

# The DXC Dandelion Program

## Overview



## Program Overview



With the constant demand for new talent in the IT industry, today more than ever, organisations are recognising the value and advantages that integrating neurodiverse individuals into the workforce brings.

The DXC Dandelion Program, part of DXC Technology's Social Impact Practice, is a holistic employment experience that prepares people with autism, ADHD, and dyslexia for future careers within IT.

The primary aim of the program is to create the right environment, with the right support structure, to ensure that neurodiverse individuals are able to build valuable information technology, life, and executive functioning skills, and to learn and grow as employees and as individuals.

### Making a difference to the lives of neurodiverse people

For individuals and organisations involved with the DXC Dandelion Program, the relationship is a mutually beneficial one. For neurodiverse individuals, the DXC Dandelion Program is an opportunity to develop technical and social skills to obtain long-term, meaningful employment in technology. For organisations, it's an opportunity to harness the unique skill sets that often come with neurodiversity, such as the extraordinary capacity for visual thinking, the comfort of routine and systematically-oriented activities, as well as accuracy, honesty, close attention to detail and the ability to identify errors – all valuable attributes for business.

People with autism have long been overlooked in the workplace and over 80% of people with autism are either unemployed or under-employed, even though nearly half of those diagnosed with autism have above-average intelligence. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there were 205,200 Australians with autism in 2018, and information from Autism New Zealand notes that autism affects about 80,000 New Zealanders. This community has much to offer, but its members are often marginalised by modern recruitment and business practices.

First established in 2014, the DXC Dandelion Program now employs over 100 neurodiverse individuals in private and public sector organisations across Australia in roles such as software testing, cyber security, data analytics, automation and monitoring. These forward-thinking organisations recognise the importance of integrating people with autism, ADHD and dyslexia into the workforce, and the competitive advantage found with a neurodiverse workforce.

“I’m a great believer that with knowledge comes understanding, and therefore acceptance will hopefully follow. If you educate people about autism, and you expose them to people with autism who are very, very skilled, and lovely people to be with, eventually you break down those stereotypes and negative stigma that has been attached to the label of autism.”

### **DXC neurodiversity support consultant**

## **How does the Program work?**

### **Unique selection and recruitment process**

Neurodiverse individuals can be highly skilled and qualified; however, talent is often missed due to employers’ overreliance on the interview process. Interviews can create barriers as they rely heavily on social communication and interaction which neurodiverse candidates often struggle with.

The DXC Dandelion Program recruitment process follows a non-discriminative assessment format which enables neurodiverse candidates to accurately portray their skills and competencies and to be judged on their ability to do the job, not on other criteria such as body language or communication skills.

DXC’s assessment format allows applicants to showcase their strengths in a supportive workshop environment in which they participate in a robotics project utilising modern software development techniques. This methodology streamlines the identification of individuals who have the aptitude and motivation required for roles with DXC and its customers.

### **Innovative team support structure**

A defining feature of the DXC Dandelion Program, and a unique point of difference, is our on-site support model and the provision of trained technical staff and experienced neurodiversity support consultants working alongside neurodiverse employees at the customer’s premises.

Neurodiverse employees need ongoing support to succeed in the workplace. DXC’s neurodiversity support consultants provide on-site support, mentoring and advocacy to help individuals navigate the workplace and assist with any challenges or interpersonal issues.

Many neurodiverse people can be tremendously talented in some areas but have extreme difficulty in others, such as personal finance and maintaining a budget. As part of developing executive functioning or ‘life’ skills, DXC provides team members with financial training which can help individuals achieve financial independence for what might be the first time in their lives.

To further support neurodiverse team members develop ‘life’ skills, another unique feature of the DXC Dandelion Program is the provision of nutrition and well-being training focused on mental and physical health, self-care, and mindfulness.

Neurodiversity support consultants also conduct neurodiversity awareness training for managers and employees working alongside neurodiverse team members, to increase their understanding and to provide them with strategies to support their neurodiverse colleagues within the workplace.

One-on-one training is also available for leaders/managers if required to work through specific challenges or scenarios such as conflict resolution, behaviour management, work performance feedback, communication and managing workplace relationships.

“I feel confident that I am capable in this working environment. The anxieties of ‘am I good enough?’ or ‘am I able to sustain a job?’ are no longer a major worry.”

**DXC Dandelion Program team member**

## Benefits of the Program

The DXC Dandelion Program has provided tremendous benefits not only to participating DXC Dandelion Program team members and their families, but also to the participating employer organisations and the wider Australian community, according to research conducted and published by the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre (OTARC) at La Trobe University.

### Neurodiverse individuals bring unique skillsets to the workplace

- Over 50% of neurodiverse individuals have above average to very high intelligence
- An ability to focus – high accuracy and attention to detail
- ‘Out of the box’ thinking with the ability to look at things differently and creatively resolve problems
- Pattern recognition and the ability to think in visual images
- The ability to perform repetitive tasks accurately
- A high level of technical ability
- The ability to concentrate on routine and procedures
- Excellent memory for facts and figures
- The ability to absorb and retain large amounts of information, especially about topics of special interest
- Honesty and loyalty
- Self-motivated and independent learners
- Strong work ethic, with a commitment to quality and accuracy of work



### Other benefits realised by organisations

The passion of neurodiverse individuals can lead to increased overall workplace productivity, with:

- Increased morale of employees around the team members
- Managers and leaders become better leaders and managers
- Stability in the workforce with highly skilled individuals

## Sustainable and holistic approach

Through ongoing evidence-based research and practical experience, DXC’s proven framework provides a sustainable framework to support neurodiverse people and their employers – providing the right environment with the right support structure to ensure a beneficial outcome for individuals, their employers, and their communities.

The program incorporates in-depth recruitment, training and ongoing learning and development, and continued collaboration with local and global partners to ensure the latest research, tools and technologies are in place to ensure an optimal outcome for all parties.

Key program components	Ongoing innovation	Program partnerships
Unique selection and recruitment process	Independent research studies in collaboration with local and global research partners	Associations & industry bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Autism CRC</li> <li>– Untapped</li> </ul>
Pre-assessment workshops Work experience programs Organisational change programs	Key partnerships with industry organisations	Tools & technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Life Sherpa</li> <li>– Uptimize</li> </ul>
Tailored employment programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 12-month models</li> <li>– 3-year models</li> </ul> Various support structures	Neurodiversity Hubs established across Australia, designed to build a continuous talent pool	Research, education & careers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– La Trobe University / OTARC</li> <li>– Cornell University</li> <li>– SAP</li> <li>– NAB</li> </ul>

Learn more at [dxc.com/au/dxcdandelion](https://dxc.com/au/dxcdandelion)