FEEDBACK FORM

Review of the Survey of Employer Use and Views of the VET System

Instructions

This feedback form accompanies the *Review of the Survey of Employer Use and Views of the VET System: discussion paper* <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2349.html>.

This form is intended for feedback on the boxed questions in each section of the discussion paper. It is also the place to raise issues not covered in the paper. It is not necessary to respond to all the questions in this form – only those areas of interest to you and your organisation. Feel free to delete those not applicable.

Once completed, please save this form, with the name of your organisation and the date as part of the header, and email to toni.rittie@ncver.edu.au by close of business Friday 8 April 2011.

Contact details

We require a contact person for each submission to clarify any questions that may arise.

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Publication permission

Please note that all responses will be consolidated and made available on the NCVER website unless advised otherwise. Responses will only be identified by organisation. Do you give permission for this submission to be made publically available?

[X] Yes, including my organization*

[ ] Yes, but not identifying my organisation

[ ] No, this submission is not to be made publically available

Feedback relating to issues in the discussion paper

Note: The views expressed in this document are those of the Secretariat for the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, and not necessarily those of the Steering Committee for the Review or of the working groups within the Review. The 'Additional feedback' section includes additional information on use of SEUV data to inform the Productivity Commission's Education and training workforce study.

1.   Purpose of the survey

1.1   From a policy perspective, interest will remain in collecting information on employers' engagement and satisfaction with the VET system. Are there any other areas of employer' interaction with the VET system that are of interest from a policy/research perspective?

The discussion paper notes that the current SEUV was designed to measure progress against key performance measures articulated by the Australian Government (in 2004 and revised in 2006). We note that these KPMs were established as part of the national strategy for VET ('Shaping our Future'), which ended in 2010. In 2009, Australian, State and Territory governments agreed to performance indicators as part of the National Agreement on Skills and Workforce Development (NASWD). At its 13 February 2011 meeting, COAG endorsed a review of the NASWD, which includes a review of both policy design and performance reporting. This review is anticipated to be completed by end July 2011. It would be useful for any significant changes proposed for the SEUV to be informed by the outcomes of the review of the NASWD.

The outcomes for VET, as outlined in the VET chapter of the Report on Government Services (RoGS) align with the NASWD's overarching objectives, but RoGS reporting is focused specifically on government funded and/or provided services whilst the NASWD is focused on a broader set of outcomes, including non-government funded services and, potentially, informal skills and expertise developed 'on the job". Whilst potentially technically difficult, it would be useful to be able to distinguish between publicly-funded and privately-funded services, and to identify employers' satisfaction with general 'skills for the job' and VET 'qualifications'.

1.2   What information does your organisation need to better understand the relationship between employers and the VET system?

The information priorities of the Secretariat for the SCRGSP are to address gaps in reporting against the NASWD and the RoGS VET chapter, and to improve the quality and reliability of current reporting.

Data that are comparable over time are important for performance monitoring in the NASWD and the RoGS. This includes both consistency in questions and adequate sample size and response rates to ensure reliability of estimates in the SEUV.

For the NASWD, a key issue indentified in the SCRGSP's report to the CRC in 2010 was a lack of data to inform the outcome area of labour market effectiveness[1]. Consultation by the Secretariat for the SCRGSP during 2011 included consideration of the SEUV as a potential vehicle for collecting data for this outcome area—the current survey asks

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[1] The complete outcome statement is: 'Skills are used effectively to increase labour market efficiency, productivity, innovation, and ensure increased utilisation of human capital'.

employers to 'rate the current skill level of employees relative to the needs of the organisation'. Further development has been put on hold pending the outcomes of the COAG review of the NASWD.

For the RoGS, a key issue is being able to distinguish government funded activity and associated information. From the perspective of employer views we acknowledge that this is difficult, but would appreciate information on the feasibility of such a distinction in the SEUV.

2.   Data items currently collected in the survey

2.1   What information do you use from the survey (if any)?

The Secretariat for the SCRGSP uses data from the SEUV for:

- the NASWD:

  - in the 2010 Report to the COAG Reform Council (CRC), data from the 2009 SEUV on *the proportion of employers who are satisfied with training as a way of meeting their skills needs* were reported as contextual information; in the 2011 Report to the CRC these data will be used to inform progress against the NASWD outcome *the supply of skills provided by the national training system responds to meet changing labour market demand*

  - in the 2010 Report to the CRC, data from the 2009 SEUV on the *level of difficulty experienced in recruiting staff in the last 12 months* were reported as contextual information

  - organisational characteristics are also considered important data elements as they allow data disaggregation by State and Territory, and by employer type[2], both of which are reported in the NASWD.

- the VET chapter of the RoGS:

  - SEUV data on *employer engagement with VET (by training category/type)* are reported as an outcome measure of government's objective that *employers and individuals will be at the centre of VET*

  - SEUV data on *employer satisfaction with VET (by training category/type)* are reported as an outcome measure of government's objective that *industry will have a highly skilled workforce to support strong performance in the global economy.*

2.2   Do you agree with the priorities we have assigned the current data items?

We agree with the high and medium priorities, but suggest that the ranking of the low priority items be reconsidered after the COAG endorsed review of the NASWD.

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[2] 'Employer type' includes:
- employers with vocational qualifications as a job requirement
- employers with apprentice/trainees
- employers using nationally recognised training

2.3   Do you agree with the data items we have ranked as high priority and are proposing to retain?

Yes. We agree with the high priority rankings. These items are reported in the NASWD and RoGS, and we agree that they should be retained in the SEUV.

2.4   Do you agree with the data items we have ranked as low priority and are proposing to remove? If not, have you used any of this information in the past? How do you propose using this information in the future if the questions are retained?

The data items identified as low priority have not previously been reported in the RoGS or the NASWD. However, depending on the outcomes of the COAG endorsed review of the NASWD, they may provide useful information in future. It is recommended that a decision on removing data items be delayed until the outcomes of this review are known.

The low priority ranking assigned to the 'training strategy' data items could be reconsidered as there are no other data items to provide context and insight into responses to the related high priority data item: '*Whether the organisation experienced any difficulties recruiting staff in the past 12 months'*. A range of economic and labour market factors may influence recruitment difficulty, and further contextual information to understand how responses to this question relate to the VET sector is important. As a minimum, consideration could be given to including a contextual question to determine whether the employer felt the reason for recruitment difficulty was related to difficulty in finding employees with skills that match their job needs, or was related to other factors.

2.5   Are there any data items we have ranked as medium priority that you believe should be removed from the survey?

No. We support retaining the data items marked as medium priority as they provide useful context for the high priority questions.

While the RoGS does not currently report on 'reasons for dissatisfaction' by training category/type at the present, it would be beneficial for the SEUV to continue collecting these data as they provide information necessary to examine the nature of employers' dissatisfaction. To be useful, the sample size needs to be increased or number of response categories reviewed to reduce RSEs at the State and Territory level.

2.6   Are there any data items you consider should be added to the survey? How would you use this information?

If not already collected (and notwithstanding that the interviewer asks to speak with the person best suited to answer questions in relation to staff training and development), information about the interviewee's position within their organisation may provide some insight into the reliability of information provided. One of the potential limitations of the current interview approach is the ability of the interviewee to represent the views of the employer on all employees.

3.   Scope and methodology

3.1   Does the current scope satisfy your needs from a policy/research perspective?

We support retaining the current scope of the survey as set out in the discussion paper and which has been used since the 2005 SEUV – continuing with the same scope is beneficial for time-series.

3.2   Do you favour a mixed mode approach for the survey (both telephone and online)?

The discussion paper does not provide information on the potential benefits and risks of a mixed mode approach for the survey. We would be interested in obtaining further information about whether changing the methodology from solely CATI (interviewer administered) to combining with online (self-administered) surveys presents opportunities to reduce RSEs through increased sample size or response rates, and whether the change in mode could adversely impact on data comparability and time-series.

A mixed mode approach for the survey would be supported if it means the sample size (and/or response rates) can be increased without affecting the quality of data or time series.

3.3   What levels of accuracy do you require from the survey?

NASWD and RoGS comparative performance reporting require high quality data at the jurisdictional level that allow analysis of change over time.

The RSEs proposed in the discussion paper (based on the larger sample size of 7400) are acceptable for RoGS and NASWD reporting, although higher degrees of accuracy would be beneficial for time series reporting as the ability to identify trends is only clear when estimates and their RSEs CIs do not overlap.

3.4   Would you favour a shorter survey in exchange for more accurate estimates?

Yes. A shorter survey that is targeted to government objectives and reporting priorities (including time series), with more accurate estimates is supported. However, as we have noted above, the high and medium priority data items provide useful information. It would also be useful to obtain the views of those employers who use the services of fee-for-service providers separately from those that use government funded providers.

4.   Options for 2013 onwards

4.1   What are your views on having a core set of questions (as noted in table 2 of the paper) each year with the option for including a separate module on a topic of interest?

We support maintaining a set of focused core questions over multiple surveys to build high quality time series data. We would request that NASWD and RoGS reporting requirements be incorporated into the core questions.

4.2   Do you have any suggestions for issues that could be included in a question module approach, either past or present?

For topics of interest we would be guided by COAG priorities – but as the current COAG emphasis is on measuring and reporting on performance over time, at this stage we would see maintaining a set of focused core questions for a number of iterations of the survey as a priority over supplements.

The VET workforce could be a useful supplementary topic (see 'Additional feedback' on use of the SEUV by the Productivity Commisison Education and Training workforce study).

Additional feedback or issues:

Please list feedback on any other issues you would like covered in the review.

Note: For NCVER to make maximum use of this information, it is important to outline why this issue needs to be considered, what changes you would propose making and why and how it would benefit the survey.

Although not related to the current NA/RoGS performance reporting, we note that information on the VET workforce is of policy interest. Provided below is additional feedback on use of SEUV data by the Productivity Commission (PC) Education and Training workforce study.

For the Education and Training workforce study (final report due end April 2011) the PC were particularly interested in measuring employers' satisfaction with the VET workforce.

For the Education and Training workforce study the PC analysed:

- characteristics of employers who use the VET system (firm size, state etc.)

- satisfaction by each form of use (apprentices; training of employees; etc.)

- reasons for: dissatisfaction with the system; no longer using the system; and not using the system.

Information was needed to determine whether employers who do not or no longer use the VET system did so because of dissatisfaction, or because they had no need to use the system. Information was also needed about users satisfaction with the VET system and its workforce. Broad information was available from the SEUV about employers' reasons for dissatisfaction with the VET workforce. However, no information was available to assess employers' degree of satisfaction with the VET workforce.

Further information about satisfaction with different aspects of training would be useful. For example, the satisfaction questions could ask employers about their satisfaction with the quality of the trainers and assessors (i.e. the VET workforce) and the cost, flexibility and content of training.

The SEUV identifies when an employer is an Enterprise RTOs (ERTOs). It would be useful to ask what these respondents regard as the advantages to them of in-house training over external training, and whether some of these advantages have to do with the 'industry currency' (state of the art industry knowledge and skills) of the ERTO trainers and assessors.