



# Understanding the social value of Mind the Gap

Final report



# Contents

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>GLOSSARY .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Purpose of this report .....	9
1.2 BeOnsite and MTG .....	9
1.3 Background .....	9
1.4 About Think Impact .....	11
<b>2. METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Project scope .....	12
2.2 Project approach and steps .....	12
2.3 Statement of limitations .....	13
<b>3. OUTCOMES ACHIEVED .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 Mind the Gap theory of change .....	15
3.2 Outcomes for stakeholders .....	17
3.3 Outcomes for Employees .....	17
3.4 Outcomes for Families of Employees .....	19
3.5 Outcomes for Employers .....	20
3.6 Outcomes for Government .....	20
<b>4. SOCIAL VALUE MODEL (FY17–FY21) .....</b>	<b>23</b>
4.1 Total amount of value created .....	23
4.2 Relative value by stakeholder .....	23
<b>5. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>26</b>
5.1 Mind the Gap is creating significant social value and has the potential to generate more .....	26
5.2 Long-term funding is essential for the full potential of programs like Mind the Gap to be realised .....	26
5.3 Post-program evaluation and support is important in ensuring long-term outcomes are realised .....	26
5.4 BeOnsite’s unique business model was a key success factor in Mind the Gap’s success .....	27
5.5 ‘Social intrapreneurs’ are an essential element in the delivery programs like Mind the Gap .....	28
5.6 The formation of Regional Steering Groups was vital in delivering positive policy impact .....	28

5.7	MTG faced challenges gaining traction in London compared to the West Midlands .....	28
5.8	Ongoing education campaigns are required to change employer attitudes to providing long-term employment to ex-offenders .....	29
5.9	Prison Employment Leads provide opportunities for employers to build relationships with prisons .....	29

## List of Tables

Table 1	Value by stakeholder .....	5
Table 2	Value by Stakeholder .....	23
Table 3	Value by outcome (Government) .....	23
Table 4	Value by outcome (Employees) .....	24
Table 5	Value by outcome (Employers) .....	24
Table 6	Value by outcome (Families of Employees) .....	25

## List of Figures

Figure 1	Mind the Gap theory of change .....	16
----------	-------------------------------------	----

## PREPARED BY

Kevin Robbie, Chris Currie, Natasha Rees, Think Impact

Project code: J22LEND01

Report status: Draft report

Date: 21 September 2023

Think Impact is a specialist social impact and sustainability consultancy based in Melbourne. Our focus is to support organisations, across all sectors, to manage for better impact.

## CONTACT

For further details please contact:

Think Impact  
Our Community House  
552 Victoria Street,  
North Melbourne, VIC 3051, Australia  
kevin@thinkimpact.com.au  
+61 402 001 237

ABN 15 129 607 576

## DISCLAIMER

Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the material and the integrity of the analysis presented herein, Think Impact accepts no liability for any actions taken on the basis of the contents of this report.

# Executive summary

Mind the Gap has been a catalyst for system change in ex-offender employment outcomes.

## Introduction

Mind the Gap (MTG) was an innovative project run by BeOnsite and funded by The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) to deliver economic and social benefits through employment of ex-offenders in the construction industry. CITB has commissioned a small-scale social valuation of the MTG project to determine its value and communicate the insights generated to the broader construction sector.

## Project background

Following projections of major skills shortages in the expanding construction industry, the MTG project was devised to explore the potential of drawing on a talent pool of currently serving prisoners and recently released ex-offenders. MTG was delivered by a consortium led by BeOnsite in partnership with other providers including A Fairer Chance, Bounce Back, Dominic Headley & Partners, the Mitie Foundation and Nacro. The three-year project, funded by a £720,000 grant from CITB with £300,000 of in-kind match funding from the delivery partners, created positive service interventions and support for employers, the criminal justice system and currently serving prisoners and ex-offenders across England (including London and the South, Birmingham, Manchester regions).

MTG exceeded its targets, delivering training and support to 400 businesses, engaging with 795 beneficiaries, providing 172 job opportunities resulting in 75 sustained (long-term) job outcomes for ex-offenders.

## Methodology

We established the social value of MTG through **social value modelling**.

Social value modelling interrogates three key questions: in what domains is value being created, who is experiencing this value and how much value is created. It involves stakeholder engagement and evidence of outcomes. A high-level narrative of where social value is occurring can be produced.

The social value study of Mind the Gap was driven by the following evaluation questions:

- What was the social value created?
- What, if any, was the policy impact of the approach?
- How has Mind the Gap influenced the working practices of host employers/providers?
- What works in supporting people back into employment?

We examined MTG activities from 1 May 2017–30 October 2020. It should be noted that part of the period being evaluated was during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Outcomes achieved

Overall, social value modelling suggests the MTG program has created **£3,536,000** of social value from FY17–FY21.

There are four key stakeholders who receive social value – Government, Employees, Families of these Employees and Employers. The social value by stakeholder group is represented in Table 2 below. Most value accrues to Government (38 per cent of the value), with Employees experiencing a further 35 per

cent of the value. Employers (19 per cent) and Employee Families (9 per cent) make up the remainder of the value.

**Table 1 Value by stakeholder**

Stakeholder	Social Value	% of social value
Government	£1,335,000	38%
Employees	£1,231,000	35%
Employers	£663,000	19%
Families of Employees	£306,000	9%
<b>Total FY17–FY21</b>	<b>£3,536,000</b>	

## Findings and key recommendations

### 1. Mind the Gap is creating significant social value and has the potential to generate more

The program was successful in demonstrating the value of this cohort as a source of workers while delivering significant social value to the Government and other stakeholders in the process.

- CITB should consider providing additional funding for the next iteration of MTG to enable progress towards realising long-term outcomes.

### 2. Long-term funding is essential for the full potential of programs like Mind the Gap to be realised

CITB funded the MTG program for three years to investigate the potential of addressing workforce shortages with a new cohort of potential employees: ex-offenders. The short-term nature of the CITB funding meant that the approach was only just getting started in terms of longer-term systems change.

- CITB (and other funders interested in systems change) should consider funding programs for longer periods.

### 3. Post-program evaluation and support is important in ensuring long-term outcomes are realised

The scope of MTG did not incorporate specific post-project follow-up with Employees to determine if they were still in employment and, if not, the reasons why. This represents a lost opportunity to understand the long-term benefits of the program and identify any potential improvements, or additional support required to ensure employment outcomes are sustained.

- CITB (and other funders) should provide funding for longer-term monitoring and evaluation of outcomes for future programs.

### 4. BeOnsite's unique business model was a key success factor in Mind the Gap's success

BeOnsite is in a privileged position as a not-for-profit embedded in a corporate – they have 'a foot in both worlds' which gives them credibility with corporates, government and potential program partners. BeOnsite is a key connector between government, the private sector and the third sector.

- BeOnsite should look to enhance their position as a partnership broker to build collaborations to achieve impact.

## **5. ‘Social intrapreneurs’ are an essential element in the delivery of programs like Mind the Gap**

The skills and reputation of BeOnsite leader, Jessica Mellor-Clark, were critical elements in the success of the MTG program. As a ‘social intrapreneur’<sup>1</sup> she was able to provide continuity in knowledge and relationships from previous projects in this space to facilitate the convening and coordination of large working groups with high-profile stakeholders.

- If CITB is considering funding other partnership approaches to tackle social change they should ensure there are leaders with key characteristics of social intrapreneurship.

## **6. The formation of Regional Steering Groups was vital in delivering positive policy impact**

A key element of the MTG program was the formation of regional networks across England to understand the challenges ex-offenders face and identify policy options to break down barriers in ex-offender employment.

- CITB (or other funders) should consider funding the coordination of additional Regional Steering Groups across the country.

## **7. MTG faced challenges gaining traction in London compared to the West Midlands**

The original aim of the MTG program was to engage with ex-offenders in London and in the West Midlands as they left custody or were available for work through Release on Temporary License (ROTL). However, as there were no London prisons releasing prisoners on ROTL for the duration of the program, that element of the program was not able to be delivered for that cohort.

- To successfully implement MTG in London, BeOnsite should seek funding for preliminary work to break down silos between key stakeholders.

## **8. Ongoing education campaigns are required to change employer attitudes to providing long-term employment to ex-offenders**

The evaluation identified that many Employers, while realising the value that ex-offenders can provide in plugging workforce gaps, are reluctant to retain people once they have met their statutory requirements.

- Tier one contractors like Lendlease could be leading the way by providing internal requirements for subcontractors to employ ex-offenders for longer than just the six months legislation requires.

## **9. Prison Employment Leads provide opportunities for employers to build relationships with prisons**

Prison Employment Leads (PELs) are key to facilitating and maintaining relationships between employers, prisons and potential candidates. Working in prisons, PELs are able to match potential candidates with employment opportunities and help them to access support and training they will need to be successful.

- CITB should encourage employers to engage with PELs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Social intrapreneurship can be defined as social innovation undertaken by someone while employed by an organisation.

# Glossary

The following acronyms are used in this report:

Term	Definition
Attribution	An assessment of how much of the outcome was caused by the contribution of other organisations or people.
Data	Information collected for reference or analysis.
Deadweight	An assessment of what would have occurred anyway, in terms of achievement of outcomes, in the absence of the intervention/activity.
Financial proxy	Social value is calculated by placing a financial value on the quantified change commensurate with the degree of change experienced by stakeholders. These financial values are known as financial proxies.
Impact	The total sum or effect of change caused by an organisation, program or activity.
Indicators	The ways of knowing an outcome is occurring or has occurred, and to what extent.
Inputs	Resources that are used by an intervention. Examples are money, staff, time, facilities, equipment, etc.
Materiality	Information is material if its omission has the potential to affect the readers' or stakeholders' decisions. Materiality requires a determination of what information and evidence must be included in the accounts to give a true and fair picture, such that stakeholders can draw reasonable conclusions about impact.
Measure	The qualitative or quantitative data that is sought to test whether the outcome is occurring and to what extent it is occurring.
Outcome	The change that occurs for stakeholders from an activity. An outcome can be positive or negative, intended or unintended, direct or indirect, long-term or short-term, social, environmental or economic.
Outcome incidence	The proportion or number of people in the stakeholder cohort group experiencing the outcome.
Outcomes framework (OF)	An outcomes framework outlines what will be measured, and by whom, to enable change to be tracked and managed.
Output	The quantities or scale associated with an activity (e.g. number of people who took part in a program).
Results	Results are the outputs, outcomes or impact of activities.
Social Return on Investment (SROI)	SROI is a framework for measuring and accounting for the broader concept of social value. It tells the story of how change is being created for the people and organisations that experience or contribute to it, by identifying and measuring social outcomes. Monetary values are then used to represent those outcomes.

Stakeholder	People, organisations or entities that either experience change as a result of the activity that is being analysed or contribute to the change taking place.
Theory of change	A theory of change tells the story of how stakeholders are impacted by an activity, program or initiative.
DWP	The Department for Works and Pensions. The project specifically worked with the National Employer Partnership Team (NEPT) within the DWP which hold particular responsibilities for construction employers regionally and nationally.
New Futures Network	A specialist part of HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) which attracts and supports employers to work with prisons in England and Wales whilst also assisting prisons to create the systems and infrastructure that will result in more prison leavers securing employment.
Mind the Gap 'MTG' employee	Lendlease BeOnsite led a consortia of delivery partners for the CITB-funded project. An MTG employee is a 'catch all' term for all those who progressed through the programme and who were employed by other construction companies. Support was provided by the delivery partners to the individuals whilst on the programme.
Mind the Gap 'BeOnsite' employee	A BeOnsite employee was someone who was also part of the MTG programme but who was directly employed on a PAYE basis by BeOnsite.
West Midlands Combined Authority	The West Midlands Combined Authority is made up of 18 local councils and one local enterprise partnership. A combined authority is a group of local authorities working together to make their region a better place to live. The government gives combined authorities the money and power to make decisions for their regions.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of this report

Mind the Gap (MTG) was an innovative program run by BeOnsite and funded by The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) to deliver economic and social benefits through employment of ex-offenders in the construction industry. CITB has commissioned a small-scale social valuation of the MTG program to determine its value and communicate the insights generated to the broader construction sector.

## 1.2 BeOnsite and MTG

The MTG program was initiated and coordinated by BeOnsite, a not-for-profit focused on providing opportunities for people with barriers to employment to find work in the construction industry. BeOnsite was established by Lendlease in 2007 as a standalone entity, to build on its success in providing people living with disadvantage, including ex-offenders, with job opportunities in its projects.

BeOnsite's approach involves beneficiaries being placed into paid employment with wrap-around support being provided throughout their employment. Since its formation, BeOnsite has assisted over 1,350 people to gain access to the job market in 80 different occupational areas spanning construction, facilities and office management and retail.

As a result of its proven track record in delivering sustained job outcomes for ex-offenders, as well as its strong connection with government and industry bodies, BeOnsite was well placed to ensure the success of the MTG program.

## 1.3 Background

### 1.3.1 Current context

The Construction Skills Network Industry Outlook for 2023-2027 states that an extra 225,000 construction workers may be needed by 2027. An increase of just under 45,000 per year is needed to meet expected output.

“The construction industry still has a long-term challenge in recruiting workers with high levels of job vacancies and low levels of unemployment likely to persist. Recruiting and developing the workforce for the future remains vital to ensure the industry can contribute to growth, such as building the homes the country needs, the infrastructure for energy and transport and retrofitting the built environment to meet net zero targets. With vacancies set to remain high, it is important that construction companies make use of support to continue recruiting, training and developing the workforce needed for coming years.”

Tim Balcon, CITB Chief Executive, January 2023

This challenge is being responded to via a broad range of activities support by policy change. For example, the government, supported by organisations such as BeOnsite, is exploring all avenues to boost the employability of ex-offenders when they leave prison including the creation of a Prisoner Apprenticeship Pathway where prisoners will embark on dedicated on-the-job learning programmes which have a direct route into work with employers on release.

Addressing this challenge also requires productivity improvements, inclusive recruitment practices (with targeted support for beneficiaries in the case of Mind the Gap) and the creation of a better workplace culture.

### 1.3.2 2017 context

However, the skills shortage challenge is not a new one. Following projections in 2017 of major skills shortages in the expanding construction industry, the MTG project was devised to explore the potential of drawing on a talent pool of currently serving prisoners and recently released ex-offenders. In addition to addressing skills shortages, research<sup>2</sup> showed that securing formal employment in the 12 months after release from prison can reduce the chance of a person reoffending. As such, it was hypothesised that the MTG program would deliver both economic benefits to the construction industry as well as social benefits to the community.

MTG was delivered by a consortium led by BeOnsite in partnership with other providers including A Fairer Chance, Bounce Back, Dominic Headley & Partners, the Mitie Foundation and Nacro. The three-year program, funded by a £720,000 grant from CITB with £300,000 of in-kind match funding from the delivery partners, created positive service interventions and support for employers, the criminal justice system and currently serving prisoners and ex-offenders across England (including London and the South, Birmingham, Manchester regions) from 1 May 2017–30 October 2020.

MTG tackled the challenges of ensuring sustained job creation post-release and reducing reoffending. It developed a framework to design, test and deliver long-term construction training and support business and beneficiaries throughout England. MTG exceeded its targets, delivering training and support to 400 businesses, engaging with 795 beneficiaries, providing 172 job opportunities resulting in 75 sustained (long-term) job outcomes for ex-offenders.

*‘Too often, employers shy away from taking a chance on ex-offenders because they think the risks outweigh the potential gains. The attitude displayed by organisations like Lendlease towards ex-offenders and their dedication to getting the right people – no matter who they are – to work for them is a breath of fresh air.’ – Rt Hon David Gauke MP, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice at the 1st anniversary of Mind the Gap, House of Commons, 21 May 2018*

### 1.3.3 Mind the Gap approach

MTG facilitated a series of activities that were focused on not only supporting beneficiaries into employment but aimed to bring about a step change in how industry engaged with this group. Activities undertaken as part of the MTG project included:

- **Facilitation of employment offers for ex-offenders:** MTG partners promoted the benefits of employing ex-offenders and identified suitable employment opportunities within construction companies.
- **PRESS/BeOnsite support:** Provision of tailored, post-release support to the most vulnerable ex-offenders. This was based on the BeOnsite model of support, which had previously been tested and proven to work.
- **Production of employer guides:** As a result of industry research, significant gaps in employers’ knowledge about the legislation pertaining to employing ex-offenders was identified. In addition, misconceptions about the risks posed by hiring ex-offenders were found to be common in hiring managers. In response, detailed, practical employer guidance was published in 2018 for employing those with convictions.

---

<sup>2</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/217412/impact-employment-reoffending.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/217412/impact-employment-reoffending.pdf)

- **Delivery of Business Challenge Days:** Delivery partners A Fairer Chance and the Mitie Foundation teamed up to deliver a combination of highly focused Business Challenge Days which offered cohorts of beneficiaries the opportunity to meet with employers prior to their release.
- **Employer engagement:** Led by Dominic Headley on behalf of Nacro, MTG delivered five bespoke large employer events around the country in Liverpool, Birmingham, Hull, Manchester and London with delegates comprising employers and key stakeholders. These proved substantial in the relationship building which resulted directly from these events.
- **In-kind delivery:** Dominic Headley and Nacro delivered a highly successful Tapping into New Talent stakeholder event in London involving all MTG providers, employers and key stakeholders and other interested parties such as the Corbett Network. Some of the other employer engagements and training sessions were also in-kind delivery.
- **Specialised training sessions:** 22 sessions for employers were delivered over the course of the project. The sessions offered bespoke training and tailored support on how to navigate the complexities of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and more generally provided support to managers in recruiting safely and fairly.
- **Bespoke policy workshops with employers:** At their request, MTG ran bespoke intensive workshops with employers (including Tideway, HHS Hire and Rentokil) to assist them in critically evaluating their hiring policies and identifying barriers to employing ex-offenders.
- **Building networks to drive system level change:** MTG facilitated the creation of steering groups which have bridged the divide between employers, prisons and education and training providers who frequently work in silos. Through these groups, customer journey maps for ex-offenders were able to be developed, allowing key barriers to employment to be identified. Armed with this information, government entities were better able to target interventions to increase the number and length of employment outcomes for ex-offenders.

The outcome from these activities formed the scope of the analysis.

## 1.4 About Think Impact

Think Impact is a specialist social impact and sustainability consultancy based in Melbourne. Our focus is to support organisations, across all sectors, to manage for better impact.

Think Impact has worked with Lendlease over the past few years supporting the evaluation and social valuation of a wide range of their shared value initiatives in each of the regions that the company operates in.

We have worked with hundreds of clients from across business, government and the for-purpose sector, building a reputation as one of the most experienced social impact and sustainability advisory firms in Australia, alongside contributing to the development of global best practice in impact measurement. We have deep experience working with clients in a range of areas including ESG, employment, community housing and homelessness, First Nations led initiatives, infrastructure, education, ageing, environment and government policy.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Project scope

Lendlease had engaged Think Impact to model the social value created by BeOnsite. This understanding of social value aimed to assist Lendlease to report on progress towards its stated target of creating \$250 million (AUD) of social value by 2025.

Think Impact was then engaged to use this baseline data to carry out a further analysis of the social value of MTG.

The social value study of MTG was driven by the following evaluation questions:

- What was the social value created?
- What, if any, was the policy impact of the approach?
- How has MTG influenced the working practices of host employers/providers?
- What works in supporting people back into employment? This was to include:
  - regional analysis of working with ex-offenders in West Midland/London
  - key insights from ex-offender beneficiaries 18 months into the program.

We examined MTG activities from 1 May 2017–30 October 2020. It should be noted that part of the period being evaluated was during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 2.2 Project approach and steps

We established the social value of MTG through **social value modelling**.

Social value modelling interrogates three key questions: in what domains is value being created, who is experiencing this value and how much value is created. It involves stakeholder engagement and evidence of outcomes. A high-level narrative of where social value is occurring can be produced.

The social value modelling has been informed by the key principles of social valuation developed by Social Value International (SVI). The eight Social Value Principles are:

- Involve stakeholders in deciding what gets measured, and how this is measured and valued.
- Examine and articulate how change is created, including both positive and negative changes for stakeholders as well as those that are intended and unintended.
- Measurement should focus on the key outcomes from the stakeholders' perspective.
- Determine what information and evidence must be included to give a true and fair picture of where value lies.
- Only claim the value that activities are responsible for creating.
- Articulate the professional judgements made to ensure reliability and validity of results.
- Ensure appropriate independent assurance.
- Pursue optimum social value based on timely decision-making and appropriate accounting and reporting.

Social value modelling closely follows the principles of SROI but does not apply them to the same depth.

The steps to deliver the social value modelling are outlined below.

### Step 1: Define scope and material stakeholders

We determined the scope in conjunction with key staff from BeOnsite who were involved in MTG and who had agreed the brief with CITB.

We determined the scope to enable an understanding the value of the full MTG program, incorporating all of the BeOnsite activity along with the delivery by the other key partners.

### Step 2: Engage stakeholders

We conducted interviews with beneficiaries, major employers, project partners and government stakeholders to identify outcomes.

We held two in-person focus groups in London with Employers and Employees who were involved in the program. These sought to understand the impact of the program and what changed for stakeholders.

### Step 3: Collect and analyse data

We collected data on the numbers of Employees, Employers and event participants. This included data from all MTG partners.

We then applied financial proxies to the identified outcomes to give the outcomes social value that was relative to the value that stakeholders placed on them.

### Step 4: Establish what you can claim

In accordance with the Social Value Principles, we applied deadweight, attribution, benefit period and drop-off discount factors to the value of the outcomes.

### Step 5: Verification and report

The results were then verified with the BeOnsite staff.

A draft report was produced for review by BeOnsite staff to provide an opportunity for feedback and clarification.

## 2.3 Statement of limitations

In preparing this report, Think Impact has relied upon verbal and written information provided by BeOnsite, MTG partners and other stakeholders, and additional information available in the public domain. Stakeholder engagement captured the views of only a percentage of stakeholders and therefore does not necessarily reflect the views of all beneficiaries or other stakeholders. Survey results provide a subjective, self-reported employee assessment.

In calculating the social value, the scope of work did not include calculation of the investment and social value ratio traditionally included in a full SROI analysis. The analysis takes a conservative approach to estimating value in line with the SROI principle 'do not overclaim', and only outlines the material areas of value identified.

The pound/dollar values stated in this report do not represent cash but are financial proxies denoting the value created.

Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the material and the integrity of the analysis presented herein, Think Impact accepts no liability for any actions taken on the basis of the contents of this report.

If the information is determined to be false, inaccurate or incomplete then the conclusions outlined in this report may change. Under certain circumstances, further analysis of the data, findings, observations and conclusions expressed in this report may be necessary.

## 3. Outcomes achieved

This section outlines the main outcomes that were revealed through the stakeholder engagement process. Interview transcripts were analysed thematically. This process revealed outcomes for MTG beneficiaries, their families, host employees and the Government.

### 3.1 Mind the Gap theory of change

A theory of change (ToC) outlines how an organisation, project or program intends to create impact. It tells the story of how the change will occur.

TOCs can be represented in a variety of different ways (i.e. program logics, benefits pathways, investment logic maps, etc.). For this project, we chose a benefits pathway as a way of representing MTG's ToC. We have used this approach for other social value analyses of similar organisations and programs and have found it to be particularly useful in those contexts.

First, an initial understanding of potential outcomes and stakeholders was generated through the document review and discussions with BeOnsite. Both elements were then refined through the stakeholder engagement process – particularly through conversations with MTG partners and government stakeholders. Themes and insights from the engagement allowed for a draft ToC to be developed, which was validated and finalised with MTG stakeholders.

MTG's ToC is represented in Figure 1 is on the next page.

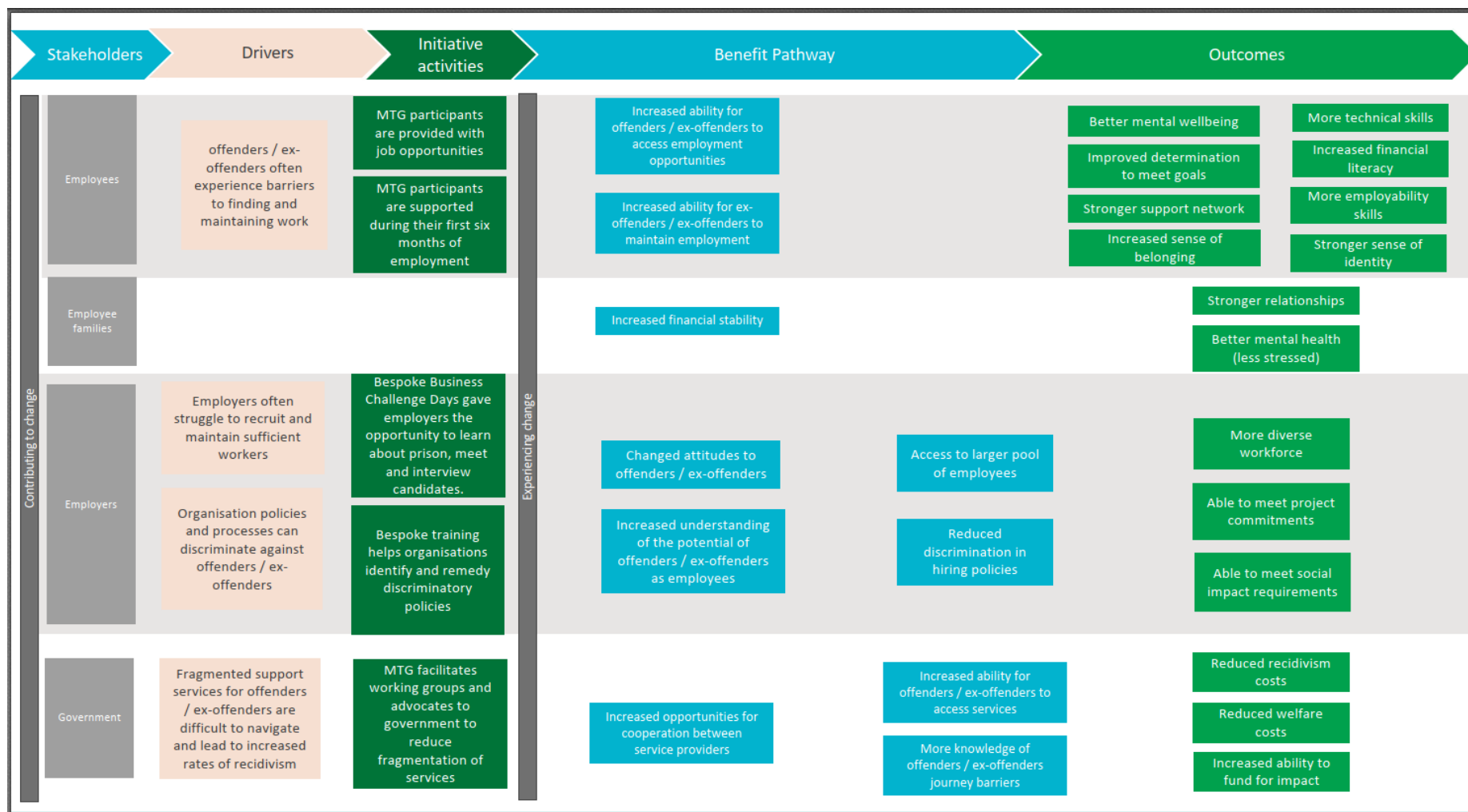


Figure 1 Mind the Gap theory of change



## 3.2 Outcomes for stakeholders

There were four groups of stakeholders who benefitted from the MTG program:

- **Employees** – people who were employed as a result of the MTG program. Employment outcomes were facilitated by BeOnsite, Bounce Back and Fairer Chance. Employees were divided into two subgroups, based on whether they experienced a sustained employment outcome, that is, an employment outcome equal to or greater than six months. Employees with a sustained outcome were determined to have experienced a greater level of change than those who didn't.
- **Families of Employees** – immediate family members of people employed by the MTG program. As with the employee subgroup, these stakeholders were split into subgroups depending on whether the MTG participant experienced a sustained or non-sustained outcome. Families with a MTG participant with a sustained outcome were determined to have experienced a greater level of change than those who didn't.
- **Employers** – Employers who provided an employment opportunity to a MTG participant during the program.
- **Government** – Specific departments that were involved in the program who benefitted directly or indirectly. Economic value also accrued to the Government in the form of cost savings.

## 3.3 Outcomes for Employees

People employed through the MTG program reported a range of changes they had experienced as a result of the program. These changes encompassed personal wellbeing, improved relationships and technical skills.

Participants in the focus group specifically identified the development of work skills, financial literacy training, and provision of support networks as key elements of the MTG program that helped them into employment.

### 3.3.1 Stronger sense of identity and purpose

Employees reported they felt a greater sense of identity as a result of participating in the program. Specifically, Employees felt they were being viewed as individuals rather than just ex-offenders:

*'I had a sense of not being judged, of being seen as an individual rather than being labelled for your past mistakes.'* – MTG employee

*'It made me feel like I'm not (just) an ex-offender. It gave me a different identity.'* – MTG employee

For some Employees, their MTG engagement was their first experience of employment and gave them a strong sense of purpose:

*'I woke up in the morning with something to do.'* – MTG employee

*'I had a sense of purpose. You know you are getting up to do a job rather than just lying around all day.'* – MTG employee

### 3.3.2 Better mental wellbeing

Employees reported an increase in their mental health as a result of participating in the program:

*'I feel like I'm a lot happier.'* – MTG employee

*'Definitely good for (my) mental health to have a routine instead of not doing much.'* – MTG employee

Employees also reported a greater sense of self-worth and confidence:

*'(Mind the Gap) gave me a sense of self-worth, that there was more I could be doing than what I am doing now.'* – MTG employee

*'I had really bad trust issues ... a lack of self-confidence ... a lack of identity. I didn't think there was anything for me. MTG taught me that if I work hard enough, I can lose that stigma.'* – MTG employee

### 3.3.3 Increased financial literacy and security

As a result of receiving a steady paycheck, Employees gained a new appreciation for and understanding of money:

*'I started to learn the value of money and respecting the money that I earned. I enjoyed it. I'd never earned money before.'* – MTG employee

Employees also felt more financially secure with a steady source of income:

*'I became a lot more independent financially.'* – MTG employee

*'Having some continuity of support from inside (prison) to outside means you have the financial security to not have to go back to offending.'* – MTG employee

### 3.3.4 More technical skills

Through their participation in the program, Employees gained new skills. These could be as a result of formal training or on-the-job learning. These skills were seen as being important for career progression:

*'The training and accreditation helped me get other jobs as well.'* – MTG employee

*'You get skills that open doors for you.'* – MTG employee

*'Now I have some qualifications. They've helped me a lot to move on with my life.'* – MTG employee

### 3.3.5 Increased sense of belonging

By participating in formal employment, MTG participants gained a sense of being part of society rather than an outsider. They also gained greater respect for themselves and other people:

*'[A job] is not just about the payslip, it's about so much more than that ... it makes somebody feel like they are worthy, they have worth and that they are a part of society.'* – Kathryn Nethersole, Senior project manager Tideway

*'I found a new respect for people. I was made a supervisor and it was nice to work with people and listen to their stories. It wasn't about the money it was about getting my self-respect back.'* – MTG employee

### 3.3.6 More employability skills

Employees singled out improvements in their ability to communicate as a key skill they developed through their involvement with the program:

*'... just the way I communicate with people and be more confident, I was able to before but it's a different environment where I have to be professional, adjust and how to talk proper and how to be confident enough to talk and then the technical side of doing computer work.'* – BeOnsite employee (proxy stakeholder)

*'Some of us don't know how to navigate ourselves through the workforce. We don't know how to articulate or get things across, so we need that guidance.'* – BeOnsite employee (proxy stakeholder)

### 3.3.7 Stronger support network

Having access to support to navigate the often confusing experience of re-integrating into society was highly valued by Employees:

*'The main thing was the support – it was having people to talk to.'* – BeOnsite employee

*'(It was) good to have someone to show you the way when you are a bit lost.'* – MTG employee

### 3.3.8 Improved determination to achieve goals

Employees reported gaining the experience and confidence to push through challenges to achieve their goals:

*'Maturity and confidence are the main things ... yeah, confidence is the main one. I feel I can do things.'* – BeOnsite employee

*'I could have reverted back to crime, but BeOnsite allowed me to push forward and strive a bit. I feel really proud.'* – BeOnsite employee

## 3.4 Outcomes for Families of Employees

Family members of Employees reported improvements in their own wellbeing and the that of the family as a whole.

### 3.4.1 Stronger relationships

As a result of bringing financial stability to the household, Employees felt they were acting as good role models for their children and other family members:

*'I want to be a good role model for my children.'* – MTG employee

*'Now my children only know daddy as a working man. (Mind the Gap) has given my kids that.'* – MTG employee

*'I live with my son, so it was better for him because I had stable work and it got us into routine.'* – MTG employee

*'(Working) brings family closer. (They) believe in you again.'* – MTG employee

### 3.4.2 Better mental wellbeing

The changes that Employees experience have a positive influence on their families' wellbeing as well:

*'My mum is a lot happier. I think she's just happy that I go out and enjoy myself (rather than) sitting at home wasting my life.'* – MTG employee

*'Now I have more experience, skills and certificates (my family) are happy.'* – MTG employee

*'My family are less worried and happy for me.'* – MTG employee

## 3.5 Outcomes for Employers

Employers revealed several benefits that they received as part of their involvement with MTG.

### 3.5.1 More diverse workforce

As a result of employing more ex-offenders, Employers felt that other Employees' attitudes towards them had shifted considerably:

*'One of the guys refused point-blank to work with our new colleague because of what his background was. So, what we had to do was try and say to him, "Listen, at least this person's been honest. They've told us about their background. We've accepted them based on what they've told us ..." Within a couple of months they were going to the pub with each other after work and became great friends.'* – Karen Clifford, Head of HR E&W HSS Hire

*'It's a real eye-opener for all of the sites to kind of understand and get to know individuals as an individual – not with a label, not with a number, not with any other baggage, but them as a person. It's really changed perception, I think, across the business.'* – Kathryn Nethersole, Senior project manager Tideway

### 3.5.2 Ability to meet project objectives

The combined impacts of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic led to significant labour shortages for construction companies. By providing access to a pool of motivated and enthusiastic ex-offenders, Employers were better able to meet their recruitment needs and project objectives:

*'MTG shifted the attitude from "(employing ex-offenders) might be a nice thing to do (to) help us meet our social value targets" to "this just makes business sense".'* – Maggie Walsh, CEO A Fairer Chance

*'At a time in employment when everybody's struggling to recruit, (MTG) helped open people's eyes to the fact that you don't need to be fishing in the same old pond, that there's other places to look for talent.'* – Sharon Simpson, project manager WAMITAB (WAMITAB is now integrated into CIWM)

*'We had an attraction and retention issue ... all of a sudden there is a pool of talent here that we can tap into.'* – Karen Clifford, Head of HR E&W HSS Hire

### 3.5.3 Ability to meet social impact requirements

By employing ex-offenders, businesses were better able to meet their statutory requirements as well as support people living with disadvantage:

*'It would be a bit more difficult to fulfil (our compliance requirements) without Mind the Gap.'* – Karen Clifford, Head of HR E&W HSS Hire

*'[We had an] aspiration to help someone and provide a learning opportunity but we didn't know how to go about it.'* – Karen Clifford, Head of HR E&W HSS Hire

## 3.6 Outcomes for Government

The benefits that accrue to the Government mainly stem from the reduced recidivism of ex-offenders engaged in the program as well as the avoided welfare costs that result from participants earning a salary. In addition, there is a direct link between the activities of the program and recent policy decisions which have positively impacted the services available to support ex-offenders transitioning from prison into society.

### 3.6.1 Reduced recidivism costs

Government stakeholders reported that MTG has provided strong evidence to support the value of employment in reducing recidivism:

*‘(Mind the Gap created) a cultural shift within DWP by providing insights into the ex-offender journey and how they can make it better.’ – Anne Pavey, National Employer Partnership Team, Department of Work and Pensions*

*‘Employment (for ex-offenders) used to be a “nice to have” but now employment is fundamental to the rehabilitation of people with convictions.’ – Dominic Headley, Project partner Dominic Headley & Associates*

### 3.6.2 Reduced welfare costs

By providing easier access to employment, MTG reduced the need for the Government to provide financial support for ex-offenders.

Government stakeholders reported that partnering with MTG provided vital insights into the needs of employers and the barriers they face in hiring ex-offenders. Access to these insights have helped them make changes that make it easier for ex-offenders to find work after release:

*‘Government was not effective at engaging with employers in this area. By working in partnership (with MTG) we were able to build momentum and connections with employers.’ – Dominic Headley, Project partner Dominic Headley & Associates*

*‘We learnt a lot from working with MTG about what was necessary to work effectively with employers.’ – Duncan O’Leary, Chief Executive, New Futures Network*

*‘We now set up people with bank accounts and ID cards before they leave prison. This was a major problem that employers faced in hiring that we only gained understanding of through MTG.’ – Dominic Headley, Project partner Dominic Headley & Associates*

*‘The round tables we ran with MTG informed the bids for funding to pay for Photo ID for people before they leave prison. This can be useful for ex-offenders in all sorts of jobs.’ – Duncan O’Leary, Chief Executive, New Futures Network*

### 3.6.3 Increased ability to fund effectively

MTG provided Government stakeholders with evidence and insights that allowed them to make informed decisions on where to deploy funding for maximum impact:

*‘(MTG) increased our ability to make informed decisions for reintegrating ex-offenders.’ – Shaun Hall, Senior Delivery Manager Construction and Pre-employment West Midlands Combined Authority*

*'We now have better representation and consideration for this community in decisions that affect them across, housing, employment and training.'* – Shaun Hall, Senior Delivery Manager Construction and Pre-employment West Midlands Combined Authority

*Government stakeholders were able to identify specific policy decisions that were directly attributable to the insights gained from MTG:*

*'The network that MTG coordinated provided the credibility and confidence to push for the development of the Second Chances Charter.'* – Shaun Hall, Senior Delivery Manager Construction and Pre-employment West Midlands Combined Authority

*'As a consequence of the experiences that we had with MTG we were able to make a business case to the Treasury for some extra investment to provide a dedicated member of staff in every prison to work with employers and prisoners to help them find work.'* – Duncan O'Leary, Chief Executive New Futures Network employee

## 4. Social value model (FY17–FY21)

### 4.1 Total amount of value created

Overall, social value modelling suggests the MTG program has created **£3,536,000** of social value from FY17–FY20.

There are four key stakeholders who receive social value – Government, Employees, Families of Employees and Employers. The social value by stakeholder group is represented in Table 2 below. Most value accrues to Government (38 per cent of the value), with Employees experiencing a further 35 per cent of the value. Employers (19 per cent) and Families of Employees (9 per cent) make up the remainder of the value.

**Table 2 Value by Stakeholder**

Stakeholder	Social value	% of social value
Government	£1,335,000	38%
Employees	£1,231,000	35%
Employers	£663,000	19%
Families of Employees	£306,000	9%
<b>Total FY17–FY21</b>	<b>£3,536,000</b>	

### 4.2 Relative value by stakeholder

#### 4.2.1 Government

The majority of the value that accrued to the Government came in the form of reduced welfare costs (50 percent) and reduced recidivism costs (45%). An increased ability to fund more effectively provided 6 per cent of the value as shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3 Value by outcome (Government)**

Outcome	Social value	% of social value
Reduced welfare costs	£663,000	50%
Reduced recidivism costs	£598,000	45%
Increased ability to fund effectively	£75,000	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,335,000</b>	

### 4.2.2 Employees

For Employees, stronger sense of identity was the most valuable outcome, which contributed to 40 per cent of the value. This outcome relates to the change in the way that Employees viewed themselves and the ways in which they presented themselves to others. The second most valuable outcome for Employees was better mental wellbeing with 15 per cent of the value. The values for Employees' outcomes are shown below in Table 4.

**Table 4 Value by outcome (Employees)**

Outcome	Social value	% of social value
Stronger sense of identity	£498,000	40%
Better mental wellbeing	£186,000	15%
Increased financial literacy	£142,000	12%
More technical skills	£122,000	10%
Increased sense of belonging	£105,000	9%
More employability skills	£85,000	7%
Stronger support network	£58,000	5%
Improved determination to achieve goals	£36,000	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,231,000</b>	

### 4.2.3 Employers

Businesses who provided ex-offenders with employment opportunities experienced most of their value through a more diverse workforce (82 per cent). Other outcomes included the ability to meet social impact requirements (13 per cent) and ability to meet project objectives (5 per cent) as shown in Table 5 below.

**Table 5 Value by outcome (Employers)**

Outcome	Social value	% of social value
More diverse workforce (which shifts the internal culture)	£546,000	82%
Ability to meet social impact requirements	£87,000	13%
Ability to meet project objectives	£30,000	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£663,000</b>	



#### 4.2.4 Families of Employees

The family members of Employees described improved relationships as their most valuable outcome (67 per cent), followed by mental wellbeing (33 per cent) as shown below in Table 6.

**Table 6 Value by outcome (Families of Employees)**

Outcome	Social value	% of social value
Stronger relationships	£204,000	67%
Better mental wellbeing	£102,000	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£306,000</b>	

## 5. Findings and recommendations

### 5.1 Mind the Gap is creating significant social value and has the potential to generate more

As outlined in the analysis above, the program was successful in demonstrating the value of this cohort as a source of workers while delivering significant social value to the Government and other stakeholders in the process. This social value was delivered despite the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic, which severely restricted access to prisons, led to a loss of momentum and postponement of planned pilot programs and activities.

#### Recommendation

- **CITB should consider providing additional funding for the next iteration of MTG** – given the success of the MTG approach, funding another iteration of the program would enable progress towards realising long-term outcomes, and generate additional insights to drive positive systemic change.

### 5.2 Long-term funding is essential for the full potential of programs like Mind the Gap to be realised

CITB funded the MTG program to investigate the potential of addressing workforce shortages with a new cohort of potential employees: ex-offenders. The issue is one where systemic change is required as it can be classed as a ‘wicked problem’<sup>3</sup>. The funding was for a period of three years. The short-term nature of the CITB funding meant that the approach was only just getting started in terms of longer-term systems change.

#### Recommendation

- **CITB (and other funders interested in systems change) should consider funding approaches for longer periods** – where there are longer-term systems change objectives and programs have delivered demonstrable results then CITB should consider ongoing funding to enable the realisation of these objectives. This might mean funding programs for five to 10 years to ensure that systemic issues are tackled.

### 5.3 Post-program evaluation and support is important in ensuring long-term outcomes are realised

The scope of MTG did not incorporate specific post-project follow-up with Employees to determine if they were still in employment and, if not, the reasons why. This represents a lost opportunity to understand the long-term benefits of the program and identify any potential improvements, or additional support required to ensure employment outcomes are sustained.

---

<sup>3</sup> A wicked problem is a social or cultural problem that’s difficult or impossible to solve because of its complex and interconnected nature. Wicked problems lack clarity in both their aims and solutions and are subject to real-world constraints which hinder risk-free attempts to find a solution.

Evidence from similar programs<sup>4</sup> has shown that the provision of opportunities for skills training, mentorship and other support is important to ensure long-term employment and career progression for beneficiaries.

### Recommendations

- **BeOnsite should build post-program support into their model** – establishing a process to check in with previous Employees will help to identify core aspects to ensure sustainable employment.
- **CITB (and other funders) should provide funding for longer term monitoring and evaluation of outcomes for future programs** – check-ins at key points post-program will help to identify improvements to the program and opportunities for long-term support and training.
- **CITB should provide funding to support beneficiaries post-program** – ensuring long-term support for beneficiaries is important in ensuring employment outcomes are sustained.

## 5.4 BeOnsite's unique business model was a key success factor in Mind the Gap's success

BeOnsite is in a privileged position as a not-for-profit embedded in a corporate – they have 'a foot in both worlds'.

With an entrepreneurial approach, BeOnsite has shown an ability to innovate and take advantage of opportunities as they arise. In addition, being a not-for-profit provides a boost to their reputation and credibility – potential partners see them as an 'honest broker' who aren't just out to improve their bottom line.

Their links to the corporate world provide another boost to their credibility – as part of Lendlease they understand the construction industry from the inside which provides confidence to corporate stakeholders.

As a result of this credibility, BeOnsite can build relationships with employers that the Government can't. BeOnsite is a key connector between Government, the private sector and the third sector.

### Recommendations

- **BeOnsite should look to enhance their position as a partnership broker to build collaborations to achieve impact** – BeOnsite's agility and ability bring together stakeholders from across the not for profit, corporate and government sectors make them an ideal organisation to deliver projects like this in the future.
- **If Lendlease is considering funding programs to employ ex-offenders in other regions, they should look closely at the BeOnsite model** – establishing similar charitable structures may be a more effective approach to drive social change.

---

<sup>4</sup> Urbis, 2021, Review of the Sticking Together project (STP), Final Report

## 5.5 ‘Social intrapreneurs’ are an essential element in the delivery programs like Mind the Gap

The skills and reputation of BeOnsite leader, Jessica Mellor-Clark, were critical elements in the success of the MTG program. As a ‘social intrapreneur’<sup>5</sup> she was able to provide continuity in knowledge and relationships from previous projects in this space to facilitate the convening and coordination of large working groups with high profile stakeholders.

Social intrapreneurs employ an entrepreneurial mindset that enables them to innovate in ways that traditional employees, who are often focused on defending and expanding existing ways of working, cannot. Social intrapreneurs need to be willing and able to take risks, build relationships across business sectors and be adept at fighting the status quo.

### Recommendations

- **If CITB is considering funding other partnership approaches to tackle social change they should ensure there are leaders with key characteristics of social intrapreneurship** – providing funding for operational costs like salaries can ensure that individuals with vital skills and relationships can be retained to drive multiple project objectives.

## 5.6 The formation of Regional Steering Groups was vital in delivering positive policy impact

A key element of the MTG program was the formation of regional networks across England. In the West Midlands, MTG worked with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to create a bespoke Steering Group consisting of organisations ranging from the Combined Authority, statutory and non-statutory criminal justice sector (prisons, probation, Youth Justice, Ministry of Justice), training providers and employer representatives. This group worked together to understand the challenges ex-offenders face and identify policy options to break down barriers in ex-offender employment.

### Recommendations

- **CITB (or other funders) should consider funding the coordination of additional Regional Steering Groups across the country** – The establishment and maintenance of additional Regional Steering Groups across the country is likely to enhance outcomes for ex-offenders in these areas as well as providing actionable insights to drive positive policy impact. Funding for a second phase of the MTG program would be the most effective way to ensure this outcome.

## 5.7 MTG faced challenges gaining traction in London compared to the West Midlands

The original aim of the MTG program was to engage with ex-offenders in London and in the West Midlands as they left custody or were available for work through Release on Temporary License (ROTL). However, as there were no London prisons releasing prisoners on ROTL for the duration of the program, that element of the program was not able to be delivered for that cohort.

In addition, while attempts were made to form steering groups with key stakeholders in both regions, MTG was much more successful in building networks in the West Midlands than in London, where

---

<sup>5</sup> Social intrapreneurship can be defined as social innovation undertaken by someone while employed by an organisation.

competing priorities between local authorities made building a coalition challenging in the short project timeframe.

### Recommendations

- **When applying the MTG model to other areas, BeOnsite should ensure a willingness to collaborate exists between key stakeholders** – to be able to deliver long-term outcomes and policy impact, key stakeholders need to be willing to work together in the best interests of ex-offenders.
- **To successfully implement MTG in London, BeOnsite should seek funding for preliminary work to break down silos between key stakeholders** – additional funding and longer timeframes will be necessary to build the required willingness to collaborate with London stakeholders.

## 5.8 Ongoing education campaigns are required to change employer attitudes to providing long-term employment to ex-offenders

The benefits of the MTG program are only fully realised when ex-offenders experience sustained job outcomes. However, there was the indication that many employers, while realising the value that ex-offenders can provide in plugging workforce gaps, are reluctant to retain people once they have met their statutory requirements. Ongoing education campaigns are required to ensure employers are committed to providing long-term opportunities for ex-offenders.

In addition, there was high uptake of the guide that was produced for employers but strong indication that more work needed to be done with employers to support a shift from contemplation to action.

### Recommendations

- **CITB should be communicating the findings of this report broadly** – the large number of organisations that downloaded the Nacro guides shows there is significant latent interest in this area. The CITB should use this report to continue to shine a light on the importance of the approach and the lessons learned from the initiative to drive better practice.
- **Tier one contractors like Lendlease could be leading the way by providing internal requirements for subcontractors to employ ex-offenders for longer than just the six months legislation requires** – this would ensure greater social value is achieved through sustained employment.

## 5.9 Prison Employment Leads provide opportunities for employers to build relationships with prisons

The positive outcomes delivered by the MTG program were a contributing factor in convincing government stakeholders of the value of building connections between employers and potential candidates pre-release to ensure long-term employment outcomes. Establishing contact while candidates are still in custody allows prisons and employers to make sure that ex-offenders have the documentation and support they need to successfully step into employment as soon as they are released. This is especially important for prisons where opportunities for Release on Temporary Licence are limited.

Prison Employment Leads (PELs) are key to facilitating and maintaining relationships between employers, prisons and potential candidates. Working in prisons, PELs are able to match potential candidates with employment opportunities and help them to access support and training they will need to be successful.

Subsequent to the MTG program, the Ministry of Justice has funded PELs in almost all English and Welsh prisons. While this cannot be directly attributed to the program it is clear that it has some influence on this decision.

### Recommendation

- **CITB should encourage Employers to engage with PELs** – building good relationships with individual prisons, facilitated by PELs, will help employers identify and secure potential candidates for their projects.



 @think\_impact #thinkimpact

[thinkimpact.com.au](http://thinkimpact.com.au)