



Communitээр

Leveraging volunteering to enrich
the international student experience

**Sydney International Business
Competition**

In collaboration with:





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In collaboration with the University of Sydney Business School. The Business Ethics Collaborative within the University of Sydney Business Chapter of Beta Gamma Sigma is proud to support student initiatives for the greater good of society.

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Letter from the CEO



Communitier's mission is to help those who want to do good do it together. We believe in volunteering as a meaningful way to engage citizens in their community.

I emigrated to Australia with my parents from Hong Kong when I was 8 years old. Getting to know their neighbours and volunteering for local organisations, they felt the best way to show their gratitude was to give back. During university, I founded UNSW's largest student society aiming to bridge cultural boundaries. This carried into the NFP sector, seeing first-hand the operational challenges they faced.

Australia has a declining volunteer participation rate. But, without this community support, the continuation of essential frontline services is threatened and social cohesion will continue to decrease. Communitier was founded in 2019 to address the needs of the NFP sector and activate untapped resources within corporate and education institutions.

We want to ensure that every individual has the access, ability and desire to contribute to a thriving community. This means shaping educational and employment systems to make volunteering resources available and to design volunteering experiences aligned to economic and personal development outcomes.

Through this case, we are seeking creative and stakeholder-centric solutions to sustainably grow our involvement in the international education sector. We believe there is tremendous potential in what international students can contribute to local NSW communities and in what students can gain out of this experience as global citizens.

Together, we can build a collaborative volunteering ecosystem to mobilise positive social change. And progress towards a future that is sustainable, equitable, prosperous and thriving.

We appreciate your contribution to this vision and we look forward to seeing the outcome.

Victor Lee,
CEO of Communitier



Who is Communitier?

Comuniteer: Overview

Comuniteer is a Sydney-based, social enterprise established in 2019 that connects, engages, and mobilises volunteers to contribute to their community and address complex social issues. They connect volunteers from corporate organisations and education institutions with Non-For-Profits (NFPs) in need. This allows Comuniteer to provide resources to NFPs while also leveraging volunteering to drive business outcomes for corporates, and student engagement for universities.



Mission

To leverage volunteering as a meaningful way to engage individuals, businesses and educators within local communities.



Clients

Primary client base includes medium-to-large corporations, universities, and government bodies across Australia with a focus in Sydney, NSW. Comuniteer connects volunteers from these organisations to NFP beneficiaries.



Services

For employers, Comuniteer offers community service events, team-building exercises, consulting services, and a volunteer opportunity board. For universities, they provide volunteering opportunities for domestic and international students in-program and as extracurriculars, funded by universities or government bodies with education stakeholders.



Team

The team consists of 7 full-time employees, including CEO Victor Lee, a marketing manager, events manager, program manager, a student engagement specialist, and 2 other employees.

Refer to Comuniteer's website [here](#) for more details.

Comuniteer: Offerings

For Educators

Comuniteer leverages volunteering to drive student engagement and achieve university and societal outcomes. They run two key initiatives for domestic and international students respectively, each supported by a separate government partnership.



Live in NSW: International Students

In partnership with Study NSW, Comuniteer has established a series of programs under Live in NSW to support international students through volunteering. These programs include:

- **Airport Welcome Desk:** International student volunteers assist other incoming international students at NSW International Airports.
- **Buddy Program:** Pairs newly arrived international students with more experienced international students who study or live nearby, helping them navigate local life.
- **Local Service:** Gives international students direct opportunities to volunteer, providing them a chance to learn about Australian culture and gain practical experience.

Comuniteer is eager to expand the **Live in NSW** program, exploring ways to achieve financial sustainability and provide greater value to more international students.

National Youth Initiative: For All Students

Comuniteer has partnered with the Department of Social Services to rebuild the national volunteer pool by offering students first-time volunteering experiences. The programs are accessible to domestic and international students at all experience levels, providing structured, federally endorsed, and subsidised opportunities. Programs include:

Local Legends
One-day group volunteering experience

Young Changemakers
Mobile app for volunteering training and tracking impact.

Community Leaders
Support for student volunteers to lead their own initiatives

Comuniteer: Offerings

For Employers

Comuniteer aims to leverage volunteering to drive employee engagement, shared value, and sustainability for corporate employers. The enterprise has 3 types of services: volunteering events, an opportunity board, and consulting services.



Volunteering Events

Comuniteer runs group events where employees use their skills, creativity and experience to solve problems for NFPs. Programs include Local Community Service, the Team Building Exercise, and Hackathons.



Opportunity Board

Corporate employers pay for access to a curated list of corporate volunteering opportunities, where employees match their availability and capabilities to opportunities posted by NFPs.



Consulting Strategy

Leverages Comuniteer's expertise to offer either long-term Volunteering Strategy, an evaluation of the current state of a company's volunteering program, or independent reporting that measures ESG outcomes.



For Non-For-Profits

While educators and employers are Comuniteer's paying clients, Comuniteer leverages these relationships to ensure that the volunteering benefits NFPs in need. They maintain a large database of NFPs to partner with for programs and provide these NFPs access to their significant volunteer base.



Live in NSW: A Deep Dive

Live in NSW: A Deep Dive

Overview

Live in NSW is designed to support newly arrived international students and provide value and opportunities to international student volunteers, helping them arrive, thrive and succeed. The program is an evolution and expansion of the International Student Volunteer Program in partnership between Study NSW and Communitier. While the initiative has not yet been formally launched, pilots of the programs have been carried out.

As it currently stands, the program offers international student volunteers welcome sessions, training, workshops, and volunteering to build social connections, confidence, and employability. Students track their volunteering hours, and after reaching 30+ hours, they are invited to a recognition event where their contributions are celebrated and showcased.

The LIVE in NSW initiative includes three offerings:



Newly arrived international students in NSW can join the LIVE in NSW initiative by signing up at the International Student Desk at Sydney and Newcastle Airports. Any current or recently graduated international student can participate as a volunteer by signing up via the website.

History

The International Student Volunteer Program began in 2015 as a simple airport welcome desk run solely by Study NSW, where employees and volunteers greeted new international students and provided advice.¹ By October 2022, Study NSW aimed to manage the desk more cost-effectively, increase the positive impact on students, and expand participation. As such, they brought Communitier on as a partner to leverage their large base of volunteers to help run the service.

Communitier quickly saw an opportunity to expand beyond just welcoming international students, inspiring the social enterprise to turn the International Student Volunteer Program into Live in NSW; a program for international students, run by international student volunteers, that is a coordinated approach to building community and encouraging volunteering. Within this new initiative, the local service program was developed, allowing international students to volunteer with local NFPs, alongside the buddy program that pairs experienced international students with newcomers.

Overall, since Communitier has come on board in late 2022, 1400+ students have expressed interest in the program, 430+ students have joined the volunteer network, registering 8200+ volunteering hours in total, and 34 students have undertaken additional training to become team leaders.

Live in NSW: A Deep Dive

Current Program Offerings



Airport Welcome Desks

International students serve as welcome and support staff at the Sydney and Newcastle Airports. Drawing on their lived experiences, they provide guidance to new arrivals while developing their own confidence and communication skills. For the volunteers, dedicated training sessions and workshops are run to foster leadership capabilities, encourage social connections and enhance employability skills.



Buddy Program

Newly arrived international students are paired with experienced international peers who study or live nearby to help them settle into local life. The program encourages students to discuss study, work, social groups, and hobbies, and to meet up in person, with guideline conversation topics of understanding Australian culture, using public transport, budgeting, and time-management.




Local Service Program

The program encourages international students to engage with the community, enhance their understanding of Australian culture, and gain valuable volunteering experience for their resumes. It supports cultural immersion by connecting students with local councils, organisations, and communities. Students will volunteer regularly in small groups of 3–5, improving their English communication skills and collaborating with diverse teams outside the university and international student bubble.

Live in NSW: A Deep Dive

Student Outcomes

	Airport Welcome Desks	Buddy Program	Local Service Program
 <p>Communitier's role</p>	<p>Provide training, shift scheduling, and team allocation support</p> <p>Organise recognition ceremonies for students reaching 30+ hours</p> <p>Promotional materials for recruitment</p> <p>Impact reports on participation/outcomes</p>	<p>Facilitation of welcome workshop</p> <p>Matching of students based on similarities</p> <p>Weekly program schedule and outline</p> <p>Promotional materials for recruitment</p> <p>Impact reports on participation/outcomes</p>	<p>Facilitation of welcome workshop</p> <p>Grouping of students</p> <p>Weekly program schedule and outline</p> <p>Promotional materials for recruitment</p> <p>Impact reports on participation/outcomes</p>
Student Volunteers			
Experience	<p>1-hour, online volunteer induction</p> <p>In-person training with a Volunteer Team Leader</p> <p>Welcoming and supporting arriving students at the airport</p> <p>Optional training to become Volunteer Team Leaders</p> <p>Commitment of 10 - 30 hours</p>	<p>Welcome workshop</p> <p>Pairing with a newly arrived international student</p> <p>Guided conversation and discussion topics</p> <p>Attending a local event with their buddy to explore the local community</p> <p>Commitment of 6-8 hours</p>	<p>Grouped with 3-5 international students to volunteer together</p> <p>Regular shifts to volunteer locally with their group</p> <p>Commitment of 12-30 hours</p>
Outcomes	<p>Improved teamwork, communication, and leadership</p> <p>Widened social and professional circle</p>	<p>Improved communication and leadership</p> <p>New community connections</p>	<p>Improved teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving</p> <p>Increased employability and work-readiness</p>
Student Participants			
Experience	<p>Greeted and providing information at airport</p> <p>Opportunity to sign up to Live in NSW</p>	<p>Support from someone with similar experiences</p> <p>Attending local events to explore the community</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>
Outcomes	<p>Smooth transition to living in NSW</p> <p>Immediate social connections with international peers</p>	<p>New community connections</p> <p>Supported during a difficult transitional period</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>

Live in NSW: A Deep Dive

Stakeholders and Resources

Communitier has allocated 100% of the Student Engagement Specialist's time to running Live in NSW as well as approximately 1 day per week from the Program Manager to facilitate external relationships with key stakeholders. With the current allocated funding, all initiatives must be manageable for these employees to organise and implement.

Study NSW



Study NSW (within the Premier's Department) is a state government body that enhances the experience of international students in New South Wales, helping them connect with local communities and organisations.²After piloting the Live in NSW program in 2023, Study NSW entered into a 3-year funding agreement with Communitier but has since stepped back from an active facilitation role.

Universities



Study NSW funds the program through an agreement with the NSW Vice-Chancellors committee. This committee represents Universities in NSW and has a pool of funding to support initiatives such as Live in NSW. Communitier then works with International Student Engagement Managers and Student Life managers from local universities, such as The University of Sydney (USYD), The University of NSW (UNSW), The University of Technology Sydney (UTS), and Macquarie University (MQ) - which account for ~75% of the current program cohort - to work on student communications and recruitment.

Volunteers



International student volunteers are central to the operations of Live in NSW, where more volunteers leads to more people resources to increase the program offerings. They almost always begin as program participants, and then transition into volunteers, and then team leaders later. The program not only leverages volunteers to assist new international students but also prioritises providing meaningful social and professional development for the volunteers themselves.


Live in NSW: A Deep Dive

Communteer's Vision for Live in NSW

Live in NSW program has evolved from a collection of separate initiatives into a somewhat unified program. Communteer envisions this program as a 3-stage pathway for international students to integrate into NSW and learn about Australian culture (arrive), connect with their local communities through volunteering (thrive), and ultimately become valued members and leaders in Australian society (succeed).



What other services do international students need in order to best arrive, thrive, and succeed? What is within Communteer's capabilities to deliver? Communteer wants to grow the number of international student volunteers in this program and increase their engagement. How should they do this and how high should they aim?



Funding and Sponsorship



Funding and Sponsorship

Communitieer must develop a funding model which is financially sustainable to grow Live in NSW. A funding model for Live in NSW should provide consistent and sustainable revenue whilst offering strong growth potential as Communitieer scales up the program. The model must offer a strong value proposition to potential partners providing them the opportunity to connect with international students and promote their product or service offering.

Current Funding Model

Communitieer's International Student Volunteer Program is funded under a 3-year contract with the NSW Government. Whilst Communitieer expects the contract to be extended beyond 2025 dependent on evaluation, Communitieer have exhausted the funding on current initiatives. The current contract with Study NSW provides \$180,000 of revenue per annum to support the program over 3 years. Funding is predominately allocated to the Student Engagement Specialist who manages inductions, rostering and other program administration. As well, the Program Manager oversees stakeholder and community relationships. Given Communitieer has exhausted this budget on current initiatives, Communitieer must look to capturing new funding streams for the successful rollout of Live in NSW which may include corporate partners, universities and the government.

Corporate Partners

Corporate partners are companies looking to offer products and services to international students when they arrive. The key value proposition for corporate partners is the opportunity to promote products, mentor students and undertake community engagement to drive positive social impact. Sponsoring Live in NSW provides access to a large database of international students, allowing them to connect after arrival and build long-term relationships.

An example of what sponsorship from a corporate partner could look like is with international students arriving in Sydney who need to buy a mobile SIM from an Australian telecommunications provider (a "telco"). Companies like Telstra, Vodafone, or Optus could reach out to students following their arrival and details are placed into the database. The telco could then invite newly arrived students into one of their stores, provide details on how to sign up and access an eSIM or offer promotional deals. The partnership would allow the telco to be invited to a recognition ceremony as a sponsor.



Funding and Sponsorship

Tertiary Institutions

Study NSW currently funds the International Student Welcome Desk through an agreement with the NSW Vice-Chancellors committee. This arrangement sees Communitier working closely with university representatives, however, there is opportunity to expand the scope of the partnership with tertiary educators. Communitier sees two avenues of broadening the relationships with the sector:

1

Increased number of partners: at present, the relationship does not include all universities and does not include a full scope of tertiary educators such as private operators and vocational education and training providers.

2

Broadened scope of partnership: the current agreement merely sees students transferred to university. Communitier believe current partnerships can be expanded to more seamlessly transition students to tertiary institutions. This includes developing relationships with organisations, faculties and societies within tertiary institutions.

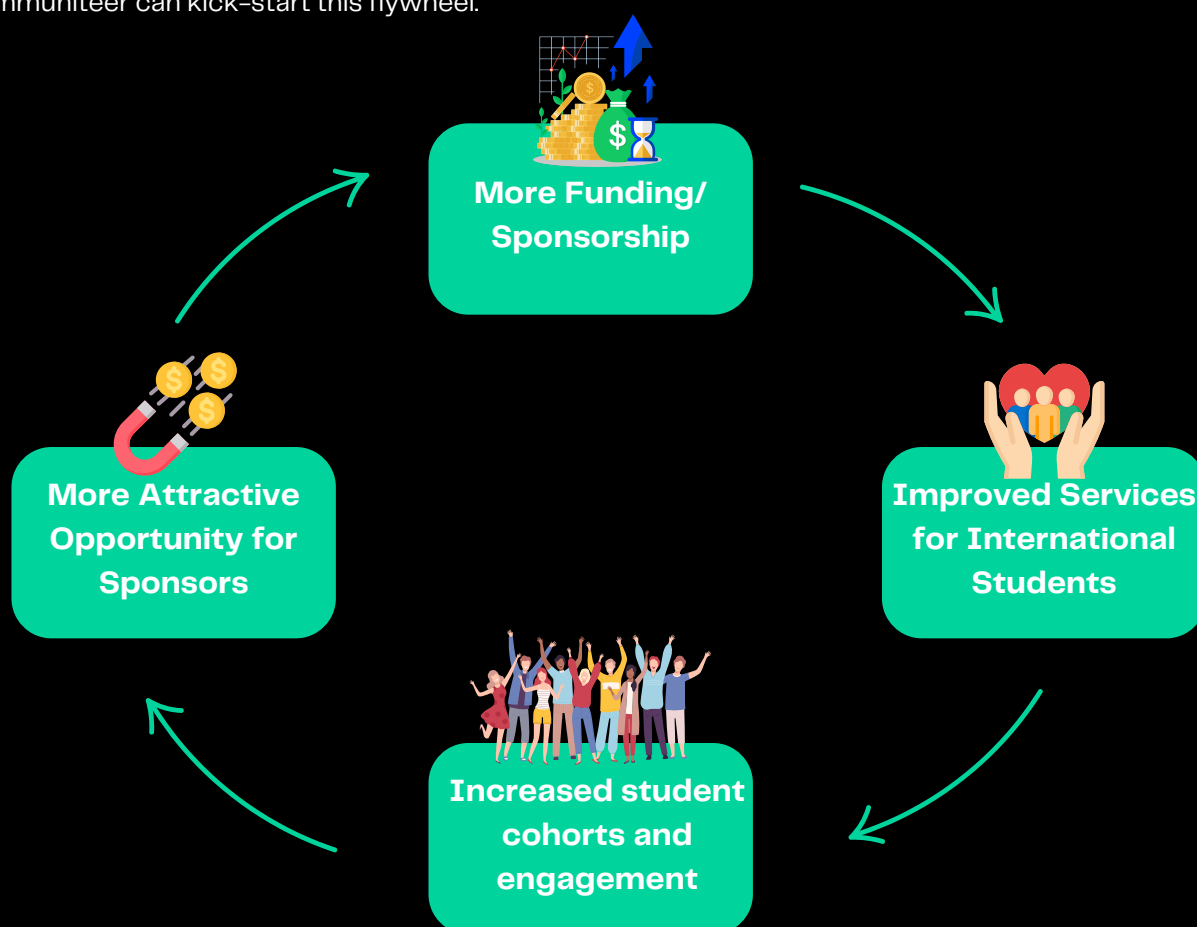
Local Government

Communitier is continuously seeking government subsidies and funding schemes but feel they have exhausted available options, like funding from Study NSW. However, there might still be opportunities with local governments and councils that support social impact projects. Communitier have previously engaged the City of Sydney and Waverly Councils for New Years Eve initiatives to engage international students and believe these local councils and others have a desire to further engage this community group. Communitier is unsure how to approach these groups or what a potential partnership would involve.

Funding and Sponsorship

The Sponsorship Challenge

There is a key challenge that stands in the way of increased funding: sponsors want large student cohorts and increased engagement before providing funding, but Communitier needs extra funding to grow the cohorts and increase engagement. Communitier envision a potential flywheel sponsorship model where more funding leads to improved services, leading to a more attractive opportunity for sponsors which in turn leads to more funding. However, the challenge remains for how Communitier can kick-start this flywheel.



So how can Communitier tweak the program to incentivise sponsorship initially? This will likely involve growing international student numbers and increasing Communitier's touchpoints with program participants using the current, limited funding and resources at their disposal. However, it's important to remember the main goal of Live in NSW is to enhance the experience for international students, not just to meet sponsor demands. Sponsorship is simply a way to support this goal. Therefore, while trying to offer more value to sponsors, it's essential not to compromise the quality of the experience for participants and volunteers.

A photograph of a person's feet wearing various styles of shoes, including a brown leather shoe, a black Converse All Star, and a blue sneaker, as they walk on a stone path. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. In the top left corner, there are several decorative circles in white, teal, and blue, some with double outlines. A thin vertical orange line is positioned to the left of the main text.

International Students in NSW

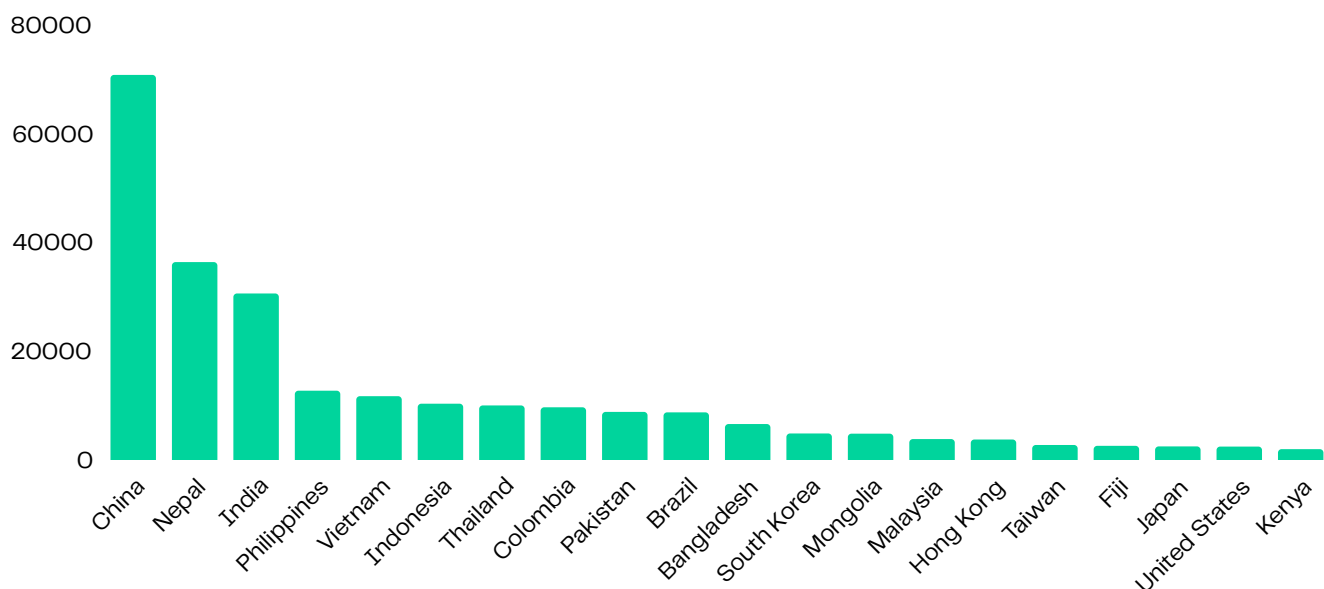
International Students in NSW

Overview

Australia has the second-highest share of international students globally, with education being one of Australia's largest exports.³ As of May 2024, there are 810,960 international student enrolment in Australia, a 17% rise since 2019. 55% of international students came from China (21%), India (16%), Nepal (8%), Philippines (5%) and Vietnam (5%).⁴ Notably, international students include all levels of schooling (university, high school and primary school), English language courses and vocational education.

With more than 190 countries represented, NSW is home to the nation's largest community of international students. 27.1% of on-campus students in the university sector were international students in 2019, and the total number of all international students was 275K+ in the January-May 2024 period. This made up a 38% share of the overall NSW student numbers.⁵ The segmentation can be seen below:

Segmentation of NSW International Students ⁶



Communiter's International Students: Breakdown

Within Communiter's ecosystem, there is heavy skew of international students towards Chinese and Indian students. There is very little European and American engagement, and, in particular, a lack of engagement with Nepalese students although they make up such a big part of international students. These students vary across age groups, however, there exists a significant amount of mature age students. Finally, there are slightly more female students than there are male.

3. [Australian Government - Education Export Income](#)

4. [Australian Government - International Student Monthly Summary](#)

5. [Study Move - International Students in Australia](#)

6. [Australian Government - International Students by Country](#)

International Students in NSW

Challenges Faced by International Students

Housing

International students in NSW often face significant housing challenges, particularly in cities like Sydney where high demand leads to limited availability and inflated rental prices. Many students struggle to find accommodation near their universities and must compromise on location, price, or quality. This often results in long commutes from less accessible suburbs or settling for shared spaces with fewer amenities, adding to the stress of adjusting to a new environment.

Language

International students come alone, usually from non-English speaking countries to Australia, where English is the primary language. As a result, many may struggle with effective communication, whether that be in the classroom or outside, directly impacting their social lives and educational experience. In particular, Australian English and its vernacular can be challenging for international students who likely had exposure to American English.

Culture Shock

Furthermore, even though Australia is multicultural, many international students experience culture shock. Whether that be the way that people talk or act, the social norms or the clothing, these are areas of daily life that students may be unaccustomed to in their home country. The key way to resolve cultural shock is simply by interacting with local students and being willing to learn.

Employability

Moreover, international students may struggle with finding a job in Australia, given the job market is already incredibly challenging. Many companies already have policies that require a student to be a permanent resident or citizen of Australia, or hold biases against international students. As such, they need to go above and beyond to stand out.

Social Stigma

In Australia, there exists a stigma around international students, with some people believing that they reduce job opportunities for local residents and that they stick to their own communities rather than embracing Australian culture. This racially-based stigma can have far reaching impacts, from how they are treated by domestic peers in the classroom to discrimination in the job market.

Forward Outlook

The government recently announced a plan to cap the number of international students able to study in Australia from 2025. This number is set at 270,000, with a limit of 145,000 in publicly funded universities and 95,000 for vocational institutions in 2025. While these limits are in an order of magnitude much higher than Communitier's current number of participants, could this have an impact on Communitier's future operations or funding?

Considerations for Communitier

Communitier wants to understand which challenges are the biggest barriers to international students integrating into the state. Based on this, what additional services could Communitier offer to help overcome these challenges? And, what is realistically possible for Communitier to deliver?

The Challenge

Communitier's vision for Live in NSW is a program that takes new incoming international students and, through leveraging volunteering, helps them arrive, thrive, and succeed, to ultimately become valued members and leaders in the Australian community.

There are several considerations that must be addressed to take the program as it currently stands towards this vision.

1

For the program to grow, it needs to increase its funding. Should it look to target corporate sponsors, universities, or local government (or somewhere else)? How does Communitier need to tweak the program to “kick-start the sponsorship flywheel” without compromising the experience for international students?

2

Communitier would like to understand the most important challenges that international students face as they integrate into NSW. Based on this, how should Communitier adapt Live in NSW to better engage and support international student volunteers?

3

Ultimately, Communitier wants to increase the number of Live in NSW international student volunteers and increase their engagement in the program. How should they do this and what sort of impacts can they expect?

Your solution should provide a clear roadmap over a 2-3 year timeframe for how Communitier can take the program from where it is today to where they want it to be.



Appendix

Appendix

Appendix 1 – List of Potential Sponsor Options

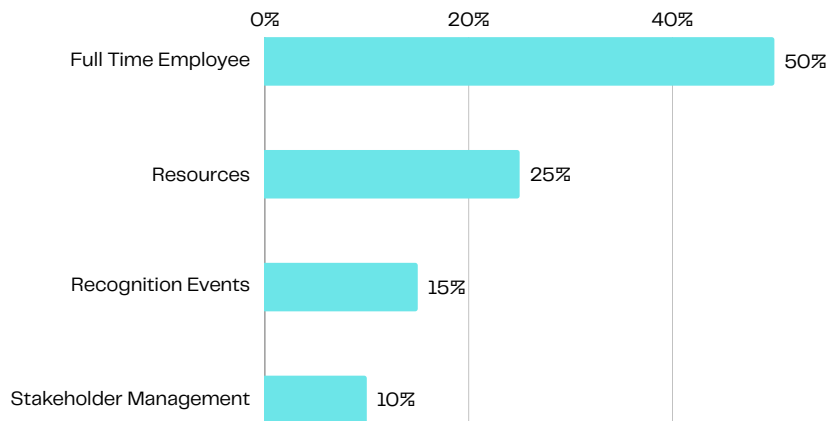
Note, this list is indicative only of the potential types of companies and institutions that might be interested in sponsoring Live in NSW. It is not a complete list of services, companies or institutions within the Australian market that international students arriving in Australia will utilise.

Type	Example Companies	Type	Example Companies
Student Accomodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iglu Scape Unilodge 	Healthcare & Health Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medibank Private Bupa Allianz Care Australia AHM NIB Health Funds
Telcos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telstra Vodafone Optus 	Rideshare and Carshare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uber Ola GoGet Car Next Door
Retail Banks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commonwealth Bank ANZ NAB Westpac Macquarie 	Employment Search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEEK Indeed Jora Hays Recruitment
Student Promotions and Discounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Edge UNIDAYS 	Private Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Notre Dame Torrens University
Partner Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Sydney University of New South Wales University of Technology Sydney University of Wollongong Western Sydney University Macquarie University Australian Catholic University 	University Student Society Governance Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Sydney Union (USU) Activate UTS Arc UNSW
		Sydney Local Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inner West North Sydney City of Sydney Woollahra Willoughby

Appendix

Appendix 2 – Indicative Budget

Under the current contract with Study NSW, Communitier have allocated the \$180,000 payments to the following key areas:



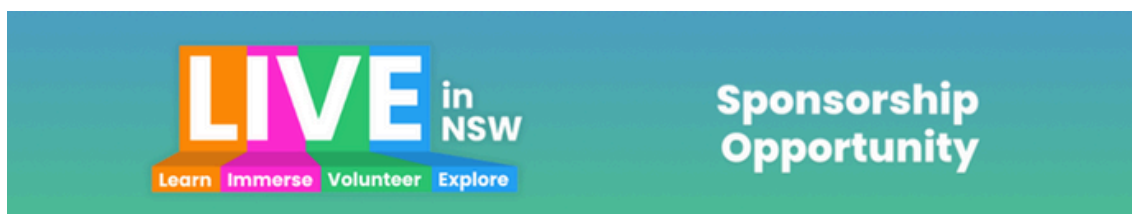
- 50% allocated to a full time employee who is responsible for scheduling, database management and other admin of sustaining and managing the International Student Welcome Desk
- 10% allocated to a senior member of the Communitier team to manage stakeholder relationships. This includes working with Sydney and Newcastle Airport, reporting to Study NSW and engaging with university representatives
- 25% allocated to travel between Sydney and Newcastle, the general maintenance of the desk, and resourcing the desk with promotional material
- 15% allocated to biannual volunteer recognition events at NSW State Parliament house

The current funding does not cover the local service program or buddy program, with the pilots of these programs funded by ad-hoc additional funding (~\$20K) from Study NSW. Communitier has not received any indication this will continue or become a permanent stream of funding

Appendix

Appendix 3 – Current Sponsorship Opportunity

Communiter's current 1-page sponsorship proposal, outlining their approach to potential sponsors. Teams are not required to follow or use this approach.



We're looking for values-aligned businesses to sponsor our latest Initiative and support a growing number of international students.

Let's explore how we can work together as a business community to enhance the economic, social and study outcomes of the international education sector.



Our Programs

We facilitate activities, events and support services for international students that empower them to connect with local communities, enrich their lived experience in NSW, and develop interpersonal and professional skills at the same time.

- Volunteering at the **International Student Welcome Desks** at Sydney & Newcastle Airports;
- **Community events** in local areas they reside and study in; and
- **Student buddy program** that pairs newly arrived and settled international students.

Why Sponsor?

There are **over 250,000 international students** residing in NSW at any given time. Help them access this Initiative and increase the reach of your brand.

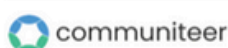
Our modular sponsorship offerings provide a unique blend of economic and social return on investment that supports business development and ESG strategies at the same time.

- **Brand awareness** throughout the entire student journey;
- **First-mover advantage** for newly arrived students;
- **Product placement** at unique touchpoints;
- **Direct connection with students** seeking your product/services; and
- **Recognition of your social contribution** in supporting this initiative.

Get in touch to learn more



Victor Lee
CEO & Co-Founder



Proudly supported by



Appendix

Appendix 4 – Reference List

1. Study NSW Volunteering: <https://www.study.nsw.gov.au/current-students/volunteering/>
2. Study NSW: <https://www.study.nsw.gov.au/>
3. Australian Government – Education Export Income: <https://www.education.gov.au/international-education-data-and-research/education-export-income-financial-year>
4. Australian Government – International Student Monthly Summary:
<https://www.education.gov.au/international-education-data-and-research/international-student-monthly-summary-and-data-tables>
5. Study Move – International Students in Australia:
<https://www.studymove.com/index.php/news/31-what-is-the-percentage-of-international-students-in-australia>
6. Australian Government – International Students by Country:
<https://www.education.gov.au/international-education-data-and-research/international-student-numbers-country-state-and-territory>