funds will be directed to employees who engage a high level or engage consistently over a long period as they will work more hours. Employees who prefer to engage intermittently or who can make a smaller time commitment are funded commensurately. Additionally, CAYLUS' low overhead costs and approach of paying only for services rendered means that MTYG can ensure that its funds are directed towards activities that create positive outcomes in participating communities.

## RECOMMENDATION

1

Given the success of the program, seek further funding to continue providing employment opportunities in participating communities.

## 4.4 Meeting the Youth Gap resources are working well for employees and senior youth workers

This section of the report details the use of program resources and their impact. The program has been evaluated against the following intended outcomes:

- The extent to which program resources are used in delivering the program.
- The effectiveness of program resources in building employees' job readiness.
- The impact of the program resources in building employees' knowledge.

### The program resources were useful to employees

A key part of MTYG is the suite of resources that have been created. Feedback from program partners demonstrates that these have been highly successful. The strengths of material in the resources are:

- They provide very useful information. The resources provide links to a range of organisations and websites. These websites can provide further information on how employees can:
  - Provide 100 points of identification
  - Open a bank account
  - Organise passwords to avoid forgetting them.
- They raise important points about how to address issues that arise for youth workers. For example, they provide information on how to set up an activity so that young people who come to take part are

**“The session on money management is really great and doing a budget etc has been really popular”**

**– Regional Coordinator,  
MacDonnell Regional  
Council**

<sup>4</sup> Australian Government Grant Connect. 2020. *Indigenous Employment Initiative 2020-21 to 2022-23*. Available at: <https://www.grants.gov.au/?event=public.GO.show&GOUUID=62484309-C9D7-664E-EA7D0115203CF1E0>

most likely to be positively engaged. Feedback indicates that both staff and employees have learned from this.

- They create opportunities to discuss issues such as mental health and drug and alcohol use. Many employees may have discussed this in school, but opportunities for such important discussions are rare in the post-school world.
- They are highly accessible to employees. The visual materials are engaging and funny, and supervising youth workers report that MTYG employees find it easier to work through resources with graphics.
- They include accessible and amusing quizzes. Supervising youth workers reported that the quizzes are particularly successful at engaging employees.

### The program resources are useful to other youth workers



#### CASE STUDY | RESOURCES HELP MORE THAN JUST THE PROGRAM EMPLOYEES

Steven and Page are both youth workers supporting communities in Central Australia. They were not engaged through the MTYG program but were interested in furthering their personal and professional development. They were able to use the program resources to assist them in understanding:

- how to read payslips
- how to set up bank and superannuation accounts
- how to create a personal budget.

Steven subsequently asked to revisit the resources with another staff member and identified that getting his P-licence, Tangentyere ID Card and setting up a savings account were additional things he would like assistance with.

The program resources are used beyond training employees in the MTYG program. One program partner has used the resources with their youth workers who are not part of the MTYG program who were interested in learning more workplace skills.

The resources provide opportunities to sit down, work through the resources and have conversations that would not otherwise happen. Several of the youth workers interviewed had been in their job for less than a year and found it challenging to build relationships with local young people. The resources created opportunities to talk beyond transactional details of their employment. The relationships built while doing the resources will function to improve all aspects of the youth program.

**“We use the resources like a bible and constantly refer to it, the graphics are really helpful.”**

**- Youth Worker**

Feedback from supervising youth workers indicated that some of the structured learning and support sessions were more accessible than others. For example, the mental health session can be sometimes difficult to run because some employees are uncomfortable or unwilling to talk about mental health. However, the resources can be a useful tool in broaching topics that are usually left undiscussed. For example, in Papunya, the mental health resource met an emerging need when the youth team and other MRC staff experienced some strange behaviour by a local person with a mental illness.

In some cases, the characteristics of the communities themselves have meant that resources have been hard to deliver. Lack of access to internet, smaller employee numbers, or more transient employee populations have been noted as challenges for delivering the resources. This has resulted in some communities completing less sessions than others.

## The program resources are useful outside the MTYG program

The MTYG resources are available on the CAYLUS website and have been accessed by a range of other organisations who report having found them useful. These organisations include the Batchelor Institute of Education who have used the resources in two Community Education Centres in remote communities, the Northern Territory AFL organisation whose program delivery staff have used the resources in their juvenile detention program and Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation for use in alcohol and other drug education in the Northern Territory.

## Additional COVID-19 resources were a valuable addition to the program resources

CAYLUS created a series of resources specifically related to COVID-19 that provide information on how to safely run a limited range of youth program activities. These were widely used when COVID-19 restrictions were in place and covered a range of topics, including:

- how to support families in remote communities to respond to COVID-19
- informative posters to be used in community
- games for small groups with social distancing built in
- a dance video and photo challenge.

These resources were circulated widely and supported communities outside the MTYG program.

### RECOMMENDATION

2

Continue promoting training resources more broadly for youth programs in remote Indigenous communities across Australia.

## Meeting the Try, Test and Learn reporting requirements has increased the data collection capability of CAYLUS and program partners

TTL required use of an entry survey and regular ratings of employees' progress through a tool that aligns with the larger Data Exchange (DEX) data set. This approach demanded a level of highly structured data collection that was new for youth services in Central Australia. This created opportunities to understand the benefits and costs that rigorous data collection practices entail.

The process of tailoring DEX data requirements to the needs of remote Indigenous communities was challenging. At project commencement, there was a considerable negotiation process to determine suitable SCORE measures and session data items and to determine requirements of completing entry and exit surveys. This included tailoring the wording of the instruments so that they would be comprehensible to both youth workers and program employees. This required a considerable time investment and resulted in a set of SCORE measures that are sufficiently intuitive to be easy to implement with some training and support to supervising youth workers. However, the TTL survey hosted by DSS that was used across all TTL program was less intuitive for MTYG employees and less easily administered by supervising youth workers as the wording is sometimes difficult for them to understand.

Nous, CAYLUS' technical partner, provided quarterly analysis of the data collected, as well as further analysis to indicate the extent to which the program has met its intended outcomes. This has generated discussion on what types of analysis can provide the most accurate indication of program outcomes.

CAYLUS necessarily relies on its program partners to complete data collection activities and has provided training to maximise the quality of the data collected. Feedback from the program partners suggests that the process of collecting the data has been onerous and, in some cases, has been a dis-incentive to enrol employees in the program. However ongoing training has reinforced that the TTL survey must be completed and has provided additional support to achieve this.

APPENDIX A

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MEETING THE  
YOUTH GAP  
EVALUATION PLAN



## A.1 What is the 'Meeting the Youth Gap'?

The Meeting the Youth Gap (MTYG) program is funded by a grant from the Department of Social Services' (DSS) 'Try, Test and Learn' (TTL) Fund. The program intends to run from July 2019 through to July 2020.

MTYG is a project to trial new ways of engaging at-risk youth in the workforce in remote communities in Central Australia. Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service (CAYLUS) is the grantee and is supported by its technical partner Nous Group (Nous) and its program partners, MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC) and Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC).

MTYG aims to employ 20-30 participants as youth workers for approximately 10 hours per week (or equivalent hours distributed amongst more participants). Through the project participants will receive a program of support sessions covering topics such as money management and mental health. At the end of MTYG participants will be assisted to access further work and training opportunities.

This project addresses the existing gap of crossing the bridge between school- and work-readiness training programs into real-world employment. It seeks to develop participants' work capacity in a way that will sustain across their life span and increase their workforce participation. It uses an entry point to the working world of working in youth programs which are culturally accessible and highly valued.

Most participants in MTYG will be 16 – 25-year-olds who are "at risk of long-term welfare dependence" living in MacDonnell Shire and Warlpiri communities. Program partners may also sign up anyone who wants to be involved and who is of NT legal working age (12 years), so long as it does not negatively impact on their education. There is no upper age limit.

A goal of MTYG is to keeping people engaged in the program for as long as it suits them. CAYLUS expects that not all participants will complete the whole program, and some may move in and out of being involved.

## A.2 Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to understand the impact of MTYG on the individual participants and the local youth program in MacDonnell Shire and Warlpiri communities.

The program has several intended impacts for participants:

- Support participants to get requisite documents for employment
- Develop participants "job ready" skills
- Provide opportunities for at-risk young people to engage in their community through youth work
- Show at-risk young people a pathway to longer term jobs to reduce dependency on welfare

The evaluation will gather evidence on the extent to which participants achieve these outcomes through participation in the MTYG program.

The evaluation also assesses whether MTYG fulfilled its intended impact for the community through building and supporting the youth program.

The evaluation will assess:

- Whether or not having additional local youth workers is beneficial to the youth program
- The impact of MTYG on the youth program's senior youth workers/facilitators/administrators
- The impact of additional funding to administer the youth program
- The impact of the MTYG session resources on the youth program.

- Changes to the impact of the youth programs during the time that they are participating in MTYG.

The evaluation will also assess the success of, and identify potential improvements to, the program design. It will assess:

- To what extent CAYLUS and service providers have built internal capacity through administering MTYG
- The impact on program quality of CAYLUS' procurement and support to local organisations as a part of MTYG
- The effectiveness of the procurement model used by CAYLUS to deliver MTYG
- How effective CAYLUS was in partnering with other Aboriginal organisations to provide support and build capacity.

## A.3 Evaluation method

The evaluation is mixed method, and a combination of process and impact perspectives. Quantitative data will be collected through surveys and the SCORE system and qualitative data will be collected through interviews with program staff. A counter-factual to compare the progress of participants with those who have not been exposed to the program will be generated through publicly available data.

### *Data sources*

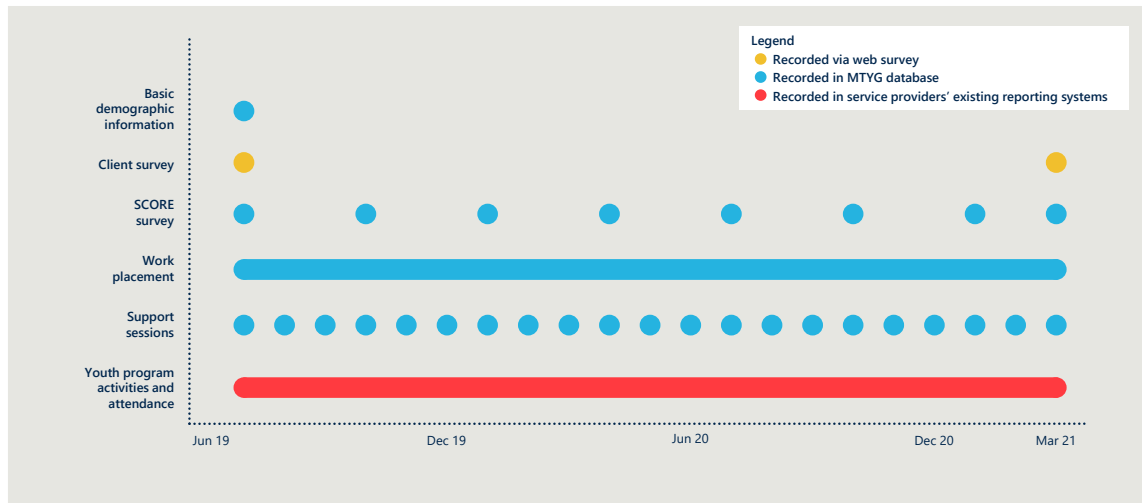
There are several data sources which the evaluators will use. These include:

- Client survey (administered by MRC and WYDAC staff, designed by DSS)
- SCORE input (median score for each domain is reported to DSS)
- MTYG database export (all scores for each domain, data on program attendance, completion and demographics of participants)
- Qualitative data collected by CAYLUS, MRC and WYDAC staff during the program
- Field work, including
  - interviews conducted by Nous with employees of CAYLUS, MRC and WYDAC *where appropriate*
  - interviews conducted by Nous with participants/families/communities *where appropriate*.

### **Data collection**

MRC and WYDAC will collect data about participants and enter this into the MTYG database. Some of these data points are collected and uploaded to the DataExchange (DEX) to meet DSS' requirements, while others are additional data points to help administer and evaluate MTYG. Figure 19 provides an overview of these data collection points and where they will be recorded.

Figure 19 | Data collection points in a MTYG participants' journey



## A.4 Implementation

Nous will lead the evaluation of the MTYG program and CAYLUS and program partners will collect project data.

Both CAYLUS and Nous will support the University of Queensland in their evaluation of the TTL fund. CAYLUS notes that it has been agreed with DSS that evaluators from University of Queensland will interview project staff but not project participants.

## A.5 Ethics

Both CAYLUS and Nous are firmly committed to ethical practice. The MTYG project, including its evaluation, will comply with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies*.<sup>5</sup> The evaluation will follow the guide's 14 principles which are grouped under the following headings:

- rights, respect and recognition
- negotiation, consultation, agreement and mutual understanding
- participation, collaboration and partnership
- benefits, outcomes and giving back
- managing research: use, storage and access
- reporting and compliance.

MTYG's data collection process does not require ethics approval because no interviews with participants will be conducted by evaluators – they will all be done by youth workers as part of program delivery.

Informed consent is an important part of ethical practice. MTYG will make sure that all participants understand what the program is and where they fit into the evaluation. Individual consent will be sought before any participant data is collected. Consent information and informed consent forms are included in both the first MTYG Resource and on the MTYG database.

<sup>5</sup> AIATSIS, *Code of Ethics*, Available at: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/code-ethics>



Respect for individuals' privacy is also a core ethical consideration. CAYLUS and Nous note that DSS has confirmed its employees cannot see individual names of participants, only aggregated data in DEX. Data will remain in DEX for "as long as needed," however the data generated from the MTYG program will only be accessed by DSS during the program. CAYLUS will delete all records at the completion of the program.

## A.6 Evaluation risks

There are evaluation specific risks which must be considered and mitigated. Table 2 outlines these risks, their consequences, their likelihood and mitigation strategies.

**Table 2 | MTYG evaluation risks**

Risk	Consequence(s)	Likelihood	Mitigation
Low quality data	Impair the value of the findings	Medium	Nous and CAYLUS will provide education to service providers about the importance of entering quality data. Nous and CAYLUS will monitor data quality during monthly uploads to DEX.
Inadequate access to data	If there is delay in uploading data during the project, CAYLUS and Nous will not be able to improve and iterate the MTYG. If there are delays near the end of program delivery, this will impact on whether the evaluation is able to assess the MTYG program as a whole.	Low	CAYLUS and its service partners have agreed to upload data to the MTYG database within two weeks of an activity or session occurring. Nous will assist CAYLUS and partners to resolve any data issues as they arise. CAYLUS are being supported by a data base specialist who will also troubleshoot any issues arising. The regular program of touching base with providers will provide a forum for resolving data issues.
Inadequate access to program staff time	As the evaluators will not directly interview any participants, interviews with program staff will be important to collect information about MTYG's impact on participants and their communities.	Low	CAYLUS and Nous have proactively sought to build relationships with service partners and their program staff during the set-up of MTYG. CAYLUS and Nous will nurture these relationships during quarterly catchups. CAYLUS and Nous will ensure interviews with program staff are set up well in advance and will be conducted in the format that suits staff. Staff will be provided with questions ahead of time to prepare and will be given the opportunity to ask questions prior to, during and after the interview. Evaluators will be respectful of staff time and will be as flexible as possible, understanding their "on the ground" commitments.
Staff turnover at CAYLUS	If there is turnover of key personnel at CAYLUS, this may compromise the richness of contextual information the evaluation seeks.	Low	Clear records will be kept by CAYLUS staff, with regular reporting to line managers so that these people are aware of the MTYG's status, approach and obligations. In the case of turnover, project responsibility would shift from CAYLUS Policy and Project

Risk	Consequence(s)	Likelihood	Mitigation
			<p>Manager, who has carriage of this project, to the CAYLUS Operations Manager.</p> <p>Nous as technical partner can support incoming CAYLUS staff. Nous also has administrator access to critical data systems (MTYG database, DEX) to mitigate loss of access to systems if the CAYLUS Policy and Project Manager were to cease employment.</p>
Evaluation does not evaluate process	If the evaluation is too impact-focused and does not evaluate process, it will miss important elements of the program. The evaluation needs to be holistic enough to inform the broader questions about impact and process.	Low	To evaluate the MTYG process, Nous will ensure interviews with CAYLUS and service partners include questions about the MTYG process outcomes.

*Risk likelihood: Low = unlikely to occur, Medium = may occur, High = likely to occur*

*Risk impact: Low = minor impact, Medium = moderate impact, High = significant impact*

## A.7 Key evaluation questions

The evaluation domain, key and sub-evaluation questions and data sources are set out in Table 3.

**Table 3 | MTYG evaluation questions**

Evaluation domain	Key evaluation question	Sub-evaluation questions	Data source(s)
Program usefulness	Have the local youth program(s) benefited from having additional local youth workers?	What, if any, have been the benefits?	Field work (interviews with CAYLUS, MRC and WYDAC, interviews with participants where appropriate)
		What, if any, have been the disadvantages?	
		How might disadvantages be overcome?	
Participants' job readiness	Did taking part in MTYG improve participants' job readiness?	What is the breakdown between areas of improvement amongst participants and across sites?	<p>Client survey, SCORE median rating for Skills domain</p> <p>MTYG database rating for BEHAVIOURD</p> <p>MTYG database rating for SKILLSA</p>
		Has there been an improvement in the participants' work seeking behaviours?	
		Has there been an improvement in participants' employment seeking behaviours?	
		Has there been an improvement in participants' workplace communication (verbal)?	

Evaluation domain	Key evaluation question	Sub-evaluation questions	Data source(s)
		Has there been an improvement in participants' workplace communication (written)?	MTYG database rating for SKILLSB
		Has there been an improvement in participants' basic computer skills?	MTYG database rating for SKILLSC
		Has there been an improvement in participants' "life administration" skills?	MTYG database rating for SKILLSD
		Did the youth worker(s) note any improvement in participants' job readiness?	Field work (interviews with CAYLUS, MRC and WYDAC, interviews with participants where appropriate)
		What is the breakdown between areas of improvement amongst participants and across sites? Are there significant demographic trends – for example have older people learned more?	
Participants' confidence	Did taking part in MTYG improve clients' confidence to seek work?	Has there been an improvement in participants' confidence to seek work?	Client survey, SCORE median rating for Behaviour domain
		Has there been an improvement in participants' interactions with colleagues?	MTYG database rating for BEHAVIOURB
		Has there been an improvement in participants' behaviour seeking assistance, supervision or mentoring as required?	MTYG database rating for BEHAVIOURC
		Did the youth worker(s) note any improvement in participants' confidence to seek work?	Field work (interviews with CAYLUS, MRC and WYDAC, interviews with participants where appropriate)
		What is the breakdown between areas of improvement amongst participants and across sites?	
Participants' ability to address difficulties in life	Did taking part in MTYG improve participants' ability to address difficult issues in their life?	Has there been an improvement in the participants' overall knowledge of topics related to youth work?	Client survey, SCORE median rating for Knowledge domain
		Has there been an improvement in the participants' knowledge of money management?	MTYG database rating for KNOWLEDGEA
		Has there been an improvement in the participants' knowledge of mental health?	MTYG database rating for KNOWLEDGEB

Evaluation domain	Key evaluation question	Sub-evaluation questions	Data source(s)
		Has there been an improvement in the participants' knowledge of youth work skills?	MTYG database rating for KNOWLEDGEC
		Has there been an improvement in the participants' knowledge of AOD issues?	MTYG database rating for KNOWLEDGED
		Did the youth worker(s) note any improvement in participants' ability to address difficult issues in their life?	
		What proportion of participants who have completed the program have 100 points of identification?	Field work (interviews with CAYLUS, MRC and WYDAC, interviews with participants where appropriate)
		What is the breakdown between areas of improvement amongst participants and across sites?	
Participants' fit	What are the characteristics of people who get the most out of participating in this program?	Does the program better fit some individuals than others?	Demographic data, community data, outcome data
		What are the youth worker perceptions of why?	Field work (interviews with CAYLUS, MRC and WYDAC, interviews with participants where appropriate)
Community impact	What (if any) impact did MTYG have in the communities where it was run?	Were there positive impacts in communities? How can these be strengthened?	Field work (interviews with CAYLUS, MRC and WYDAC, interviews with participants/families/communities where appropriate)
		Were there detrimental impacts in communities? How can these be mitigated?	
		What was the impact of MTYG on service provider organisations?	Field work (interviews with MRC and WYDAC)
Community impact	What are the MTYG program's barriers and enablers?	What are the barriers for CAYLUS and service providers to deliver a consistently high-quality program?	Field work (interviews with CAYLUS, MRC and WYDAC, interviews with participants where appropriate)
		What are the enablers for CAYLUS and service providers to deliver a consistently high-quality program?	
Community impact	How could the MTYG program improve?	What should change (if anything)?	Field work (interviews with CAYLUS, MRC and WYDAC, interviews with participants/families/communities where appropriate)
		What could be improved?	

Evaluation domain	Key evaluation question	Sub-evaluation questions	Data source(s)
		What were the different implementation methods?	
	What can be learned about how the different service providers rolled out the program?	What were the strengths?	Field work (interviews with CAYLUS, MRC and WYDAC, interviews with participants/families/communities where appropriate)
		What were the weaknesses?	
		How were weaknesses managed/overcome?	
		What strategies were implemented?	
	Did CAYLUS' find effective strategies to support program partners?	What worked?	Field work (interviews with MRC and WYDAC)
		What did not work?	
		What could be improved?	



## A.9 Program extension

### Scope of the extension

The MTYG program has been extended from July 2020 and until March 2021, following receipt of additional grant funding from the Department of Social Services (DSS). CAYLUS will continue to deliver the program with Nous Group as technical partner and MRC and WYDAC as program partners. The program will continue to employ 50-60 participants as youth workers and deliver support sessions to participants.

### Evaluation method

Evaluation of the program at its conclusion will draw on the interim evaluation that was conducted in July 2020, following the above evaluation plan. The additional data collected will be used to update the presentations included in the interim report. Recommendations will be re-considered in the light of findings arising from the additional data.

The final evaluation will draw on the following data sources:

- Client survey (administered by MRC and WYDAC staff, designed by DSS)
- SCORE input (including median score for each domain as reported to DSS)
- MTYG database exports (including all SCORE data for each domain, data on program attendance, data on program completion and demographics of participants)
- Quarterly data analysis reports provided to CAYLUS during the program
- Qualitative data collected by Nous, CAYLUS, MRC and WYDAC staff during the program.

### Implementation

Nous will continue to lead the evaluation of the MTYG program with CAYLUS and program partners collecting project data.

### Ethics

No additional ethical considerations have been identified.

### Evaluation risks

No additional risks have been identified and evaluation risks remain the same as those outlined in Table 2 **Error! Reference source not found.****Error! Reference source not found.**

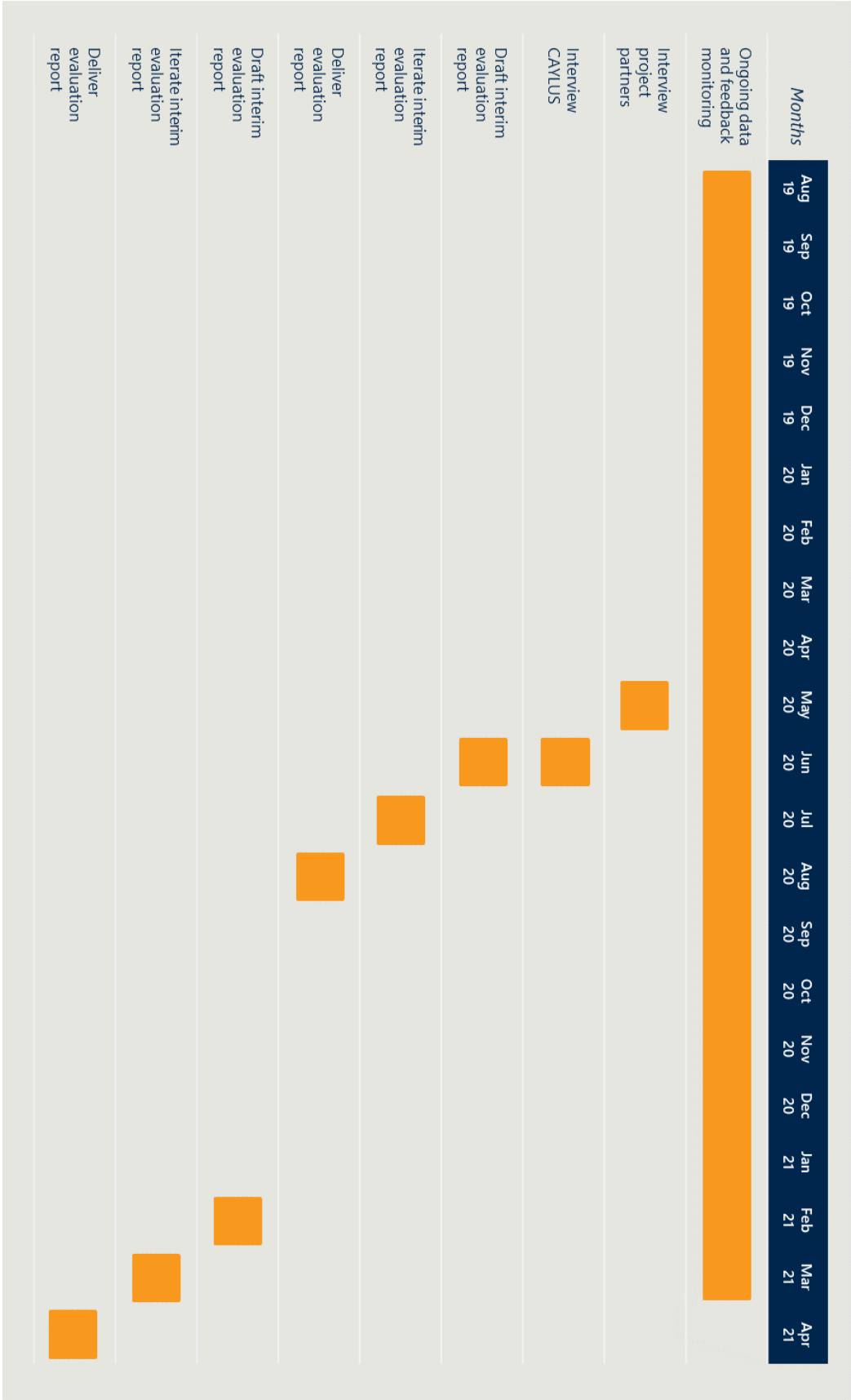
### Key evaluation questions

Key evaluation questions remain the same as those outlined in Table 3.

### Evaluation timeline

The key activities to inform the final MTYG evaluation are outlined in Figure 21.

Figure 21 | Final evaluation timeline





# APPENDIX B

## METHOD



## B.1 Meeting the Youth Gap collects data to understand the program and facilitate evaluation

### Meeting the Youth Gap collects employee demographic, participant and session data

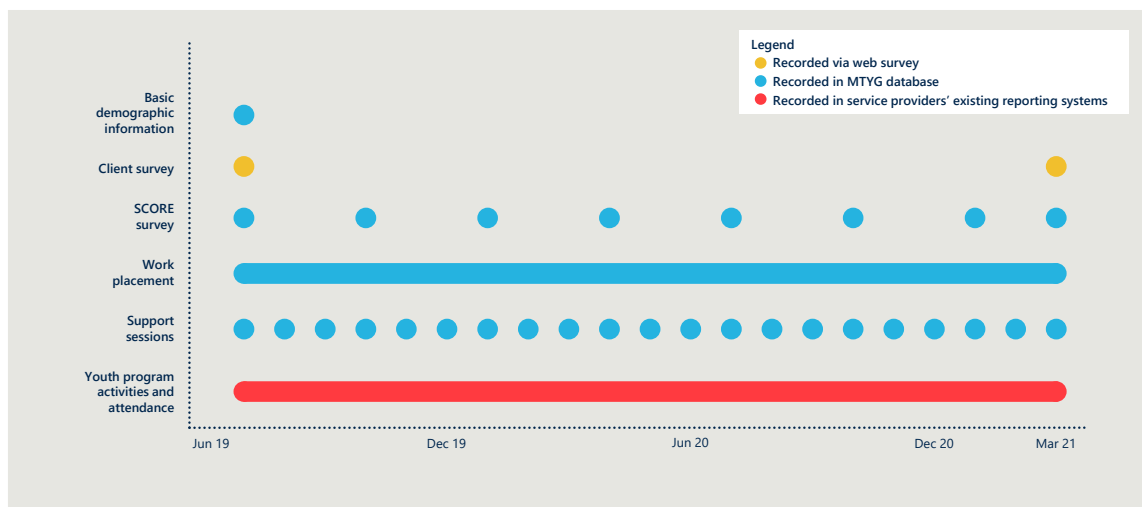
The evaluation uses a range of data sources to gather perspectives on the evaluation questions outlined above. As part of the Try Test and Learn Fund the MTYG program is required to collect a range of data at the individual employee level. This includes entry and exit surveys as well as progress measures known as Standard Client Outcome Reporting (SCORE). Some of these items, including entry and exit surveys, are designed by DSS and are non-negotiable. The primary purpose of these surveys is to allow DSS to examine projects across the Try Test and Learn program. Others, including the SCORE data collection have been designed by CAYLUS and approved by DSS on the condition that they comply with their Data Learning Exchange database (DEX).

CAYLUS created a database to support the collection of data that can be used to support the program's evaluation. They use this database to record:

- employee demographic information
- the number of hours completed by employees
- the number and type of program sessions completed by employees
- employee SCORE results.

Figure 22 illustrates the different points at which data is collected throughout the MTYG Program.

Figure 22 | MTYG data collection points



Supervising youth workers at the program partner organisations record demographic information on all employees, the number of hours they have worked, and the number of sessions they have completed. The program partners submit this data, which are collectively called employee data, to the CAYLUS database. Throughout the program, Nous conducted quarterly analysis on this data, which included analysis of both demographic and session data. Nous analysed the growth in number of employees and hours worked, and examined division by community, sex, and education level. This provided CAYLUS with a snapshot on the performance of the program. Detailed MTYG data is available in Appendix C and Appendix D.

## SCORE data is used to assess impact on employees

At the start of the program, supervising youth workers assess each employee using the SCORE tool to baseline their employment, behaviour, knowledge, and skills characteristics. Employees' SCORE ratings are assessed approximately every three months that they are in the program and upon exiting the program. This data is also entered into the CAYLUS database by the program partners and are analysed by Nous.

## Qualitative data was collected during the program

Qualitative data was gathered to inform the interim evaluation. This data collection included interviews with managers from CAYLUS, MRC and WYDAC and supervising youth workers who deliver the program in five of the 13 participating communities. A small number of employees were interviewed from one community; however, COVID-19 and border closures limited the number of interviews that could be conducted in person and most were instead conducted over the telephone. Table 4 provides an overview of these data collection points and how they are recorded.

Table 4 | MTYG data collection types, collection methods and timing

DATA SOURCE	COLLECTION METHOD	TIMING
<b>QUALITATIVE</b>		
Supervising youth worker insights	Interviews with supervising youth workers from the program partners	1 April 2020 - 21 May 2020
Program partner administrator perspectives	Interviews with the staff responsible for the administration of the program	07 April 2020
<b>QUANTITATIVE</b>		
SCORE assessment data	Input into the CAYLUS database by supervising youth workers using the SCORE assessment tool	Upon employee commencement, every three months of participation and upon program exit
Employee demographic data	Input into the CAYLUS database by supervising youth workers	Upon employee commencement
Program session data	Input into the CAYLUS database by supervising youth worker, includes hours worked and sessions conducted	Entered progressively as sessions are conducted

## B.2 Some caveats apply to data collected during the program

This report presents analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected during the MTYG program. The following section outlines some caveats for how this analysis should be used or interpreted.

### Discrepancies exist between employee data and SCORE data

There are some discrepancies between SCORE data and employee data as they are entered into the databases at different times and sometimes by different people. The participant data records 80 employees while 79 employees have completed at least one SCORE assessment and 59 have completed at least two. As the discrepancies between these datasets are relatively small, Nous was still able to conduct rigorous analysis of the program.

### Meeting the Youth Gap provides a relatively small sample size

The MTYG program had 80 employees, of which 59 completed two or more SCORE assessments that contribute to analysis of change in SCORE rating. These sample are relatively small, and caution should be taken in drawing strong conclusions from this data. Section 4 presents some analysis that goes beyond descriptive statistics such as the age and gender of the cohort and it is important to note that some conclusions drawn from this data may not hold for a larger cohort or at a future time.



# APPENDIX C

## SCORE DATA ANALYSIS



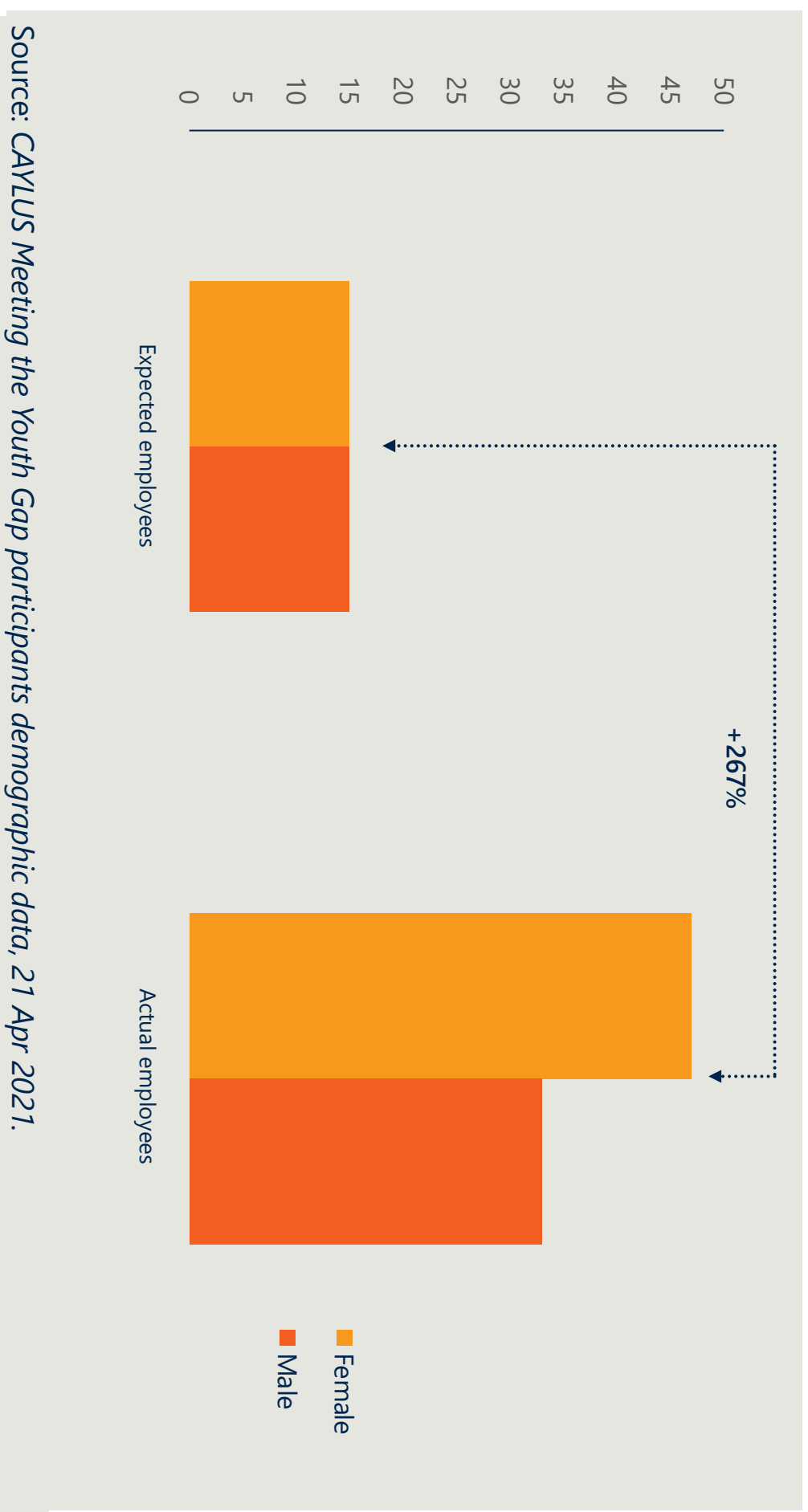


# Appendix C

## MTGY program data analysis

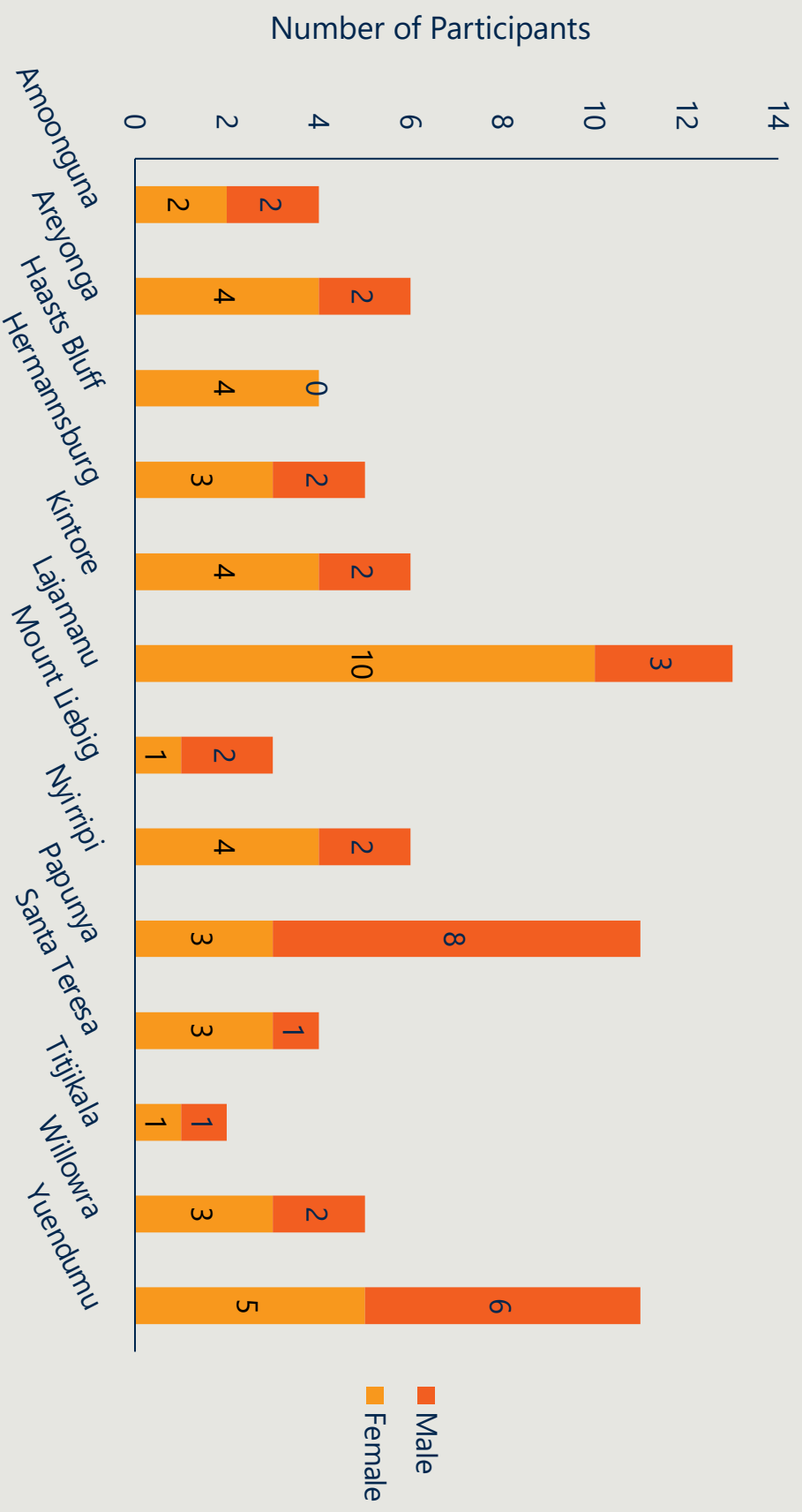
Meeting the Youth Gap Final Evaluation draft report

# MTYG attracted more employees than expected



Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants demographic data, 21 Apr 2021.

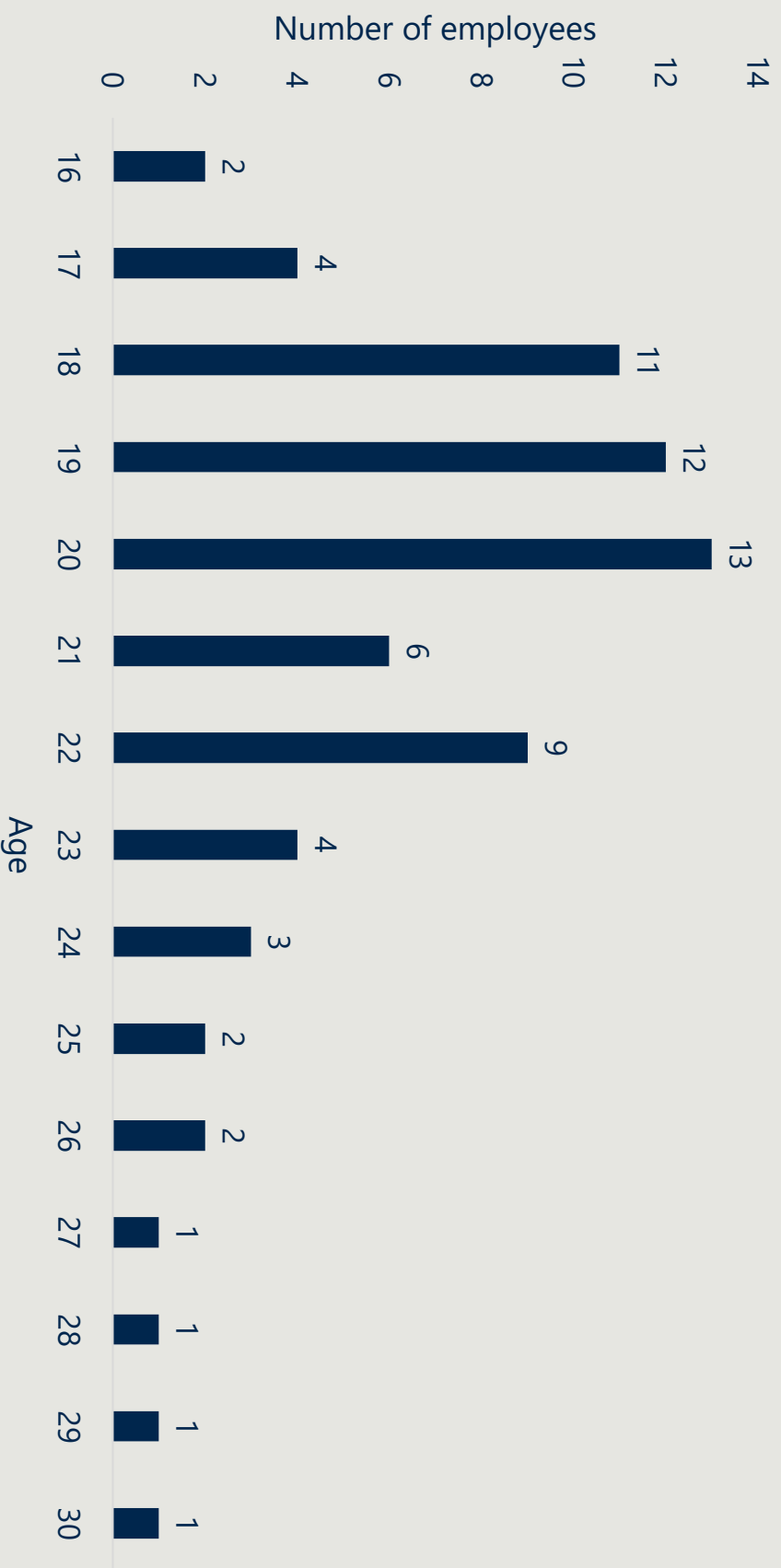
# MTYG had a balance of female and male employees



Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants session data, 21 Apr 2021.

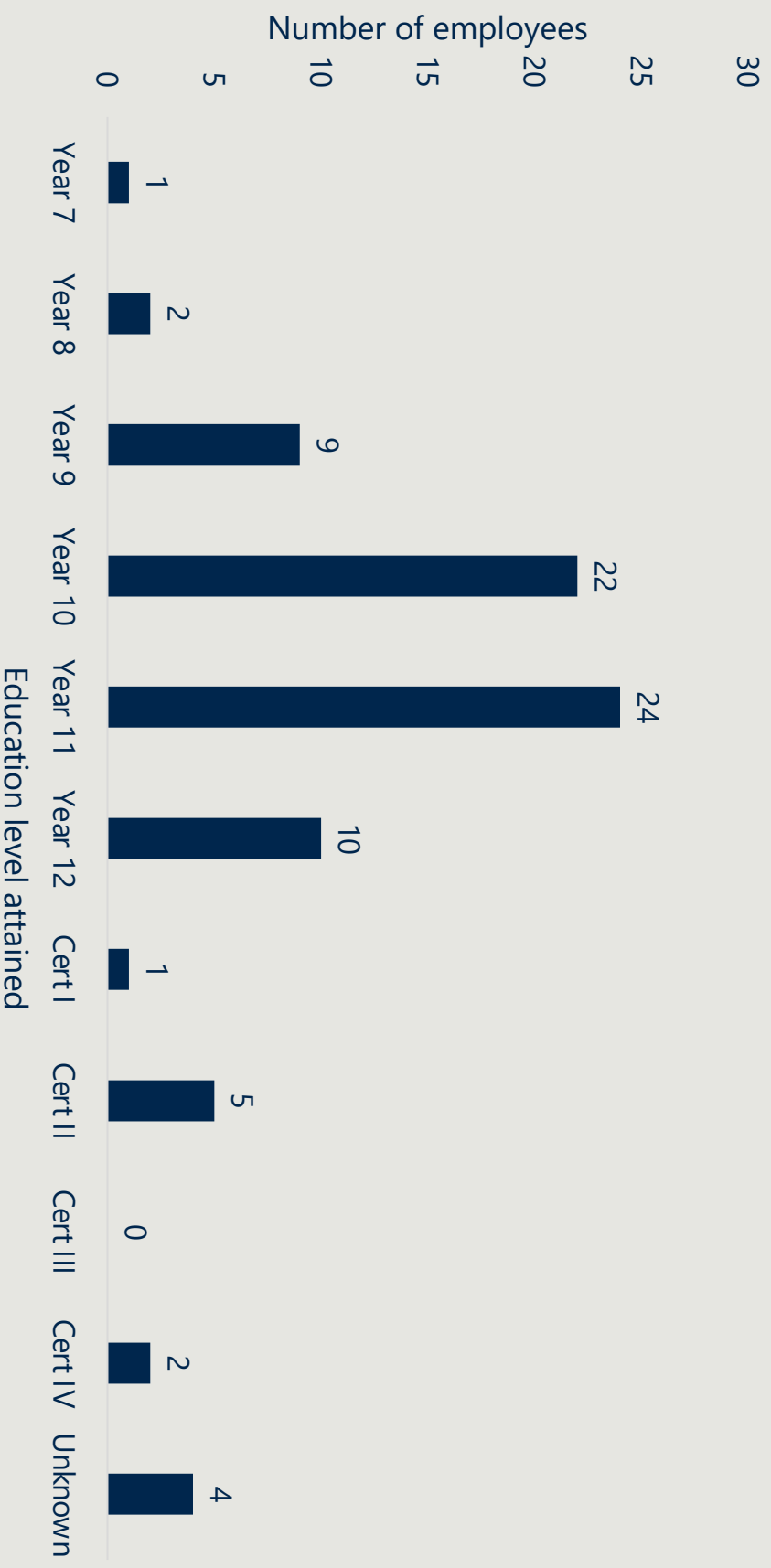


# Employees represent a range of ages



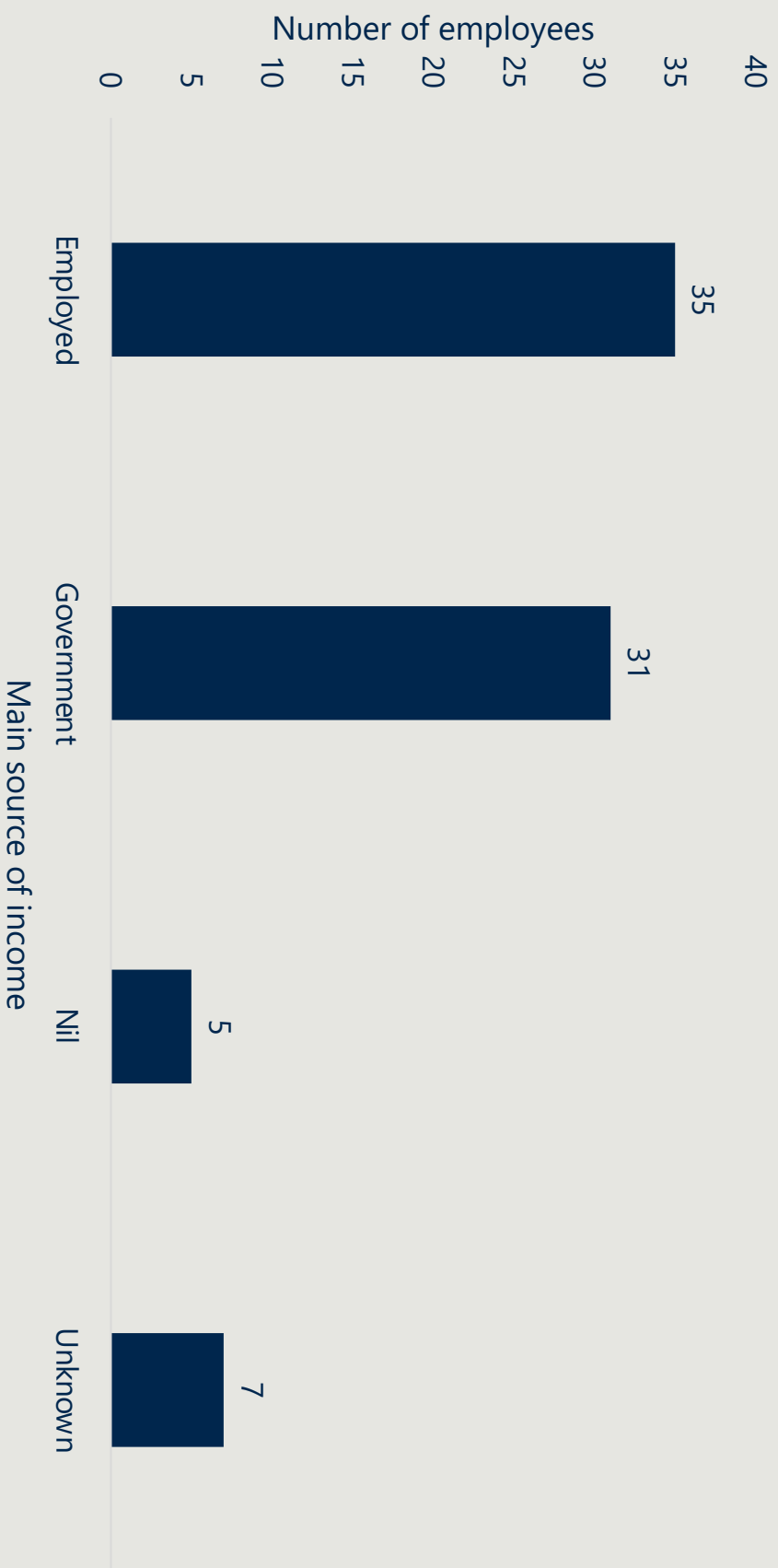
Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants session data, 21 Apr 2021.

# Employees have a range of educational attainments



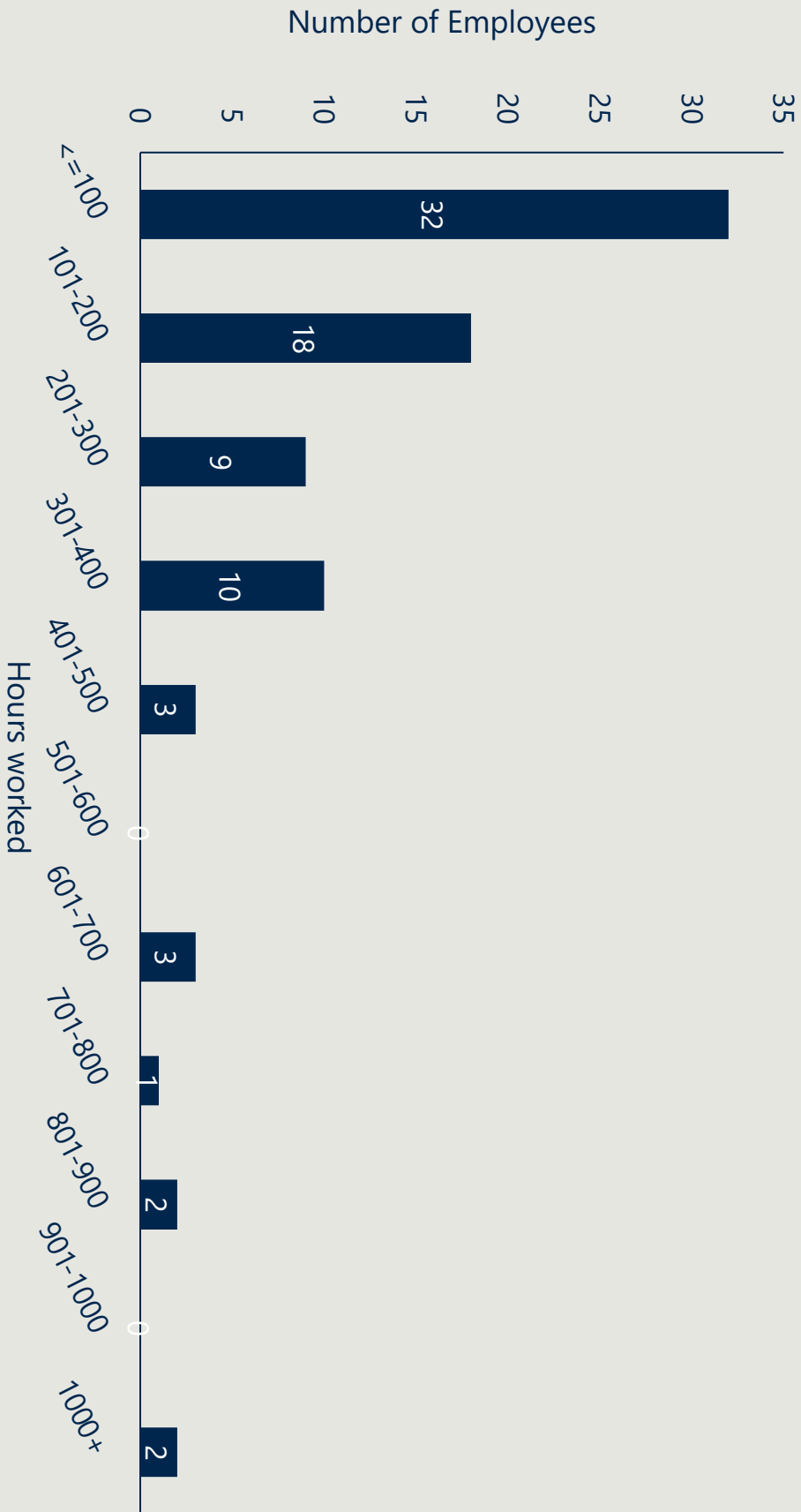
Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants session data, 21 Apr 2021.

# Employees' main source of income is employment or Government income support payments



Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants session data, 21 Apr 2021.

# Employees have worked 17,900 hours across the MTYG program



Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants session data, 21 Apr 2021.

# Employees have completed many hours of supervised work and structured learning sessions

**17512**

Hours of supervised work sessions

**388**

Hours of structured learning sessions

**219**

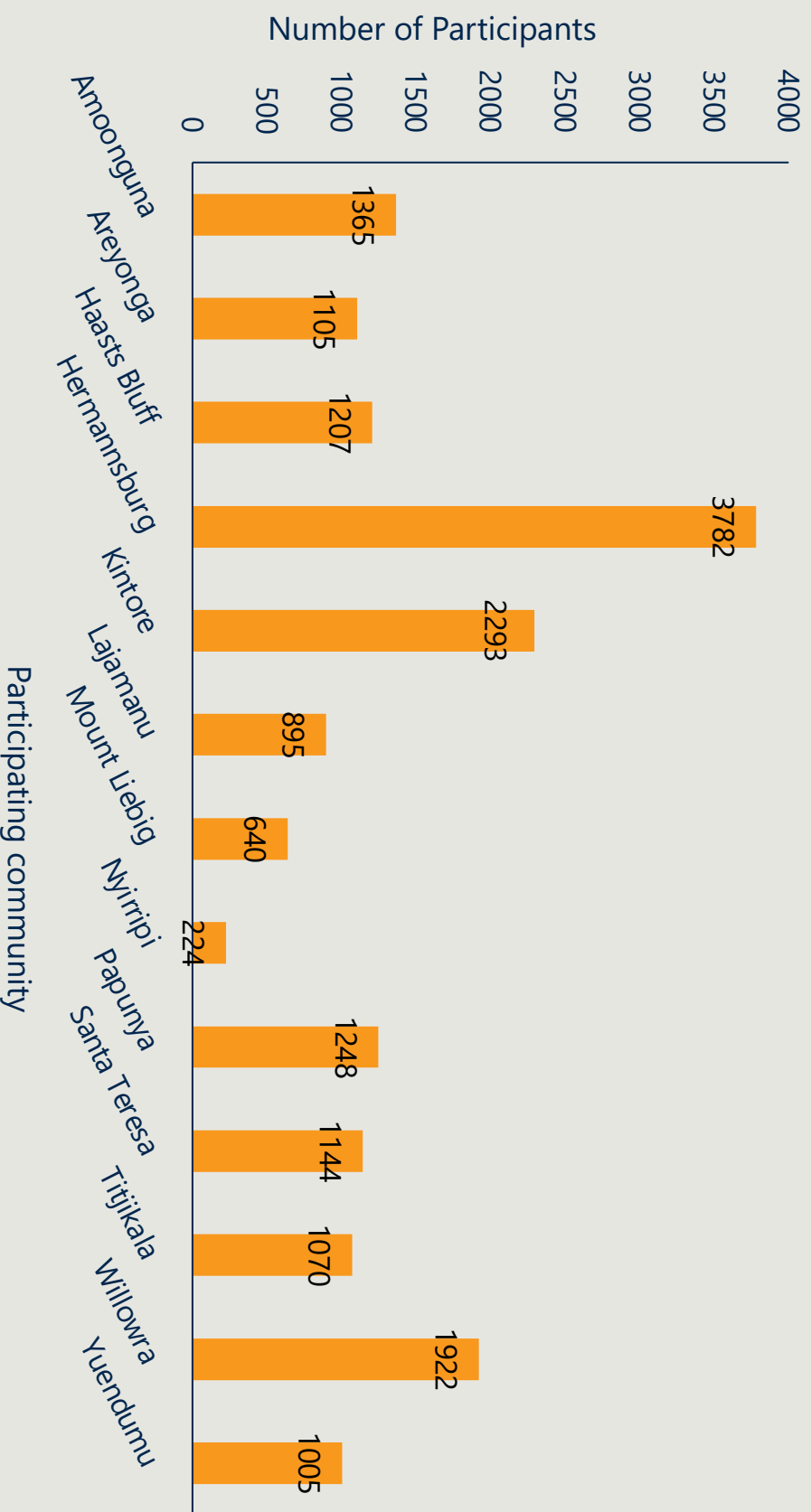
Average hours of supervised work sessions per participant

**5**

Average hours of structured learning sessions per participant

Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants session data, 21 Apr 2021.

# Employees' work hours vary across communities

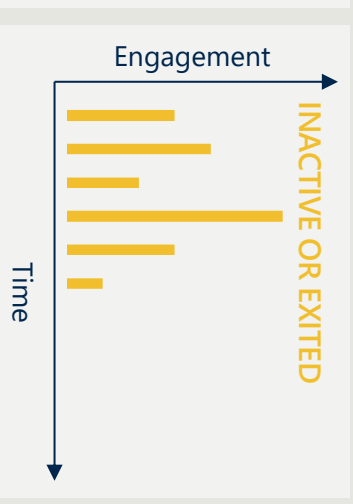
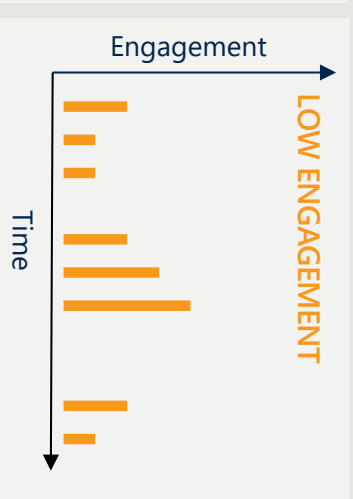
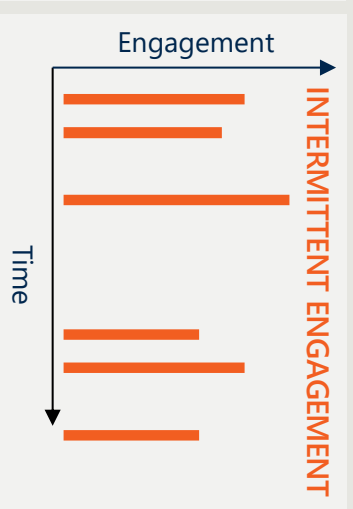
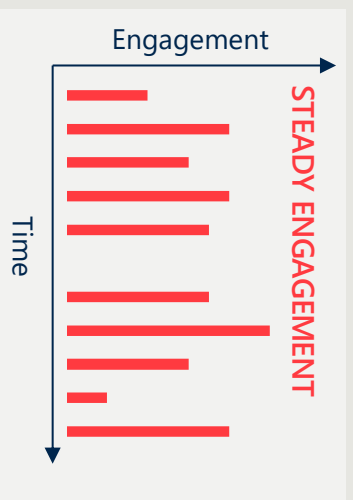


Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants session data, 21 Apr 2021.

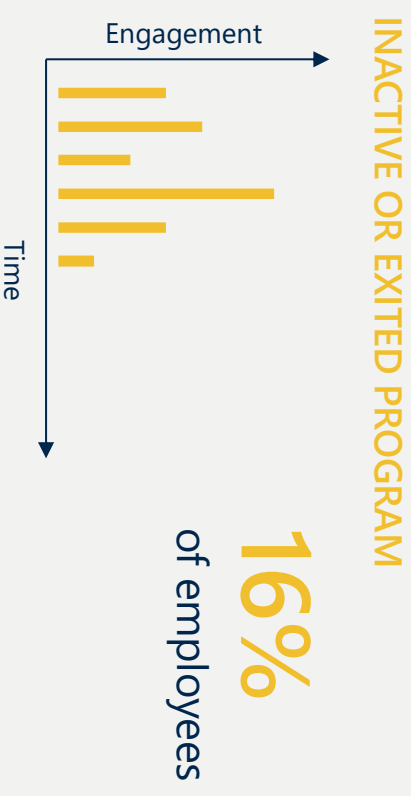
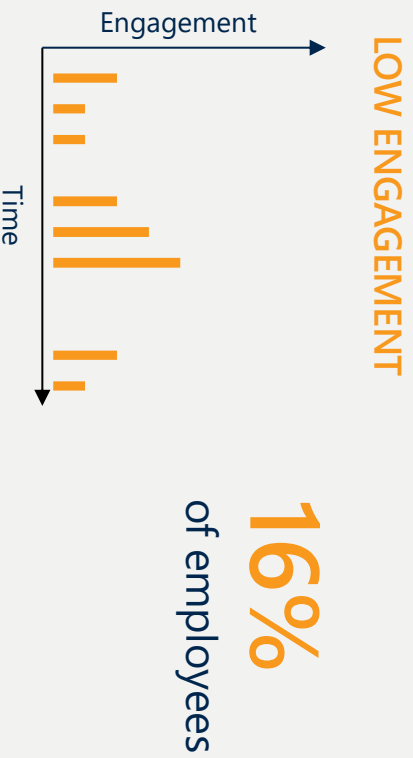
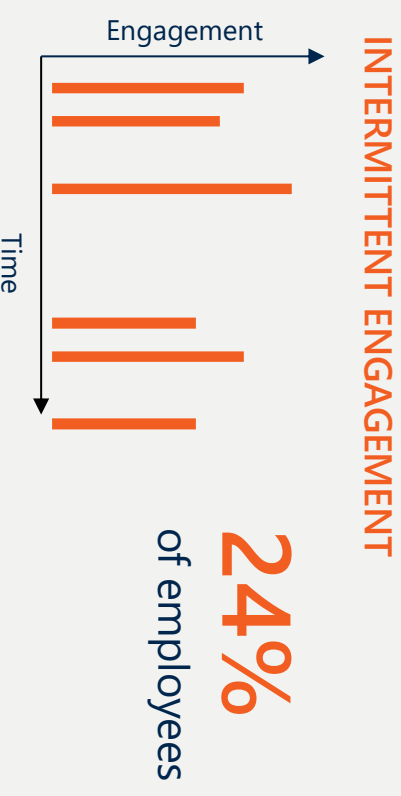
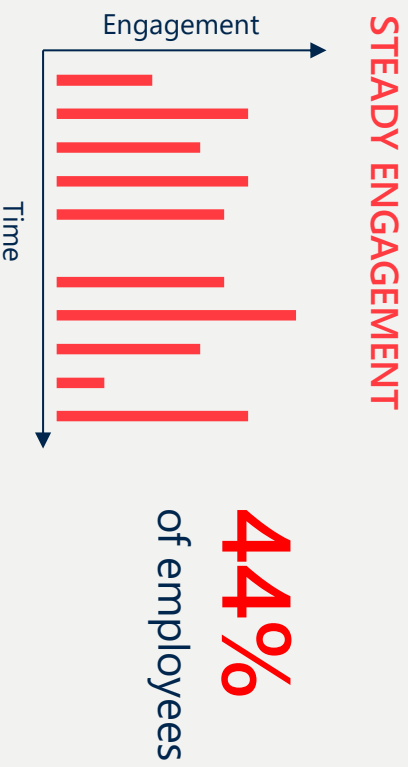
# Employees engage with the program in different ways

Flexible implementation allows participants to engage with MTYG in a way that makes sense for them and their other family, community or cultural responsibilities. Participants engage with the program in the following ways:

- **Steady engagement** – these employees engage at consistent levels throughout the program and have recorded hours in most of the months during their participation in the program. These participants do not necessarily record the most hours, but their engagement has been consistent across several months.
- **Intermittent engagement** – these employees engage with the program intermittently and have taken a break of three months or more during their participation in the program.
- **Low engagement** – these employees engage in the program at a low level and have recorded 50 hours or fewer across their participation in the program. Some of these participants have been in the program for only a few months and may develop a pattern of steady or intermittent engagement if they were to participate in the program for longer.
- **Inactive or exited program** – these employees are no longer engaging with the program and have either been marked as inactive if that have not engaged in the past three months, or have been formally exited from the program. Some of the inactive participants may develop a pattern of intermittent engagement if they were to participate in the program for longer.



# The majority of employees engage steadily with the program



N = 80



# APPENDIX D

## MTYG PROGRAM DATA ANALYSIS

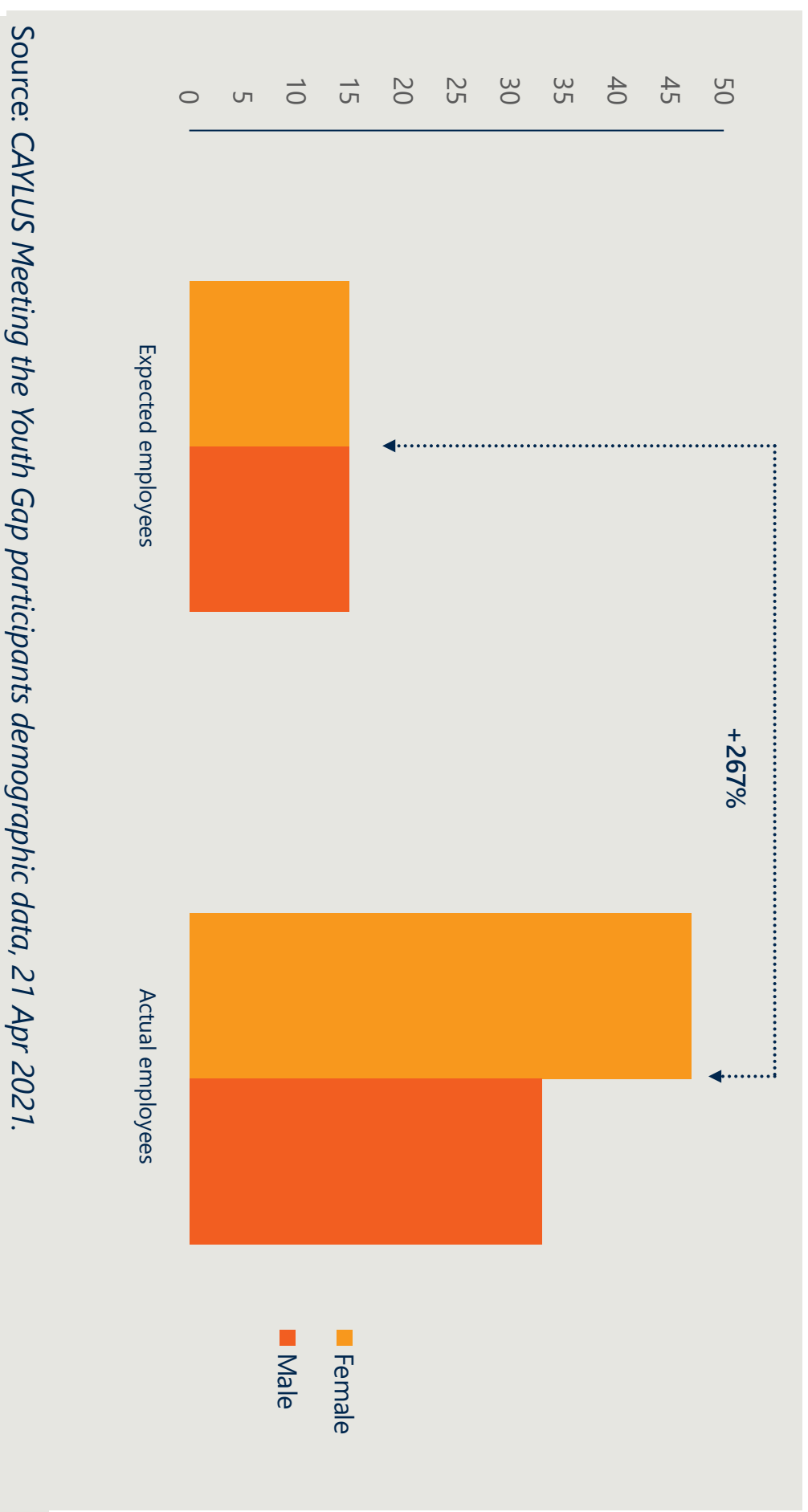


# Appendix D

## MTYG program data analysis

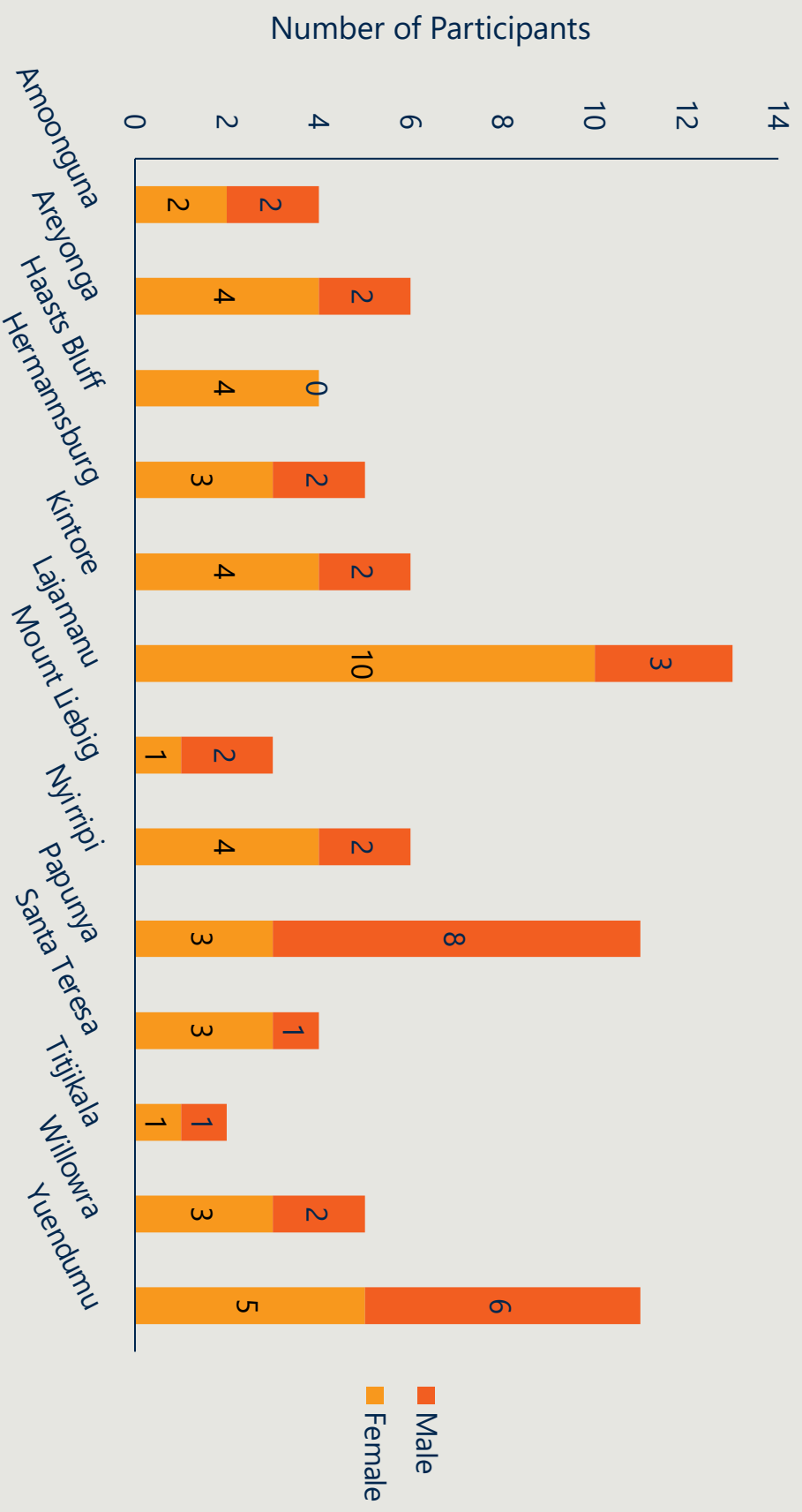
Meeting the Youth Gap Final Evaluation draft report

# MTYG attracted more employees than expected



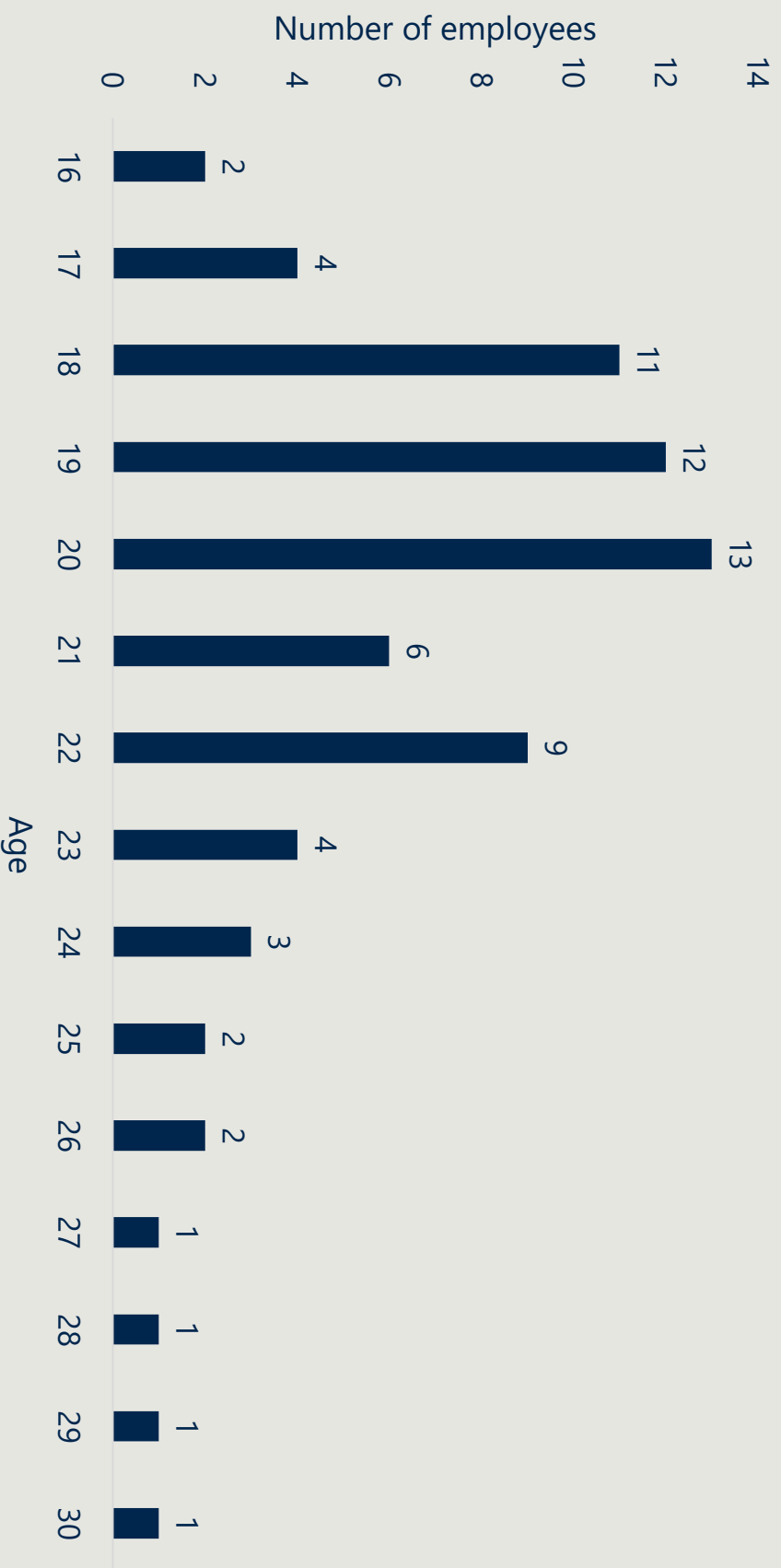
Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants demographic data, 21 Apr 2021.

# MTYG had a balance of female and male employees



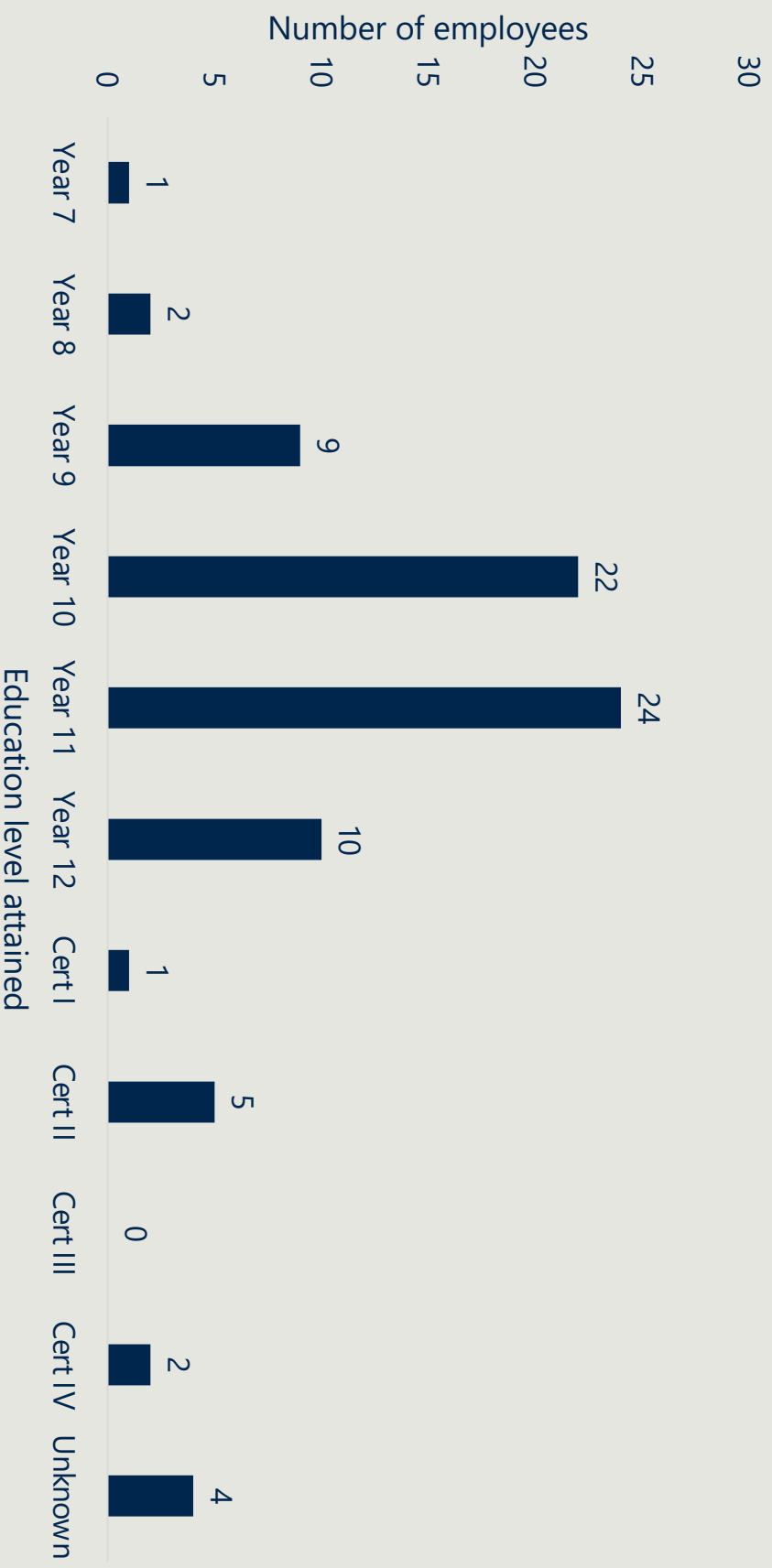
Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants session data, 21 Apr 2021.

# Employees represent a range of ages



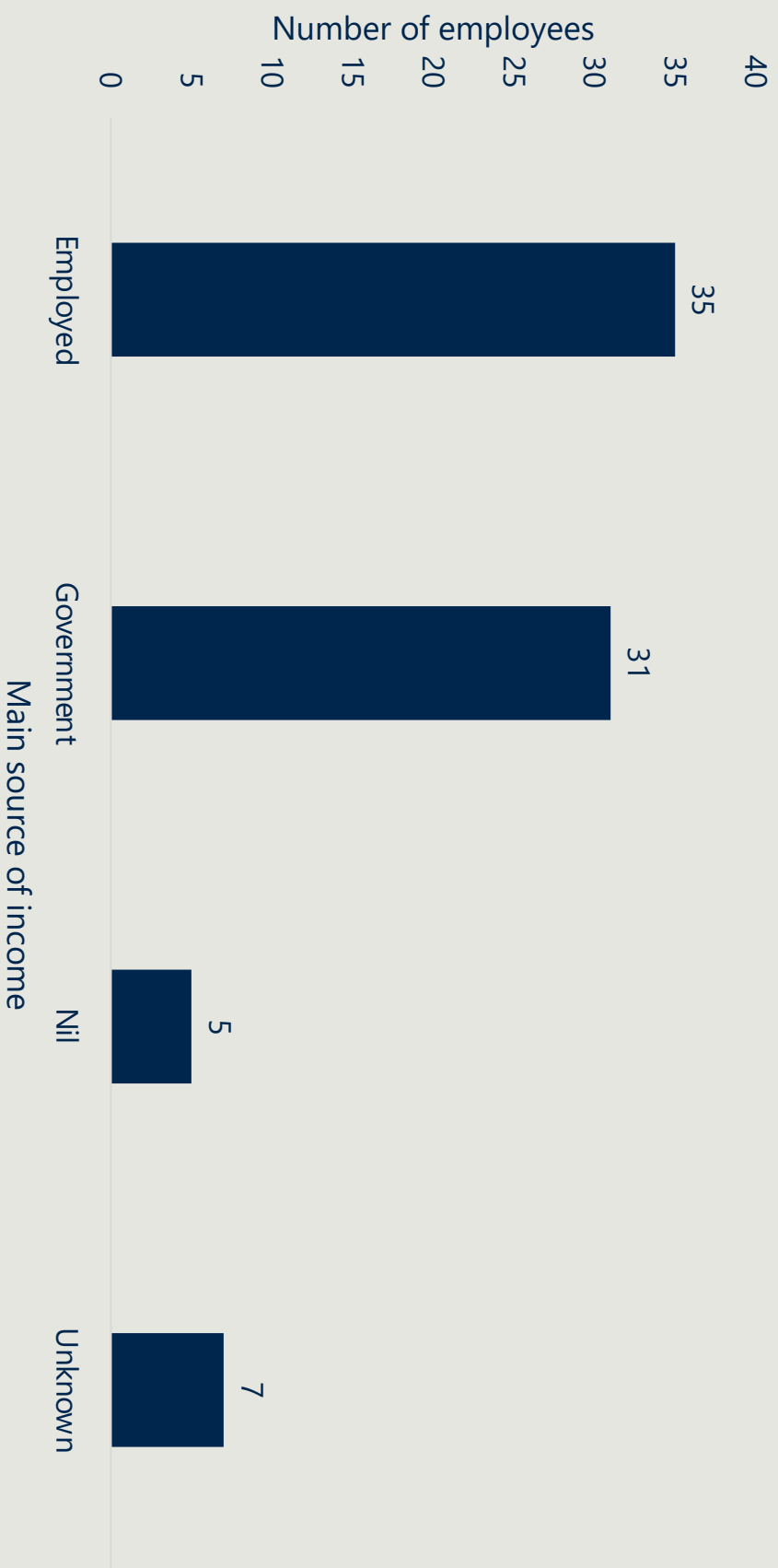
Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants session data, 21 Apr 2021.

# Employees have a range of educational attainments



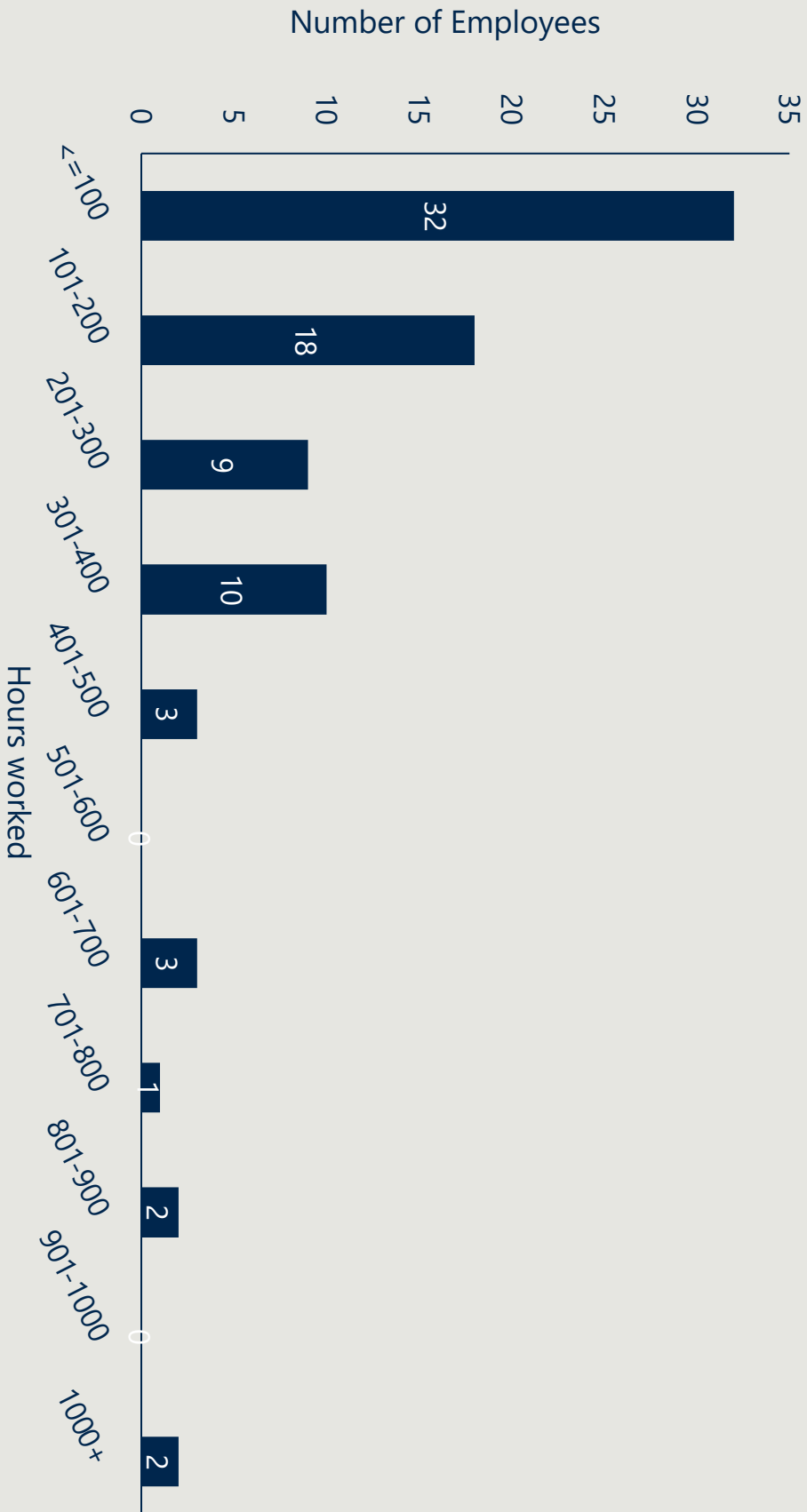
Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants session data, 21 Apr 2021.

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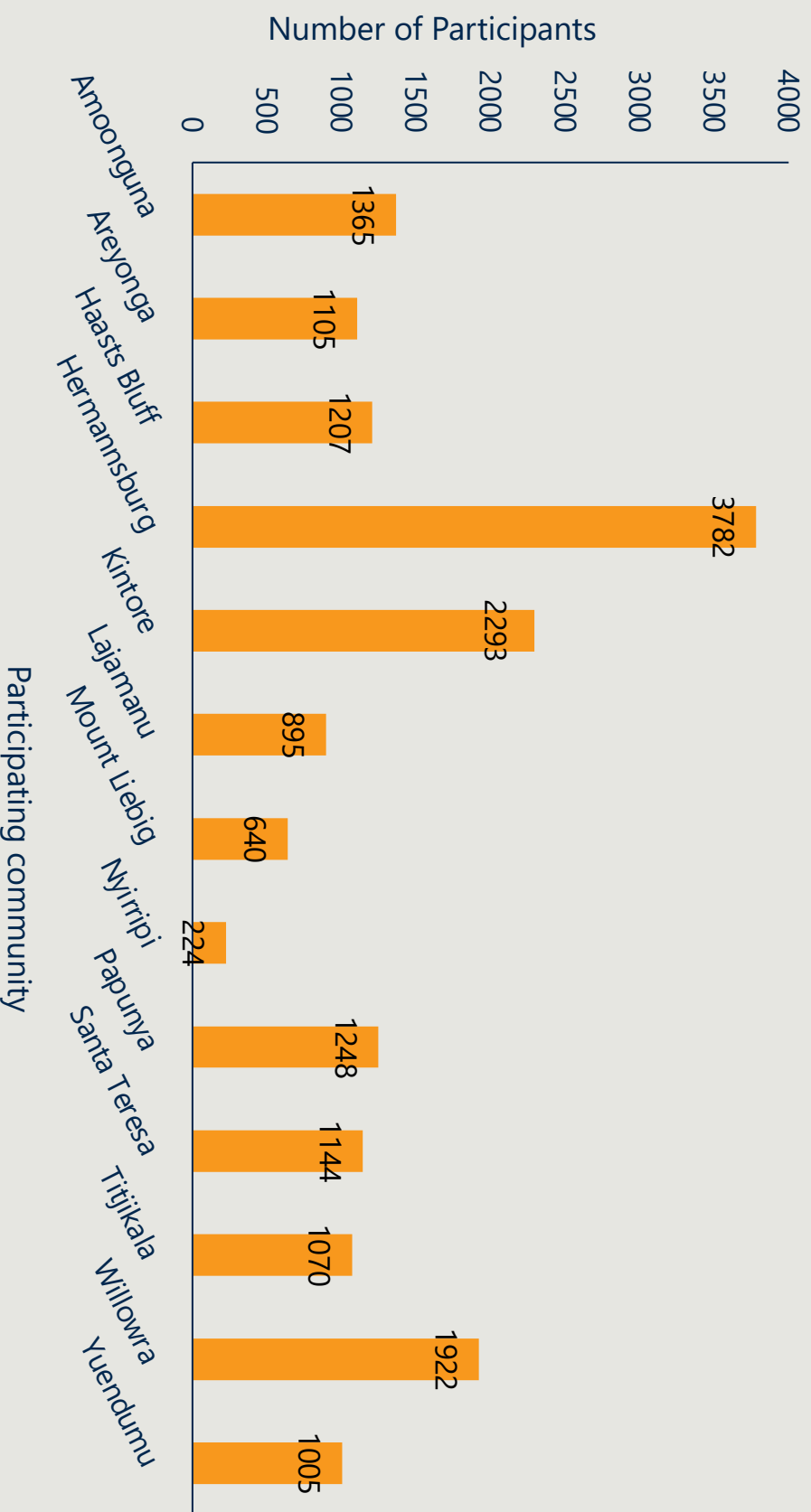
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Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants session data, 21 Apr 2021.

# Employees' work hours vary across communities

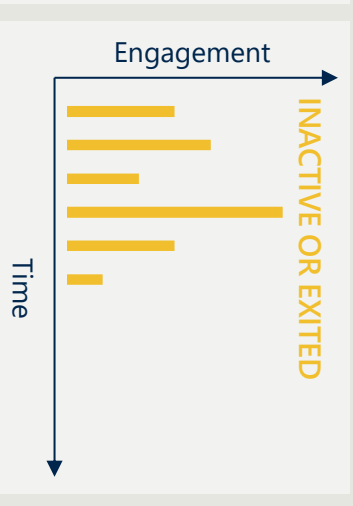
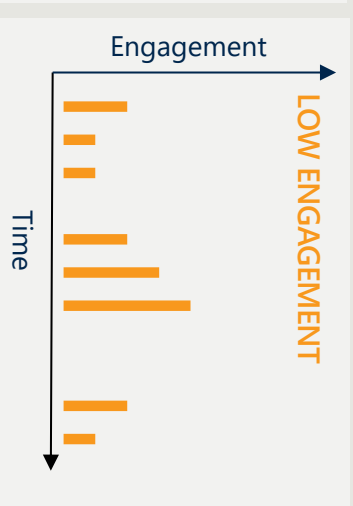
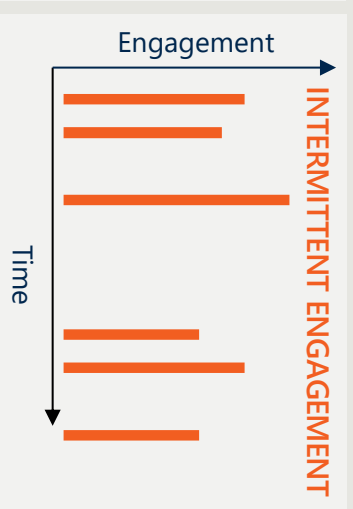
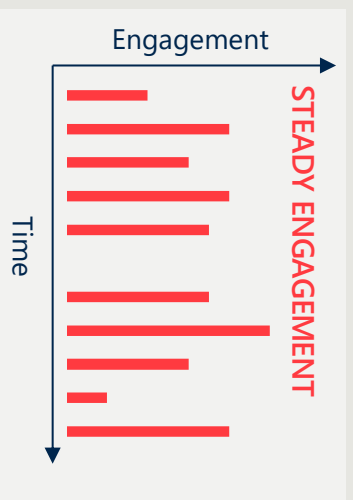


Source: CAYLUS Meeting the Youth Gap participants session data, 21 Apr 2021.

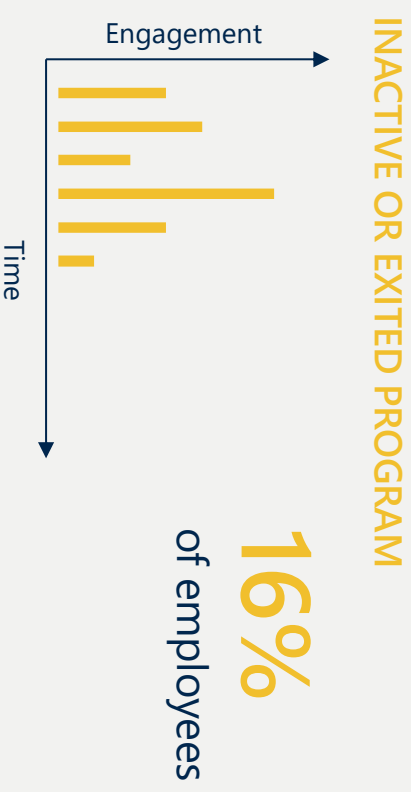
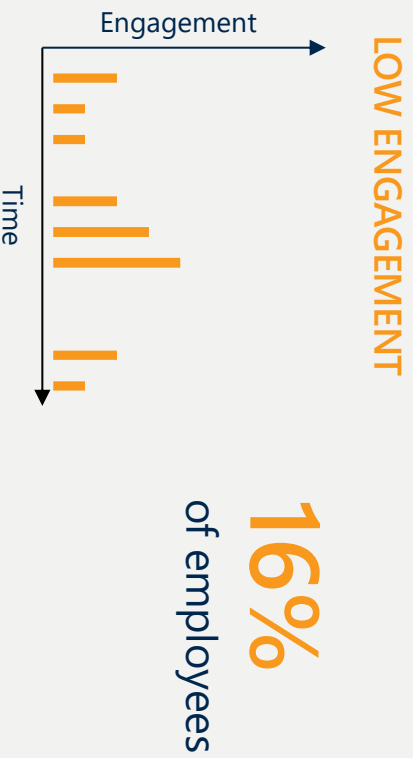
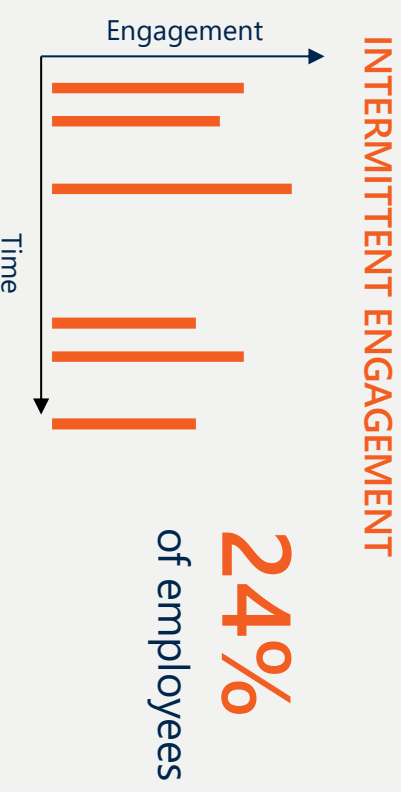
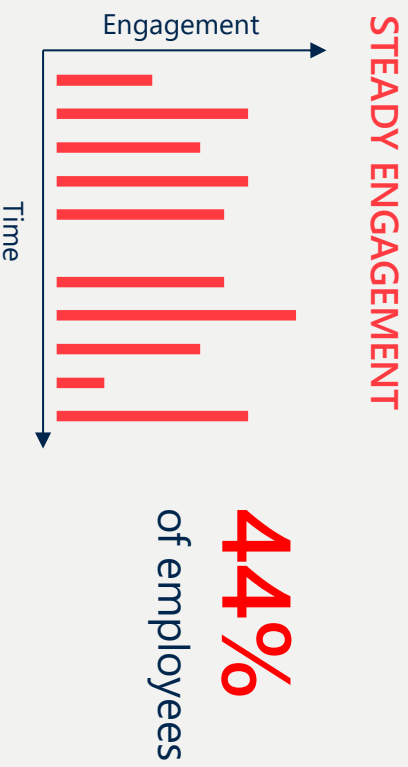
# Employees engage with the program in different ways

Flexible implementation allows participants to engage with MTYG in a way that makes sense for them and their other family, community or cultural responsibilities. Participants engage with the program in the following ways:

- **Steady engagement** – these employees engage at consistent levels throughout the program and have recorded hours in most of the months during their participation in the program. These participants do not necessarily record the most hours, but their engagement has been consistent across several months.
- **Intermittent engagement** – these employees engage with the program intermittently and have taken a break of three months or more during their participation in the program.
- **Low engagement** – these employees engage in the program at a low level and have recorded 50 hours or fewer across their participation in the program. Some of these participants have been in the program for only a few months and may develop a pattern of steady or intermittent engagement if they were to participate in the program for longer.
- **Inactive or exited program** – these employees are no longer engaging with the program and have either been marked as inactive if that have not engaged in the past three months, or have been formally exited from the program. Some of the inactive participants may develop a pattern of intermittent engagement if they were to participate in the program for longer.



# The majority of employees engage steadily with the program



N = 80

# nous

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## ABOUT NOUS

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**Nous Group** is an international management consultancy operating in 10 locations across Australia, the UK and Canada. For over 20 years we have been partnering with leaders to shape world-class businesses, effective governments and empowered communities.



bold  
performance & influence  
engaging

400

PEOPLE

11

LOCATIONS

3

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