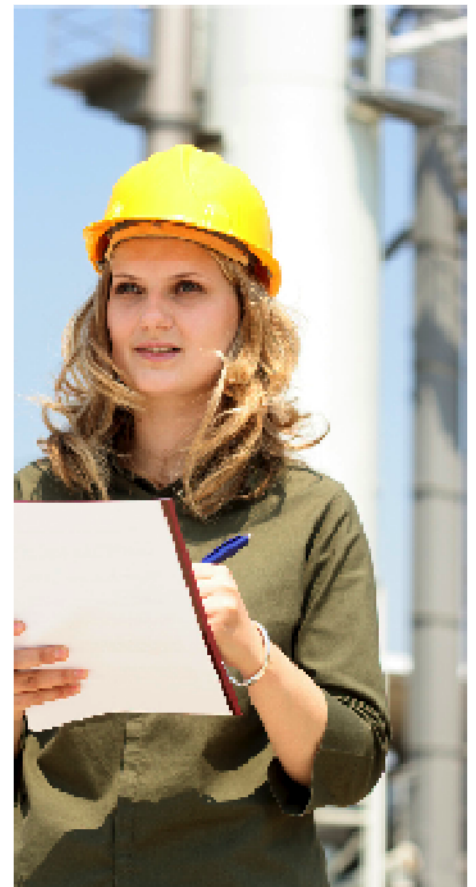




Education &
Communities

Smart and Skilled: making NSW number one

Submission cover sheet and template
September to November 2011



SMART AND SKILLED: SUBMISSION COVER SHEET

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Is this submission made on behalf of an organisation?

Yes

If Yes, please fill out the following:

Name of organisation:	Navitas
Organisation's main function eg training provider, job service provider, community organisation, government agency	Private education and training provider
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Submission should be treated as IN CONFIDENCE?

~~Yes~~

No

Do you consent to your submission being made available on the Department's website?

Yes

~~No~~

SMART AND SKILLED: SUBMISSION TEMPLATE

1. INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1.1 How can we engage more of the working age population in vocational education and training?

- Approximately 53% of working age Australians have difficulty with numeracy skills, 46% of Australian adults have difficulty with reading skills and 13% are classified in the lowest literacy category. It is essential to incorporate English Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) skills development within vocational skills training, e.g. English preparation for Aged Care. This will provide the learner with the language and literacy skills and confidence to complete qualifications and move along the pathway to employment
- Provide more flexible delivery options. Combining face to face, distance and online training options to enable greater access to courses. The target market is mobile and may have existing work and family commitments. Delivery approaches that are flexible and well structured around place and time can better serve the needs of this group
- Greater partnerships with employers to encourage skill pathways. There is an opportunity to build a 3-way relationship between the employer, the training organisation and the student to better accommodate both the student's needs but also how these relate to employment
- Provide opportunities for the working-age population to cross-skill and retrain in skill areas and technologies that are highly relevant to the industries of today and of the future
- Provide financial incentive (reduction on course fee or tax incentive) to learners and/or employers to participate in work-based Vocational Education and Training (VET)
- Provide examples and evidence that training leads to better jobs or career paths
- Increasingly with people living longer and wishing to maintain their quality of life, there will be value in supporting mature workers to retrain for work that will be more suitable to the needs of the economy and their capabilities. This may mean for example a shift from heavier or shift work to more sedentary style or set time/part time activities e.g. a builder to a loss assessor, a long distance truck driver to community care. The current approaches by focus on only up-grading skills may limit options and some changes to allow for re-skilling in these areas would be in the State's interests
- Mature workers to be provided with opportunities to retrain in areas of skills need notwithstanding that this may mean accessing a first course/similar grade of skills

1.2 How can we equip people with the skills they need to participate more fully in work?

- Develop more explicit training resources for the LLN components of Training Packages
- Ensure that critical digital literacy is part of every training package
- Educate current employees on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC) processes for obtaining and/or updating qualifications
- Educate workers on the benefits of upgrading qualifications (financial incentives, promotional opportunities and personal satisfaction)
- Include Employability Skills/Foundation Skills as an integral part in all workforce planning and training

1.3 How can we improve training and job outcomes for disadvantaged learners?

- Current experience within the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), Settlement Language Pathways and Employment/Training funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) at Navitas English indicates that the work experience component of all courses provides a large incentive for learners to participate and gain practical skills
- Ensure that work placements are embedded in every VET package. This could be facilitated via financial incentives to providers and employers who participate
- Financial support for targeted low SES learners on a full or part-funding basis
- Develop additional resources for mentoring learners during work placements and after obtaining employment, and to support employers to address areas of disadvantage
- Provide English LLN skills development for the specific industry area alongside VET training.
E.g.:
Monday – Wednesday: English language for Aged Care
Thursday – Friday: Cert III Aged Care VET training
- Provide less intensive learning arrangements and part time work placements for those learners who may experience difficulties in initial settlement e.g. Refugees with trauma issues
- Provide a Pathway Advisor for learners to assist, encourage and pathway candidates into employment, and to support employers

A Navitas English Refugee case study

Mansour came to Australia last year from Iran as a refugee. After completing a Customer Service course at Macquarie Community College in Blacktown this year, he used his newly gained customer service and communication skills to secure employment in a business administration position. Mansour secured full time employment within a short period of finishing the Employment Pathways program course.

1.4 How can we maximise vocational education and training opportunities for people in rural and remote communities?

- Include local Business Chambers in the planning and development of required skills development programs and opportunities
- Encourage cross provider collaboration to maximise available funding and expertise
- Utilise innovative e-Learning and blended delivery methodologies
- Make available existing rural and remote learning infrastructure such as public schools and TAFEs to Registered Training Organisations (RTO's) to support delivery with a face-to-face component
- Offer incentives to providers who can or do deliver in those areas

1.5 How can we encourage more people to complete higher-level qualifications?

- Include more academic LLN components in high-level VET courses
- Promote to employers the benefits of up-skilling their workforce e.g. reduction of staff turnover, succession planning and potential for innovation and development through the use of cost/benefit scenarios
- Improve promotion to potential end users including highlighting the benefits of higher-level qualifications
- Provide a guaranteed employment opportunity for a percentage of learners depending on overall achievement and employability

- Provide experienced employment specialists with extensive industry contacts to organise tailored work place visits, industry presentations and work placements
- Ensure that current industry processes (equipment, machinery, etc) are incorporated in all VET training, specifically in the practical training components of the course
- Encourage employers to provide study leave entitlement to employees undertaking further training through the use of cost/benefit scenarios
- Provide clear articulation pathways within the VET sector and between VET to higher education courses.

1.6 How can we build better pathways to higher-level qualifications across our education sectors?

- Articulate the skills recognition process to qualified migrants and refugees prior to arrival to ensure the recognition process is transparent and avoids potential confusion and disillusionment
- Ensure that bridging courses are consistently offered to overseas trained migrants and refugees
- Ensure funding for programs includes local advisors to assist with qualification recognition processes
- Encourage cross provider collaboration to maximise available funding and expertise, and promote training providers that achieve successful outcomes
- Provide financial incentives for VET providers to improve completion rates. Higher completion rates at the VET level are essential to support improved pathways to higher-level qualifications across our education sectors
- Encourage NSW TAFE and other VET providers to develop pathways with higher education providers. This may be by way of financial incentive between the VET and higher education provider

1.7 To what extent could a training entitlement increase training participation and meet the future skill needs of individuals, businesses, regions and our economy?

- Training entitlements should be linked to local skill shortages. The role of regional and industry advisory groups and links to providers will need to be strengthened to identify and meet these needs
- Training entitlements should lead to closer working relationship between the Industry Skills Council, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) Local Employment Coordinators, the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), Business Chambers and providers to ensure that relevant and effective training is provided
- There should be screening of applicants to ensure the applicants are placed into appropriate and required courses to achieve outcomes for individuals, business, regions and the economy

1.8 What should an entitlement to training cover?

- An entitlement should cover a starter, first course or an upgrade of skills or qualification
- Entitlement to training should be linked to accountability in terms of learner achievement
- A requirement for learner, provider and employer feedback on the quality and value of the course

- Employment outcomes should be monitored at post-course, 6-monthly and annual intervals. This would provide valuable data to the provider and DET on the effectiveness of the training and sustainability of employment outcomes for learners

1.9 How do we match individual demand with industry needs under an entitlement model?

- The NSW Government is implementing an election commitment to deliver 10-year industry strategies for key sectors of the economy. This will be through Industry Action Plans which will identify drivers for, and barriers to, growth, innovation and productivity. The proposed Industry Taskforces, in partnership with the NSW Government, will be well positioned to advise on specific industry needs, and Government should promote information to individuals and providers regarding priority skills required. Strengthening local business, provider and government linkages will allow all parties to more actively target courses to industry needs and advise individuals of the opportunities available to them that enhance their employability
- Ensure whole of Government approach to key industry sectors to ensure consistency of policy deployment

1.10 Under an entitlement, how should the level of investment in training made by government, individuals and employers be determined?

- This will depend on the level of qualification and the capacity to pay of individuals and employers

1.11 Should student loans be available for government-funded vocational qualifications? If so, what should they look like?

- Yes. In particular, HECS type student loans should be made available to those newly arrived migrants not currently entitled to Centrelink benefits to enable them to participate in vocational training. Currently under the AMEP Settlement Language Pathways and Employment/Training Program some courses include Skill Sets of competencies from Training Packages. Having a HECS type student loan will encourage newly arrived migrants to continue their training to finish the qualification. Under the current system many migrants on specific visas do not enter vocational training due to the absence of initial government financial support. Providers should ensure that migrant learners enrolling into VET training have accessed Federal funding prior to utilising state funding to ensure there is no duplication

2. TARGET VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL NEEDS

2.1 What is the best way to ensure that the Government's funds for vocational education and training flow to areas that maximise economic benefits for our businesses and the State?

- Develop entrepreneurial opportunities to utilise the skilled unemployed in regions. E.g. Provide small business training in conjunction with the DEEWR funded New Enterprise Incentive Scheme to encourage local small business development
- The DEEWR Local Employment Coordinators work closely with providers to anticipate trends in skills shortage areas
- Refer to point 1.9 above

- Encourage local councils to provide quality work experience opportunities in order that learners gain valuable local knowledge and skills
- Base funding on the needs of industry and not only on individual interest
- Provide data on the number of learners who have achieved a qualification within an industry area in a specific region
- Reduce duplication of state and Commonwealth funding e.g. where learners are eligible for Commonwealth funded programs such as the AMEP and the Language Literacy and Numeracy Program funded by DEEWR they should be directed to these programs before accessing state funded programs
- Invest in funded training that future-proofs the working population with skills to support industries and technologies that will allow NSW to remain competitive in years to come.

2.2 How can we maximise vocational education and training opportunities to meet the needs of our regions?

- Ensure that adequate research identifies and predicts regional and local skills shortages (Refer 1.9 above)
- Vocational education (and all education planning) should be part of a regional strategy focussed on population, infrastructure and the support of regional economies
- Provide appropriate funding or incentives to attract approved providers to the region(s)
- Include local Business Chambers in the planning and development of required skills development programs and opportunities
- Encourage cross provider collaboration to maximise available funding and expertise
- Utilise innovative e-Learning and blended delivery methodologies

Case Study

Research within the Navitas English Employment Pathways Unit showed that there was a need for skilled laboratory technicians in the Liverpool region. A migrant from India with a Bachelor of Science completed her English Preparation for qualified Professionals course which included 3 weeks of work experience in a local laboratory. She was then offered a casual position as a Research and Development Technician. The employer stated that he had no hesitation in offering her a position. Although not locally trained or experienced she demonstrated that she now had the cultural knowledge, skills and attitude to do the job well

2.3 How can our vocational education and training system adapt and be responsive to meet the changing needs of business and industry and changes in the economy?

- VET providers need to respond to any shifts that may happen within the industry, regionally and locally, and tailor their courses accordingly
- Accrediting bodies need to move more swiftly to accredit updated components of training packages that relate to changes in industry

3. ROLE AND FUNCTION OF TAFE NSW AS THE PUBLIC PROVIDER

3.1 What should the role of TAFE NSW be in the context of a broader entitlement to training in our vocational education and training system?

- Opportunities to do specific units or competencies from a training package without the requirement to complete all the units in a certificate level at one time

- Offer shorter more intensive courses and provide more frequent enrolment points
- Linking funding to delivery and outcomes including completions
- Work collaboratively with public and private providers to maximise available funding and expertise
- Greater connections between TAFE NSW and Higher Education institutions to facilitate articulation

3.2 How should TAFE NSW be better utilised to meet the future skill needs of our workforce?

- Given the cost of training and limited funding available TAFE NSW should be empowered to work collaboratively with other providers to maximise available funding and expertise
- While there is a definite need for pre-employment courses¹ that focus on Australian work cultures, employability and life skills, these courses may better be done in collaboration with other providers, which would allow TAFE to focus on Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications in key areas of strength and specialization while individuals are 'pathwayed' through into TAFE by specialist providers, delivering courses for learners. The Navitas academic pathway model which has been phenomenally successful in providing skills for those not well equipped for tertiary education demonstrates the benefit of specialist providers working in partnership with mainstream providers
- NSW TAFE should leverage its significant infrastructure physical campus network to work in partnership with other RTO's – collaboration rather than competition

4. GREATER CHOICE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND EMPLOYERS

4.1 What type of information is needed by individuals and employers to inform their choice of vocational education and training?

- Providers to promote and market courses directly to employers and unemployed individuals in regions with specific skills shortages. Courses should also be marketed via Government functions such as Centrelink
- More information about course content in plain English and simpler enrolment for low level certificate courses
- Individuals and employers should be provided with information on the relevancy and currency of training being offered
- For individuals, emphasis should be placed on marketing the practical skills to be gained from work placements

4.2 How can we continue to assure the quality of vocational education and training in the context of greater choice?

- There needs to be proper checks and balances in place to ensure quality is not sacrificed by providers overly focused on profits. Such checks could include:
 - Learner and employer web based feedback to DET which then provides data for providers continuous improvement processes
 - National Quality Indicator Surveys data could be shared at State level to review quality standards and ensure transparency

¹

These types of courses can develop skills for those who are not yet work ready. This could include a course to educate learners about industry areas, the types of roles within specific industries and an understanding of the pathways from entry level to management positions. This would enable learners who may not fully understand the range of options available to them to make informed decisions about a potential career path.

- Close liaison between the NSW Government, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TESQA), federal Government and between Industry Taskforces, industry skills bodies, etc.
- There are standard and/or widely accepted LLN assessment tools available and currently used where training is delivered through Government funded programs. Any tendered training should build such tools into their program as well as specifying outcome key performance indicators. However these measures require investment and delivery by LLN specialists working with vocational specialists

4.3 How could increased contestability of government-funded training support greater participation in vocational education and training and greater take-up of higher-level qualifications?

- Greater flexibility and responsiveness in the delivery of training
- Improved outcomes for learners, industry and NSW
- Increased investment as the private sector in particular can source funds and undertake capital and IP investment, without constraining government budgets, to facilitate greater participation

4.4 What factors should the Government consider in increasing contestability of training funds?

- Quality and compliance of providers
- Open the Industry Skills Council to greater participation from a range of providers
- Utilise provider-risk matrix similar to that being developed by Commonwealth

4.5 How should community service obligations be managed in a contestable market?

- Community service obligations should be clearly identified in any requests for tender and weighted accordingly
- Identification of community needs and guaranteed funding into the contestable range of training to ensure that community needs are addressed by providers with the capacity, experience and competencies to deliver training to these needs

4.6 What criteria and what accountabilities should training organisations meet to be eligible for government-funding?

- Learner and employer feedback on the quality and value of courses, which would be considered in any evaluation of providers. This feedback could be an online feedback mechanism direct to DET. Reporting to be simple to minimise manipulation of data to present positive results
- Certificate completion rates to be provided to the funding bodies
- Longitudinal studies to track the relationship between learner achievement of a qualification and improved employment outcomes

5. IMPROVE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMPLETION RATES

5.1 How can we improve vocational education and training completions?

- Greater LLN , foundation and employability skills support, with vocational providers working in collaboration with LLN/foundation and employability skills providers
- Greater emphasis on interview, assessment and placement to ensure the skills, motivational and behavioural matching of clients with training

- The definition of completion needs to be reviewed, e.g. when a learner transfers from one qualification to another, current reporting requirements demand that the provider record the first withdrawal as a non-completion despite the learner completing the second qualification. Completion needs to be recorded on the basis of the individual learner achievement
- Tester courses and work experience to provide learners with practical understanding of the industry area they are about to commence training in. This will minimise learner drops outs
- Develop more flexible delivery options that support learner mobility and competing issues such as family and work commitments
- DET to follow up on completion rates and gain feedback on why learners fail to complete

5.2 In what critical areas should they be improved?

- A system where employers are held accountable for repeated failure to take trainees through to the final year of an apprenticeship or traineeship

5.3 How can we improve completions for apprentices and trainees?

- Higher remuneration for apprentices. Current research found that many apprentices do not finish their apprenticeship due to low salaries; better financial structures can provide the incentive to complete
- Better communication between the provider and the employer to ensure that training is relevant to the workplace and vice versa
- Establishment of an apprentice career pathway, which recognises master-trades people and skilled technicians

6. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

If you would like to make any additional comments, please provide them below.

Thank you for your input. When making your submission, please be mindful that the closing date for submissions is **5pm on Friday 4 November 2011**. Submissions can be lodged by:

Email: submissions@det.nsw.edu.au

Mail: Ms Kate Johnston

Smart and Skilled: making NSW number one, Submissions

NSW Department of Education and Communities

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