LIFE CHANGING

Second Chance Coffee kiosk

Evaluation report

June 2019

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Introduction

In April 2017, VACRO launched a coffee kiosk outside the Sunshine Magistrate's Court, prompted by a body of research that has identified employment as an integral factor for offender reintegration. Our 'Second Chance Coffee' (SCC) program provides training for both prisoners on day release from the Judy Lazarus Transition Centre (JLTC) and offenders referred from Community Correctional Services (CCS) and aims to support participants' integration back into the community by improving employment capabilities. Operating as a Community Work site, participants commence work on a voluntary basis in order to satisfy their commitments to Corrections Victoria and to undertake barista and hospitality training. VACRO collaborated with the William Buckland Foundation and the Besen Family Foundation to philanthropically fund the program and employ a Project Coordinator to facilitate and maintain its operations. Any program profits are injected back into SCC with a future aim to support the work of the VACRO Children's Foundation.

SCC offers a range of training and work experiences for participants during their transition. Kiosk participants receive training in specific skills related to the hospitality industry and are able to develop a set of general employment related 'soft skills', such as communication and teamwork skills. The enterprise endeavours to create a work environment that promotes job readiness and workplace confidence for participants seeking further employment and looking to broaden their employment outcomes. These key aims follow recommendations from a significant body of research that has explored the positive effects of job training and employment in both reducing recidivism and strengthening rehabilitative pathways for offenders during their transition (Harer, 1994; Henson, 1990; Lipsey, 1995; Sampson & Laub, 1997; Visher et al., 2005).

Evaluation aim

The aim of the evaluation was to identify participant transition and employability outcomes through the assessment of the following:

- Development of 'soft skills' relating to general job readiness, e.g., communication, problem-solving, and teamwork skills.

- Development of hospitality-specific skills, namely coffee-making, food preparation, and processing orders on a cash register.

- Development of confidence to seek future employment and general self-confidence.

- Enjoyment of the program.

- Employment status and future employment/education plans.

In addition, we also aimed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the program in terms of how it functions as both a transition program and a business. This evaluation will provide vital insights to review the program, make recommendations for future social enterprises, and may inform future funding and program expansion. This evaluation was approved by the Corrections Victoria Research Committee.

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected from three key groups: SCC program participants (n = 4), CCS & JLTC case workers with clients who have been involved in the program (n = 7), and SCC staff (N = 4).

Questionnaire

Feedback was via a tailored questionnaire, which comprised of both multiple-choice and short answer questions based on a pre-existing Work Readiness Tool developed by the US Department of Labor to assess an individual's development during an employment program (2007). This list of general employment skills relevant to any type of employment was used to measure the overall efficacy of the program, and the skills measured were:

- Attendance

- Punctuality

- Workplace appearance

- Taking initiative

- Quality of work

- Communication skills

- Response to supervision

- Teamwork

- Problem-solving/critical-thinking

- Workplace culture policy and safety

The program participants' and case workers' questionnaires were largely comprised of multiple-choice questions with one short answer section, and the SCC staff questionnaire was entirely short answer. The four-point Likert-scale was used in the program participants' questionnaire to measure all ten above skills, with a response "always", "sometimes", "rarely" or "never". Broader multiple-choice questions were used in the case workers' (e.g., "I think it prepares participants with the soft skills…"), and a general short answer in the SCC staffs' questionnaire ("do you believe that SCC has helped develop or improve program participants' 'soft skills', such as punctuality, communication…").

All three questionnaires assessed program participants' self-confidence and confidence to seek future employment, the quality of their hospitality-specific skills, as well as their general enjoyment of the program. Specifically, the program participants' questionnaire also assessed their employment status and future employment/education plans. The case workers' and the SCC staffs' questionnaires assessed participant employability and the strengths and weaknesses of the program, with the case workers' questionnaire asking additional questions regarding the organisation and reputation of the program. Finally, the SCC staff were also asked their opinion on whether the program has any other unintended positive effects. These constructs were measured via open-ended and fixed-response questions.

Additional qualitative information was obtained from the case workers via a group discussion. As the SCC staff are responsible for delivering the key aims of the program and hence, closely monitor the participants' progress, a short answer questionnaire was deemed more likely to capture the richness of their data as opposed to a largely fixed-response questionnaire.

Data Collection

For the SCC staff and program participants, questionnaires were administered via a student researcher. By having a researcher administer the questionnaire, not only does this help reduce the level of inconvenience experienced by participants (potentially increasing their willingness to participate), it also enables participants to ask for clarification and overcome literacy issues that could potentially obfuscate their answers. It should be noted that as responses were obtained via an interview

(with no recording), some participant answers have been paraphrased. For the case workers, hard copies were handed out at a meeting where a VACRO staff member was present to provide clarification and guide a discussion.

Participation was voluntary and interviewees were provided with plain language statements. Data collection from the program participants was challenging, resulting in a small sample size. Some participants did not want to participate; some participants failed to show up for their scheduled shifts, and thus could not be interviewed; others had only recently started training and were not considered for participation; past participants couldn't be contacted due to a lack of contact details; and finally, the program participant population was already quite small to begin with, as the kiosk is only able to support a limited number of participants due to its size.

Results

Quantitative Statistics

SCC has operated for two-and-a-half years and achieved the following key statistics:

	Numbers	Outcomes	Percentage
Referrals	37		
Participants	33		89%
Completions (280 hours)	20		61%*
Completion outcomes			
	3	Employed by VACRO	
	7	Employed elsewhere	
	10	Total employed	50%
	1	Studying	
	1	Moved overseas	
	8	Unknown	
Non completions	5		15%
	1	Return to custody	
	4	Unknown	

* It should be noted that completion of hours is specifically the hours required for the completion of the VACRO training modules, NOT the completion of their required community work hours.

It indicates the popularity of the program that 89% of all referrals moved through into the program. At the time of the evaluation, 61% of these had completed their hours and another four participants were still active in the program which would take that up to 73%. As our recording of completions is related to training and not community work requirements, we don't have knowledge of why a participant may not finish their training. There were no security breaches and no formal complaints from participants, correctional staff or customers. With the employment rate for prisoners at 54% prior to incarceration and 22% post release (AIHW, 2018), it is outstanding that participants in SCC have achieved a 50% employment outcome.

Of the four program participants that participated in the evaluation, all four were referred to SCC by CCS, and of the referrals one was mandatory and the remaining optional. One participant stated that they chose to partake in SCC as it presented an opportunity for a new experience. Three participants had been involved in the program for over three months and one only a week. The results of the evaluation for all three groups will be presented under each area of interest.

Qualitative Findings

1. **Job readiness or 'soft skills'**

    a. Attendance and punctuality

According to the program participants, two had never missed a rostered shift, one had only missed one, and another had missed a few. In terms of tardiness, all four participants said they were never more than ten minutes late for a rostered shift. SCC staff noted that participant punctuality shows a trend, where punctuality increases over the course of their training. One staff member commented that participants gradually become more punctual when they realise that their work is valued and meaningful. All four staff members stated that they strive to foster an accepting and inclusive environment, which is exemplified in their responses to late participants. Rather than shaming or scolding them for being late, staff will instead say, "I'm glad you came!" or "it's okay that you're late", as they understand that for some participants (especially those struggling with anxiety), it's an effort to come. During the case worker discussion, one individual commented that if their client

doesn't show up to their shifts, it's usually because they have to overcome a number of barriers in order to show up, such as housing, health and transport issues.

b. Appearance

All four program participants reported that they always arrived at the kiosk looking clean and tidy.

SCC staff reported little to no issues with participant attire. On the occasion that a participant doesn't dress appropriately (e.g., wearing high heels to the kiosk), staff will send them home. The next time they arrive, staff note that they're dressed appropriately. One staff member commented that they understand how it can be difficult for participants to dress 'appropriately', as such clothing can often be expensive.

c. Initiative and problem solving

All four program participants reported that they always took initiative at the kiosk and were capable of identifying and solving problems. One participant said that they do the dishes of their own volition when there are no customers.

d. Communication

All four program participants reported that they were always able to communicate positively and clearly with both co-workers and customers.

According to staff, SCC has "definitely" helped develop and refine program participants' communication skills. As participants are working in a customer service role, they're able to become accustomed to talking to the public again (especially if they've been in prison), learn how to express themselves appropriately, and build rapport with regular customers. Staff report that initially some participants are reluctant to talk to customers as they don't yet have the confidence, but this reluctance disappears as they refine their skills and grow more confident. Furthermore, staff encourage participants to ask for help when they need it, fostering an open dialogue at the kiosk.

Of the seven case workers, five agreed that the "quality of communication from participants" is "very good", and two "good".

e. Supervision

All four program participants reported that they were always comfortable receiving direction and responding to criticism.

SCC staff members stated that program participants generally respond well to feedback. For instance, one participant was rushing their orders (leading to mistakes) and another was interacting with customers in a hostile manner (asking "what do you want?"). According to staff, both participants took criticism well and worked to overcome these issues. Participants may have responded positively to criticism and feedback because:

SCC staff report putting a lot of thought into how they'll deliver feedback, whereas staff at another workplace may not be so considerate.

The kiosk is set up as a learning environment. Staff remind participants that it's okay to make mistakes. They're not in this program because they already know how to do everything, but rather because they're there to learn.

Staff provide lots of positive reinforcement when the participant is doing something correctly/well.

f. Teamwork

All four program participants reported that they always feel like a positive team member and always actively help out their co-workers.

SCC staff commented that program participants help each other out and pick up after each other. Their ability to work comfortably with other people gradually improves with the guidance of staff over the course of their training.

g. Workplace Safety Knowledge

All four program participants reported that they were always aware of (and understood) the kiosk's workplace safety rules and procedures. Two participants commented that they appreciated the high standards of staff members, stating that the staff were very clear about workplace safety rules, and that there was no slacking off in terms of upholding them.

To conclude this section on 'soft skills', for nine out of the ten skills (excluding attendance), all four participants felt that they demonstrated these skills "always" or "many" times. Three of the four staff members agreed that SCC does indeed help develop or improve participants' soft skills, one staff member stating they didn't feel they could give a definitive yes or no answer as they hadn't worked at the kiosk long enough. Finally, six of the seven case workers agreed that SCC does prepare participants with employment-related soft skills, one case worker was undecided".
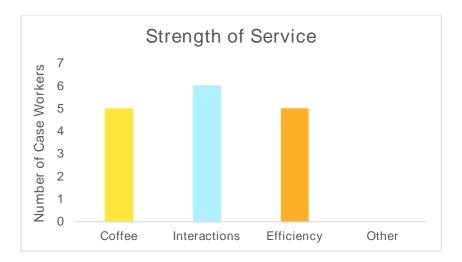
2. Industry specific skills

Three of the program participants had been trained to make coffee, prepare food, and handle transactions on the cash register, the other participant had only recently commenced training and had not yet been taught how to make coffee. All four participants reported that they always felt the quality of their work met the expected level. In terms of confidence in their coffee-making skills, two participants felt confident in their abilities, one had not been trained yet, and the other did not feel confident. This participant explained that they felt nervous making coffees because they want to get it right and they're afraid to waste ingredients.

SCC staff members stated that learning how to talk to customers and each other is one of the most important hospitality skills the participants will develop. One staff member noting that many program participants get to a stage in their training where they would be employable in a café.

The case workers reported frequenting the kiosk often (as they work in close proximity), one case worker revealed that sometimes they attend three times per day. When asked as to what their impressions of the kiosk were, the case workers had comments such as, "A+ service", "I don't reckon I've ever had a bad coffee", "they have great toasties and hot chocolate", and "the participants remember my order and name". All seven case workers agreed with the statement that SCC "prepares participants with the necessary skills for future employment…in the hospitality sector". Of the participants' perceived competence and capability, four case workers rated this as "very good" and three "good". Six case workers agreed that SCC has a "very good" reputation, and one "good". The case workers were also asked to select which aspects of the kiosks service were the strongest, see figure 1 below. In terms of improvements needed, three case workers selected "coffee", three explicitly said "nothing/nil", and one did not provide an answer.

Figure 1. Strengths of kiosk service according to case workers.

Strength of Service

3. Confidence

All four program participants agreed with the statements, "I am confident working in hospitality", "I am confident in a workplace environment", and "I am confident looking for further work". When asked what they enjoyed about SCC, one participant stated that they liked that it helped them build their self-confidence.

According to SCC staff, some participants start their training with very low levels of confidence. This is exhibited by a general apprehension towards trying new things and becoming overwhelmed when they make a mistake (or feel they've made a mistake). One staff member said that to people who don't work with this demographic such behaviours can often look like laziness or a lack of initiative. SCC staff reported that the program "really increases [participant] confidence", and that this is one of the most important aspects of the program. Staff note that over the course of the training, participants learn that they have something to offer the community, which increases their motivation. They start to take pride in their work, putting pressure on themselves to do something right, even early in their training. Staff stated that they stage participants' skill development, ensuring that they have the skills and capabilities to successfully complete the task with assistance, but also stretch them so that they're learning something new and being challenged. Staff also build participant confidence via continuous reinforcement of what they're doing well. Customers can play a role in boosting participant confidence when they make positive comments, such as "that's a great coffee".

All seven of the case workers agreed with the statement, "I think [SCC] improves participants' confidence in a workplace environment". During the discussion, one

case worker commented that one of her ex-clients was able to start talking to people more often and open up.

4. Enjoyment

All four program participants reported that they enjoyed the experience and opportunities of their training, and they agreed with the statement, "the program should be offered to other prisoners, parolees, and offenders…" Below are some of the responses from the short-answer question:

- I liked the staff/the staff are lovely.
- The customers are nice and open-minded.
- I would like to work at SCC when I finish my training.
- It was a good learning experience.
- The kiosk is a happy place and that I would "like to work there every Friday for the rest of my life".
- The kiosk is a cheery non-judgemental place.
- It's a more normal environment. I feel like a normal person at my job making coffee rather than being judged for picking up rubbish.

Three staff members said that they believe the participants enjoy the program. According to one staff member, a particular participant has been referred to a number of CCO placement programs but hasn't been able to stick with them, yet at SCC this participant has consistently attended and even completed one hundred hours so far. Another staff member also said that the fact participants are staying and finishing their 280 hours, says a lot about the engagement of the program. Staff believe that participants feel valued, and as it's a light-hearted social environment, the day passes quickly for them. However, one staff member reported that they have observed some people who did 'drag their feet' over the course of the program. They suggested that these people may have been ready to move on or weren't particularly interested in the hospitality industry.

All seven case workers agreed with the statements, "participants are interested in working at SCC when informed of the opportunity" and "participants enjoy working at SCC". During the discussion, the case workers had the following comments, "one [of my clients] said that they love it", "[I've] never had a complaint or negative feedback",

"[one client] really loved it…attended all the time [and] was always smiling when I bought coffee from him". Six of the seven case workers agreed that "[SCC] should be offered to other people involved in the criminal justice system", with the remaining case worker "undecided". Underneath this question, one case worker wrote, "it's a positive program that has a great purpose [and] good coffee", another, "the people I have sent here have improved many skills (including social skills)…recommend it highly".

5. Other benefits

When asked if they believe the participants reap any other benefits from the program, staff stated that SCC allows participants to correct some of their stereotypes and negative attitudes towards justice workers, as interacting with lawyers, case workers, magistrates, other offenders, and police officers helps humanise these groups. One staff member recalls a participant saying, "Oh that one's actually alright"; about a police officer they'd served. Staff also said the reverse is true, with police officers revealing they were nervous to come to the kiosk for fear that a participant would spit in their food. When the police officers see the participants working hard and making an effort, it helps change some of their negative attitudes towards offenders. Staff also commented that SCC helps participants increase their sense of community belonging and their self-image, as they can say that they volunteer for an organisation that donates money to charity.

During the discussion, the case workers also commented that a positive benefit of the program is that participants get to interact with justice workers and learn that case workers aren't all authoritarian individuals. However, one case worker noted that interacting with their client in a more casual environment resulted in said client being less compliant.

6. Employment and education

SCC has helped one program participant obtain employment and prompted two participants to consider completing some form of training/education. Below are the outcomes for the four evaluation participants:

Participant A: Currently completing their training at SCC and has been offered casual work at the kiosk for when they complete their 280 hours. This individual is considering enrolling in some type of hospitality-related course. They stated that they believed SCC had helped contribute to these employment/education outcomes.

Participant B: Completed their training and was employed before they began at SCC. They're looking into completing a course in the construction/manufacturing industry. They weren't sure if SCC had contributed to their decision to consider undertaking further education/training.

Participant C: Currently completing their training and are looking for work. They're considering enrolling in some type of hospitality-related course. They agreed that their experience at SCC has contributed to their decision to consider further training/education.

Participant D: Currently completing their training and was already employed prior to participating in SCC. They are not looking at completing any further education/training at the present point in time.

SCC staff stated that whilst the program does directly increase participants' employability in terms of hospitality-specific skills, they believe that the development of participants' soft skills plays a greater role in improving their employability in a range of work fields.

All case workers agreed with the statement, "to my knowledge, participants feel they are gaining valuable work skills". During the discussion, case workers shared the participants' post-SCC employment outcomes; one had started their own yoga studio in Belgrave, two had obtained work at the kiosk, and another had set up his own coffee cart and is in the process of starting a café business with his brother. It should be noted that the aforementioned clients are not the participants referred to in this evaluation.

7. Organisation and management

All four participants agreed that the "program was well designed and managed". One participant commented during the interview that the program "runs really well [and is] very thorough". Another stated that "other workplaces don't care about these things,

such as trying out new coffee art and making it better", and that they appreciated the staff's high quality standards.

Five case workers agreed that "the organisation and management of the facility" is "very good", and the other two agreed it was "good".

The SCC staff noted the following positive aspects of the model:

- Systems exist to communicate between rostered staff regarding training, goals and outcomes for participants.

- The local community acknowledges its appreciation of the program and the fact that the proceeds are donated to charity.

- The fact that it fosters a community environment, a place where participants feel they are accepted and belong.

Key learnings

Based on the small sample of program participants, SCC is delivering on its key objectives. This evaluation has highlighted that SCC:

Increased Employability	• Directly through teaching hospitality-specific skills, such as coffee-making, food preparation, and order-taking. • Indirectly by helping participants to develop and refine their general employability skills or 'soft skills'. • These transferable soft skills play a greater role in increasing participant employability than do hospitality-specific skills.
Increased Belonging	• Through provision of an inclusive program that helps participants feel a sense of community participation and belonging
Valued Partnership	• The collaboration of VACRO and CV staff and their consideration for the needs of the participants has largely contributed to the overall success of the program

Model improvement

As the SCC staff are not only responsible for the support and training function of the program, but also the business aspects, they and the CCS case managers provided feedback on potential model enhancement.

Program expansion

Three staff members suggested expanding the program which included:

- A larger space (a café) would enable SCC to provide training for additional hospitality-related skills such as table service, food preparation, cooking.

- A larger space and more locations would allow SCC to take on more participants, give them additional hours, increase profits, and reduce running costs by buying stock in bulk.

- Other locations could support opening on weekends to make the program accessible to those who want to apply for the program but are unable to attend on weekdays.

Post program linkages

- Develop employment connections in hospitality for participants when they finish their 280 hours. Assistance could include a list of local cafes in Sunshine or Melbourne CBD, a sample resume, and a guide on how to apply for work online.

- Build connections with hospitality-related course providers to facilitate the opportunity to complete short hospitality courses.

- Present participants with a certificate upon completion outlining their 280 hours, a brief training summary of learnings and a number that an employer can call to verify the certificate in lieu of a reference.

Procedures

- Improve the structure of the training to include a written training trajectory that provides guidance for staff on where to start with participants, and next steps following each mastered task.

- Establish a process for participants to make formal enquiries regarding employment at the kiosk.

- Simplify certain areas such as simpler pricing and selling less stock. This would make the learning environment easier to manage for participants.

Improved communication with management and VACRO

As a stand-alone program and isolated site, SCC staff identified that it would be beneficial to establish more communication lines between SCC staff and VACRO management. The current manager is in another role and not always available which slows down simple organisational processes such as ordering/café-related questions or requests.

Further to this, integrating SCC more deeply in the organisation would increase their sense of belonging and build their professional capacity to better understand the criminal justice system. Since the completion of the evaluation, VACRO pays staff to attend all staff meetings which ensures that they meet other VACRO staff and can participate in staff training.

Recommendations

In summary, the SCC evaluation establishes that this program; meets all of its original objectives in providing a live work based environment that supports participants to develop employment 'soft skills', hospitality specific skills and increase their individual levels of confidence to seek future employment. In response, VACRO recommends the following:

Expand the program

- Create one or more stand alone kiosks attached to courts or Justice Centres; and/or
- Add a larger location that functions as a cafe.

Increase work transtion

- Provide program participants with a certificate and training summary upon completion of their training.
- Provide applications for program participants to fill out if they would like to apply for work at the kiosk post-training.
- Provide additional assistance for program participants during the job-seeking stage.

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