



Employment Support Services (ESS)

Hosting an Employment Support Services

Centre at a TVET provider

Promising Practice

Implemented by: Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT) with support from the Ministry of Employment and Human Resource, Australian Aid and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Where: Kiribati

Status: ESS was started at KIT in 2011

Summary: Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT) provides employment services for its students through a dedicated Employment Support Services (ESS) Centre. The Centre assists graduates in their search for jobs by helping them to prepare job applications and practice for interviews. The Centre additionally provides preparatory courses for graduates to work overseas through the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) and the New Zealand Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) schemes.

Overview

The Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT) is a regionally accredited TVET provider delivering international standard qualifications and training certificates. KIT provides students with the skills and knowledge to gain jobs locally and prepares graduates for employment overseas through the work mobility schemes that Kiribati is a member of, as a Pacific Island. They include the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) and the New Zealand Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) schemes. Employers are encouraged to work with KIT to meet their employment needs. KIT has two campuses and two Island Learning Centres throughout Kiribati and its Outer Islands.

Description

KIT's Employment Support Services Centre (ESS) assists graduates in the job search process, as well as supporting them to prepare job applications and practice for interviews. ESS also supports I-Kiribati workers to prepare for overseas employment opportunities that are organized through the Ministry of Employment and Human Resource (MEHR). ESS offers preparatory courses for the Australia-led PALM ¹ and New Zealand-led RSE ² and regional cross Pacific Island employment schemes to people nominated by the Ministry, preparing them for interviews with an overseas employer.

Preparatory courses take four weeks (three, one-hour courses per day) focusing on three skill sets:

1. English listening skills
2. English reading skills related to workplace health, safety and signage.
3. English comprehension and writing skills including:
 - How to complete forms and applications
 - Understanding a job description
 - Interview skills: techniques and mock interviews
 - Preparing a CV

For graduates employed under the PALM and RSE schemes, a pre-departure briefing takes place over five days and includes courses and support for:

- Employability skills, including: teamwork; conflict resolution; finance management; IT skills
- Understanding an employment contract; employer and employee obligations

- Cross-cultural management
- First aid; sexual health; workplace health and safety
- Leadership and management
- Australian/New Zealand laws
- Arrival/departure paperwork

These courses are adjusted depending on the sector for which the candidate is planning to apply. As an example, in the English for hospitality training, a candidate will receive training in English Communication, Interview Skills, Driver Skills and the Responsible Serving of Alcohol.



Fig 1.2 photo showing women participating in ESS activities³ from KIT's Facebook page

Objectives

The ESS Centre is designed to assist graduates and those nominated by the Ministry of Employment of Human Resources to search for jobs, prepare job applications and practice for interviews. This preparation may be for the local or regional job market or to apply for overseas work in Australia and New Zealand. The goal is to reduce local unemployment and enable people to migrate for work thereby creating opportunities for them to learn new skills and experience which they can bring back to Kiribati. Whilst abroad, remittances support poverty reduction within Kiribati.

For people applying to overseas jobs, the role of the ESS Centre is to support the capacity of people to work, in English and to prepare them for the working and legal environment of Australia and New Zealand. The PALM and RSE schemes are both temporary and are targeted at recruiting people in jobs in specific sectors.

¹ PALM allows citizens of Pacific Island countries to take up seasonal work (up to 9 months) or long-term work (1-4 years) for unskilled, low-skilled and semi-skilled job opportunities in Australia. The PALM scheme is centred on job opportunities in the hospitality and tourism; healthcare; agriculture; meat-processing; forestry; and fishing sectors.

² RSE is New Zealand's seasonal labour market programme for the horticulture and viticulture sectors to recruit workers from Pacific Islands for up to 9 months per year.

³ From KIT's Facebook page

Outcomes and impact

The Ministry of Employment and Human Resources monitors the numbers of participants who are mobilized to work in Australia and New Zealand through KIT's ESS programmes. Between 2023 and 2025, close to 1,750 people (20% female) participated in preparatory and pre-departure training and went on to work in Australia. Between 2023-25, 400 people (25% female) participated in KIT's training and went on to work in New Zealand.

"Now, I got (...) a plan, when I finish my contract, I would like to go back and maybe share these skills that we learn here and share it with the people of Kiribati."

- Video testimony of a KIT graduate working in the Australian care sector⁴

Insights and challenges faced

The activities of the ESS Centre are promoted by the Kiribati government with funding from migration schemes supported by Australia and New Zealand aid funds. KIT's programmes are popular and aspirational for I-Kiribati. However, whilst many I-Kiribati speak English, it is not the native language, and many people need more time for English training to become sufficiently literate to work in an

English-speaking country such as Australia or New Zealand. Accounting for this, the preparatory courses offered through the ESS Centre are regularly reviewed to ensure that participants are learning what they need to know to operate in an Australian or New Zealand work context. More work is being done throughout the courses on offer at KIT to integrate employment preparedness training into the curriculum and experience for all students.

Kiribati is a remote island nation comprising thirty-two atolls. Whilst KIT has two campuses and two island campuses, many people will not have access to KIT's services without moving. Additional funding support has been secured from development partners to extend KIT's

employment services specifically to I-Kiribati residents living in the most climate vulnerable areas.

As a small island nation, the economy is dominated by public administration, tourism and agriculture. Encouraging employers to partner with KIT is challenging. Engaging employers from Australia and New Zealand can also be difficult – they may not consider workers from Kiribati as a priority pool of employees. KIT works closely with the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWER) as well as the New Zealand Ministry for



Fig 1.3. Excerpt from KIT 'Skills for Employment Pathways' video ⁵

⁴ See, <https://youtu.be/SCW9y7KW5Og>

⁵ See the video: <https://youtu.be/SCW9y7KW5Og>

Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) to encourage more outreach and engagement from international enterprises.

The success of KIT's ESS Centre relies on building strong partnerships with regional and international governments, employers, development partners and community leaders. Such wide-ranging partnerships can be difficult and are time-consuming to maintain.

Conclusions and next steps

Kiribati's unique context (i.e., geographic isolation, climate vulnerability and a weak private sector) means that the government relies on its population to be migration ready to support the economy, to gain new skills and to be mobile. Kiribati has found willing partners regionally through the Pacific Labour Mobility Support Programme (PLMSP) of nine Pacific Islands to which Australia and New Zealand are signatories. More is being done within KIT to increase the availability of its employment services and preparedness programmes to all students and to embed it into all curricula.

Learn more

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To learn more about Kiribati Institute of Technology, see:

<https://kit.edu.ki>

To learn more about the Employment Support Services, see:

<https://kit.edu.ki/employers-and-employment-support/>

For a video on KIT Skills for Employment, see: <https://youtu.be/SCW9y7KWsOg>

Discover other practices

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