



**COMMUNITY  
COLLEGES  
AUSTRALIA**

# **MORE THAN ART AND POTTERY: COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROVIDERS' INVOLVEMENT IN WORK-BASED LEARNING AND FOUNDATION SKILLS**

**INTERIM RESEARCH REPORT – DECEMBER 2015**

Community Colleges Australia is the peak body that represents and provides services to community owned, not-for-profit education and training providers.

## Executive Summary

This research is being conducted by Community Colleges Australia on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Education & Training (DET) under the Strategic Partnerships Project.

The research aims to examine the extent to which community providers are delivering work-based learning, workplacement and foundation skills. It is hoped that the research will create better recognition of community providers by illuminating the role community providers play in providing quality Vocational Education and Training (VET).

The research involves a large-scale survey of community-based providers followed by detailed semi-structured interviews with selected participants. Results will be collated into a report for the Department of Education & Training.

Four hundred and fourteen (414) Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) were selected from the National Register of RTOs, [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au) (TGA) according to their provider type indicator (AVETMISS Data Field) and invited to take part in the initial survey. Ninety-two (92) RTOs responded to the survey.

## Who is a community provider?

For the purpose of the research we defined a community education provider as being an RTO that is Not for Profit (NFP), a legal entity, focused on adult education and serving a specific community whether that be a geographical community or a cultural community.

Survey participants were selected from the TGA database according to provider type indicator. Those selected included those identified as the following provider types (AVETMISS Data Field):

- Community Based Education Provider
- *Other provider '91* - Private education/training business or centre' is a privately operated registered training organisation ('private provider').
- *Other provider '99* - Other training provider not elsewhere classified' are for-profit private training providers (e.g. private one-on-one music teachers, private tutors) and not-for-profit training providers (e.g. Mission Australia, Salvation Army)

Despite that fact that the AVETMISS definition of "Community-based Adult Education Provider" specifies that such a provider should be NFP, our research using the TGA database has shown that a number of RTOs registered with the "Community-based Adult Education Provider" type indicator are in fact "for-profit" organisations. This is a curious and potentially misleading fault in the AVETMISS collection and has implications for how the data may be used for research and policy decisions.

## Summary of Early Findings

While the data provided by the surveys needs to be further interrogated and checked with detailed semi-structured interviews, the initial results indicate the following:

### Work-based learning

Community based providers are very much involved in delivering work-based learning:

- 45% deliver traineeships and 10% deliver apprenticeships.
- 66% of RTOs are delivering qualifications that have a mandatory work-based learning component (i.e. where the training package specifies that assessment must be conducted in the workplace and/or specifies work placement hours required).
- 52% of Community based RTOs are involved in delivering accredited and non-accredited training for specific business clients.
- 74% stated that they provide work placement opportunities as part of their courses, even when the training package does not require it.
- 35% of RTOs stated they operate a business that has been specifically designed for the purpose of providing work-based training such as a hairdressing/beauty salon, nursery or café.

When asked why they did not deliver more work-based learning and provide more work placement opportunities, the following themes emerged:

- Funding is a big issue. RTOs state that employers are reluctant to pay for work-based learning and the funding arrangements are not supportive.
- Community based RTOs often service large regional and rural areas and the cost of managing work-based traineeships in such thin markets with large geographical spread was prohibitive.
- Community based RTOs are often very small operations and do not have the capacity to invest in the marketing and relationship building required to build a client base with local business and market the RTO capabilities.

- Furthermore, it was felt that community based RTOs did not have a reputation for providing work-based learning opportunities and therefore the marketing requirements are greater.
- Employers are reluctant to host learners for work placement and there is a lot of competition especially in rural and regional areas from other “large national” and “private” RTOs to engage host employers.

### Foundation Skills

Community providers are very involved in delivering foundation skills:

- 88% stated that they have delivered accredited foundation skills in the last 12 months. These were classroom-based courses.
- 89% stated that they are integrating foundation skills into VET courses. This may be achieved in a variety of fashions, such as VET trainers who have achieved TAELLN411 integrating language literacy and numeracy (LLN) into their VET delivery (46%), LLN experts working with VET experts in the design of the course (18%) or units from the Foundation Skills Training Package (FSK) being integrated into VET courses (29%).

When asked why they did not deliver more foundation skills following themes emerged:

- The most common response was inadequate funding for foundation skills. It is perceived that employers will not pay for foundation skills training and “selling” the benefits of foundations skills to employers is a significant drain on resources.
- Changes to *Job Active* contracts mean there are less referrals from this source.
- The requirement that appropriate qualifications be on scope and being on the Approved Provider List are seen as prohibitively complex and costly for many Victorian providers.
- Limited approved courses for foundation skills under *Smart and Skilled* in NSW has caused problems for many RTOs.

- Students that are in greatest need are not interested or reluctant and people are not aware of their LLN needs contributing to a lack of student numbers.
- Many responded that they have limited capacity in terms of qualified staff and classroom space to deliver more foundation skills.

### Next steps in research:

- A second broad follow-up survey will be sent to all respondents who have indicated they deliver foundation skills.
- The survey will take a snapshot of the range of conditions, strategies and practices in use for the facilitation of foundation skills including: the qualifications of trainers; the characteristics of learners; the curriculum/training packages being used; funding arrangements; classroom and workplace practices: approaches to pedagogy and assessment and the outcomes in terms of assisting transitions in life, work and education for learners.
- Detailed semi-structured interviews with survey respondents focusing on:
  - Those RTOs who are successfully engaging with businesses to provide business specific work-based learning opportunities. What strategies have worked for engagement? What strategies have worked for delivering the training and up-skilling workers? What skills are required by trainers?
  - Those RTOs who are delivering Traineeships. What models are they using? What skills are required by trainers/assessors?
  - Those RTOs who operate a business for the purpose of providing training, such as beauty salon or café.
  - Those who deliver training that has mandatory workplacement requirements. What have they learnt from this experience in terms of engaging with employers, finding host employers and the value of workplacement?
- Presentation to the *ACTA/ACAL Conference, Diversity Exchanging Ways of Being* scheduled for April 2016. Conference program available at <http://waalc.org.au/2016-ACAL-ACTA-conference/conference-overview.htm>

For more information or comments contact [projects@cca.edu.au](mailto:projects@cca.edu.au)

**Community Colleges Australia** | ACN: 123 159 526  
PO Box Q1839, QVB Post Office, Sydney NSW 1230

**P:** 02 9233 3634 | **F:** 02 9232 7982 | **E:** admin@cca.edu.au

[www.cca.edu.au](http://www.cca.edu.au)



**COMMUNITY  
COLLEGES  
AUSTRALIA**