

# Work Inspiration Case Study: Citywide



## 1. Pilot Name and Location

Citywide pilot, located in inner Sydney.

## 2. Lead Employers and their Purpose

Citywide Service Solutions are committed to the provision of sustainable open space and environmental and infrastructure services e.g. tree care, project hazard checks, mulching and tree/flower planting. The company places the highest priority on developing "the best people to work in a culture of teamwork, safety and respect". Currently, Citywide are experiencing skill shortages in Arboriculturist work (particularly arborists) and have to recruit qualified staff from overseas. They are keen to inform and inspire young people about their industry and the apprenticeships pathways available. Citywide is therefore keen to strengthen their working relationship with schools.

The contacts for the Citywide pilot are Kacie Tulliani (HSE Coordinator; [kactul@citywide.com.au](mailto:kactul@citywide.com.au)) and Luis Venegas (Trees Coordinator; [luiven@citywide.com.au](mailto:luiven@citywide.com.au)).

## 3. Students and Schools Involved

Six year 10 students, all male, completed the program. Five were from Marist College Pagewood and one from Matraville Sports High School. Five year 9 students from Green Square, a 'behaviour' school, decided not to participate, due to the difficulty generated by a 6:30 am start. All eleven students had completed a one day Workplace Safety White Card course prior to being selected by their Career Advisers.

## 4. Partnership Brokers and Evaluator

The Citywide pilot was supported by Sydney Business Education Partnerships (BEP), a provider of the Partnership Broker program.

This coordination and preparation of the evaluation report was carried out by Adrian Rhodes (Partnership Broker) for Sydney BEP. His email contact is [Adrian@sydneybep.com.au](mailto:Adrian@sydneybep.com.au)

The pilot video that can be accessed at [www.sydneybep.com.au/pb/casestudies](http://www.sydneybep.com.au/pb/casestudies)

## 5. Pilot Summary

Citywide developed a five day program of activities and interactions with staff for the students. The activities included completing site hazard checklists, mature tree planning, tree trimming, flowerbed planting, mulching and the adventurous tree climbing and elevated work platform (EWP) arborist work. The additional interactions included induction, 'all about me' discussions, a tour of the Citywide depot, equipment demonstration and then the final day reflections and a two-way feedback session.

The first day was located at the depot, and the next four days required a 6:30 am start – reflecting the character of the work day. Students worked in pairs and undertook a range of tasks, depending upon their interest. Rotation with various site teams was encouraged, in order for students to experience a diverse range of tasks. In addition, students were invited to ask questions of the staff who coordinated the program, as well as the field staff attending the various work sites, so they could have access to staff stories.

Well before the five day event, Citywide had organised a briefing session with the Partnership Broker and key Citywide staff to plan the event and its program, i.e. a smaller version of a Big Conversation.

## 6. Key Successes and Success Factors

- ▶ All six students agreed or strongly agreed that their participation in the pilot had helped them think about their career planning options and how careers happen. Four students felt that it had encouraged them to develop aspirations and set goals for the future. Citywide employees strongly agreed that the pilot had assisted their recruitment pipeline, to get closer to schools and to profile their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) image.
- ▶ Of particular note, was a strong belief that they can use Work Inspiration (WI) to help young people who are considered to be 'at risk' or have special needs. One student sent a thankyou card to the company the following week and asked them how he can apply for an Apprenticeship with them. With the help of his Career Adviser and Citywide Staff, his application was submitted and is currently being processed.
- ▶ The six students that participated in this pilot were a 50/50 mix of keen vocationally orientated students, and students at risk of disengagement at school. The teachers were delighted with not only the positive engagement of all six in the WI pilot, but also by their performance and learning through what students considered to be a well-structured program of work based learning. Students received positive feedback from the employer, teachers and parents. They were pleased about the levels of motivation of their young people – animated and ready to start at 6:30 am.
- ▶ As stated by one teacher, "positive feedback from students and their parents – particularly that they felt really motivated to get up and get there – disengaged boys, no problem with a 6:30 am start".
- ▶ These students succeeded in a different setting, beyond the classroom. Just as significantly, the evaluation of the program by the boys and the two employees of Citywide closest to the program revealed extremely positive results. All six felt that it had boosted their career planning and development. They were really pleased to work and learn with the employees of Citywide and get a real glimpse of what working hard was like!
- ▶ Citywide felt that the pilot had met their expectations, both for the students and the business in terms of recruitment pipeline, getting closer to schools, boosting morale of staff, CSR profile and assisting those young people who are more in need of such encouragement.
- ▶ The factors that most contributed to the success of the pilot are varied, reinforcing and yet accumulative. The rotation of tasks, the student pairs building working relationships with employees, and the parental support (two families) to transport and encourage all six to experience a normal working day at Citywide were all success factors.
- ▶ The students tasted strong and respectful teamwork that offers our public land and recreational space sensitive and sustainable solutions of service and care. Moving from placement to project, from individual to a team focus, this pilot innovated and created a new form of work experience program for Citywide.

## 7. Key Learnings

### For next time: local application

- ▶ Ensure that the school or Partnership Broker has organised for the students to be covered for Workplace Safety Insurance and all legal matters. This was extremely helpful.
- ▶ Take great care with the referral of young people – the mix of engaged vocationally orientated students and young people more 'at risk' was appropriate, but year 9 students from a behavioural school who dropped out before the start were too young and anxious about the 6:30 am start.
- ▶ Think more about the equal opportunity agenda, including gender. No females participated in the pilot, even though it was a successful pilot and great learning experience for the male students. This can be changed, but there may be a need to innovate in terms of the promotion of the program to female students and their teachers and parents.
- ▶ There may be advantages in offering the five day program over a two week period, thereby allowing for more in depth site visits, conversations and reflections and the opportunity to see their projects through to completion.

### The long term future of Work Inspiration: national

- ▶ This case study offers WI a story to tell to the vast number of private subcontractors and public departments that service our public space and recreational land. Citywide is already considering introducing WI to its relevant Industry Organisations (Arborist Industry Association) and to another sibling business.
- ▶ The schools and Citywide are both thinking about how WI, or a component of it, such as the hands-on tasks, could be used in a broader context – induction to, or as a part of a School Based Apprentice & Trainees relevant to this area of work and as an activity at a 'Give-it-a-go' event.

## 8. Special Feature

### Respect for Parks

"I respect parks now. Knowing the work has to be done" (a student).

- ▶ The feedback from Citywide made mention of the following:

"It was a huge thing for us to hear them say that they now have a better respect for the parks and the work and care that goes into them – this addresses one of our major problems – people destroying our parks."

- ▶ This feature raises a series of very exciting possibilities for the WI campaign in this work area. Citywide and other equivalent organisations could incorporate a youth ambassador role that emerges from their program. The students could be asked to offer feedback on how the company can encourage young people to be more respectful to public parks (a project in parallel with the Three Insights), and/or the students could go back to their schools as Citywide ambassadors. However it is essential to not overtly contrive such an outcome.
- ▶ The very special feature is that respect for the parks was not imposed, but organically grew out of the WI pilot purpose and its Three Insights!

## 9. Recommendations to National Partners

- ▶ Promote the key learnings from this case study to the private contractors and public agencies, including local government that service our recreational space and public parks. Ask Citywide to edit its existing video (thanks to Sydney BEP) into a short promotional tool that complements the case study, the key learnings and the hard statistical evaluation data which is very positive regarding all outcomes for student, teacher and employer expectations and hopes. It is a strong story to tell, and also offers helpful hints to the potential lead employer that relates to the engagement of young women in this area of work.
- ▶ Take a more careful look at the elements of this case study that contributed to disengaged young males becoming animated and motivated to work and learn. The team and hands-on approach designed by women at Citywide, the adventure of the 6:30 am start to outdoor work, and the high value placed by the employer on teamwork, respect and care for both people and space, plus the creative mix of motivational and less engaged students are all of interest. They may provide helpful insights to help WI lead employers and school teachers who wish to inspire disengaged year 10 students to work and learn.

## 10. Reflecting Upon the Evaluation

An intriguing case study that is rich in learning, particularly about the engagement of disengaged males.