

The Dandelion Program

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Autism@Work Forum





Dandelion Program Video

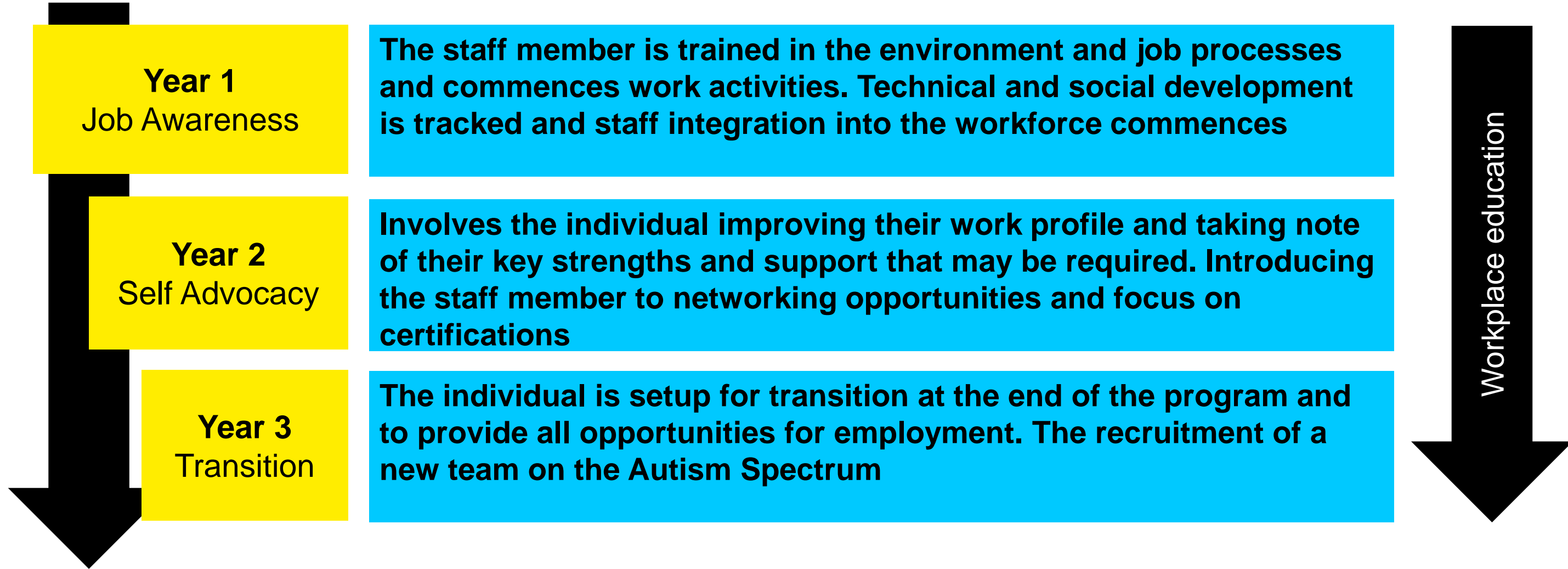
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhfMianm3zs>

Dandelion Program Overview

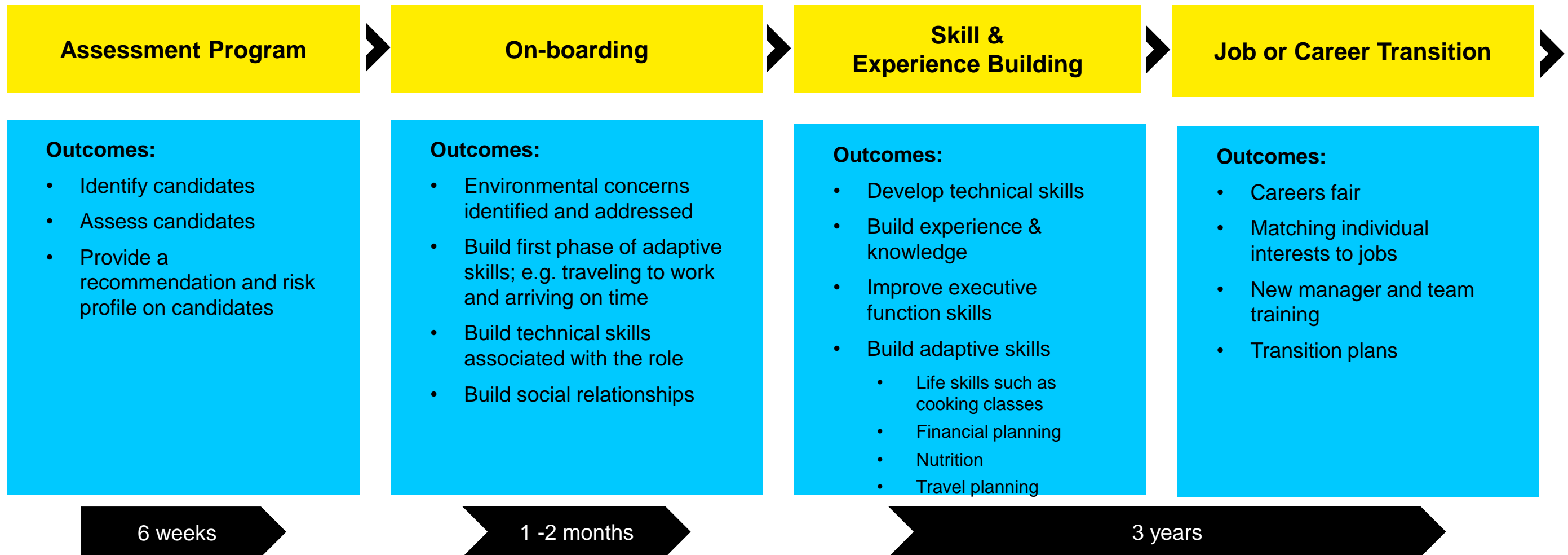
- Established 4 years ago by DXC, formally HPE, initially working with Department of Human Services
- Vision was to create a sustainable program that would increase the participation of people on the autism spectrum
- Consists of two streams – internships and employment
- The Dandelion employment program is a three year program focussed on building careers and the skills of people on the spectrum; similar to a graduate program
- The Dandelion Program now has 58 people (DXC employees) working in the areas of cybersecurity, data analytics and software testing for the Australian Federal Government Department of Defence, Department of Border Protection and Department of Human Services



Dandelion Program Structure



Dandelion Employment Program Overview



"This program is unique because it attacks the problem of employment for people with an ASD, not simply by pushing harder the peg into the square hole, but instead by addressing the supports needed on both ends..."

Professor Cheryl Dissanayake, Director, Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre

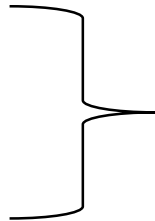
Benefits


- Unique skills sets that team members bring to the workforce such as attention to detail, out of box thinking and the ability to do repetitive tasks accurately
- Productivity is very high
- Identification of defects and issues that no one else has identified
- Increased team morale of the staff around the Dandelion team members
- Manager and team leader have become better managers and leaders
- A positive impact on the families of the people on the spectrum. A sense of relief that there is opportunity and a career based future for their family member

“Our main objective is to enhance capability”

**Australian Department of Defence, Rear Admiral Peter Quinn
Head Joint Capability Management and Integration**

Learnings (It is sustainment NOT recruitment)

- Ensure the organisation is ready for people with autism, thus ensure appropriate organisation change has been implemented
 - Autism awareness sessions
 - Autism manager training
 - Communication to the workplace
- Appropriate skill building for the individuals
 - Technical skills
 - Life skills (financial awareness, nutrition, travel)
 - Executive functioning skills
 - Empowerment

Critical
- Support
 - Technical and life mentoring
 - Social relationships and shared experience

Critical

Challenges

- Lack of evidence based research
- Lack of understanding and knowledge from service providers on the on-boarding and sustainment requirements; focusing on jobs not build careers
- Employer tools such as co-worker and management training, screening, behaviour management, transition plans
- Economic business case
- Fragmentation of the social service sector

Future

- Employment goal of 120 people on spectrum
- Global relationship with Uptimize an e-training program in neuro-diversity
- Further research in area:
 - Mental health & autism in workplace
 - Survey & review of Autism@Work programs globally
- MBA internship program to help develop future HR leaders – Cornell University & University of Queensland
- Launch of internship program in Queensland that will run in December this year
- Announce partnership with La Trobe University, University of Haifa and Ono Academic College on the autism work performance tool
- Partnership with Life Without Barriers to expand to scale the program

Resources

- Dandelion Program – <https://www.dxc.technology/dandelion>
- Open sourced Dandelion documents with Cornell University - <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/dandelionprogram/>
- Autism CRC - <http://www.autismcrc.com.au/>
- La Trobe University Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre – <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/otarc>
- Integrate Autism Advisors - <https://www.integrateadvisors.org/>
- Uptimized - <http://www.uptimize.com/>
- LinkedIn group - Autism@Work



Thank you.