

Jumping hurdles:

Overcoming the barriers of 'thin markets' and rural locations

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As always, the considerable effort and interest of the staff of Councils and registered training organisations (RTOs) who gave their time to participate in the research and contributed their ideas with candour and thoughtfulness is appreciated. Their willingness to work to progress the vocational education and training (VET) system so that Australian workers will have access to 'world's best' training is also recognised and applauded.

Executive Summary

Over time, Australian Local Government Training (ALGT), an industry-owned body which provides support and advice regarding national vocational education and training (VET) issues to the nation's third tier of government, has become increasingly aware of the difficulties involved in increasing the participation rate of Council employees in qualifications from the Local Government Training Package.

ALGT is also aware of the apparent contradictions to be found in this situation given Councils' generally high levels of commitment to skill development and the sector's clearly articulated need for an increasingly skilled workforce to meet the growing pressures experienced by Councils as their roles and community expectations grow. Previous work conducted by ALGT has identified that local government, in common with other smaller, niche markets, experiences difficulties associated with being a 'thin' market – which can be defined simply as a market with a small number of purchasers.

This research was geared towards:

- clarifying the nature of Councils' training experiences
- identifying the barriers (or hurdles) which work against the participation of Councils in VET and, in particular, their participation in industry specific training
- identifying strategies including flexible learning strategies which can be adopted to overcome the hurdles.

The research which involved the surveying of Councils and registered training organisations (RTOs) combined with in-depth case study interviews identified that:

- regional and rural Councils do have a demonstrable commitment to training, including recognised training, but that more recognised national qualifications are drawn from other industries' training packages than from the Local Government Training Package.
- the diverse skill needs of the Council workforce makes it difficult for RTOs to identify and cost effectively deliver training to small groups of trainees.
- Councils prefer workplace delivered and workplace relevant training.
- the geographic spread and remoteness of many Councils makes the cost of servicing them problematic for many RTOs.
- 50% of all regional and rural Councils have difficulty in finding an RTO who can deliver the required training to them.
- the lack of nationally and publicly available learning and assessment resources that support local government training is a major cost barrier that makes it not cost-effective for RTOs to service the market.

Finding solutions to these issues is, of course, complex and difficult. The solutions, however, appear to rest in the formation of partnerships between clusters of regional Councils and RTOs with the intent of delivering a 'critical mass' of trainees, so that RTOs are able to achieve the economies of scale necessary within their current funding models. The pragmatic realisation that training cannot be delivered to very small numbers of workers, in a way which is affordable to either the provider or the client, is central to the finding of workable solutions.

The role of resource development which supports flexible delivery is also central to the problem – and most difficult to resolve.

It is apparent that the propensity for RTOs to deliver 'generic' business and administration qualifications to Councils, rather than industry specific training, is driven as much by the ready availability of resources as by the career pathway benefits of these qualifications over those of industry-specific qualifications.

The report concludes with recommendations that address matters which fall within the province of the Commonwealth, States and Territories, industry and RTOs.

It is recommended that:

Recommendation	Action by:
1. Local Government industry associations and bodies actively foster the participation of Councils and RTOs in regional networks to identify Councils' skill development needs and negotiate workable delivery solutions	Local Government Industry Associations and Bodies
2. Local Government industry associations and bodies actively foster the development of annual training plans for all staff by Councils so that an orderly approach can be adopted to the development of workforce skills	Local Government Industry Associations and Bodies
3. Local Government industry associations and bodies promote the value of the allocation of, at least, a dedicated part time training officer for all Councils employing more than 50 people and that, for smaller Councils, a senior staff member be assigned this responsibility	Local Government Industry Associations and Bodies
4. ALGT, and other Local Government industry associations and bodies, increase and target effort to raise the awareness of regional and rural Councils to the availability and benefits of the new Local Government Training Package and escalate the debate within the industry of the relative merits of broadly-based, or generic, training and industry-specific training	ALGT
5. Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and, post July 2005, the Ministry for Vocational and Technical Education within the Department of Education, Science and Training invest in the development of flexible resources to support the skill development of Councils with, in particular, an emphasis on the skills required by the workforce to engage with communities, support community development and address immediate skill shortages such as planning and land management and environmental health services.	ANTA and, post July 2005, the Ministry for Vocational and Technical Education within the Department of Education, Science and Training

- | | |
|--|---|
| 6. In order to better assess the training profile and experience of the local government industry, that ANTA and its successor, together with the State and Territory Training Authorities and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) modify their data collection methods to track and record the enrolment and completion rates of the employees of Council irrespective of whether the enrolled qualifications are drawn from the Local Government Training Package or from other industry training packages | ANTA, State and Territory Training Authorities, NCVER |
| 7. The State and Territory Training Authorities, in conjunction with the Australian Flexible Learning Framework (Framework), invest in a specific professional development strategy for RTOs to assist with the development of skills in identifying and creatively addressing the skill development needs of thin and non-traditional markets | State and Territory Training Authorities |
| 8. RTOs, supported by the State and Territory Training Authorities, revisit their funding and charging models to make explicit those areas which will be supported with public funding and those which will require fee-for-service payments. | RTOs |
| 9. State and Territory Training Authorities provide specific funding, in support of RTOs and their initial market establishment costs, when it is demonstrated that delivery to a niche or thin market is moving from 'generic' training to industry-specific training. | State and Territory Training Authorities |
| 10. State and Territory Training Authorities, responsible for the establishment of RTO registration processes, put in place funding models which do not act as a disincentive for RTOs to include in their scope of delivery qualifications which may only receive relatively small enrolments. Such funding models should actively encourage the inclusion of qualifications from niche industries and thin markets by reducing the costs to RTOs rather than encouraging RTOs to rationalise their scope to only include large and mass-market programs. | State and Territory Training Authorities |

Introduction

The provision of training is dependent upon the participation of a client who has identified a need for training and is willing to participate in the process and a training provider who is able and willing to provide the professional services necessary to develop and assess the skill of the enrolled candidates. This appears to be a simple process conforming to the laws of supply and demand.

Inevitably, there are a range of factors which can disrupt or complicate the process.

The training provider must have the trainers, learning and assessment resources and infrastructure necessary to deliver the training. Funding must be available from either the public purse or the client and the client must be an active participant able to articulate the training needs and making available the time required to undertake the negotiated skill development and assessment process.

Above all, training is a collaboration that requires the establishment of trust and understanding between the supplier and the consumer.

Jumping hurdles

The research project conducted from June to October 2004 was designed to clarify understanding of the hurdles that exist to the take up and delivery of training and to articulate the capacity of effective flexible learning strategies to overcome those hurdles. This applied research was also designed to add to the general awareness and understanding of the issues surrounding the provision of training in thin markets and to build on the experience of ALGT which over more than 5 years has worked with industry and RTOs to explore and explain the challenges of serving small and niche markets. This is also an area where there is little published research although there are clear indicators from NCVET data (Blythe, 2004) which indicate that enrolments and participation in training are concentrated in large mass market areas with much lower levels of participation in the majority of industry sectors – a troubling factor which is often explained as simply being a result of low demand by industry clients rather than with a partial cause being a lack of supply.

One key factor which limits the capacity of RTOs to cost effectively deliver training to client groups is the notion of 'thin markets' which can be defined simply as a market with a small number of purchasers. A thin market can be a valuable niche market for a limited number of suppliers but it can also be a market which is under-served when it is perceived as being not cost effective for suppliers to support.

Although the focus of this research is local government Councils in regional and rural Australia, the investigation illuminates more generally the hurdles or barriers to RTOs in country areas with small and circumscribed markets serving niche industries with tailored training solutions. The research, therefore, can inform policy and professional development for RTOs more generally regarding the cost effective development of flexible learning strategies.

Regional and rural Councils

Australia's 720 Councils are major employers, particularly in regional and remote Australia, however the relatively low levels of participation points to the fact that they have experienced significant barriers in accessing the national VET system. These barriers are most keenly felt by the approximately 580 regional and rural Councils. A key barrier, identified by the ALGT during the past five years, and which prompted this research, is that Councils because of their geographic spread across the nation

represent an inherently thin market – and one which is not commercially attractive to many RTOs.

Methodology

The research process was designed to:

- increase understanding of the current training and skill development practices of Councils in regional and rural Australia
- identify the barriers to the take-up of formal, recognised, training
- seek out solutions that would lead to the increased engagement of Councils in recognised training and, particularly, industry-specific local government training
- canvas the role of flexible learning in providing strategies to address the serving of thin training markets.

The research questions developed to support and drive the project were:

- What are the current policy, structural and resourcing barriers to RTOs servicing regional and rural councils with local government specific training?
- Why are councils undertaking 'generic' rather than industry specific training?
- Would access to flexible strategies and resources lower the barrier to entry to the local government market by regional and rural RTOs?
- What design requirements for flexible learning models and resources would meet the needs of regional and rural councils?

The methodology used was designed to focus on the needs and views of the nation's regional and rural Councils but to test their responses against those of metropolitan Councils. The intent of this strategy was to highlight any differences in experiences and needs of regional and rural Councils from those in metropolitan areas and to identify differences in needs and potential delivery strategies.

The research combined both quantitative and qualitative techniques to enrich understanding and build confidence in the outcomes.

- a written mailed questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of 145 regional and rural Councils drawn from a total population of 580
- a written mailed questionnaire was also distributed to a sample of 75 metropolitan Councils to provide comparative data and drawn from a total population of 140
- a written mailed questionnaire was distributed to 90 RTOs of active providers to Councils drawn from the ALGT database of 120 RTOs.

Three qualitative mini case studies were conducted with RTOs to explore issues surrounding the delivery of service to Councils and to explore solutions for improving the industry's access to recognised training in regional and rural areas.

The sound response rates to the quantitative surveys provides evidence of the interest of the local government sector in training and access to training while also ensuring the robustness of the findings.

The response rates achieved where:

	<i>Population</i>	<i>Sample Size (Number Mailed)</i>	<i>Returns</i>	<i>Response Rate %</i>
Survey – Regional & Rural Councils	580	145	49	34
Survey – Metropolitan Councils	140	75	15	20
Survey – RTOs	120	90	24	27

Industry profile

Local Government is the third tier of government. It is, however, difficult to speak of the Councils that operate across the continent as an homogenous group. Each State and Territory has constitutional responsibility for developing the legal frameworks under which Councils operate. While sharing much in common, this does mean that the scope of services offered and the systems of oversight of Council operations differ.

Councils have in the past been seen as the providers of 'roads, rates and rubbish' but as their range of responsibilities has grown so to have Councils' range of training needs increased.

Local Government employment is on the increase following a reduction at the end of the 1990s and is now in excess of the level experienced in 1997.

Data available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics states the trend estimates for employment in Local Government is 152,500 a change of 2.4% in the year August 2001 to August 2002. Of considerable importance is the fact that Local Government's employment growth is outstripping that of the other two tiers of government with a 2.4% increase during the period of August 2001 to August 2002.

Table 2: Government employees trend

Changes in Employment by Sector			
	<i>August 2002 '000s</i>	<i>% change May 2002 to August 2002</i>	<i>% change August 2001 to August 2002</i>
Commonwealth Government	238.2	-2.6	-9.0
State Government	1 105.1	0.4	1.6
Local Government	152.5	0.5	2.4

Source: ABS Wage & Salary Earners: Australia, Public Sector, Cat no. 6248.0

There are approximately 722 Local Government bodies in Australia. The number of Councils in each State or Territory is affected by a number of factors:

- size of the State or Territory – with the largest States tending to have more Councils in response to the difficulties in managing Councils with responsibility

for vast distances. More information on the distribution of Councils is provided below

- State policy and the level of rationalisation of Council numbers that has occurred
- need of the region and its population density

The very nature of the Local Government industry ensures that it is represented in every area of the nation, with the exception of the Australian Capital Territory which is governed by a single tier Territory Authority. The distribution of Councils between urban and regional Australia must also be recognised with 80% or 580 of the Councils able to be classified as regional or rural (National Office of Local Government, 2001-02). The high level of representation of Councils in regional and rural Australia was a motivating force for this research and a factor which has significant implications for their training need and delivery.

Findings

The research findings provide the clear message that although regional and rural Councils vary in size they are significant employers in the community with survey responses showing that the majority employ between 100 and 199 people.

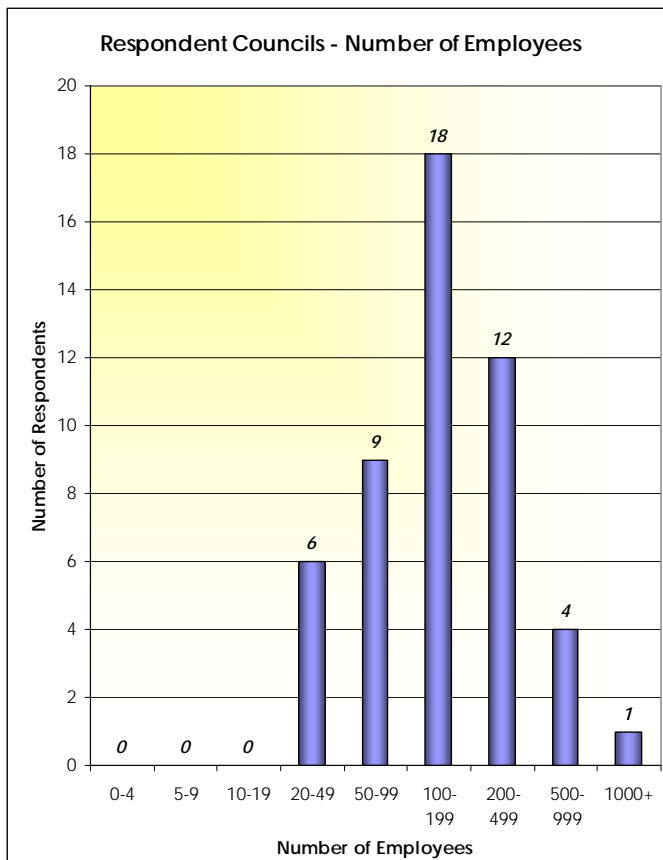


Chart 1: Employment size of regional and rural Councils responding to the survey

Councils' training infrastructure

The level of staff and other infrastructure to support the training of employees provides a useful litmus test of both an organisation's commitment to participation in a planned and thorough approach to skill development and its capacity to maximise the benefits of training.

While it is not surprising that regional and rural Councils have a lower level of dedicated training staff than metropolitan Councils (92% with training staff), given their smaller size, the fact that 55% of regional and rural Councils employ either full-time or part-time training officers provides a firm basic infrastructure from which a strong training culture and strategy can be built.

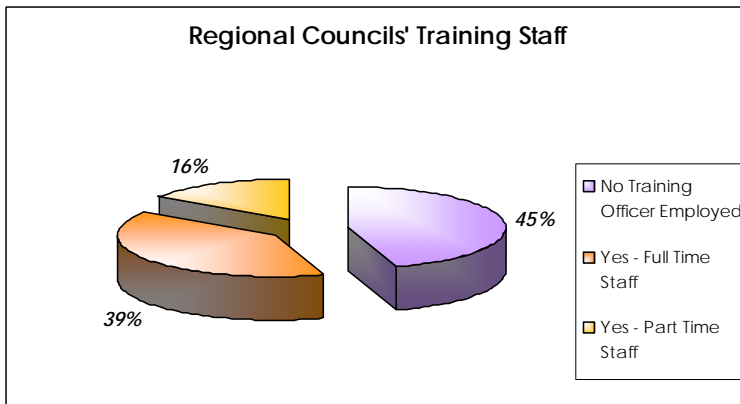


Chart 2 : Regional and rural councils' training staff and employment status

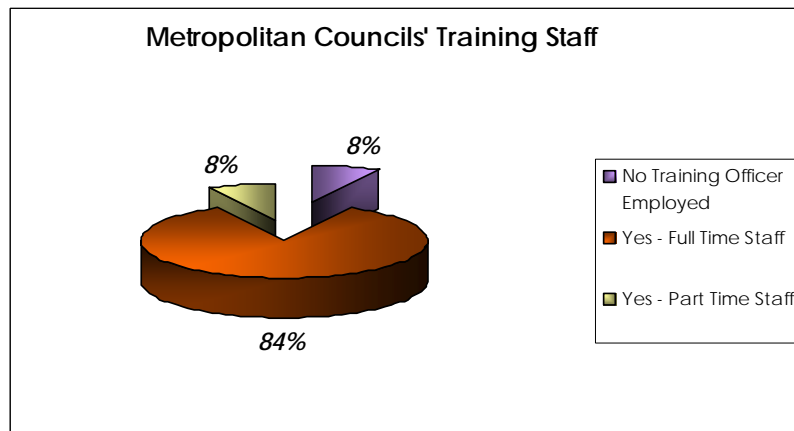


Chart 3 : Metropolitan Councils' training staff and employment status

Councils, irrespective of their location, clearly have an awareness of the structures and benefits of the national VET system. While only 4% of the metropolitan and regional Councils surveyed were RTOs there is a high level of expertise inside Councils with 71% of regional and rural Councils having staff who hold the nationally recognised Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment and Training. This high level of availability of people with complex understanding of competency based training is further supported by the more than 60% of regional and rural Councils which also have staff holding the three competency standards: *Plan*

Assessment, Conduct Assessment and *Review Assessment* and are able to support assessment processes under the management of an RTO.

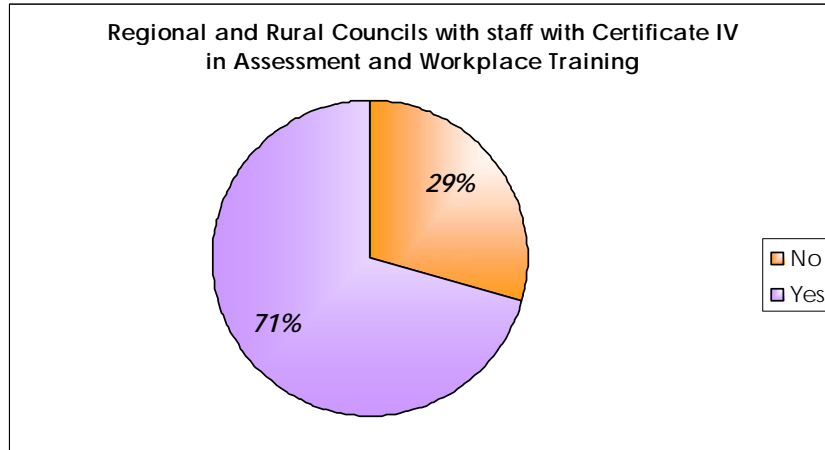


Chart 4: Percentage of regional and rural Councils with staff with a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training

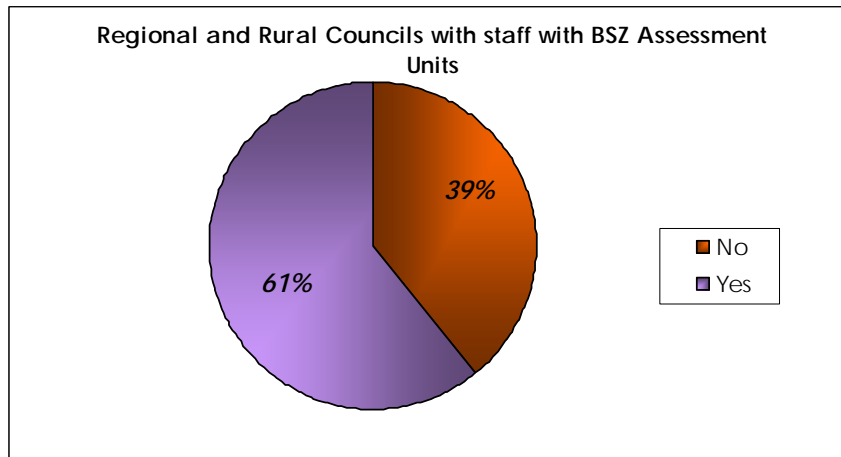


Chart 5: Percentage of regional and rural Councils with staff with BSZ Assessment Units

It could be expected that this level of commitment and resident expertise within regional and rural Councils, and Councils more generally, would lead to a high level of take-up of nationally industry qualifications – a situation which at this time has not occurred.

Engagement with the Local Government Training Package

More than three quarters (78%) of regional and rural Councils do not currently use the Local Government Training Package.

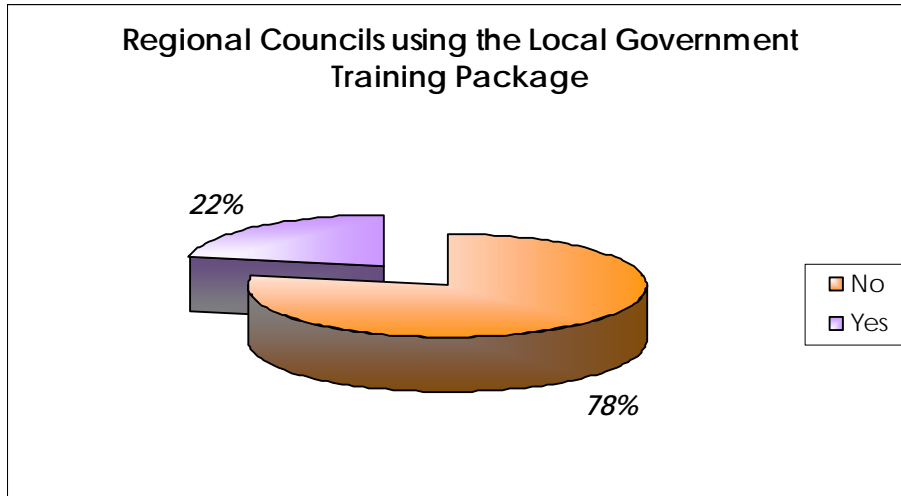


Chart 6: Percentage of regional and rural Councils using the Local Government Training Package

This quite low level of penetration into regional and rural Councils is in contrast to metropolitan Councils where 60% of respondents indicated that they do use the Local Government Training Package.

The major reason given by regional and rural Councils for their non-use is clearly a lack of knowledge of the training package. A situation, while concerning, which can be addressed.

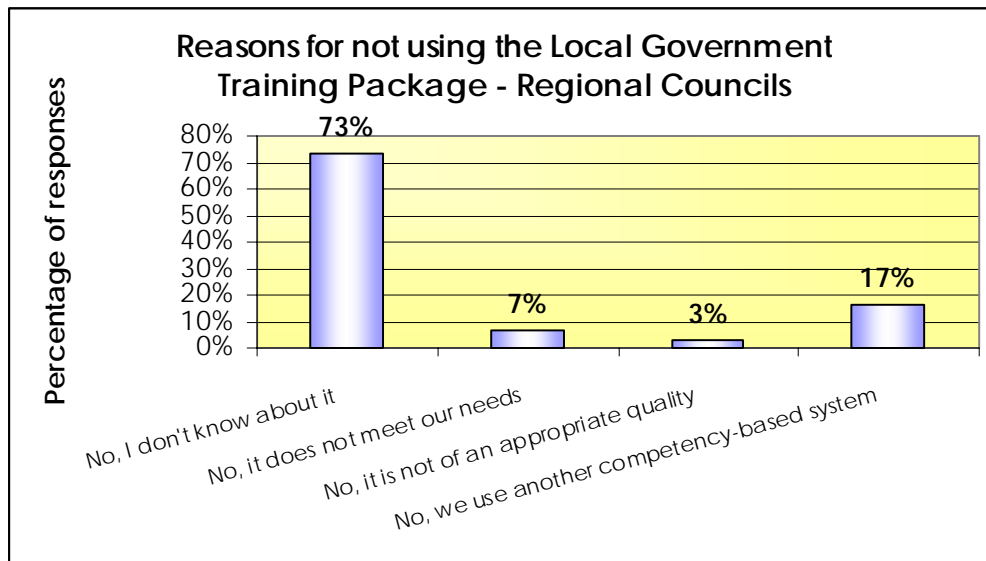


Chart 7: Percentage of cited reasons for not using the Local Government Training Package – by non-users

Training experience

Regional and rural Councils demonstrated comparable assessments of their level of training with that reported by metropolitan Councils.

The Councils were asked to assess the level of reach and volume of training that they had conducted during 2002 to 2004. While this question did not seek to quantify the amount of training it does illuminate the Councils' belief about training and how their training commitment is viewed. Consistently, Councils indicated that they deliver a moderate level of training to a wide range of their staff with a minor tendency towards a high level of training.

Table 3: Regional and rural Councils' identified level and breadth of training 2002-2004

N=number of responses

	<i>High levels of training with wide range of staff</i>	<i>High levels of training with narrow range of staff</i>	Moderate levels of training with a wide range of staff	<i>Moderate levels of training with a narrow range of staff</i>	<i>Low levels of training with a wide range of staff</i>	<i>Low levels of training with a narrow range of staff</i>	<i>No training undertaken</i>
2002	6	2	23	8	6	5	2
2003	7	2	28	6	5	2	2
2004	10	3	21	6	6	3	2

The message is quite clear. Councils train a wide spectrum of staff and there is evidence of consistency in its delivery.

In building a picture of the level and nature of training that occurs in regional and rural Councils it is evident that there is willingness to train and a workforce where there is an availability of training skills and qualifications but low levels of awareness of the national industry training package, particularly in contrast to metropolitan Councils.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the profile of the training which is conducted sees a bias towards unaccredited training. Although there is a moderate but clear increase in regional and rural Councils who overtime are delivering 'largely accredited' training and a commensurate moderate decline in Councils who choose 'largely unaccredited' training the rate of training and investment in staff is not being matched by the delivery of nationally recognised qualifications.

The comparative study of metropolitan Councils demonstrated similar findings notwithstanding the fact that the larger urban Councils had even higher levels of training personnel and almost universal access to staff with a Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment and Training.

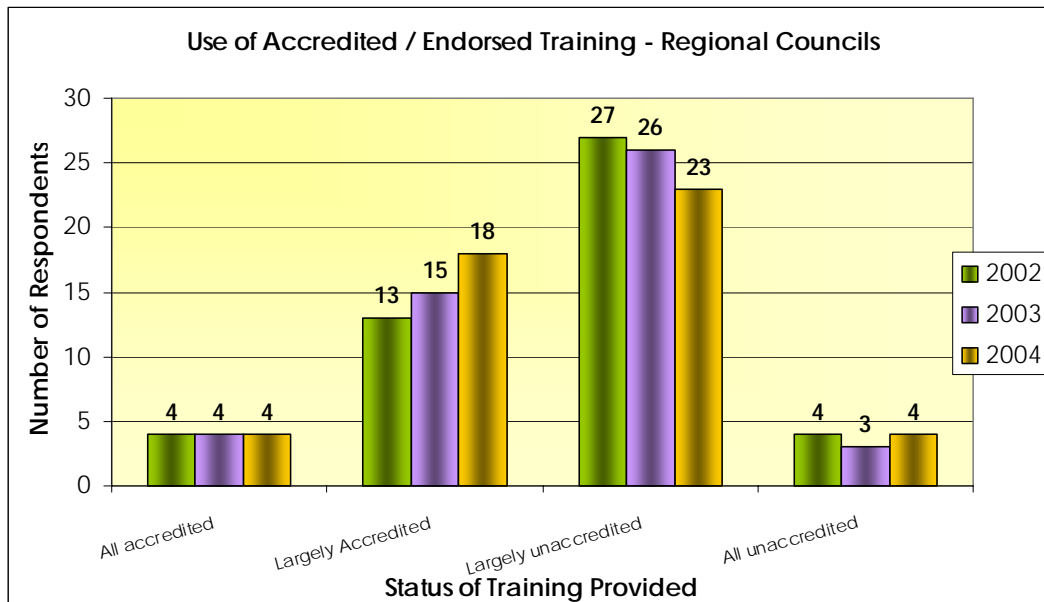


Chart 8: The use of accredited and unaccredited/recognised training by regional and rural Councils 2002-2004, number of responses received

Comments received to open questions coupled with interviews that were conducted indicate that regional and rural Councils deliver a considerable amount of training that can be classified as:

- non-accredited staff induction training
- corporate training for managers and senior staff which is seen to respond to short term and individually identified skill requirements such as negotiation skills or leadership
- special 'needs driven' training which represents the major commitment and which is significantly compliance-driven with, for example, short course training on occupational health and safety or forklift operation.

The majority of this shorter and more reactive training is identified as being provided by externally sourced private providers and consultants. Once again, while this type of training is not currently leading to the awarding of nationally recognised qualifications it is contributing to the building of the sector's skill base and provides an opportunity to build on and enhance the unaccredited training leading to a growth in national qualifications awarded within local government.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) statistics (Blythe, 2004) indicate there were 860 students enrolled in Local Government Training Package qualifications nationally during 2002. A number that represents less than 0.1% of the total number of enrolments across the nation.

As can be seen from the current study this does not mean, however, that only 860 people working in Councils were participating in nationally recognised training.

Local Government versus other training packages

The Local Government sector has a workforce which embraces a range of occupations and skills ranging from librarianship to community services, engineering and horticulture. These occupational areas also receive specialist training which is valuable but not recorded in national VET statistics as 'belonging' to local government.

It is also clear that Councils access Business Services Training Package qualifications as a source of generic administration training. Comments received from Councils both in survey returns and the qualitative phase of the study indicated that the Business Services Training Package was also used because it was all that was supported or offered by the RTO and represented a 'proxy' for industry specific training.

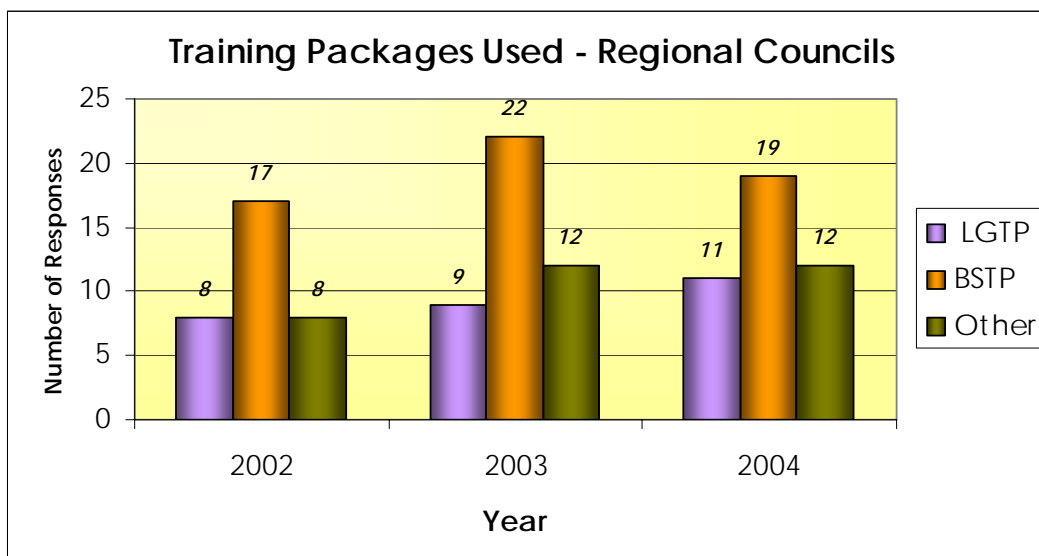


Chart 9: The use of the Local Government Training Package and other industry training packages by regional and rural Councils to support training, 2002-2004

The 'other' category encompassed a wide range of training packages with the most frequently cited being:

- horticulture
- construction/civil construction
- library science
- community service

It is worthy of note that, for example, the local government sector is a major employer of community services workers who provide services in child care, elderly care and accommodation, counselling, welfare and meals on wheels. During 2002 the Community Services Training Package experienced one of the highest levels of enrolments with 9.5% of the total national enrolments (NCVER, 2004) with, it is reasonable to assume, many of these being employed by Councils.

Barriers to supply

Councils in regional and rural Australia tend to typically use a mix of training providers embracing RTOs and commercial but unregistered trainers – an experience which parallels that of metropolitan Councils.

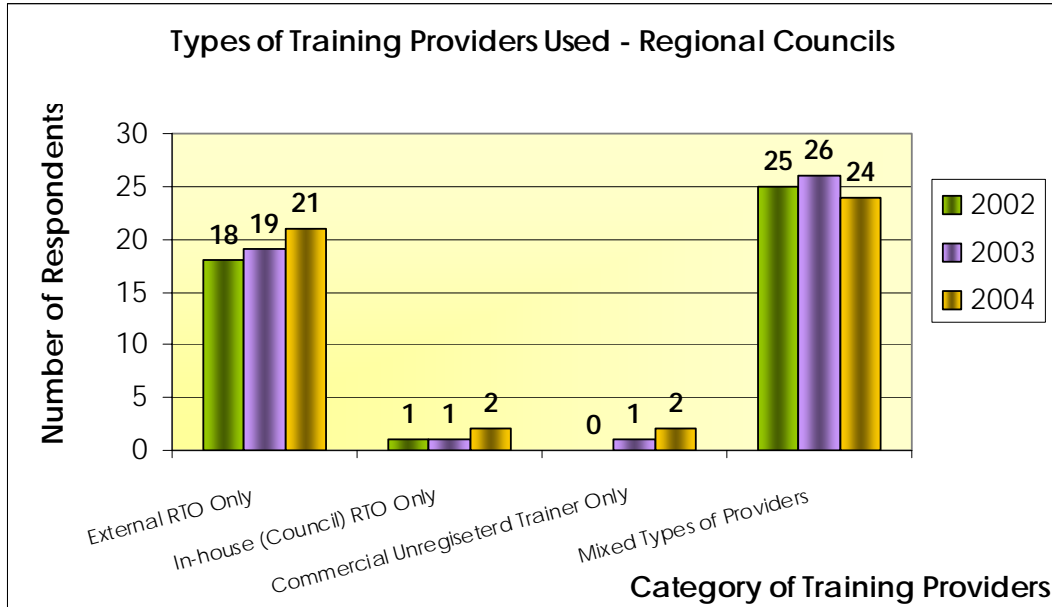


Chart 10: The range and type of training providers used by regional and rural Councils, 2002-2004. N= number of responses

Of major concern, however, is the fact that half the regional and rural Councils experience difficulty in finding an RTO. The capacity of Councils to increase their level of sophisticated, integrated, planned and recognised training is going to be limited if supply of training provision is limited.

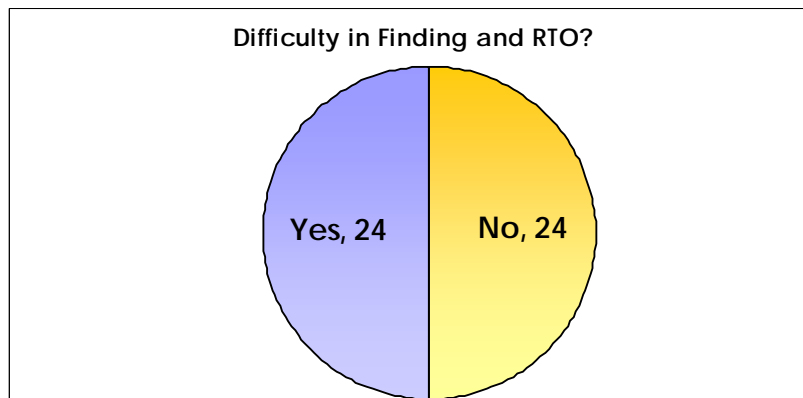


Chart 11: Percentage of regional and rural Councils finding difficulty in accessing a RTO

'[Our Council] is 5 hours from Melbourne.....the nearest TAFE college is 120 kms from the offices [and] trainers appear reluctant to venture out this far from Melbourne' (survey respondent regional Victoria, 2004)

This view, which is commonly expressed by regional and rural Councils, points to the barrier of distance experienced by Councils and to their difficulty in accessing training supply.

Even when Councils do have access to RTOs in regional areas there is still significant concern expressed about the scope and relevance of the training which is offered.

Councils are employers with a workforce which performs diverse functions requiring equally diverse training solutions. When the 50% of regional and rural Councils which experienced difficulty in accessing an RTO were asked to indicate the reason for the difficulty the most frequent responses were that there were not the RTOs available offering relevant programs or with the expertise to deliver to the market. These key reasons were closely followed by a simple lack of an RTO in the region.

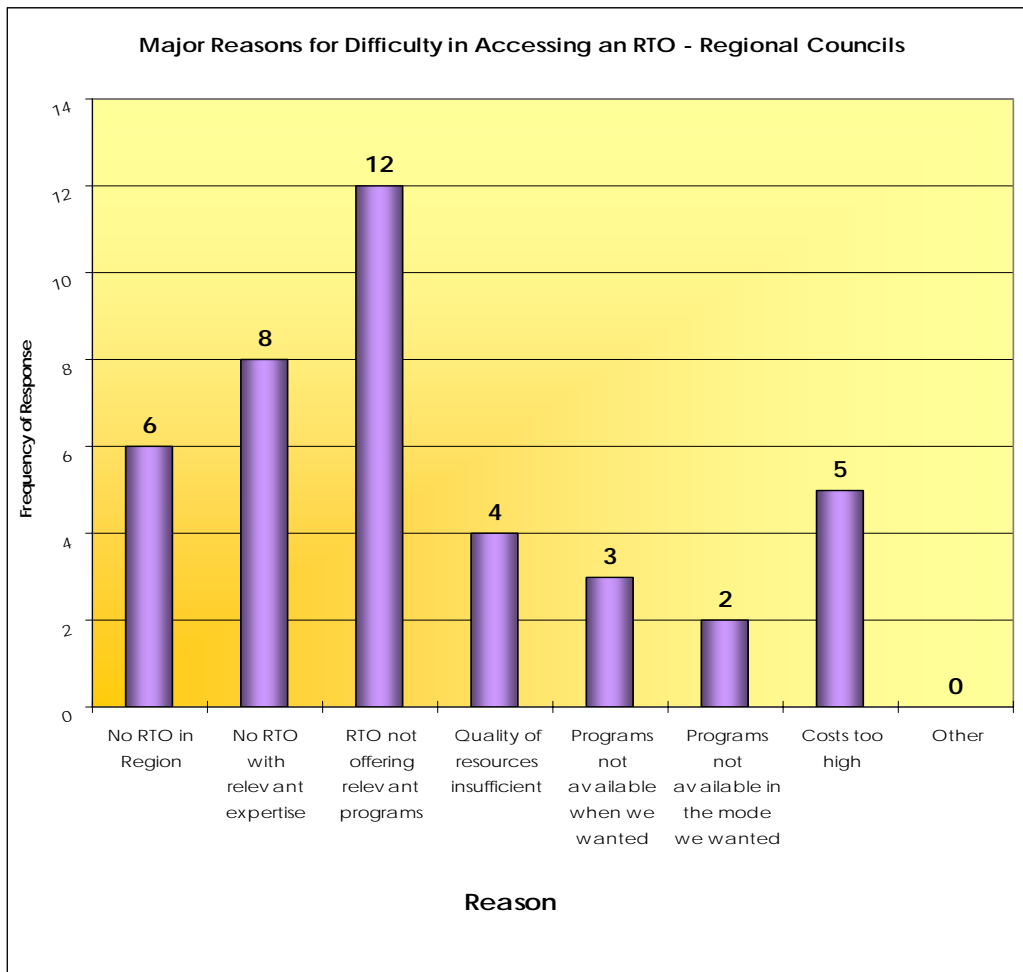


Chart 12: The major barriers to accessing an RTO be regional and rural Councils – expressing difficulty. N= number of responses.

RTOs must make careful judgements about the markets they seek to enter and the resources which are allocated to support those markets, particularly when they are operating using defined and typically restrained public funding allocations. To become cost effective many RTOs seek to secure 'classes' of 15-20 students - a situation which

is not always feasible in regional or rural councils. Alternatively, to contain costs, RTOs offer councils 'generic', typically business administration qualifications, rather than the industry-specific qualifications, because they can either include those students in large publicly available programs or use pre-existing resources and expertise for delivery.

In short, supply, particularly for specialist technical skills is an ongoing and major barrier for regional and rural Councils:

'TAFE is certainly improving its flexible delivery mode BUT – being in a regional area – I still have problems sourcing the delivery of accredited training eg Certificate III in Library Services as it is not possible at the local TAFE.' (survey respondent regional NSW, 2004)

and

'In regional area[s] it is difficult to access RTOs with the scope to provide accredited training. Often TAFE is the only option and they are still only providing curriculum based training which does not always align with national competencies...' (survey respondent regional NSW, 2004)

The supply-side perspective

The difficulties in servicing a niche market in the more geographically remote areas of Australia are recognised and cannot be over-estimated.

The costs associated with the development of specialist resources, the difficulty in accessing staff with relevant industry expertise and, above all, the costs associated with delivery to a relatively small and dispersed market are challenges that many RTOs experience in working with regional and rural Councils.

The survey of RTOs which service regional and rural Councils indicated that 82% experienced difficulties in delivering to this market.

While Councils perceive that RTOs do not offer relevant programs or have relevant expertise to meet their needs, RTOs perceive the direct costs associated with supplying a thin market coupled with the, not unexpected, difficulty of gaining Council commitment as the major hurdles to establishing a viable working relationship with the significant employer market within their regions.

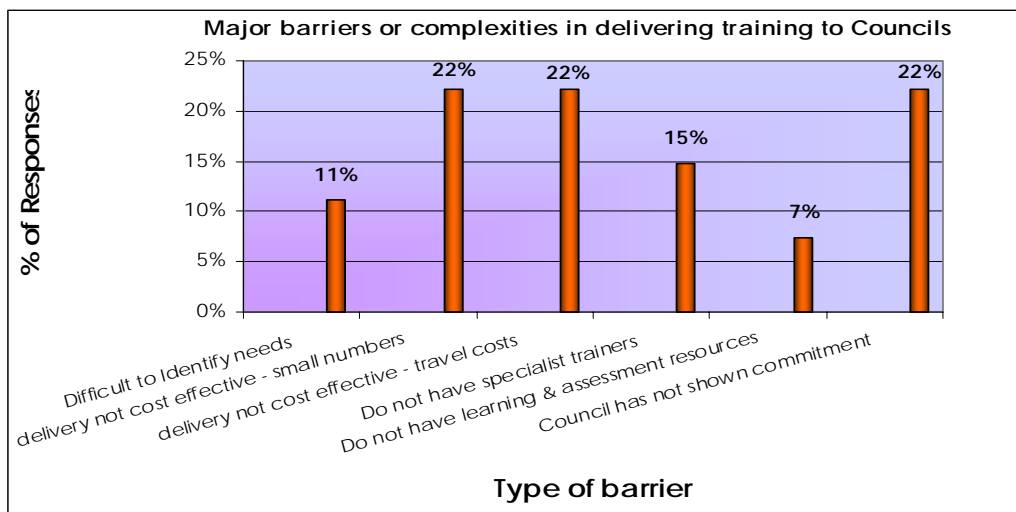


Chart 13: Major barriers experienced by RTOs in serving Councils, n= number of responses

A flexible response

It is clear, however, that both Councils and RTOs see the solution to the improved servicing of this training market as resting in the development of flexible responses to the provision of training.

Flexible learning and assessment is broadly defined, being:

‘an approach to vocational education and training which allows for the adoption of a range of learning strategies in a variety of learning environments to cater for differences in learning styles, learning interest and needs, and variations in learning opportunities (including online).’ (from AQTF Standards for RTOs)

Flexible learning and assessment, within a thin market, can also be the negotiated and pragmatic response to the development and assessment of skills which uses strategies and tools that minimise delivery costs and integrate the expertise and resources of the workplace to make delivery both feasible and relevant.

RTOs indicate that currently the forms of delivery used to support Councils is predominately on-the-job training partnerships which utilise the expertise of Council staff and infrastructure to develop and assess the skills of candidates. This is strongly supported by off-the-job classroom delivery either at the worksite or in the RTO. There is little use of technology based forms of flexible delivery driven by the high development costs.

Table 4 : RTOs response - the type of delivery used with Council staff by category

	<i>Classroom offsite</i>	<i>Classroom onsite</i>	<i>Self paced paper- based</i>	<i>Self paced video</i>	<i>Self paced online</i>	<i>On-the- job</i>	<i>Mixed mode</i>
Outdoor	17%	19%	11%	3%	3%	28%	19%
Administration	21%	13%	18%	3%	5%	28%	13%
Managers	17%	21%	13%	4%	4%	21%	21%
Planners	11%	22%	33%	0%	0%	22%	11%
Environmental							
Health	20%	20%	20%	0%	0%	20%	20%
Library	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Community							
Services	20%	20%	20%	0%	7%	7%	27%

Workplace-based, flexible and mixed modes of delivery provides an answer

These forms of workplace-focused and mixed modes of delivery are also those sought by regional and rural Councils for the various segments of the workforce. Councils clearly indicate (see appendix) that on-the-job training supported by other modes including classroom delivery (both off-site and on-site) provides a sound learning and assessment process for the workforce.

RTOs, in response to a question about the major barriers to the take-up of technically-based flexible learning solutions, identified as significant the lack of appropriateness of these modes to the learning needs of the workforce together with the practical barriers found in the lack of high quality and tailored resources.

Table 5: RTO Response to the barriers to technically based flexible delivery modes

MAJOR BARRIERS	DELIVERY METHODS		
	Video/CD-Rom	Video Conference	On-line
No barriers	10%	5%	5%
Cost	7%	8%	10%
Lack Council Expertise	7%	8%	8%
Lack RTO Expertise	3%	3%	8%
Lack Resources - Quality	20%	13%	15%
Lack Resources - Tailored	23%	18%	15%
Lack Technical Infrastructure	7%	21%	3%
Poor quality Telecommunications	7%	10%	15%
Not Appropriate to needs/learning style	17%	15%	21%
TOTALS	100%	100%	100%

The same question, when asked of Councils, demonstrated broadly similar responses with, in particular, concern being expressed about cost and the lack of technical infrastructure being the most frequently identified barriers.

Metropolitan Councils are, however, more likely than regional Councils to agree with RTOs that a major barrier to take-up is the relevance of technically-based modes to the learning needs of the workforce (for example, the level of identified barriers to the online mode were RTOs 21%; metropolitan Councils 22% and regional and rural Councils 10%).

Table 6 : Metropolitan & regional and rural response to the barriers to technically based flexible delivery modes

MAJOR BARRIERS	Video/CD Rom		Video Conferencing		Online	
	<i>Regiona</i>		<i>Regiona</i>		<i>Regional</i>	<i>Metro</i>
	<i>I</i>	<i>Metro</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>Metro</i>		
No barriers	15%	19%	8%	0%	4%	17%
Cost	10%	19%	12%	30%	10%	17%
Lack Council Expertise	11%	5%	12%	5%	8%	0%
Lack RTO Expertise	9%	5%	10%	0%	11%	0%
Lack Resources - Quality	6%	5%	4%	5%	7%	0%
Lack Resources - Tailored	13%	14%	11%	0%	15%	6%
Lack of Technical Infrastructure	11%	14%	21%	30%	16%	22%
Poor quality Telecommunications	11%	10%	15%	15%	20%	17%
Not Appropriate to needs/learning style	14%	10%	7%	15%	10%	22%
TOTALS	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Costs were of considerably greater concern to metropolitan Councils, perhaps indicating the overall pressure on training budgets of a larger workforce. Metropolitan Councils were also moderately more concerned about the barriers of lack of technical infrastructure to the take-up of these forms of flexible delivery.

Regional and rural Councils were also somewhat more concerned about their and their RTOs, lack of expertise to deliver and support technically-based forms of flexible delivery that either metropolitan Councils or RTOs.

Flexible solutions in-depth

The conduct of three mini case studies, together with vibrant information provided in open questions in the quantitative phase of the research, provided the opportunity to develop additional understanding about the solutions that can be put in place to support the delivery of training, and in particular recognised national qualifications, to Councils.

Councils believe that flexible mixed modes of delivery best meet their need for training and assessment. While priority is given to the delivery of workplace or on-the-job learning supported by delivery which can be broadly classified as classroom based whether at the Councils' premises or at the RTO, the use of self-paced and other modes of flexible delivery cannot be overlooked for particular segments of the workforce.

This preference for face-to-face and workplace-based delivery is most strongly felt with regard to the 'outdoor' workforce, that is those workers who perform road building and maintenance, undertake gardening and other forms of infrastructure improvement in the local government area.

'70% of our staff here are outdoor workers so e-learning is not appropriate'
(survey respondent regional NSW, 2004)

There are also concerns about the quality of telecommunications infrastructure which is seen as a barrier to the up-take of online learning by 15% of regional and rural Councils. This not insignificant barrier is also coupled with concerns about the lack of availability of quality and tailored resources.

'Telecommunications are slow and unreliable in this area' (survey respondent regional Queensland, 2004)

Others less concerned about the quality of telecommunications, however, see online learning as a boon particularly for the 'indoor' or technical, administrative and managerial workforce – and as a definite solution to the problems with delivery in regional areas. This enthusiasm is, however, often tempered with an understanding that the reality of the size of the market means that compromises would have to be made about what access could be realistically provided:

'If online delivery was possible, for just a selection of accredited courses – suitable for local government – it would be very beneficial for Regional Councils,'
(survey respondent regional NSW, 2004)

Councils demonstrate a clear awareness of the challenges facing RTOs in meeting their needs and recognise the challenges that a diverse workforce, relatively small numbers and significant distances between worksites offer to a training provider.

‘I know it is tough to work with councils – we may only have 5 people to train at a time and we have to be prepared to work together with both parties contributing’ (interview, Victoria, 2004)

It is also clear that where there is recognised national training being delivered to Councils that this is, in the majority of cases, business, construction or community services training rather than local government training. While this is often sought by Councils to provide flexible career pathways for their workers it is also frequently offered by RTOs who cannot see a cost-effective solution to the offering of more specific industry training.

RTOs are also aware of the challenges facing councils but can see the challenges as a sign of a lack of commitment to training and an unwillingness to pay.

‘It is hard to pin them down and they are not prepared to pay for training – they expect it to come from the public purse’ (survey respondent Victoria, 2004)

A network comprising local TAFEs and Councils in the Gippsland region provides a model for the development and delivery of tailored and flexible learning and assessment strategies. The network’s formation is driven by pragmatism and from several ‘false start’ where RTOs have tried in the past to work with Councils but have failed to find either a workable solution to support delivery or to successfully engage the Councils on other than relatively small scale delivery – although this experience did vary across the region.

The network is a positive development which will see the Councils work to identify mutual or common training needs across their various workforces in order to be able to deliver to the RTOs sufficient numbers of trainees to make the service cost effective for the supplier.

This compromise, and pragmatism, is reflected in the response of the RTOs who, located at opposite ends of a significant geographic region, will jointly service the Councils.

The opportunity also exists for the skills that are available in the Council to be used to ensure the relevance and credibility of the learning experience. The use of Council staff

Case ‘Snap Shot’ – Victoria

A collaborative approach harnessing the skills and capacity of RTOs and Councils in Victoria’s Gippsland region is underway.

The collaboration recognises that Councils want flexible on-the-job delivery and tailored learning that reflects the nature of Councils’ work but also responds to the reality that RTOs do not necessarily have the industry expertise or financial resources to serve the Councils individually.

To respond to the problem, the two regional TAFEs and four regional Councils are forming a network to pool expertise, negotiate a common suite of training requirements and identify delivery strategies which are viable.

The Councils recognise that they need to work together to deliver sufficient numbers of trainees and the RTOs recognise that by working collaboratively they can provide the geographic coverage that is needed while also harnessing the expertise of two RTOs and the workforces of the Councils.

The missing links are the resources to support the delivery.

to participate in the learning process – such as running a workshop or mentoring staff – is both a practical response and one which improves the outcomes for the trainees.

As a human resource co-ordinator for one of the regional Councils stated:

‘let’s use our own customer services manager to bring specific expertise to the learning.’

A senior TAFE manager, working in the same network identified that they have previously tried to design a training delivery strategy for their town’s Council - which is recognised to be the major regional employer - but had little success.

The collaborative network provides, from the RTOs perspective, another opportunity to revisit the situation and try a new approach. The collaboration also opens the way for a major barrier to be overcome by delivering ‘critical mass’ that is, enough enrolments to make delivery viable given that Councils’ paying full fee-for-service rates is not considered likely or possible.

The model for delivery will see the identification of common needs and an agreed approach to delivery but central to its success will be the partnerships with Council staff to support the workplace-based delivery. The major barrier that remains is the lack of relevant and publicly accessible learning and assessment resources.

Across all RTOs the consistent message is that the investment required in developing resources to support delivery for this niche market, in common with other smaller industry sectors, is prohibitive. While resources which are technically based, for example online learning and assessment, may be seen as a useful strategy to reach isolated Councils it is also recognised that the size of the market may make achieving a return on the significant investment required to develop these resources problematic.

RTOs also recognise that the availability of existing resources is frequently why ‘generic’ or broadly based administration and management programs are offered in lieu of the specific industry qualification.

The challenge of serving thin markets is well recognised and understood by RTOs and, while it is often difficult, the development of effective and flexible strategies enables RTOs to achieve a key goal of industry training which is to deliver demonstrable workplace performance improvement by responding to the real needs of the workforce and developing skills which are relevant to and grounded in identified current industry practice. This need to strive for industry and workplace relevance is summed up a leading manager of a RTO, which was the site for a second case study, as:

‘after all, training to meet the market’s needs is the goal’

The major Tasmanian RTO has extensive experience in the delivery of training to relatively small and niche markets and, as a result, has worked to identify delivery strategies which improve outcomes for enterprises and clients while using the inevitably restricted resourcing of the organisation effectively and efficiently. Once again, the availability of resources that reduce the cost of serving the niche or thin market is key. While this RTO does not currently serve Councils as clients, as opposed to individual employees who do enrol for specific programs, the use of self directed learning coupled with partnerships with Councils to facilitate viable workplace delivery is being investigated.

It is, however, not always easy to build strong partnerships between Councils and RTOs as a third case study demonstrated. A major Group Training Company operating on the fringe of Sydney and reaching into regional areas has devoted considerable resources to tackling the delivery of services to Councils. This market, however, when limited or focussed on the delivery of training to new apprentices and trainees can be problematic. In areas where there is access to a larger employment pool Councils have

been unwilling to use local government-specific qualifications to support traineeships. Indeed, there has been a degree of unwillingness to employ trainees at all.

This factor, coupled with the high cost to an RTO of placing and then maintaining qualifications on their 'scope of delivery' challenges RTOs and leads them to question the viability of offering courses to smaller or niche markets.

Delivery to the larger and more generic 'business' market is easier than addressing these new and niche markets given the availability of significant amounts of existing resources and a skilled body of teachers and trainers. Markets where nationally produced and publicly-owned resources are available benefit from the opportunity for RTOs to offer delivery in a multiplicity of flexible modes including full distance delivery.

The ready availability of existing high quality resources also enables more traditional classroom teaching to be offered more creatively, effectively and cost-efficiently through the reduction in face-to-face delivery and the increase in tailored and personalised delivery through the use of 'self teaching materials'.

Conclusions and recommendations

Underpinning all the strategies identified as being successful in servicing thin markets is the idea that the skills, time and resources of the workplace must be harnessed with strong partnerships built between the provider and client to share costs and improve the quality of the outcomes.

Indeed, the hurdles to the servicing of thin markets are most readily jumped by the formation of committed business relationships between the RTO and the client together with the creative use of *existing* learning and assessment resources and the negotiation of cost effective delivery arrangements.

The experience of Councils across the nation and their current level of engagement with the VET system identifies significant contradictions. On the one hand Councils demonstrate considerable levels of commitment to the skill development of their workforces. A significant number of Councils:

- employ a training officer, although this is less evident in smaller regional and rural Councils
- commit on an ongoing basis to the delivery of training programs to a broad range of their staff
- almost universally run structured induction programs for staff
- commit to ongoing training that meets compliance and other forms of regulatory requirements
- recognise that the diverse workforce requires different and tailored training responses

Councils also, however:

- sometimes experience difficulty in engaging and enthusing the outdoor workforce about the benefits of training
- sometimes seek short, sharp, unaccredited training to meet an urgent training requirement rather than adopting a more planned approach underpinned by training which leads to a qualification
- often have only a small number of people to be trained in a given field at the one time
- prefer workplace-based training

- are often geographically remote from a RTO
- are often unwilling or unable to pay full commercial rates for training and believe they should have access to publicly funded training

The barriers to the delivery of learning and assessment services to Councils by RTOs are common across all thin markets. RTOs, given the existing funding models:

- struggle to deliver workplace training to small numbers of enrollees
- find the cost of travel to distant client sites prohibitive
- find the cost of developing learning and assessment resources prohibitive
- find the cost of placing industry-specific qualifications for niche markets on their scope and subsequently supporting audit and maintenance costs a disincentive
- cannot afford to pay for expert industry trainers when they do not have the resident skills on staff

The issue of funding, inevitably, is central to the dilemma of engaging Councils in the take-up of nationally recognised industry qualifications. While there is little information, or clear articulation from RTOs, about the allocation of public resources to support 'thin market' training it does seem, from the perspective of Councils, that public support is most readily provided for those industry areas which are either extremely large (and can deliver significant numbers of students to TAFEs and other RTOs) or have been historic clients of the public system.

Newer, smaller, industries where training requirements tend towards workplace delivery are often seen as candidates for full fee-for-service training. A factor that can deny the clients the opportunity to participate and limit the access of a new market to RTOs – and in regional and rural Australia this market typically represents on the largest employers in the area.

A way forward

The most effective and viable model for the delivery of learning and assessment strategies to thin markets is characterised by:

- an open, collaborative and understanding relationship between RTO and client
- the formation of networks that will see the building of viable numbers of trainees from across Councils undertaking a learning and assessment program which has been negotiated to reflect the most pressing and common needs of the organisations
- the building and support of partnerships between RTOs and Councils that will see the expertise of Council staff used as an in-kind contribution which, with proper auspicing and support by the RTO, will assist with delivery, add relevance and credibility to the process and lower the delivery cost
- the use of flexible delivery modes that will see learning and assessment occur in the workplace supported by the use of effectively designed but short workplace seminars/workshops
- the development or tailoring of resources to support workplace delivery

Recommendations

The research, while focussed on the issues surrounding the delivery of skill development services to Councils, has also illuminated the challenges that face all smaller industry and thin markets.

It would be beneficial for government authorities and RTOs responsible for VET delivery to consider the application of this research to other industry sectors. It is apparent that, in common with all industries, VET must continually find strategies to offer services to increasingly segmented markets. The emergence of new industries or sectors within the economy will also drive the need for more finely tuned and targeted responses from VET. Understanding how to serve a thin market such as the local government sector will only ensure that the VET system as a whole is well placed to respond to other niche and emerging sectors which although small offer significant potential such as the knowledge management industry.

In order to jump the hurdles which act as barriers to the increased participation of Councils, and other thin markets, in the national VET system the active participation of RTOs, Councils and VET system policy-makers are required.

It is recommended that:

Recommendation	Action by:
1. Local Government industry associations and bodies actively foster the participation of Councils and RTOs in regional networks to identify Councils' skill development needs and negotiate workable delivery solutions	Local Government Industry Associations and Bodies
2. Local Government industry associations and bodies actively foster the development of annual training plans for all staff by Councils so that an orderly approach can be adopted to the development of workforce skills	Local Government Industry Associations and Bodies
3. Local Government industry associations and bodies promote the value of the allocation of, at least, a dedicated part time training officer for all Councils employing more than 50 people and that, for smaller Councils, a senior staff member be assigned this responsibility	Local Government Industry Associations and Bodies
4. ALGT, and other Local Government industry associations and bodies, increase and target effort to raise the awareness of regional and rural Councils to the availability and benefits of the new Local Government Training Package and escalate the debate within the industry of the relative merits of broadly-based, or generic, training and industry-specific training	ALGT
5. ANTA and, post July 2005, the Ministry for Vocational and Technical Education within the Department of Education, Science and Training invest in the development of flexible resources to support the skill	ANTA and, post July 2005, the Ministry for Vocational and Technical Education

- development of Councils with, in particular, an emphasis on the skills required by the workforce to engage with communities, support community development and address immediate skill shortages such as planning and land management and environmental health services.
6. In order to better assess the training profile and experience of the local government industry, that ANTA and its successor, together with the State and Territory Training Authorities and the NCVET modify their data collection methods to track and record the enrolment and completion rates of the employees of Council irrespective of whether the enrolled qualifications are drawn from the Local Government Training Package or from other industry training packages
7. The State and Territory Training Authorities, in conjunction with the Australian Flexible Learning Network, invest in a specific professional development strategy for RTOs to assist with the development of skills in identifying and creatively addressing the skill development needs of thin and non-traditional markets
8. RTOs, supported by the State and Territory Training Authorities, revisit their funding and charging models to make explicit those areas which will be supported with public funding and those which will require fee-for-service payments.
9. State and Territory Training Authorities provide specific funding, in support of RTOs and their initial market establishment costs, when it is demonstrated that delivery to a niche or thin market is moving from 'generic' training to industry-specific training.
10. State and Territory Training Authorities, responsible for the establishment of RTO registration processes, put in place funding models which do not act as a disincentive for RTOs to include in their scope of delivery qualifications which may only receive relatively small enrolments. Such funding models should actively encourage the inclusion of qualifications from niche industries and thin markets by reducing the costs to RTOs rather than encouraging RTOs to rationalise their scope to only include large and mass-market programs.
- within the Department of Education, Science and Training
- ANTA, State and Territory Training Authorities, NCVET
- State and Territory Training Authorities
- RTOs
- State and Territory Training Authorities
- State and Territory Training Authorities

List of references

Australian Quality Training Framework: Standards for Registered Training Organisations, Melbourne: ANTA, 2001

Blythe, A. (2004) *Australian vocational education and training statistics*, [Adelaide]: NCVET

Wage and Salary Earners Australia, Public Sector, Canberra: ABS, 2002 Cat. no. 6248.0

Appendix

Additional data not directly referenced in the research report:

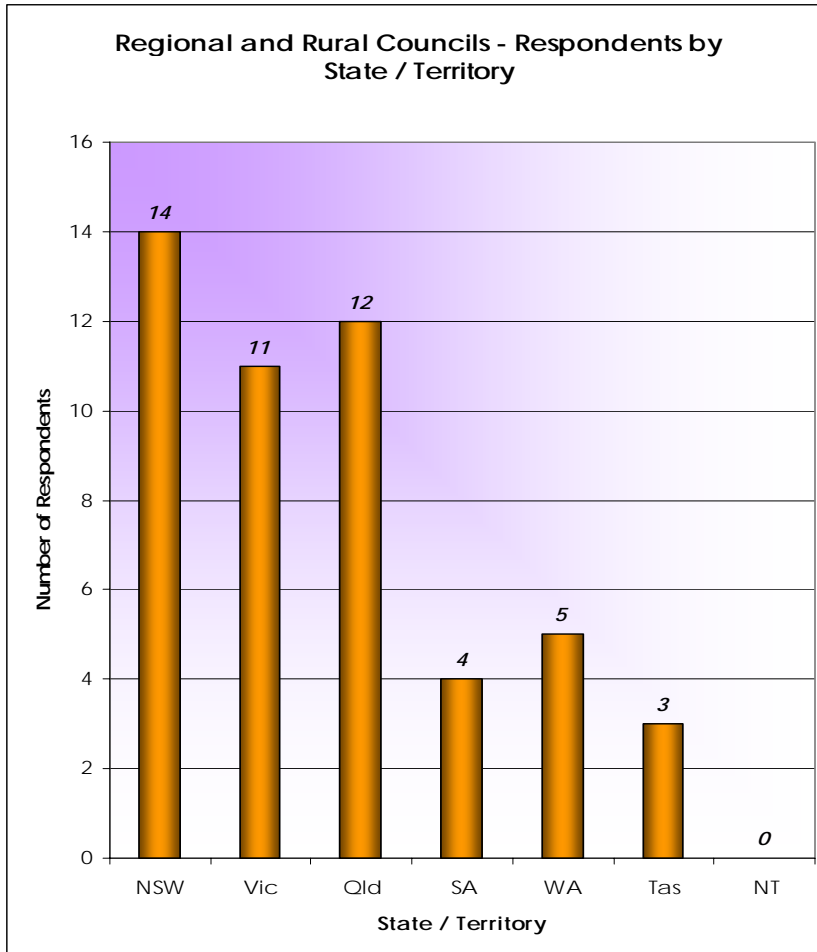


Chart 14: State/Territory of Regional and Rural Council respondents to quantitative study

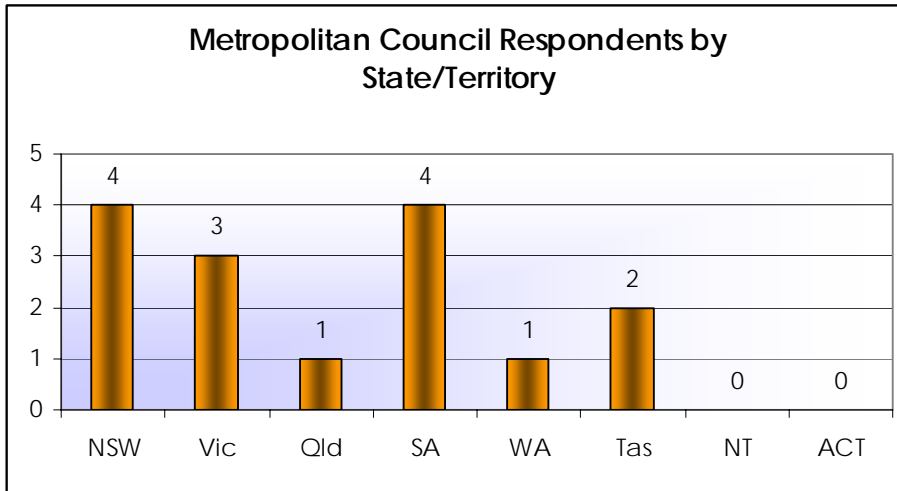


Chart 15: State/Territory of Metropolitan Council respondents to quantitative study

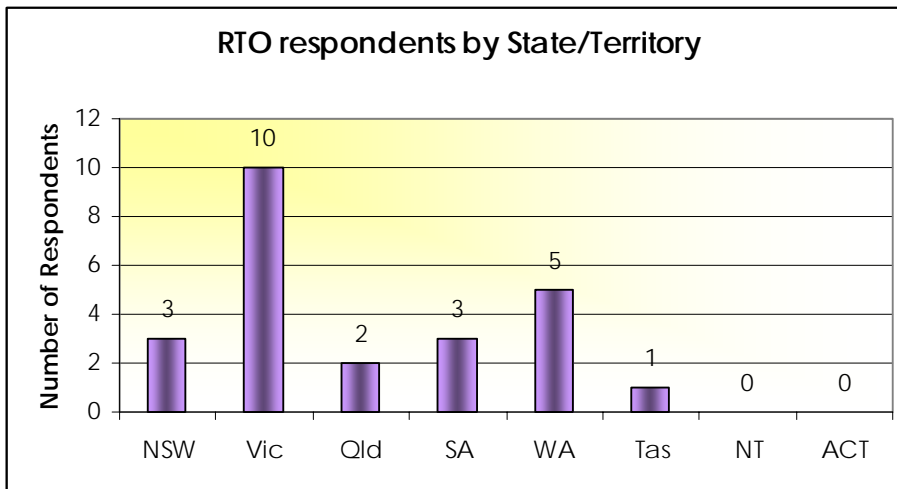


Chart 16: State/Territory of RTO respondents to quantitative study

Table 7: Regional and rural Councils level of satisfaction with current delivery modes

N= number of responses

	<i>Not Applicable</i>	<i>Highly Satisfied</i>	<i>Moderately Satisfied</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Moderately Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Highly Dissatisfied</i>
Classroom - offsite	15%	37%	44%	0%	3%	0%
Class - onsite	12%	8%	76%	4%	0%	0%
Self paced – paper based	32%	5%	43%	18%	2%	0%
Self paced - video	59%	5%	15%	15%	5%	0%
Self paced - online	76%	0%	8%	8%	8%	0%
On-the-job	9%	32%	50%	7%	2%	0%
Mixed mode	27%	27%	36%	11%	0%	0%

Table 8: Metropolitan Councils level of satisfaction with current delivery modes

N= number of responses

	<i>Not Applicable</i>	<i>Highly Satisfied</i>	<i>Moderately Satisfied</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Moderately Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Highly Dissatisfied</i>
Classroom - offsite	0%	38%	56%	6%	0%	0%
Class - onsite	0%	91%	9%	0%	0%	0%
Self paced - paper based	67%	0%	22%	11%	0%	0%
Self paced - video	45%	9%	36%	9%	0%	0%
Self paced - online	80%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%
On-the-job	0%	27%	64%	9%	0%	0%
Mixed mode	0%	50%	30%	20%	0%	0%

Table 9: RTO level of training involvement with Councils 2002-2004

N= number of responses

2002			2003			2004		
<i>No training for Councils</i>	<i>Yes training for one Council</i>	<i>Yes training for two or more Councils</i>	<i>No training for Councils</i>	<i>Yes training for one Council</i>	<i>Yes training for two or more Councils</i>	<i>No training for Councils</i>	<i>Yes training for one Council</i>	<i>Yes training for two or more Councils</i>
5	6	12	4	5	13	3	5	14

Table 10: Regional & rural Councils satisfaction levels – training providers

N= number of responses

	Mixed response – some providers where good and others were poor	Highly satisfied	Moderately satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Moderately dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied
2003	12	11	22	1	0	0
2004	10	18	20	1	0	0

Survey instruments

Survey of Local Government Training Needs and Experience



This study is being conducted with funding provided by a Commonwealth program and is geared towards identifying strategies that will assist Councils gain access to the level of training service that they require. The outcomes of this study will be used to provide policy advice to Governments (both State/Territory and Commonwealth) and to Registered Training Organisations about how best training can be delivered to Australia's 750 Councils and in particular those in regional and rural areas.

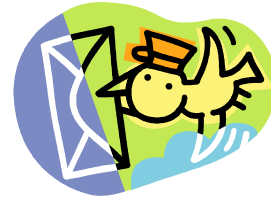
Please give us 10 minutes of your time to complete the survey – it will assist your industry.

Your response will be kept confidential. Your name and personal details will not be linked to your responses or used in any reporting of the research outcomes.

Please return the survey in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope by 18th August

and be in the 'early bird draw' for a

\$100 Book Voucher.



To:
Performance Growth
PO Box 18179
Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003

About You and Your Council

- 1 Your Details** (*Optional*. Please note: this information will be treated confidentially and will not be divulged. The information must be completed to be in the *early bird draw*)

Name _____

Position _____

Council _____

Address _____

Email: _____

2 In which State/Territory is your Council located?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New South Wales | <input type="checkbox"/> Tasmania |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Victoria | <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Territory |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Queensland | <input type="checkbox"/> Australian Capital Territory |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South Australia | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Western Australia | |

3 How many people are employed by the Council?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 20-49 | <input type="checkbox"/> 200-499 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5-9 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50-99 | <input type="checkbox"/> 500-999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10-19 | <input type="checkbox"/> 100-199 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1000+ |

Your Council's Current Training Experience

4 Does your Council employ a Full time or Part time officer responsible for coordinating training and skill development? Please tick the appropriate box and write the number of staff in the space provided.

No

Yes

_____ Full time

_____ Part time

5 Is your Council a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) able to offer recognised training and assessment services? Please tick the appropriate box.

No

Yes

5.1 Do you have staff who hold a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training?

No

Yes

5.2 Do you have staff who have completed the Units of Competency to ‘Plan Assessment’, ‘Conduct Assessment’ & ‘Review Assessment’ and are able to conduct assessments?

No

Yes

6 Does your Council currently use the Local Government Training Package?
Please tick the appropriate box.

No

→ If No, Go to Qu 6.1

Yes

→ If Yes, Go to Qu 7

6.1 If no, have you considered using the Local Government Training Package?
Please tick the appropriate box

- No, I don't know about it
- No, it does not meet our needs
- No, it is not of an appropriate quality
- No, we use another competency-based system

7 Please indicate the Council’s overall training experience during the calendar years 2002, 2003 and 2004 (for 2004 please include your actual experience for the first 6 months). Please tick one box for each year.

	High levels of training undertaken by a wide range of staff	High levels of training undertaken by a narrow range of staff	Moderate levels of training undertaken by a wide range of staff	Moderate levels of training undertaken by a narrow range of staff	Low levels of training undertaken by a wide range of staff	Low levels of training undertaken by a narrow range of staff	No training was undertaken
2002							
2003							
2004 to date							

→ If No for all three years

Go to Qu 13

8 Please indicate whether the training provided was accredited (part of a Training Package and leading to a nationally recognised qualification such as a Certificate or Diploma) or unaccredited? Please tick one box for each year.

	All accredited	Largely accredited with some unaccredited	Largely unaccredited with some accredited	All unaccredited
2002	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2003	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2004 to date	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8.1 Where your training was accredited with the potential to lead to a national qualification, please indicate the Training Package(s) used. Please tick as many boxes as required and/or write the name of the Training Package in the space provided. If you have used more Training Packages than there is space provided to list it would be appreciated if you could attach a page with the additional Training Packages listed.

	Local Government Training Package	Business Services Training Package	Other Please Write	Other Please Write
2002	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
2003	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
2004 to date	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____

9 Please indicate whether the training was provided by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), a commercial training provider who is not registered or in-house by your own Council trainers? Please tick one box for each year. This question is aimed at gaining an overview. It is recognised that you may use different providers for different Training Packages. In this case tick 'a mix of types of providers'.

	By an external RTO	In-house – the Council is an RTO	By a commercial but unregistered training provider	A mix of types of providers
2002	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2003	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2004 actual and planned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10 Please indicate your overall level of satisfaction with the quality of the training you have experienced during the past 18 months? Please tick one box for each year.

	Mixed response – some providers where good and others were poor	Highly satisfied	Moderately satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Moderately dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied
2003	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2004 to date	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11 Please indicate your overall level of satisfaction with the range of training delivery modes you have experienced during the *past 12 months*? Please tick the appropriate box for each mode of delivery. If you have not used a mode of delivery select 'not applicable'.

	Not Applicable	Highly satisfied	Moderately satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Moderately dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied
Classroom delivery off-site at the training provider	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom delivery on-site at the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-paced training using paper-based tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-paced training using video, CD-Rom or similar tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-paced on-line training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workplace on-the-job learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A mix of delivery modes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12 Comments. Do you have any general or additional comments to make about your training experience? Write your comments in the box below.

Training Needs

The following questions seek information about the type of training you would prefer for your Council.

Access to Training

13 Have you ever experienced difficulty in finding a training provider who meets your needs?

No

→ If No, Go to Qu. 15

Yes

→ If Yes, Go to Qu. 14

14 What has been the *major* reason why you have experienced difficulty in finding a suitable training provider who meets your needs? Please tick one box that reflects the most important reason or if required write the major reason in the space provided.

There are no training providers in our region

There is no local training provider with relevant expertise

There is no local training provider offering relevant programs

The quality of the learning and assessment resources was insufficient

The programs could not be delivered when we wanted

The programs could not be delivered in a mode we wanted

The costs were too high

Or, other _____

Preferred Delivery Mode

15 Please indicate the mode of training delivery that you believe best suits particular segments of your workforce. Please tick one box only for each segment.

	Classroom delivery off-site at the training provider	Classroom delivery on-site at the Council	Self-paced training using paper-based tools	Self-paced training using video, CD-Rom or similar tools	Self-paced on-line training	Workplace on-the-job learning	A mix of delivery modes
Outdoor workers							
Admin staff							
Cont.	Classroom delivery	Classroom delivery	Self-paced	Self-paced	Self-paced	Workplace on-the-job	A mix of delivery

	off-site at the training provider	on-site at the Council	training using paper-based tools	training using video, CD-Rom or similar tools	on-line training	learning	modes
Managers							
Planning staff							
Environmental health staff							
Library staff							
Community Services staff							
Other _____							

Flexible learning

We would like to explore further your views about technology-based flexible learning.

16 What do you perceive are the major barriers, if any, to your Council taking up a range of the most commonly used technology-based flexible learning modes? Please tick as many boxes as required and/or describe the major barrier in the space provided.

	Video or CD-Rom delivery	Video-conference delivery	On-line delivery
There are no barriers			
Cost			
Lack of Council expertise to use the facility			
Lack of RTO expertise to deliver the mode			
Lack of learning and assessment resources of an appropriate quality			
Lack of learning and assessment resources that are sufficiently tailored to our workplace needs			
Lack of in-house technical infrastructure (eg equipment)			
Poor quality telecommunications infrastructure (eg slow lines, no ADSL)			

Not appropriate to the needs and learning styles of the workforce			
Other _____			

17 Please provide any final comments you would like to make, in the box below, about the use of flexible training and assessment as a means of meeting the skill development needs of your Council.

Thank you for participating in this survey - you have helped in the development of project which will assist the skill development of Australia's 750 Councils

Survey of Local Government Training Needs and Experience – RTO Survey



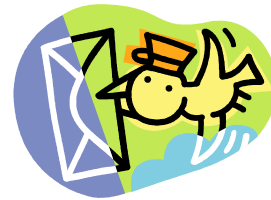
This study is being conducted with funding provided by a Commonwealth program and is geared towards identifying strategies that will assist the development of strong training partnerships between registered training organisations (RTOs) and Councils. The outcomes of this study will be used to provide policy advice to Governments (both State/Territory and Commonwealth), Councils and to RTOs about how best training can be delivered to Australia's 750 Councils and the role of flexible learning strategies in meeting Councils' training needs.

Please give us 10 minutes of your time to complete the survey – it will assist the delivery of training to an important industry serving communities across the nation.

Your response will be kept confidential. Your name and personal details will not be linked to your responses or used in any reporting of the research outcomes.

Please return the survey in the enclosed reply paid envelope by 4th September

and be in the 'early bird draw' for a \$100 Book Voucher.



To:
Performance Growth
PO Box 18179
Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003

About You and Your RTO

- 2 Your Details** (*Optional*. Please note: this information will be treated confidentially and will not be divulged. The information must be completed to be in the *early bird draw*)

Name _____

Position _____

Organisation _____

Address _____

Email: _____

2 In which State/Territory is your RTO located?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New South Wales | <input type="checkbox"/> Tasmania |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Victoria | <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Territory |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Queensland | <input type="checkbox"/> Australian Capital Territory |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South Australia | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Western Australia | |

3 How many people are employed by the RTO?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 20-49 | <input type="checkbox"/> 200-499 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5-9 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50-99 | <input type="checkbox"/> 500-999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10-19 | <input type="checkbox"/> 100-199 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1000+ |

Your Current Training Experience with Councils

4 Does your RTO have a staff member with specific responsibility to support and liaise with Council clients? Please tick the appropriate box.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| No | Yes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5 Please indicate if your RTO has conducted training for Council(s) since 2002 (where the Council is the client rather than individual employees enrolling independently) Please tick one box for each year.

	NO	YES		
2002	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If yes.....</i>	for one local Council <input type="checkbox"/> for two or more local Councils <input type="checkbox"/>
2003	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If yes.....</i>	for one local Council <input type="checkbox"/> for two or more local Councils <input type="checkbox"/>
2004	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>If yes.....</i>	for one local Council <input type="checkbox"/> for two or more local Councils <input type="checkbox"/>

→ If YES for any year, Go to Qu. 6

→ If NO for each year, Go to Qu. 5.1

5.1 Please indicate the most significant reason why Council(s) are not a current client of

your RTO? *Please tick the box that best describes your experience.*

We have not actively approached the Council to offer training services	The Council uses another RTO	The Council is an RTO and delivers its own training	We do not have the specialist trainers to deliver to Councils	We do not have the learning and assessment resources necessary to deliver	It is not cost effective to deliver training to Councils
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other _____

[→ Go to Qu. 10](#)

6 Please indicate whether the training provided was accredited (part of a Training Package and leading to a nationally recognised qualification such as a Certificate or Diploma) or unaccredited? Please tick one box for each year.

	All accredited	Largely accredited with some unaccredited	Largely unaccredited with some accredited	All unaccredited
2002	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2003	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2004	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6.1 Where the training was accredited with the potential to lead to a national qualification, please indicate the Training Package(s) used. Please tick as many boxes as required and/or write the name of the Training Package in the space provided.

	Local Government Training Package	Business Services Training Package	Other Please Write	Other Please Write
2002	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
2003	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____
2004	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____

7 Please indicate the type of staff your RTO has trained anytime since January 2002 and the modes of delivery you have used to meet their needs. Please tick as many boxes as required.

	Classroom delivery off-site at the training provider	Classroom delivery on-site at the Council	Self-paced training using paper-based tools	Self-paced training using video, CD-Rom or similar tools	Self-paced on-line training	Workplace on-the-job learning	A mix of delivery modes
Outdoor workers							
Admin staff							
Managers							
Planning staff							
Environmental health staff							
Library staff							
Community Services staff							
Other _____							

Working With Councils

Councils have a diverse workforce with diverse training needs and the complexity of serving this market is recognised. The following series of questions address the barriers and benefits of working with Councils and the role of flexible learning in delivering training to this market.

8 Please indicate the major barriers or complexities you encounter in working to deliver training to Council staff. Please tick as many boxes as required.

We experience no difficulties in delivering training to our Council client(s)

or

It is difficult to identify the training needs of staff

The number of potential students is small and delivery is not cost effective

The distances to travel to deliver training increase our costs and make delivery not cost effective

We do not have the range of specialist trainers to deliver to Councils

We do not have the learning and assessment resources necessary to deliver

The Council has not shown a commitment to purchase our training for staff

Other _____

Flexible learning

We would like to explore further your views about technology-based flexible learning.

9 What do you perceive are the major barriers, if any, to your Council client(s) taking up a range of the most commonly used technology-based flexible learning modes? Please tick as many boxes as required and/or describe the major barrier in the space provided.

	Video or CD-Rom delivery	Video-conference delivery	On-line delivery
There are no barriers			
Cost – the Council would not be prepared to pay			
Lack of Council expertise to use the facility			
Lack of RTO expertise to deliver the mode			
Lack of learning and assessment resources of an appropriate quality			
Lack of learning and assessment resources that are sufficiently tailored to the workplace needs			
Lack of in-house technical infrastructure (eg equipment)			

Poor quality telecommunications infrastructure (eg slow lines, no ADSL)			
Not appropriate to the needs and learning styles of the workforce			
Other _____			

10 Comments. Do you have any general or additional comments to make about your experience in working with Councils? *Write your comments in the box below.*

Thank you for participating in this survey - you have helped in the development of a project which will assist the delivery of training to Australia's 750 Councils

For more information contact:

National Communication Team

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